

Revelation 1 - 3

W. Kelly.

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Part 1 of Lectures on the Book of Revelation.

(The Translation by W. Kelly of the Revelation of John is included as the file revtrans.doc. Search for 'revelation /2/ john'.)

Preface.

The Lectures here presented to the reader were taken in shorthand, and printed in 1858-9 in a periodical form, with additions or retrenchments throughout. In 1861 a new and corrected edition appeared, preceded in 1860 by a critical edition of the Greek text with a close English translation and a full statement of the authorities (MSS., versions, and early citations) and various readings in the notes. In 1868 a new edition in the periodical form was issued, and the following year again in the collected form.

I trust that, in spite of many hindrances to such a revision as one might desire, the present edition will be found not only enlarged, but more accurate, though few are likely to be so sensible of its defects as myself. May the gracious Lord, who deigned to use it for the good of souls, even when certainly encumbered with greater drawbacks, bless its fresh circulation to the refreshment of His own and the warning of the careless or even the scornful among such as know Him not!

Introduction.

That the day in which we live is serious and fraught with change of the gravest character is doubted by no thoughtful mind. A sage of this world has issued his Latter-day Pamphlets. For near a century the

air has been full of revolution. Men take pleasure, especially in experimental science, which has yielded not a few brilliant results, and some of them eminently practical in facilitating the intercourse of men and minds. Hence a tendency to glorify success, especially in material things, and to look more than ever for progress in the future. The past is either slighted utterly or condoned patronisingly and with pity. All things are made matters of question. The age prepares to put the most venerable authority on its trial speculatively as it will in fact ere long. But it essays a more audacious flight; it already counts itself wiser than God's word, and will soon accept a man as God Himself in His temple.

Has the Holy Spirit wrought after no special sort in presence of Satan's activity and new wiles? As it is according to God to work invariably for His own glory but in ways admirably adapted to the dangers and wants of His own, so has He proved in our day. He has recalled His children far and wide to Christ's person and work, to the Spirit and His presence, to their own forgotten privileges as Christians and the church now, as well as to the hope of His coming shortly.

Hence if on one side the world's restless love of change has imperilled the solid hold of what is good and of God, on the other side grace has disabused many of prejudices, detected faulty or imperfect views, and opened hearts to truths stored in scripture but in vain till the Holy Ghost made them living. To this the powerful conviction that the Lord is at hand contributed largely, as it raised in hearts and consciences the solemn question of the church's state and of our own as individuals.

Thus for good as for evil it does not satisfy to cite the ways and thoughts of men in the last few centuries. Some doubtless drench themselves with the dregs of the dark ages; others go back to the impressions of the first four centuries after Christ, and think they have done much when they find themselves coinciding with the Greek or Latin ecclesiastics of those days. But not a few there are, I thank the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who have been taught of Him to confide only in the scriptures by the Spirit — not in testimony since the apostles, but in their divinely-inspired writings.

If the spirit of revolution or of superstition slight the work which God effected by the labours of the reformers, faith values indeed and gives God thanks for what He did then, but goes straight up to the fresh fountains of revealed truth, and owns these to be the needed, sweet, and sure resource of divine grace for an hour when evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

It appears to me then that, while it is wanton to reject the work of the Lord's servants either at the Reformation or in days before or since, it is not the wisdom which befits the believer at any time, least of all in face of our increasing snares and perils, to stop short of the sources which are as accessible to us as to those who originally received them, which only unbelief prompted men to forsake, to the grief of the Spirit and their own irreparable loss. It is good to respect Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, Jewell; it is better — yea, a bounden duty to test what these said and others, respectable indeed but inferior to them, to test their thoughts by the living and abiding word of God. Why swear to the words of an earthly master, or of a school which sprung later from his words, when God has vouchsafed His own, and given us the Spirit who abides in us for ever?

Rationalism can find not a little material and an apparent sanction for its own bolder impiety from the unguarded words of the greatest of reformers. Pious Protestants cherish the memory of their works, and ban, on their words as articles of faith and hope. But there is no need for the Christian to be a Protestant, no excuse for becoming a rationalist. Why not take the whole written word and trust the Holy Spirit to give us all the truth suited to the exigencies of today, as He was pleased to strengthen others yesterday? The word of God as such claims our homage as the sole rule, and this too as a whole, not that measure only which was blessed to and in others who have passed before us. The Reformation is not Christianity, nor are Luther and his fellows the apostle Paul and the other apostles.

I am thoroughly convinced that the admirable men of the Reformation, though greatly beyond those who followed in the or seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were no more spiritually fit to traverse safely the field of prophecy than their descendants at the present time. It is a thing as unknown among Protestants as among Romanists to meet with souls consciously dead to sin and law, standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Still less do they apprehend aright the union of saints with Christ by the Spirit, and the character of the assembly of God as the body of Christ or even as the house of God. Unacquainted with these truths, as little emancipated individually from every hindrance and bond as their systems are from the Popish leaven of a consecrated caste with its efficacious rites, they habitually gravitate toward Judaism, and this in a prophetic scheme quite as much as in doctrine and walk.

The grounds of this judgment the reader may find too abundantly, if otherwise he himself knows it not, in these lectures. It is useless, save for party purposes, to meet the charge by peremptory denial and haughty contempt. I am sure I love the reformers with a hearty affection in the Lord, as I do those who adopt their views as a standard in our day; but I believe that it is no disparagement to either if we, profiting it may be by their footsteps, seek to go on to know the word of the Lord more fully.

The reader will see that there is frequent reference in these pages to Mr. E. B. Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*. I meant this as an act of sincere respect to him and his elaborate commentary, the best representative of the Protestant school. It is with regret that one observes a ruffled tone in his notice of my criticisms.* His answers I shall here review in the hope that he may be convinced of oversight at least in some important details, if not in grave first principles.

*Thus his note 3 to p. 643 is a great exaggeration of anything I expected, which was, not that he would abandon his general scheme (no such exorbitant thought being ever anticipated), but that he might see how incorrect were some of his positions,. not only in detailed points, but even in the structural division of Rev. 21.

And first I must say that it is not fairly put (i.p_18) to assert that 1, whom he is pleased to classify "on the Futurist side," have distinctly renounced many of the chief dogmas of the original "Futurist school." I might have let this pass, though in my opinion likely to produce the erroneous impression that I had put forth futurism once and since "renounced" many of its chief dogmas; but taken alone, with his still stronger language in the same direction (iv. p. 644), it seemed due both to Mr. Elliott and to his readers to correct the error. "In fine (says he), we may, I think, safely conclude to receive Mr. W. Kelly's judgment, so far as it goes, in favour of the Protestant Historical view of the Apocalyptic prophecy, as that forced upon a person originally altogether prejudiced against it." Mr. E. has not the least warrant for these last words. I am sorry to occupy space about a personal matter. It is more important to state that, years before the first edition of the *Horae Apocalypticae* appeared in 1844, there were Christians who waited for Christ and looked for the personal Antichrist, with the many momentous consequences of both views, yet held the general application of the Apocalypse to the saints and the world since the time of St. John, as stated in my lectures. Nor ought Mr. Elliott to have forgotten this (as I doubt not he did); for I have so told him orally and given him a work by a friend of mine to that effect, which was published in 1839. He should not therefore have spoken of "renouncing" futurist dogmas once entertained, any more than of "a person originally altogether opposed to the Protestant view."

On another point too I am surprised that such a man should so gravely misunderstand. He contrasts with Mr. Barker's vague and indefinite views my writing "distinctly and expressly, and moreover in a certain way authoritatively, as if speaking as the organ of a not unimportant party in the Christian

Church" — this because of my using the word "we" sufficiently often to leave this impression. (*e.g.* Introd. p. ix.) Let me say in few words that I am simply comparing the thoughts of such as like myself admit a partial application of the Revelation to the past, but believe that the errand and close fulfilment of its central prophetic visions — Rev. 6 to Rev. 16 — will be after the translation of those set forth by the elders or glorified saints, and in order to their appearing with Christ in glory. I am not alone in these convictions, which are shared by many intelligent persons, both Anglican and Nonconformist, besides those who like myself refuse to take a sectarian place in the present chaos of Christendom. Whatever of "authoritativeness" was in my words is due solely to my firm conviction of the divine word, not in the least to being the organ of a party important or not, a thing as far from the fact as foreign to my own feeling and judgment of what is due to the Lord and the church.

The first and main difference which severs Mr. E. and myself as interpreting the book is his denial of that which to me is certain, that the epistles to the seven Asiatic churches were intended to give more than the actual state in St. John's day, and to figure successively the most characteristic phases of the church from apostolic times to the consummation. Mr. E. in a periodical long since defunct had urged some objections to the late Mr. Trotter's statement of similar convictions in his well-known *Plain Papers*. It seemed to Mr. E. inconsistent with the analogy of scripture prophecy and with plain fact.*

*I cite the substance of the remarks that follow from the Introduction of the same edition, pp. iv.-vi.

My answer was that it is in vain to appeal to Dan. 2, 7, 11, or other such prophecies, which have no analogy with the addresses of the Lord Jesus to these Christian assemblies. These are manifestly *sui generis* and have no connection with the fortunes of the world, or the successive rising and setting of its powers. Supposing such quasi-prophetic sketches to have been intended of God, the intermingling of the chief changes of civil government among men would be to my mind an incongruous mixture, instead of being a necessary element of consistency.

Next it is said to be contrary to plain fact; because in more than one of the epistles the prominent characteristics of the church addressed disagree utterly from the state of the Christian church at the assigned era. So, for example, very specially in that to Thyatira, where nothing less than an unintentional* mutilation is charged on the effort to make out a case at all plausible for applying it to the dominion of Popery in the dark ages, the eye being fixed on the exception Jezebel, not on the church in Thyatira. Whereas, instead of prevalent irreligion and the almost complete extinction of testimony for Christ, the epistle depicts a high state of piety in the general professing body there: and with the power in their hands, which it was their grand fault not duly to exercise, of interdicting and stopping the teaching of the woman Jezebel.

*In the H.A., iv. 642, note, Mr. E. says "Not '*intentional*' mutilation; as Mr. W. K. very unwarrantably represents me as saying. I had, and have, too much regard for Mr. T. to entertain such an idea." This somewhat startled me, as I had certainly written as Mr. E. said unintentional; and so it was in all the copies of my book that I could see. Accordingly I wrote to Mr. E. asking whether it was the fact that his copy of my book made me represent him as saying "intentional" where I had really written the precise reverse, as he said himself. It was possible of course that in his particular copy the printer might, by some singular accident if not intention, have thrown out the important prefix "un" which had led him to so strong and rash a charge against me, who certainly would not on any account misrepresent any man. Mr. E. wrote immediately a private acknowledgement that it was his mistake, not my misrepresentation. I understood from him that he had been troubled before he wrote his critique with an attack of a complaint which often leads men to see things in a wrong light. Any one is liable to a mistake, particularly if he writes a rejoinder, when it is not a case of the "double sight" he imputes

metaphorically to me in the same page, but under the influence of such a malady (not morally, but physically) not quite passed away. But I humbly think that he owed it to the Lord, his readers, and himself, to have publicly corrected so gross and groundless an insinuation, instead of leaving it to me now nine years after it was disseminated to all the world.

Such is a full statement of this objection; but it has no real force. For it must be borne in mind that our [i.e. Mr. T.'s and my] hypothesis assumes a twofold application, and therefore necessarily shuts out a rigid facsimile, which supposes a single set of circumstances wherein it can be verified. The churches are addressed as such, that is, as standing on the footing on which Christ had set the church, though the evils that were come or coming in are notified to those churches as thus responsible. The address is not to Balaam or Jezebel, but to assemblies where the germs of those symbolic forms of iniquity were found, and therein to those who had the consciousness of the Christian profession. Plainly therefore it is the *character*, not necessarily the extent, of the evil (or of the state, whatever it might be), which is or could be noticed here. If it was general deadness, such is the state indicated, and that in a particular order; if the seductions of false teachers were aimed at, this is also found; but in no case is there an attempt to define the extent of the sphere which might be thus leavened.

Hence I do not see in Thyatira a broken centre in the array of evidence, but rather an unmistakably strong and conspicuous front. The solemn principle that appears in it is that even there the church was then the birthplace of children born to Jezebel in adultery. The point is not the number of her children; but that, up to the Lord's warning, the saints *accepted* this condition of things. There might be ever so abundant works and service, faith and love. Still the evil of Jezebel was allowed. The good was no doubt far more prominent in the primitive Christian assembly, the evil no longer an exception winked at, but infinitely more developed and systematized in mediaeval Christendom; though I am far from thinking that, in these dark ages, there may not have been an amount of loving though unintelligent devotedness, of which it becomes not men of the present hour to speak too lightly. In short the epistle applied literally to Thyatira in St. John's days, while for him who has ears to hear there is much to intimate a further reference to a time when Jezebel and her children might have the upper hand, a faithful remnant be defined most strikingly, and faith called to look onward to the Lord's coming as the only solace.

It is quite the mistake of Mr. E. that this view implies that Protestants are "the synagogue of Satan." For I agree with many, living as well as dead, that Protestantism is set forth by Sardis. The other most sweeping sentence of the Holy Ghost prefigured those who insist on a traditional religion of sacramentalism and succession, the modern Judaizers, who have put forth such painfully successful efforts to revive a system of doctrine and rites, which, nipped in the bud by apostolic vigilance, especially by St. Paul, afterwards expanded into gigantic proportions in the catholic days of early Christendom, even before the empire had renounced Paganism, and of course long before the full-blown Popery of Rome. (Compare Rev. 2: 9 with Rev. 3: 9) Can anything more exactly describe them, though good men, like a Barnabas of old, may be ensnared in it for a while?

The argument drawn from the agreement or from the discord of commentators, Mr. E. probably knows I do not consider entitled to much attention. But, from the days of Abbot Joachim at least till our own, it is impossible to deny that some of the most godly and thoughtful students of the book have embraced the view of a prophetic as well as historical sense of these epistles. Brightman, Forbes, Mede, More, Gill, Sir I. Newton, Vitranga, and Cunninghame, are among the names of departed writers, who might well claim respectful attention, especially from their companions of the Protestant school. Shades of difference there are between these and others; but all agree in the common principle of a continuous and periodistic force appertaining to the seven epistles. And so far is this from being a

peculiarity of those who look for a future personal Antichrist, that, on the contrary mere futurism is opposed to it as decidedly as praeterism.

In short I do not affirm that the seven epistles to the Asiatic churches are strictly prophetic, like "the things which must be after these," which are the prophecies of the book. But I do hold that, just as Daniel 3 - 6 gives us historical facts divinely selected, "is ever the case with inspiration, and in strict keeping as prophetic types with the formal visions of the prophet, so is it with the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks. They had, like the incidents recorded of the kings in Babylon, a bearing deeper than the history, and like them also they pave the way for the predictions which follow. As with all types or parables, it is only a cavil to insist on a technical minuteness of application in order to throw overboard the profound lessons of truth they convey to the circumcised ear. The objection of Mr. E. is the less reasonable in the instance of Thyatira, because in types every one familiar with them knows that the woman typically represents a given slate, good or evil, the man rather activity in good or evil. On the other hand, it was important to guard against the notion that God sanctioned so frightful a state of Popery, which was but an enormous falling away from the truth, the real witnesses in His eyes being now "the rest" or "remnant," who were then first defined in this typico-historic sketch of Christendom. For myself, though I may fail to convince those who are strongly committed to a denial of the protracted view of "the things that are," I cannot see how, if the Spirit had designed such a view, the elements for it could have been otherwise so admirably disposed to that end without destroying its past use. What Mr. E. taunts as "a most curious double view" is really characteristic of scripture in general; and of all the inspired writers, he who is at once the deepest and the most sober is the one who most frequently initiates us into this use of Old Testament facts and persons. That it should be employed in a more orderly method and a more complete measure in the Revelation than in preceding books of prophecy is exactly in harmony with what is true in all other respects of that book as compared with the prophets who went before St. John, Why should deep-reaching perfectness be incredible in his eyes? Ample reasons have been given for so interpreting these epistles, besides answering his objections in a way satisfactory to many unbiassed men.

Nor does Mr. E. attempt fairly to grapple with the vision of the twenty-four crowned elders in Rev. 4, 5, corroborated by their position throughout the book, as proving the translation of the saints after the seven churches are closed and before the proper prophetic action begins. "A. double view truly marvellous!" (p. 648) is a feeble reply to a plain fact which I urge afresh on Mr. E., and which neither he nor any other historicalist has ever fairly faced. There is scarce more difficulty in the mode of the twofold application here than in the ordinary difference of the type and its antitype (p. 644). Such a difference is credible to Mr. E. in the high priest literally and typically; nor is there a whit more of particularity in the Apocalypse than in Leviticus. The order and accuracy in detail are divinely perfect throughout Scripture, though Dr. Fairbairn in his Typology is as slow to believe in the figures of the law as Mr. E. in those of the Apocalypse. I am sure that "my more intelligent readers" will agree with me that this is little to the credit of two men who have undertaken a task to which they prove themselves somewhat unequal, and that such reasoning and pleasantry, or whatever it may be best designated, will be acceptable to such only as feebly know the scriptures and the power of God.

Thus was the case put in my former Introduction: "In passing it may here be asked, What satisfactory reason can historicalists offer for the occurrence of such scenes [as Rev. 4, 5] at this point? It is easy to make remarks on the heavenly company and the Apocalyptic scenery; that is, particular points in the vision; but why and how have we such a vision here at all? There is no serious attempt that I know of to account for the disappearance of churches on earth thenceforward, nor for the fact that the full company of the royal priesthood, or at least the representative heads of all the courses, are then

seen in heaven. What event was there in Mr. E.'s view, immediately before the reign of Nerva, which could call out the special joy and worship of heaven, or the new action with which God and the Lamb begin to occupy themselves? If that wondrous change, the removal to heaven of the saints now glorified, be supposed to have taken place, all is explained. A turning point is reached in the application of the ways of God, who, having gathered to Himself His heavenly redeemed from the beginning to that epoch, then proceeds to reveal the process of His providence for accomplishing His earthly purposes to His own glory and that of Christ; that is, His future dealings not as now with the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but expressly with Israel and the nations, remnants of whom will be raised up to bear a testimony to the plans which God will have in hand. Not that He will not have His saints and witnesses among them both; but they are so foreshown in the character of their experiences Godward and manward, and the attitude of God Himself toward them and men generally is so described, as to evince a condition essentially different from that which subsists now; and all most confirmatory of the idea that the rapture of the saints will then be an accomplished fact. Nothing simpler, if the church state, 'the things which are,' continue no longer, the risen saints be gone to meet the Lord in the air, and the eve of the great crisis of the earth come. Not a hint is dropped that the crowned and enthroned elders are disembodied spirits, but the contrary is implied in all that is said of them. When souls are meant, they are so specified, as in Rev. 6 and 20. Moreover the elders are a complete symbol. Whatever the special portion in glory assigned to subsequent sufferers, the elders remain a definite company from Rev. 4 to 19, and receive no addition to their number. Their complement is made up from the first presentation above, and that figure only vanishes when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and a new symbol is needed to convey the new circumstances of the saints already transfigured and taken to heaven.

"On the protracted Protestant scheme, which I believe to have a certain measure of truth, the vision may be regarded vaguely as a sort of pictured pledge, or perhaps anticipation, of the church's heavenly glory, while the providential actings of God toward the world are afterwards unfolded. But when we raise the question of exact and full interpretation, I see no reason to doubt that these chapters reveal the position of the glorified saints above, *after* churches are no longer spoken of on earth, and *before* the Lord and His armies emerge from heaven for the war with the beast and the reign over the earth. It is properly a scene in heaven after the actual ecclesiastical state is closed, and before the millennium commences — a scene which inaugurates the very momentous interval between the two, when it becomes a question of judicial inflictions from God, and new classes of saints, invested with a testimony most appreciably distinct from the church, are called to glorify Him in the midst of the fires."

If Mr. E. thinks he has truth, and cares for many who believe him utterly wrong as to this which I am convinced is the key to the just and full understanding of the Apocalypse, he would do well to put forth all he can in meeting the brief statement now repeated with the detailed proofs which are continually referred to as evidence presents itself through my lectures on the Revelation. If I am right, the closer his examination the less he will have to regret it; if he can show me wrong, I trust I shall be truly grateful for his serving the Lord in correcting me and those swayed by my statements

In his tabular scheme given of the Apocalyptic plan according to my thoughts (p. 645), I have only to remark that it is the coming Roman prince who breaks covenant with the Jews, very likely in concert with the Antichrist or wilful king in the holy land; that is, the beast from the sea in all probability along with the second beast (from the earth or land), if we speak in the symbolic language of Rev. 13. As they are thus of one mind and policy, the confusion of these two practically is of little moment. Not so if (as I understand Mr. E.'s vi.) he makes me teach that the Assyrian is the last head of the reunited Roman empire. The Assyrian may be identified, as I judge, with the king of the north (Dan. 11), but he

is certainly not the Apocalyptic beast from the abyss, any more than he is the king in the holy land with whom he wages war at the time of the end. I wonder that an intelligent man like the author of H. A. could so misconstrue some of the main points of my book, whereon I have strongly objected to the muddle of ancients and moderns. Here Mr. E. seems to make me just like the rest where I stand firmly opposed. So again I do not understand his representing my thought thus at the close of all -

"Great white Throne.

1000 days."

Can any reader divine? It crossed me that he perhaps meant 1000 years; but he knows well that I consider his putting the great white throne *before*, instead of after, the thousand years and the short space that follows, a blunder of the greatest magnitude, though he is not quite alone: two writers at least had preceded him in so flagrant a perversion of the chapter. But 1000 days or years are alike wrongly imputed to me; for I judge that eternity (the new heaven and earth in the most absolute sense) is the one and only thing that follows the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead, who have their portion in the lake of fire.

In his "Addendum" (pp. 644-653) Mr. E. complains of sundry strong animadversions of mine on certain points of his Apocalyptic Exposition "by no means altogether in that spirit of fairness and candour which might have been anticipated from the courteous notice of myself and my Commentary in his Introduction." He has certainly overrated the careful study I had given to the H. A., though it is true that I bore in review the book as a whole in revising the reports of my lectures for the press. These he arranges under two heads as follows: — 1st, Mr. E.'s asserted errors in the adoption of certain wrong readings of the Apocalyptic Greek Text, as readings of quite insufficient authority; 2ndly asserted errors in certain of his renderings of the Greek, and of his historical applications of the prophecy. "1. *Asserted erroneous readings of the Greek text preferred in the Horae.*" Of these Mr. E. selects four, which he seems to think most important.

"1. In Apoc. xi. 8, Mr. E. repeatedly but incorrectly, of course through oversight, represents the reading in the critical editions [he says now] *ἐπι τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης* (contradistinctively, I presume, to *πλ. πολ. τῆς μεγ.*, without the *τῆς*). So Mr. K., p. 198." The reader will be surprised, and I doubt not Mr. E. himself, to hear that I do nothing of the kind; and that Mr. E. not only misunderstood but, misquotes me is the whole point of the matter. What I really say is, "Were the reading such as Mr. E. repeatedly represents it (of course through oversight), *πλατεία τῆς π. τῆς μ.* (H. A., [4th ed.] vol. ii. p. 396, note 4, and yet more incorrectly in vol. iv. p. 543, note 2), there had been no room for this rendering ['the great street of the city'], which some very competent judges prefer."

Really it is beyond measure careless to add a fresh series of blunders now. The fact is, though it was always in my eyes a point of no moment, Mr. E. misquoted the Greek text from the New Testament in his fourth edition, and misquotes me in his fifth, and has evidently not seen that all this is exclusively and inexcusably his own mistake, which strongly illustrates my accusation of the great want of critical knowledge and tact, not only a conspicuous feature in a man of his general ability and acquirements, but most injurious to a commentator on a book which from its wretched state in the received text demands these qualities more than any other in the New Testament.

Here then I reiterate to the letter my statement, which Mr. E. must see., if instead of trying to defend himself from a charge of nothing more than oversight, he will kindly compare the two references to his fourth edition according to my note. I did not object to the *τῆς*, for it is my own reading, as it is that of every critical editor of the Revelation, save Griesbach and Scholz. But in that fourth edition he

misquoted πλατεια for πλατείας, the unquestionable reading of all MSS.; but on the second occasion referred to he says εν τη πλατεια της πολεως της μεγαλης, which differs in the first three words from every known copy and edition. Had Mr E. taken the trouble to read his own quotations with my remarks, comparing both with any Greek Testament whatever (not to speak of a critical edition), he would have seen that I was simply correcting two misquotations of his, the last much the worst, which last is repeated once more with its three first words quite wrong in the 5th edition, iv. 579, note 1 — not p. 580, which contains no such reference. What Mr. E. deduces at the end of the paragraph of course therefore falls to the ground. The whole case is no bad example of the extreme looseness of citation in the H. A. Had he looked into my Greek text, he would have seen that I read as all save the two already named, who seem to have neglected entirely their own evidence, as well as much since better known. Bishop Middleton is quite right in what he says that the article is required before πόλεως. Even the Complutensian edition is correct, and though Erasmus introduced the error into the first published edition and all those which followed, it is now known that it was his own error, not the bad reading of his manuscript; for Codex Reuchlini exhibits ἐπὶ τῆς πλ. τῆς π.

2. At page 203 Mr. X. animadvert on my preferring the reading ηνοιγη ὁ ναος του Θεου εν τω ουρανῳ, in Apoc. xi. 19, to ηνοιγη ὁ ναος του Θ. ὁ εν τω ουρ., which he regards as that of best MS. authority. In reply to which charge I have to say that what I prefer is the reading of Griesbach, Scholz, Heinrichs, Tregelles, Alford; Wordsworth alone of the critical editors by me preferring the other reading."

What I do say in my page 203 makes Mr. E.'s present statement just cited more serious than the former one, and is to my mind unaccountable in a careful scholar. "The true reading is probably ὁ ἐν τῳ οὐρανῳ (i.e. which is in heaven). At any rate, so the Alexandrian and the Paris rescript, the Leicester, L Vatican cursive (579), the Middlehill, the Montfort, and one of the Parham (17) manuscripts say, not to speak of the Cod. Coislin. of Andreas and Victorinus. Mr. E. is also quite wrong in saying that 'according to Tregelles this is a mistake.' It is true that in his first edition, he *omits* this various reading though long before noted by Walton, Bengel (Wetstein probably [I now add certainly]), and even adopted without question in the text, not of Wordsworth only, but of Lachmann and Tischendorf, as it appears to be by Tregelles, judging from the new edition of 1859 [which gave the English only, not the Greek]. How it was that Mr. E. did not End it in the critical editions of Griesbach and of Scholz, it is not for me to say; but there it unquestionably may be found by any who examine them. In Hahn's manual one could not rightly expect such a thing." Such was my notice of Mr. E.'s note 5, page 478, vol. ii., fourth edition, where he had the temerity to say "Wordsworth reads ὁ ναος του Θεου ὁ εν τῳ ουρανῳ, with the article ὁ: as if in A and C. [!!] But according to Tregelles this is a mistake. Nor do I find it in any of the critical editions, whether Griesbach, Scholz, Hahn, Tregelles, or Heinrichs. And in the parallel passage, Apoc. xv. 5, Wordsworth, as well as all the others, read ηνοιγη ὁ ναος. . . . εν τῳ ουρανῳ." Now it must be evident to any candid mind that my fault with E. was *not* the question of adopting ὁ, for I myself bracketed it in my Greek text, and therefore doubted it more than the greatest of modern critics, and only used the word "probably" in the note before Mr. E. What I charged him with was the extraordinary tissue of errors, which he now, one is sorry to see, evades by an argument about the reading He distinctly affirmed in his fourth edition that when W. read the disputed ὁ as if in A and C, this was a, mistake according to Tregelles. I denied both the mistake and that T. says anything of the sort. Dr. T. knows the readings of the Revelation far too well to be guilty of an assertion so monstrous in the eyes of any one acquainted with such matters. He never said so. He omitted this various reading in his first edition — a rare fault with him; for the book was. in most respects very well done and abounded in sound information. But T.'s omission (which the most careful may fall into sometimes) is no warrant for using his name to deny ὁ to be the reading of A and C, as it

certainly is. And I corroborated this by referring to Tregelles's new edition (English) of 1859, in which he gives the clause, "And the temple of God* which is in heaven was opened." This can leave no doubt how utterly mistaken Mr. E. was. Further, though not adopted in the text of Griesbach or Scholz, the reading is given with the authorities then ascertained.

In his explanation of marks used Dr., T, says, "An asterisk () is inserted whenever the ancient text differs from the modern."

I must add too that the changes in the new note seem to show that Mr. E. was aware in measure that his statement in the fourth edition could not be justified. For he has materially modified the matter in his fifth edition (ii. 489, note 5): "Wordsworth comments on this, as if ὁ ναός του Θεου ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, with the article ὁ, were the true reading. But such is not the case. I do not find it in any of the critical editions, whether of Griesbach, Scholz, Hahn, Tregelles, Heinrichs, or Wordsworth himself. Moreover, in the parallel," etc. It is some satisfaction to me that, if Mr. E. defends himself so bravely in vol iv. when he is criticising me, it is very plain that he silently used the correction afforded as to some of the chief points here which disappear from the fifth edition as compared with the fourth. It is odd to class Hahn and Heinrichs with the principal critics, and to leave out several which have cleared the ground or advanced the frontiers since Griesbach and Scholz. I presume the reason why Mr. E. could not find the reading ὁ in the critical editions is that he uses mere manuals, not their real editions wherein they present the various readings whether adopted or not. But the question here with Mr. E. was *not* the reading but the facts which were altogether misstated in ed. 4, and only in part stated rightly in ed. 5. It is a province, as I have always judged, in which Mr. E. is not at home; and the self-defence, he may be assured, will only fix it more by calling attention to the facts among all who are competent to form a solid opinion on the subject.

Lastly Mr. E. states what is absolutely contrary to fact when he says in his zeal that "Mr. Kelly, indeed, would here too [Apoc. xv. 5] read ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ: for he gives as the English, 'the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony *in heaven* was opened;' not '*was opened in heaven.*' But altogether, so far as I know, without authority. And why? It seems to be only because of its suiting his peculiar interpretation of the passage, and of the Apocalyptic scenery; the very fault he has so often and wrongly ascribed to me."

The simple answer to all this is that I do *not* read ὁ in Rev. 15: 5, as Mr. E. may see in the Greek text published the year before the edition of the lectures he cites, which is there translated as nearly as possible in the order of the Greek, "there was opened the testimony of the tabernacle in heaven." Further it is not the fact that in giving the words as he says in the lecture I make the smallest use of them in the way he imputes as a motive to me. The whole of this remark therefore is due to imagination, and certainly not of a noble or amiable kind.

"3rdly comes my adoption in the fourth seal (H. A., vol. i. p. 189, 4th ed., or in this 5th ed., p. 201) of a reading correspondent with Jerome's well known Latin translation in the Vulgate, *super quatuor partes terrae*, 'on the *four parts* of the earth;' instead of that found in our Greek MSS. all but [is it not altogether?] universally, ἐπὶ τὸ τέταρτον τῆς γῆς, 'on the fourth *part* of the earth.'" Here the case is simple enough. There are five uncial MSS. of the Revelation, and upwards of a hundred cursives, in not one of which has there been found the smallest ground for justifying Jerome's "quatuor partes." Two or three later Latins who used the Vulgate (not always without discrepancy) give the same very naturally; but neither Greek ecclesiastical writer nor Oriental, nor any version save the Vulgate, countenances the change. In my judgment it is critically discreditable and doctrinally dangerous to adopt such a change on such a precarious footing. Nothing like it can be produced from the entire New Testament. Why

should it be here? How much better to leave the difficulty unsolved than to adopt a resource so desperate? Mr. E. refers to my own principle of using internal evidence. Certainly I do to decide between readings with good external support on both sides, never where all the direct witnesses are on one side, and you have hear-say evidence of one type on the other side. The rest of Mr. E.'s reasons and remarks as to this I can happily leave with a brief answer. That there should be difficulty according to the historical scheme in finding a precise fulfilment of "the fourth part" I can well believe; but this is in perfect harmony with my view, which supposes vagueness in that application and precision only in the future. In itself the fourth part is thoroughly plain and intelligible. That it cannot be readily adjusted to history is an obstacle to Mr. E., not to me.

4. There is noticed by Mr. K. 'the flagrant proof of my proneness to prefer a manifestly spurious reading where my hypothesis requires' in my preference of $\epsilon\pi$ $\tau\omicron$ $\theta\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ to $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\tau\omicron$ $\theta\eta\rho$. in Apoc. 17: 16. So W. K., p. 304. And no doubt the evidence of Greek MSS. is very strong in favour of the $\kappa\alpha\iota$. Moreover, I have in the course of this last revision of my book found that I was mistaken in supposing that the early *Hippolytus* read $\epsilon\pi$, in common with the early Latin Father *Tertullian*, and also probably with Jerome; being misled by the Latin translation of Hippolytus'. 'De Christo of Antichristo.' Hence my confidence in decidedly preferring the $\epsilon\pi$ is less strong than before." As Mr. E. speaks thus moderately of the point raised, I do not feel it needful to swell this introduction with an answer to his stout defence of the Protestant scheme and assault on futurism, supposing *kaiv* to be the true reading, as I am satisfied it is. Any one who knows Mr. E.'s system will be able to judge, spite of his arguments, whether his system can sustain the shock given to it by the inspired prediction that the beast *and* the ten horns unite their fury against Rome, first in rendering it contemptible, next in enriching themselves with its substance, and lastly in its destruction. The effort to bring in the beast joining the Goths and Vandals to destroy the old heathen city is more worthy of Bossuet than of Mr. E.; and the rather is the phrase of the Spirit is most precise. It is the whore, not the woman merely; that is, it is the corrupt religious state, not Rome viewed simply as a city. Further, it is a state of final revulsion *after* the beast had carried her in ease and honour and influence, and just *before* the war of the beast and the kings with the Lamb. Any spiritual man can judge whether this suits the Protestant scheme of the prophecy.

"1. Says Mr. Kelly, 'Mr. E. contends for the strangest possible version of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, as= *after*, or at the expiration of the aggregated period, of the hour, day, month, and year in Apoc. ix. 15.' So p. 150. When Mr. K. has shown that the same Greek preposition placed before a time, times, and half a time in Dan. 12, as well as before the 1335 days in a verse immediately following, does not mean *before* [it should be *after*], or *at the expiration of*, those aggregated periods, he will be in a better position for so expressing himself about my rendering of the clause in Apoc. 9: 15. But, though he had these parallel passages before his eyes in my Commentary, as very mainly my justification in the rendering of Apoc. ix. 15, Mr. K. makes no allusion to them."

Mr. E. should have understood better my motive for silence. The two passages "very mainly" rested on for justification are *not* parallel. The first certainly cannot bear the smallest approach to the meaning he would put on them. Indeed Mr. E. gives the Greek according to the received punctuation (not as he says of the Septuagint copies, but) of Theodotion's version, and then translates without regard to that punctuation; for he clearly should put at least a comma at the end of the clause, the effect of which would be nearly what he gives with a period in his foot-note. But, to avoid the smallest charge of forcing anything, I shall cite Sir L. C. L. Brenton's version, "that it *should be* for a time of times* and half a time: when the dispersion is ended, they shall know these things." Now if this be so, this witness must disappear.

*So it is in Holmes and Parsons' text, $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omega\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\eta\eta$ $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\upsilon$. Many MSS. and editions

however give καιρούς for καρῶν.

But Mr. E. is very confident as to verse 12, where however Sir C. B. equally fails him, for he translates it thus, "Blessed is he that waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." This latest and most exact rendering of the Greek Bible is then opposed to the desired issue.

But I must go farther, while allowing of course that there are cases where εἰς may mean for the space, or to the amount of, as εἰς ἔνιαυτόν "for a year," that is, not till it begins merely, but for that term. Such I believe is the true sense of the last case, not *after* or *at the expiration* of, which even, if true in fact for the blessed person, is in no way the sense of the word either here or anywhere else. But the important point which every scholar must see is that the structure of the clause in Revelation has nothing akin to that in Daniel, on which depends the precise shade of meaning intended and legitimate. Mr. E.'s notions are most vague and uncritical, as I have often had occasion to notice with regret; and he is mistaken if he thinks that the examples adduced could not be multiplied. Thus he reasons at length on the possible difference of ἀποκτείνωσιν, as if it might be taken either as the present or as the aorist subj.; whereas the real turning point is the connection with ἡτοιμασμένοι, as well as with the purpose expressed in the last clause. Now I affirm, without fear of contradiction from any unbiassed man competent to deal with these questions, that the sense of such a phrase is and can only be "prepared *for*, or as we say idiomatically *against*, the hour," etc. No doubt those are wrong who confound the perfect participle with either the present or the aorist. It is neither the course of preparation nor the simple historical fact that they were prepared, but the present result of a past preparation, as usual in such forms. But this does not touch the true force of εἰς, any more than the question whether the slaying the third of men be a continuous action, or one viewed as summed up in its conclusion. The nearest and a true parallel that I observe in the New Testament is John 12: 7, εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἔνταφιασμοῦ μου τετήρηκεν αὐτό. Here it is the finite verb, not the participle; but this does not affect the question. Indeed the sense is beyond controversy. It was for or *against* the day of Christ's burial she had kept the unguent, certainly not *after* or *at its expiration*, whatever others may have done. It is just the same with the phrase in the Revelation, though the nature of the case may forbid the absurdity of *after* being so conspicuous. Had it been said in Dan. 12, "Blessed is he that comes to the 1260 days," or even to the 1290 days, I could understand Mr. E.'s argument, though even so it would seem to me invalid. But the period is one which overlaps these times of horror and destruction, and, as I believe, goes up to the day of settling Judah and Israel in the land, though the millennial age may not be in its full character till the 1335 days. We can readily see then that he who arrives at these days is blessed indeed. And the Hebrew confirms this as the true meaning. But in Rev. 9 it is an aggregated period which must elapse before the end of the slaying. To begin the work of slaughter at the end of that period is contrary to all analogy of dates, and untenable according to the true force of the phrase employed. If εἰς can mean *after*, it can as truly mean *before*, and language would dissolve into a linguistic chaos. It appears therefore that Mr. E. by his bold challenge only secures the exposure of his erroneous criticism; and with all the respect that I retain for excellent points in the book, it appears to me plain enough that critical acumen in the Greek tongue is as weak a point in the *Horae Apoc.* as acquaintance with the sources of the text and the comparative value of readings.

"2. I utterly reject Mr. E. Is statement that '*at one and the same time*' is the true rendering of the Greek phrase in Apoc. 17 of μίαν ὥραν μετὰ τοῦ θηρίου. It should be, he says, *for the same time*, marking *duration*, not *epoch* or *occasion*. So Mr. K., p. 300. But as in the preceding case, so here let me say, when Mr. K. has succeeded in setting aside the parallels of John 4: 52, Acts 10: 3, and Rev. 3: 3, adduced by me *in loc.*, where the *accusative* of time is unquestionably in the sense of *epoch at which*, it will be time enough to reply to him further on this point."

How others may regard such an answer it is not for me to say. But I avow that to me the effort to escape the regular rule in the use of the accusative and the dative of time seems far beneath a Christian of less reputation than the author of H. A. For there is not the remotest resemblance between these three exceptional instances culled out of the New Testament and the ordinary construction under which falls Rev. 17: 12. This I pointed out at some length in the note to which the citation refers. There is no rule whatever without an exception. What can one think of the judgment which musters a few exceptions against the plainest examples of a plain principle of the Greek language? The true scholar would rather seek to understand what lay secretly under the three irregularities, and thus to account for them, instead of perverting them to set aside instances where no such modifying influences wrought.

Thus, to take the first, any scholar ought to observe that the reason why the accusative is found is not because it can ever in itself mean the point at which a given fact occurred. This is the force of the temporal dative, though it properly requires the preposition ἐν to define it. The accusative here is due solely to the context. The courtier enquired from his servant τὴν ὥραν in which his son got better. And they said to him, Yesterday ὥραν ἐβδόμην the fever left him. It is the former clause which thus influences the latter. But this would not justify the conclusion that, when such a disturbing cause did not interfere, the accusative could have been employed *per se*. Hence in the very next verse, when it does not operate, the grammar returns to its ordinary conditions. The father knew therefore that it was ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐν ἡ κ.τ.λ.

As to the second, Mr. E. is not entitled to cite it, because the very best manuscripts, the Sinai, Alexandrian, Vatican, Palimpsest of Paris, and the Laudian of Oxford, with more than twenty cursives and other authorities, give ὡσεὶ περὶ ὥραν ἐνάτην, and so it is edited by Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, as well as Tischendorf in his most recent (8th) edition.

There remains only Rev. 3: 4, which is strange indeed either to misunderstand in itself or to compare with the phrase in debate. The reason for the accusative is even more obvious and closer than in John 4: 52, though similar in principle. It depends on the γνῶς just before· οὐ μὴ γνῶς ποῖαν ὥραν ἤξω ἐπὶ σέ. If the construction were filled up, it would be τὴν ὥραν ποῖα ὥρα. As far as grammar is concerned therefore, it was open to omit either the accusative or the dative, as both would be cumbrous and uncalled for. So in Matt. 24: 42 we have οὐκ οἴδατε ποῖα ὥρα, in our passage we have γνῶς ποῖαν ὥραν. But to infer from this that, where no such reason occurs for a compendious mixed construction, the accusative can be used for a point of time or the dative for duration, or that the radical difference does not always really abide underneath such an ellipse, is contrary to every just thought of language.* We are not at liberty to reason from these peculiar instances to others wholly different; it is as illogical as can be.

*Such has always been my conviction, as any one can see in the earliest edition. But I thought it might be more satisfactory to others, perhaps to Mr. E., if I submitted the point of grammar to the learned author of the latest and most elaborate work of the kind which has emanated from Oxford. The following is the reply: — "I have no doubt but that in the two passages, John 4: 52, Rev. 3: 3, the accusative depends upon the verb. In the latter the full construction would be ποῖα ἦν ὥρα ἐν ἡ, or more briefly and simply ὥραν ἐν ἡ (or ἡ alone) κ.τ.λ.; and the relative is attracted to the accusative and prefixed to it, just like ὃν τρόπον, ὃν χρόνον, etc. In the former (John 4: 53) this full construction does occur, the attraction being prevented by the insertion of ἐν before the relative. In Acts 10: 3, the accusative is used, just as it would be with a περί for an indefinite and general notion of time; and I have no doubt but that the writer followed the analogy of περί, though he chose to express the notion by ὡσεὶ [that is, even according to the common text, without περί]. Moreover, where time is indefinitely expressed, it is in reality a *space* of time and not a point, and its construction would follow

the analogy of the expression for a space of time (accusative) rather than that of the expression for a *point* of time (dative). When you say, 'about three o'clock,' there is no definite point presented to the mind, but a space extending (say) from ten minutes before to ten minutes after. This seems to be the philosophy of the accusative after *περί* in such expressions. To my mind then neither of the three passages justify the taking *μῖαν ὥραν* (Rev. 17: 12) as a point of time. I am happy to say that I have no theological or mystical bias one way or the other; I really do not know which of the various Apocalyptic parties I am favouring when I say that to my mind, looking at it grammatically, the words can only mean 'one and the same space of time with the beast,' not 'one and the same point of time.' My answer would have been sent sooner, had I not been from home, so that the letter was some time in reaching me. I am, dear sir, yours faithfully, W. E. Jelf."

I have in my lectures shown the importance of the true force of the accusative in Rev. 17: 12. Like "at," it supposes the same starting-point for the beast and the ten horns; but it adds the other, and this the main and intended, information that they receive authority as kin" for one hour with the beast: not the Roman empire as once without the kings, nor the kings as afterwards without the empire, but both together, the revived empire in its place, the kings in theirs, enduring for the same space till they all perish together at the appearing of Jesus.

3. It is the question of the seven thunders; but inasmuch as Mr. E. adds nothing, we can dismiss it without farther notice.

4. Here, as Mr. E. admits that the rendering of Rev. 11: 9 in his former editions was unsatisfactory, I am happy to say little. It seems to me plain, however, from the context, that the sense is not merely that their testimony was perfected but finished when the beast slays them.

In 5 and 6 we have the questions whether the *ναός* includes the court sometimes, and whether toads and frogs are interchangeable, both of which Mr. E. answers affirmatively, which I doubt.

His 7 calls for a fuller notice. "At p. 246 Mr. K. insists on the right translation of *ενεσθηκεν* in 2 Thess. 2: 2 being '*is present*;' not as in our English authorized version, and as in the *Horae*, '*is at hand*.' At p. 92 of my vol. iii., in this edition, my readers will find the point more fully argued out than before; and the latter rendering of the word, I may unhesitatingly say, on the grounds of Greek criticism, fully justified. Let me only here ask Mr. X. the question how he supposes the Thessalonian Christians could have believed that the day of the Lord was then *actually present*, when putting together the two facts — first, that they knew from St. Paul's former epistles that the *primary* event of the day of the Lord would be the gathering of Christ's saints, both the dead and the living, to meet Christ in the air; secondly, that neither themselves nor even St. Paul had thus far been made the subjects of that promised blessed rapture? Will Mr. K. be agitated by the idea of the day of Christ having begun, so long as he is conscious that neither on himself nor on any of his most honoured Christian friends has any change taken place?"

The reader will find in the text and note, pp. 299-304, a tolerably complete refutation of what I judge to be mistaken in Mr. E.'s. argument. He starts with the common error* of confounding the presence of the Lord to gather His saints with the day of the Lord to execute judgment on His enemies. This necessarily vitiates all that follows, as it misses wholly the force and even sense of the apostle's opening entreaty. For where would be the wisdom of entreating them for the sake of the same thing as that in respect of which he was going to disabuse their mind? The apostle is guilty of no such slip or paralogism. He begs them by reason, or for the sake, of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him that they be not soon shaken in mind [or literally "from their mind," though it is hardly English] as that the day of the Lord is present. This to my thinking is not

only intelligible but plain and conclusive for the object in hand when we distinguish according to the light given in 1 Thess. 4 and 5, where these two things, the presence and the day of the Lord, are both discussed and distinguished as here. It was the false teachers who brought in confusion, and, instead of holding up the bright hope of Christ's coming to receive His own to Himself as the apostle did and does everywhere, sought to fill and alarm them with the terrors of the day of the Lord — that term of solemn judicial dealing which abounds in Old Testament prophecy. It is well known that it has there an incipient application to such a frightful judgment as befell Babylon, Egypt, or other earthly states. In some such way the misleaders at Thessalonica seem to have interpreted the trouble through which, we can see from the first epistle, the saints there were then passing. They pretended, like many since their time, that the dread day was come, pretending to the Spirit's revelation of it, teaching it, and even led on by the enemy to allege a letter purporting to be from the apostle to that effect. If they so misunderstood the first epistle, as Jerome throws out and E. doubts not, it is certainly not the meaning of δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν. I know what Paley says; but, pace tanti viri, the apostle here means a suppositious letter falsely bearing his name, not his own epistle: yet this is the only basis they have for the thought.

*The want of light that prevails among commentators in general on the subject of prophecy affects their criticism seriously. Thus assuming, as they almost all do with excessive vagueness, that the coming of the Lord to gather His saints is the theme about which the apostle is about to give instruction in the verses which follow, many were influenced to translate ὑπέρ here as nearly equivalent to περί whereas this is hardly the case with verbs of prayer, beseeching, etc., like ἐρωτάω. Each has its own appropriated force, as any intelligent man can verify with a Greek Concordance. Had these writers seen that he entreats the saints on account of their own bright hope not to be alarmed by the false rumour that the day of the world's judgment was arrived, they would have avoided an error singularly gross and grave, not so much lexically, though certainly phraseologically (for ἐρωτάω ὑπέρ means, "I beg, not concerning or with regard to, but on account of, by reason of, by or for the sake of"), but mainly because of the contextual fact that he urges the one as a motive of comfort against the uneasiness inspired by the mistake as to the other, instead of treating of one and the same thing throughout. Dan. 2: 18; Rom. 9: 27; 2 Cor. 5: 12, 2 Cor. 7: 4, 2 Cor. 8: 23, 2 Cor. 9: 3; Phil. 1: 7; 2 Thess. 1: 4, on which Mr. E. leans with Rosenmüller, Macknight, Whitby, etc., are beside the mark; they none of them follow a verb of entreaty. It is true that both ὑπέρ and may often be translated "for," and ὑπέρ sometimes even "concerning;" but there are limits to such approximations of meaning as a scholar knows, instead of vaguely catching at a possible sense and applying it to suit a purpose. Words of entreaty, as far as I have noticed, exclude such a sense when joined with ὑπέρ and require περί. It is absurd to identify them at random.

Mr. E. contends (ii. 92) for "partly" some forged words or letter ascribed to St. Paul, and "partly too" misconstruction of words which he had really written in his first epistle about Christ's coming again to gather to Himself His saints both quick and dead. But this is utterly baseless. There is but one clause for the inference, and the Greek phrase cannot possibly mean both. It is only laxity of mind or negligence which could seriously think of extracting partly the one thing and partly the other from words which can bear but one unequivocal meaning. Had the apostle intended his own epistle, he would have so expressed it. He might have said (as he does later in this very chapter, where such is his intention) δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν, or rather, as he would in that case have referred to his previously existing letter, διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, with or without ἡμῶν. But to convey such an idea, he could not have written as he does at δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, which can only signify a letter *falsely* professing to come through the apostle and his companions. Hence says Theodoret, μήτε εἰ προσποιῶντο χρησμοδεῖν καὶ προφητεύειν ; τοῦτο γὰρ λέγει, Μήτε διὰ πνεύματος· μήτε εἰ πλασάμενοι ὡς ἐξ

αὐτοῦ γραφεῖσαν ἐπιστολὴν προφέροιν, μήτε εἰ ἀγράφως αὐτὸν εἰρηκέναι λέγοιν. (Opera, iii. 532, ed. Schulze.)* If they claimed the apostle's authority for their affirmation in writing or in word, it was spurious, as far as the apostle informs us and we therefore have ground to believe; not a question of misunderstanding either his oral teaching or his first epistle. Of this there can be no doubt for such as fairly judge the words with a competent knowledge of the Greek tongue, or pay due heed to any right translation of the words. For in no language whatever is Mr. E.'s inference well founded or defensible.

* I understand Chrysostom to be of the same mind (Opera, iv. 231, 232, ed. and the ablest of modern German expositors, as well as Ellicott and Alford.

I have already perhaps sufficiently anticipated the answer to Mr. E.'s questions without delaying to notice the mistake which treats the gathering of the saints as an event, primary or not, of the day of the Lord (which scripture never does); but I reply that, though the Thessalonians had been set right as to the dead saints by the first epistle, the second proves that they were liable to go astray as to the living saints, and needed therefore fresh instruction. They already knew the fact, that the Lord would come to translate the saints, deceased or alive, and that His day is to fall with swift destruction on the world; but the mutual relation of these two things they clearly did not know, and hence were open to those who pretended that the day was arrived with its dangers and troubles before the presence of the Lord to gather them home on high. The heresiarchs at Thessalonica probably taught a quasi-spiritual day of the Lord, as others went so far later as to teach similarly that the resurrection had taken place already. There is not the least force therefore in what Mr. E. urges, particularly as 1 Thess. does *not* unfold the relative order of the two events, the presence and the day of the Lord, in such a way as to preclude the false rumour which is refuted in 2 Thess. We know *now* that such a notion must be unfounded; but how this could have been known before the second epistle was written is, I believe, beyond Mr. E.'s power to prove.

The reader has before him the substance of Mr. E.'s critique on my criticism. He has left many remarks without notice, in which I consider him wrong; how far he has defended himself to purpose in those he selected for a reply, it is for others to judge rather than for me to say more. It must be plain what my opinion is. Were it the object to give a complete review of the *Horae Apocalypticæ*, faults and defects especially in the intelligent criticism of the text could be enormously increased from the first chapter to the last. From the first I have ever felt that this was one of the chief drawbacks; and a singular sight it is to me that, with a great deal of interesting history and ingenious applications of antiquities, such a book should give continual evidence of the want of an average amount and exactitude of knowledge in what ought to be the groundwork — the best readings and their evidence. I also think that the version preferred is too often vulnerable. The grand desideratum of all however is of another sort: I need not rehearse it here, having often pressed it in the lectures and the notes. There is an absence throughout of truth as to the heavenly relations of Christ and the church; and hence failure in discriminating between the proper Christian hope and prophecy. This in such a book must needs be ruinous if true, as I firmly believe it to be. Of course it is to me matter of regret that Mr. E. should say or think that my criticisms on his book were wanting in fairness and candour; but the reader will have perceived that the reason was in part or wholly due to the fact that he has not even understood many errors already pointed out. I have always considered the H. A. peculiarly defective in this, that the author did not first diligently ascertain, according to his best judgment or that of the ablest critical inquirers, the true text, and then seek to expound it. I can honestly say that such has been my own course; whereas his book constantly gives the impression of one who up to its fifth edition is not yet in possession of the full grounds for a sound judgment, of a mind either unused or not adapted to the resolution of such questions, and consequently choosing, as his system seemed to require, such

readings as suited, not those which command the acceptance of the most competent judges on the broadest basis. I believe I could make good this opinion of Mr. E.'s book throughout every chapter, if it were called for; and the attentive reader of my lectures will have seen many more instances than the author has sought to defend. But I will take as an example. the first and last chapters, with one in the middle of the book, which Mr. E. professes to give as corrected by critical authority.

(1.) Rev. 1: 2 presents an instance of extreme carelessness. How could any one, unless barely reprinting the received text or the Authorised Version, intelligently keep τε in the Greek text or the last "and" in English? The best MSS. and versions are unanimous; and so are all careful editors. The erroneous addition falsifies the sense; for it makes of John's visions a third division of his testimony, instead of representing them as qualifying the word of God and the testimony of Jesus which he testified. (2.) His neglect of the present form of the participle τῷ ἀγαπῶντι is a glaring fault in verse 5; but I have dwelt so much on its force in its proper place in the following pages, that I need say no more. The external authority is overwhelming in its favour and against the vulgar aorist which E. continues without remark. (3.) The καί with ἀδελφός in verse 9 is contrary to the best authorities, and even to Erasmus' Cod. Reuchlini, though he (not the Complut.) inserted it in his text. It is a manifest clog to the sense. In the same verse should be a still more needed restoration of the right reading by striking out ἐν τη, "in the," before kingdom, which mars the sense. I say nothing of two disputed questions in the same verse; but Mr. E. is as silent about the two certain and necessary changes as he is about the points which may be considered still *sub judice*. (4.) Mr. E. properly omits the ill-attested clauses in verse 11, but does not bring out the distinctive force of ἐλλάλει as supplanting the common ἐλάλησε in verse 12. (5.) In verse 14 he gives the Authorised Version where it differs from the received text as much as from that approved by all judicious critics and required by the best witnesses. It should be "white as white wool, as snow." (6.) Verses 17, 18, he fails to represent according to any good text. It should be, "I am the first and the last, and the living one [or "he that liveth"]; and I was [or became] dead," etc. (7.) He omits the beautiful and emphatic οὖν of the best authorities in verse 19: "Write therefore," etc. Minor points are omitted, but such errors as these are found too commonly to allow the claim of the H. A. to take rank as a critical work up to the fair requirements of earnest and intelligent students in our days. The favourable opinion of an English judge or of an Edinburgh reviewer will not affect the judgment of any competent to pronounce on questions in which one could not fairly expect such persons to be at home. The first requisite in a comment surely is that it be founded on a correct text. Is it so with the H. A.? I believe it is not.

Let us now review the last chapter similarly. (1.) In the first verse Mr. E. gives, without the least warrant, "the" river of the water of life. It should be of course "a river of water of life." All agree in omitting the καθάρων of the received text. (2.) In verse 3 there is a needless departure from the regular sense of the καί. On the disputed reading in verse 5 I say nothing; but (3.) verse 8 is as loosely given in the *Horae* as the Authorised Version. F, or surely it must be, "And I John am [or was] he that heard and saw these things;" and in this order, spite of and some cursives. (4.) In verse 12 the true reading I believe to be ἐστίν "is" as in , A, and two cursives in the Vatican. Still, as the Rescript of Paris and the Porphyrian uncial are here deficient and the Basilian Vatican with the other cursives opposed, I would say no more than that an exact commentator ought to have noticed a good reading, which is far more energetic than the common one, even if he adhered to the received text, ἔσται, "shall be." (5.) In verse 13 I suppose there can be no doubt Mr. E. is wrong in adhering to the order of the common text, contrary to the critics who follow the ancient MSS. (6.) In verse 14, though agreeing with Mr. E. in adopting πλύνοντες τ. στολὰς αὐτῶν on the authority of , A, 7, 38 against all other known manuscripts, I cannot accept his connecting this verse with Rev. 7: 9, 13, 14; as if the one were the anticipation, the other the realization, but rather as a similar blessing possessed by two distinct classes

of saints. (7.) "For" (δέ) in verse 15 is absent from the best MSS. and editions. Its insertion in H. A. spoils the contrast intended. (8.) The readings in verse 16 may be considered doubtful; but there need be no hesitation in striking out καί from the received text before ὁ θέλων, which Mr. E. keeps in. Again, it is wrong to say as he does, "of the waters of life." "Of the fountain of the water of life" is all right in Rev. 21: 6; here it is simply "life's water," without a various reading.

I will finally take a central portion (Rev. 11), with a view to a similar test. (1.) Mr. E. is far too reluctant in accepting the critical correction of the received text in verse 1; and the difficulty of construction is due to not seeing the Hebraism of the style. (Compare Rev. 4: 1; Rev. 14: 6, 7; Rev. 19: 7.) The Sinaitic and Porphyrian uncials confirm the Alexandrian and upwards of thirty cursives, with most of the ancient versions, against the reading of the Basilian Vatican, and ten cursives, with the later Syriac and the Armenian; which is indeed an evident gloss to get rid of the seemingly harsh phrase in the original text. The Sinaitic alone reads λέγει for λέγων; but this is of no moment, especially in the Revelation, where slips of the kind are more than usually common. (2.) On E.'s version of τελέσωσι in the sense of perfected, to avoid its natural meaning, "completed," I will not here delay further than to express dissent. (3.) Surely "in that hour" is the right rendering of ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ, rather than "at that same time." It is a fair question as to ἤκουσα or ἤκουσαν, the latter having decidedly the best ancient evidence in its favour, as well as the more modern copies from which the received text was drawn; but the former has good authority, uncial and cursive, supported by most of the ancient versions, and the general analogy of the phrase in the book. (4.) καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος is rejected by the Sinaitic, the Porphyrian, the Basilian Vatican (B 2066), as well as A and C, and the mass of cursives; also by the Complut. and even by Erasmus' Cod. Reuchl., though he boldly inserted it (probably out of deference to the Vulgate, not knowing that its best copies, Amiat. Fuld. Demidov. and Harl., reject the clause). Mr. E. might have been therefore a little bolder, had he known the facts more fully. (5.) I have elsewhere discussed the question of ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, so that I need say no more here. What Mr. E. remarks on it is incorrect; but I do not say that it is "the true reading." In 1860 I bracketed the article before ejn as doubtful; I should be disposed to do the same in 1871.

This will serve as a sample of the H. A., examined at the beginning, middle and end, in order to test its critical accuracy as to the text, which is evidently the most fundamental of all questions for the commentator who aims at precision on a solid footing.

LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Revelation 1.

Every Christian of spiritual intelligence must have felt more or less fully the peculiar character of the book on the study of which we now enter. It is a "revelation of Jesus Christ which *God gave him*." It is evident that the Lord Jesus is viewed here, not in His place of intimacy as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, but in one of comparative distance. It is His revelation, but, moreover, the revelation which God gave Him. Somewhat similar is the remarkable expression which has perplexed so many in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 13: 32), "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man: no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He is the servant Son of God all through that Gospel; and it is the perfection of a servant not to know what his lord does — to know, if we may so say, only what he is told. Here Christ receives a revelation from God; for, however exalted, it is the position He took as man which comes out conspicuously in the Revelation. And what makes this the more striking is that, of all the inspired writers of the New Testament, none dwells with such

fulness upon His supreme and divine glory as John in his Gospel. In the Revelation, on the other hand, it is the same John who brings out with the greatest detail His human glory, but without hiding that He is God.

In keeping with this, the Revelation is "to show his servants things which must shortly come to pass." How very different is the tone of John 15: 15 "Henceforth I call you not servants;" and also of John 16 speaking of the Spirit, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." So we see through the Gospel from first to last, that the design of the Spirit is to give the disciples the title and consciousness of their sonship with and through Jesus, the Son of God in the highest sense. Thus in John 1: 11, 12, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God." And again, after His death and resurrection, the Lord says, John 20, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Of course they were servants also, and there is not a shade of incongruity. Still the difference of the relationships is immense, and the Revelation clearly is addressed to the lower of these relations. The reason, I presume, is, partly because God is therein making known a certain course of earthly events with which the lower position is most in harmony (the higher one of sons being more suitable to communion with the Father and with His Son); and partly because God seems here to prepare the way for dealing with His people in the latter day, when their position as His servants will be more or less manifested, but not the enjoyment of nearness as sons — I allude to the interval after the removal of the church.

The next words greatly confirm this; for the Lord." sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." That is, the prophetic communication is made, not directly, but through the intervention of an angel; and John is no longer spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned upon his breast at supper," but as "his servant," "who testified the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever things he saw." It has to be remarked here, that the last *If and*" ought to disappear, which makes no small difference in the sense. For whatever things he saw" must not be regarded as a third and additional division, but rather as explaining or limiting the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The visions of John compose "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" here intended. How many have slighted them! Let them learn how they are characterised by the Lord here, and tremble lest their blind depreciation come into collision with His sentence. It is the word of God who gives the revelation; it is the testimony of Jesus (not *to* but *of* Jesus) who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever things he saw. (Compare Rev. 22: 8.)

Very different indeed is the revelation of God here, and the testimony which Jesus bears in this book, from what we find in John's Gospel. The Word of God there is the Lord Jesus Himself, who in the beginning was with God and was God; the full and personal expression of God, and that not merely as the Creator of all things, but in perfect grace. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory (the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." In the Revelation, on the contrary, even when He is spoken of as the Word of God, it is as the expression of divine judgment, because the whole book is eminently judicial. "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God." (Rev. 19: 13.) So too in the Gospel the testimony that Jesus Christ renders is to the Father, as it is throughout the Father's joy to bear witness of the Son. Indeed the Son Himself, towards the close of His ministry, sums up the pith and character of the testimony there in these few words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14: 9.)

All this makes the distinctive features of the Revelation to stand out in broader contrast. For

throughout the book the very name of the Father occurs but rarely, and even where it does, the object is in no way the revelation of His love as Father to His family. In Rev. 1: 1, Rev. 3: 21, and Rev. 14: 2, He is spoken of as such in relation to Jesus only, The grand subject is God manifested in His judgments, as well as the beneficent power of His kingdom here below at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, "King of kings and Lord of lords." Even when the churches are in question, it is even about them to another, not to themselves directly.

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things therein written: for the time is at hand." What a serious mistake in the face of such words as these for Christians to think that this book or any part of it is unprofitable, and that it may be safely set aside either as too difficult to understand, or, if understood, as having no practical bearing upon the soul! It is remarkable indeed with what special care the Lord has commended it, not only here at the commencement but at the close, where we read, "These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." It would seem that the Lord's prescient eye anticipated in such warnings the neglect with which the Apocalypse would be treated by His servants, and that He was thus solemnly guarding them against it by commending the book emphatically to their study and use. It is a little remarkable, by the way, that a somewhat similar admonition occurs in the close of 1 Thessalonians, which was the first of Paul's epistles, and the one which above all others develops the grand truth of the coming of the Lord. In Rev. 1: 3 the Lord takes pains to encourage every possible class of people who might come in contact with the book. Not only the individual who reads is pronounced blessed, but those who *hear* its words and keep (or observe) what is written therein. And certain I all! that the Lord does not fail to encourage His saints who count on His assured faithfulness and blessing. He has never turned aside from using it for good, and especially in times of danger, spite of all contempt or perversion.

The objection to the study of prophecy arises from a root of unbelief, sometimes deeply hidden, which supposes all blessing to depend on the measure in which a subject bears immediately on one's self or one's circumstances. Thus when some cry out, That is not essential, I would ask, Essential to what? If they mean essential to salvation, we agree. But then on what a ground do such objectors stand! The anxiety to examine only what they deem indispensable to salvation shows that they have no consciousness of salvation themselves, and that this need of their souls is the only thing they are alive to. Now all hold that not prophecy but the gospel should be put before the unconverted. The coming of Christ in glory, which is the centre of unfulfilled prophecy, ought to be terror to their hearts, instead of a mere question for interesting discussion. To the believer indeed His coming is "that blessed hope." We wait for the Son of God from heaven, and we await Him not only without anxiety but with joy, because we know Him to be "Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." But for any man, who has not, peace by faith in Him dead and risen, to occupy his mind either with this, the church's hope, or with the events of which prophecy treats, is but a diversion of which the enemy can make fearful use, if it be not a proof of litter deadness of conscience as to his own condition before God, — though I am far from saying, that God may not make use of that truth to arouse it. On the other hand prophecy is essential to our due appreciation of Christ's glory and of the glory that is to be revealed. To slight prophecy therefore is to despise unwittingly that glory and the grace which has made it known to us. It is the plainest evidence of the selfishness of our hearts, which wants every word of God to be directly about ourselves.

God takes for granted that His children love to hear whatever will exalt the Lord Jesus. The result too is striking and serious: where Christ is the object of our hearts, all is peace; where our own

happiness is the first thought, there is wont to be disappointment and uncertainty.

Another form in which this egotism works, and must be watched against, even among those who do hear the words of this prophecy, is the assumption that its visions are about the church — that the seals, trumpets, and vials, for instance, are of chief value and interest, because they concern ourselves (*i.e.*, the church) either in the past or in the future. But this is a fundamental mistake, as we may gather from the very words of the verse before us. The divine ground alleged for the importance of taking heed to this book lies not in the time being come or our being in the circumstances described, but in their being *near*; "for the time is at hand." How far it contemplates those on Christian or church ground, when we see a wholly different state come in before this age closes, then in the millennium and finally in eternity, is a question for investigation as we proceed in the study of the book. But even from the opening it seems clearly as unfounded to assume from our possession of the book that we must be in the predicted circumstances, as to reason from God's confidential announcement to Abraham, that he necessarily in his own person was concerned in the doomed cities of the plain. The principle is erroneous, overlooks the grace in which the Christian stands, and ignores the fact that there are to be in the latter day servants of God in a different position from ours, and more immediately mixed up with its horrors, though warned and saved, as just Lot was in time to escape the worst. If nevertheless the book in the apostle's days could profit saints of God who were not personally concerned in the judgments, equally at least may it avail for us. The Lord grant that we may increasingly value the place in which He has set us, peacefully "knowing these things before."

Ver. 1-6. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia."* Even the three verses already looked at give us a certain measure of insight into the peculiar features of this book, which are obviously distinct from the other parts of the New Testament. God reverts a great deal to the principles on which He had acted in Old Testament times. One can see that the positive edification of the church is not the subject, nor the unfolding of God's special dealings in mercy. We have here to do with His judgment of evil, whether in the churches or in the world. In perfect harmony with this, God introduces Himself to His people by a style and title that differs from the rest of the apostolic addresses. "Grace to you and peace from him that is, and that was, and that is to come." It is generally what answers in the New Testament to Jehovah in the Old. There is this peculiarity, that He is here revealed as first He that is in His absolute ever-present being, then He that was, and He that is to come. The "I am" takes precedence, but He was before, and is the coming One. God of old revealed Himself to Israel as the unchangeable One, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." But now He speaks in the language of the Gentiles, and by these words — "Him that is, and that was, and that is to come," translates as it were that name of Jehovah, never before so communicated to them. He is going to return to His ancient people Israel; but before He does so, there must necessarily be a sweeping judgment upon the professing mass that calls itself by the name of the church. Thus, when God has set Christendom aside, He will bring in Israel again — no longer on the ground of law but of grace. The law executed death on sinful man, but the grace of God substituted the person of the Son of God, as in Heb. 2: 9 it is written, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But God, in the death of the Lord Jesus, also gave a stronger expression of His hatred of sin than in any other dealing. So in witness of, and as an answer to, His death does grace now flow out to the very worst. In that day Israel will know this for themselves; but they will know better what Jehovah means. And of what mighty import it will prove to them that His personal name in the government of this world is the precious token given to them nationally the title of relationship in which they have Him revealed as their God! This book then is the transition from a morally judged Christendom to "that day."

*By Asia is meant not even Asia Minor, but that part of its western coast which constituted the

Roman proconsular province. The kingdom of Pergamus had that title given to it, just as part of the Carthaginian territory was called the province of Libya or Africa. Some account for the absence of allusion to Colosse and Hierapolis by the circumstance that they were destroyed by an earthquake soon after St. Paul's epistle to the former. If Eusebius and Tacitus refer to the same fact (for their dates differ), it seems that Laodicea, though involved in the catastrophe, was rebuilt before the reign of Domitian. But adopting the earlier date of the Roman historian (A.D. 61), how can this consist with the usual reference of the Colossian epistle to A.D. 64? May I also express my surprise that the strange notion of Theodoret, that St. Paul founded the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, should be held by any unbiassed person? I am aware of Lardner's elaborate effort. But Col. 2, if rightly understood, includes the Colossians and Laodiceans among those who had not seen the apostle in the flesh.

Again, the style in which the Holy Ghost is here introduced is as strikingly characteristic of the book as what we have just traced; and so too is the way in which the Lord Jesus Himself is spoken of after that. "Grace be to you and peace . . . from the seven Spirits who are before his throne." Of course, the same Holy Ghost, known as the "One Spirit" in the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, is here mentioned as "the seven Spirits which are before his throne." He is spoken of as the "One Spirit," where it is a question of the one body, the church, as in Eph. 4: 4. But here it is the "seven Spirits," because, when God shall have finished His present work in the church, He will infallibly exit off the faithless (Jewish or Gentile), and will no longer gather Jews and Gentiles into one body on the earth. On the contrary, in the millennial kingdom on earth, Israel is to be put above the Gentiles. (Compare Isaiah 2: 2-4, 11, 12, 24, 35, 49, 54, 55, 59, 65, and the prophets generally.) It will be a different state of things altogether; and the Holy Ghost therefore is regarded in His various fulness of operations (as He is in connection with Messiah in Isaiah 11), and not in His heavenly unity. It is added, "who are before his throne," because the main subject of this book is the government of God; first providentially and preparatorily in the seals trumpets and vials; next personally at our Lord's appearing till the kingdom be given up and God be all in all.

In general, when we have "grace be to you and peace," it is from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." But in this place the order is as different as the style: first it is "from him that is, and that was, and that is to come," i.e., from Jehovah; then "from the seven Spirits," etc.; and lastly "from Jesus Christ." I think this departure from the usual order is because Jesus is here spoken of, not so much as related to the believer nor in His divine glory as Son of God, but in special reference to the earth and His rightful claims over the world.

The Lord is first viewed as "the faithful witness." All other witnesses had more or less failed. He alone had been the faithful witness of God and for God on the earth. But this was at all cost to Himself. But though put to death, it was the defeat of this world's prince, not of Christ; and hence in resurrection He stands "the first-begotten of the dead." He is the first who entered into resurrection-life in this wondrous way which defied corruption to touch it. "Being raised from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." But much more than this is conveyed. He is the heir and chief of the new estate, according to divine righteousness and counsels, of man beyond death and the grave, Lord not only of the living but of the dead, and this proved and displayed in the power of His resurrection. This He is, as faithful witness He was. So moreover He will prove to be at His coming in glory "the Prince of the kings of the earth," when it is a question of the government of the world. All these things are connected with what He was, is, and will be, as man. It is Jesus viewed in His earthly connections, or at least without speaking of what He is in heaven. His intermediate relation to the church (as its Head, and as the "great High-priest") disappears, as not falling in with the design of the

divine government here.

But mark the beauty of what follows. The moment Jesus is presented to the churches, and announced as "the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth," the answer of joy and praise can be withheld no longer. The saints interrupt, if one may so say, the message of John, and break forth into a song of thanksgiving — "To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom * — priests to his God and Father." He satisfies the affections by His love, He has cleared the conscience by His blood, and has put us in such glorious relationships as He stands in Himself to God and the Father. Yet even here it is not the distinctively Christian relationship. It is not sonship known by the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, nor is it our membership of Christ's body. It is blessed to have access as priests, glorious to reign with Him; but in both we share with the Apocalyptic sufferers at the end of the age. (See Rev. 5: 10, and especially Rev. 20: 4.) What is common will be true for all; but this does not hinder distinction of privilege.

*It is a clear allusion to Exodus 19, and follows the Hebrew idiom in the true reading, not exactly kings and priests here, but "a kingdom, priests." There is of course this essential difference, that there it was but an offer conditional on Israel's legal obedience; here grace has given us the position, but the position itself is formulated Jewishly like all else, as the reader may have seen and may see yet more.

There is a little alteration that should be made on excellent authority in this verse, which greatly adds to its sweetness and force. In the correct text it is "To him that loveth us," not "that loved us." It is quite true that "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Eph. 5 shows us this; — equally true, that He "loved me and gave himself for me," as in Gal. 2. But the first of Revelation shows us the present love of Jesus. It is not that He is always washing us from our sins: He washed us with His own blood once for all, and does not require so to wash us again. There is however the practical cleansing day by day — the washing of water by the word; but this is not what is spoken of here, but in His blood, a finished work, and one that lasts all through to His praise. But how blessed it is to know, while listening to the very book which most unfolds the ways and means by which God is about to put aside unfaithful Christendom, and to judge the evil of the world, that in presence of all this we can look up in the full confidence of His present abiding love, and say — "To him that loveth us, and washed* us from our sins in his blood . . . to him be the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen."

*Another reading $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\nu\tau\iota$, "loosed," is supported by the three best uncials A C, L few good cursives, the Syriac, some Slav. copies, and early writers. But $\sigma\upsilon$ might be easily merged in υ , and the idea of washing seems most in keeping with the style elsewhere. The common reading is supported by B P, the vast majority of the cursives, versions, and citations. Doctrinally the difference of sense is unimportant.

After the salutation, "Grace be to you and peace," etc., we had an interruption. It was the voice of the heavenly saints breaking forth into a strain of praise. Now we have (verse 7) those solemn but blessed words, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye see him, and those who pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so (or "Yea"), Amen." This is not a part of the song, but a testimony quite distinct from it. And we often find these two things: that which forms the communion of a saint of God, and then that which is or should be his testimony.

The communion with each other is a great element of Christian happiness. Now it is the presentation of Christ and the knowledge of Him and of our portion in Him which produces the sense of fellowship and calls out worship. Besides this, the believer is acquainted by God with what is coming upon the world. And this is a part of our testimony, but not the theme with which the heart should be most filled.

With a person who merely dwells on prophecy you may find interesting and grave topics, but not much fellowship of heart. For, however true may be his judgment of passing events, however sound his expectation of the future, grace in Christ alone leads to communion. It would be quite wrong to despise prophecy, and he who does will be sure to fall into some snare or other. But if the Christian is always occupied with the details of prophecy, there never will be power for heavenly worship; nor does it necessarily deliver a man from the ways of the world. A person may have impressions correct enough about the Jews, the judgments on Babylon and the beast, etc., who may not yet walk in separation from the world. But when the heart is set upon Christ, and these predicted things come in as a sort of background then they all find their level. The Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth, glorifying Christ, and also showing us "things to come."

So in 2 Peter 1: 19 it is said, speaking of the word of prophecy, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." It is important that I should see what is coming and that I should not indulge myself in an easy path here below. To know that the Lord is coming to judge the habitable world ought never to be a comfort to those who are swimming with its current. But there is something else that may well be the delight of the soul — day-dawning and the day-star arising in the heart. Peter does not here speak of the day arriving for the world, but affirms that the word of prophecy is an admirable lamp until you get heavenly light, and the day-star arises in your heart. It is the heart awakening to better hopes than Israel's, and of Christ Himself coming for us as its own proper portion. How many still as then, and naturally most of all among Jewish Christians, do not rise above a hope, formed by Old Testament prophecy, which is true and important, but not the heavenly hope given to us? This is never presented in scripture as a bare prophetic event. Christ waited for and known as One who may come at any time to gather us together to Himself — such is the form taken by our blessed hope. It is the apostle Paul who, while fully presenting the appearing and the kingdom, specially brings out the hope of the church. John too looks at Christ as the Bridegroom, at what He is for the heart, after he has closed the general testimony of the Revelation to His judicial dealings and government.

When the Lord comes to receive us, He is not said to come "with the clouds." When He ascended, a cloud received Him. Even so will it be with us: we shall be caught up together in clouds to meet Him. But here He is manifested for judgment of the world, and especially of the Jews. "Behold, he cometh with the clouds." This is a revelation known and testified by the heavenly saints, who cannot but love His appearing as that which will break the yoke of evil for the world, and secure God's glory and blessing to all creation here below; but it is not their own peculiar joy in communion. "Even so, Amen."

In Colossians the association of the saints with Christ is very fully brought out in Colossians 2, 3. He is my life, and I am identified with Him. Thus, inasmuch as Christ my Saviour is dead to the world, with Him I also have died to the world. Hence not only is my treasure there, but the very religion of the world is judged, because Christ was cast out by the world's religion. And when He our life shall be manifested, then shall we too be manifested with Him in glory. So here, when He comes with the clouds, every eye shall see Him. But this will not be the case when He comes to gather His own to Himself on high. (2 Thess. 2: 1.) God is gathering the friends of Christ round the name of Christ now. The church is a body that is called while Christ is not seen, and the Christian, having his portion in Him now, is hidden with Him. "Your life is hid with Christ, in God." Next we are caught up to meet Him. After that (how lone, after we may seek to learn) God brings us with Him at His revelation from heaven. Not now chosen witnesses, but "every eye" shall see Him then, and especially the Jews, characterized as having pierced Him (compare Zech. 12: 10 with John 19: 37), and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. The words will equally bear the sense of "the land;" in which case the

clause would take in not the Jews only but the whole δωδεκάφυλον or twelve-tribed nationality of Israel. Let the reader judge which best suits the context, as well as the enumeration of the verse. It is certainly not the twelve tribes in those who pierced Him, but of Israel distinguished from the more direct guilt of Judah, unless it be still wider.

In this verse then it is not the Lord coming to meet His own and gather them to Himself in the air; but "every eye shall see him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." When the Lord comes to translate the church, it will be far otherwise. God has joined us even now by the Spirit to Christ in heaven, according to all the efficacy of His death and resurrection. As far as the spirit is concerned this is true now, and it will be true of the body itself when Christ comes. The resurrection of Christ calls me to live thoroughly to God, as the death of Christ makes me as truly dead in principle to the world as if I were already buried. In practice, alas! we have to own sad falling short. Still, says the apostle, "your life is hid," etc. It is the life of Christ you have received. As long as Christ is hidden, you are hidden also. But the time is at hand when this will no longer be the case. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." When Christ comes to receive the church, no eye will see Him but those for whom Christ comes. When the world sees Christ, it will be when He comes in glory, bringing His saints with Him — revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (the Gentiles), and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Jews). If the world were to see Christ coming alone in glory before the church is caught up to Him, the inseparable association of which the apostle Paul made so much to the Colossians, would cease to be true. But scripture cannot be broken. The world can never see Christ, coming to receive the saints, because then they must have seen Him without them and before them; whereas the same moment of His appearing is to be the epoch of our appearing with Him. He will come for us; and we subsequently come along with Him. And this does not merely rest on a word here and there: it is the doctrine of the whole passage. The same truth is shown and confirmed by other proofs throughout the New Testament.

With Christ, by His death we are dead to the world; united to Him risen we are risen, and are therefore to have our hearts set upon heavenly things before we see them. And more than that: Christ, is not always to be hidden. He is about to be manifested; and when He is, we too shall be manifested along with Him. It is plain that Christ and the church must have been together before they are manifested to the world, if they are to appear together. In Rev. 19: 11 we have this taught beyond all doubt. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. . . . And the armies that are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clad in fine linen, white, pure." The horse is an emblem of aggressive power; the white horse, of this power prospering or victorious. Here it is the Lord Jesus coming in judgment, substantially the same time when He comes with the clouds. These armies that were seen in the prophetic vision following Him out of heaven, clad in fine linen, are not angels. The text says that the fine linen (βύσσινον) is the righteousnesses of saints. Now it is to be remarked that, although angels are described in Revelation 15 as being "clad in pure bright linen," a different word (λίνον) is used. Thus the heavenly saints are those described in Revelation 19 as the armies of heaven, etc. They were in heaven therefore before the way was opened for Christ to come out in judgment; they had been caught up to meet Him before; and now they follow Him from heaven when He comes. I doubt not that angels are in His train also, as appears from other texts; but they do not seem spoken of here.

There are thus two important and different stages of the Lord's second coming. First of all He will come to receive His people to Himself, and the church ought always to be waiting for this. In the next place He will come to judge the world, when He has already taken up the heavenly saints, and

wickedness rises to its head apace. Then suddenly the heavens will open, and the Lord Jesus Christ will come and the church with Him, appearing together in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Is it asked how? Israel was not told how they were to be delivered out of Egypt. Jehovah was going to deliver them; but He did not explain the method before it came to pass. And the Lord is going to take the church to heaven by His coming. Besides this, He will judge the wickedness of the world; but then the church will come along with Him from heaven.

Verse 8. Here, it seems to me, that we have God as such, though as always not to the exclusion of Christ,* uttering the titles of His various but divine glory, as a sort of seal of the foregoing and an introductory basis for what follows: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, He that is, and that was, and that is to come, the Almighty." The first (the ἄλφα and the ὦ) is evidently a name most suited to the book which so admirably closes the written communications of God. He is the God of Israel, the ever subsisting Eternal, who had sustained the fathers, and thus attests the truth, not of the solemn warning alone just given, but of all here revealed to the end of time. Assuredly all His names here announced, it would be wholesome for the saints to remember, whether for us before the trial, or for those who shall be called on to pass through it. It is to be observed however that the special revelation to the Christian is precisely what is omitted here. He does not call Himself our Father in this prophecy. This, and the reason for it, readers have too often forgotten. Our hope and prophecy differ, as heaven does from the earth.

*At the close of the book (Rev. 22: 13) the Lord takes similar titles; for if He were the exalted man and is to come and to judge as such, He was much more, and no designation of the Eternal God could exceed the dignity of His person. But the words of the common text in verse 11 ("I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last and") are an interpolation *there*, and mar the symmetry of the context. All the best MSS., versions, etc. reject them, and require "God" in verse 8.

Verse 9 is not quite correctly given in the ordinary text. "I John, your brother and companion in tribulation." The word "also" is left out in the best copies. And what follows should be read thus: "your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ [Jesus]." The trouble, reign and patience all go together. He purposely speaks of himself, not as a member of the body of Christ, but as their brother and companion in tribulation (perhaps because, after the church is taken away, there will still be saints on earth and our brethren, John puts himself along with them. The Holy Ghost loves us, whatever specialities of privilege may come in, as much as possible to take our place along with the saints of God at all times. The book of Revelation was written for the church, just when it was drifting into a state of ruin. In Rev. 6 we have some of these companions in tribulation; but what they say proves that they do not belong to the church. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood We find a proper Christian appeal to God in the case of Stephen — "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The Christian is always called to suffer in the world. These Apocalyptic saints will understand that the Lord is about to judge, and they will ask Him to do so. It would be wrong now to ask this, for it is the day of grace still. Faith habitually takes its language from what God is doing, and He is dealing in grace and not in judgment now. We are called to retire from the way of the world, and to attach our hearts simply to all that is glorious and heavenly, for this is the present object of Christ. The white robes given to these sufferers in Revelation 6 are an evident mark of God's approbation. They were to rest till their brethren who should be killed as they were should be fulfilled. Judgment must then take its course.

"In the tribulation and kingdom and patience." It will be the kingdom of Christ, in power when the tribulation and patience are all over. But now the circumstances of that kingdom involve tribulation. The kingdom of heaven as presented in the prophecy of Daniel is no mystery. It means the reign of

heaven on (or over) the earth. But Christ, instead of getting His rightful place as Messiah when He came, was rejected, and went up to heaven; and thus it is that the mysteries of the kingdom come in while He is there unseen, save to faith. Hence it is that there "lust now be suffering and endurance in the kingdom is it actually is for the Christian. When Christ appears in glory, all this will be at an end. Then will come the kingdom and power. (See Rev. 12) It is the kingdom and patience in Christ now. That word "patience," or endurance, is to be weighed well. We have communion with Jesus in this patient expectation; we wait for what He waits. A man that is born anew now is not in the kingdom and power, but in the kingdom and patience in Christ. Hence suffering here below naturally follows. So here the apostle John was thrown into the isle of Patmos "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus." It was, I presume, for his faithful work as an apostle in the gospel and in the church, ministering Christ, in both. But he was inspired to speak of it in the tone of this book for reasons already suggested.

Thus the ground on which John addresses the churches is not expressly as an apostle, but as their brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus One remarkable trait which Christianity has brought out is, that God has opened to us another kingdom of an order differing from the earthly or Jewish one — a kingdom in which for the present there is tribulation, as far as our circumstances are concerned, and patient hope the corresponding and distinguishing grace; for Christ's love has made us kings, and we shall reign with Him.

But the church has slipped out of its place of suffering and endurance; it has sought and taken the place of power in the world — the place that had belonged only to the Jews of right, and to the Gentile empires in divine sovereignty because of Israel's sins. In the presence of general failure it becomes no one to be high-minded; where there is real separation from evil, may there be humility! Wherever it is a question of ceasing to do evil, there is great need of looking to the Lord, lest one should say, "This is what I have done, and what others have not done." Say rather it is all the Lord's grace. But those Christians who desire to stand aloof from the evil around them are in evident danger of giving themselves somewhat of credit for doing something that others are not doing. In the presence of evil that we may have done and left, the effects of which we have still to judge in ourselves, it is not a time to indulge in high thoughts of ourselves.

When God executes His purposes towards the earth, His people will have fellowship with what He is doing, as of old in the land of Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan. But when we look at Christianity, it is not a question of earthly purposes, but of Jesus crucified through weakness, and of power put forth to raise Him again from the dead. There will be again a most solemn dealing on God's part when Christ will judge not only the living but the dead. But for us the fire of God's wrath has fallen upon Christ; His judgment was borne in grace by His beloved Son. And now God is imprinting on the hearts of His people heavenly glory. He is forming their character by these two great facts which meet in Christ; the one is the cross, and the other is the glory into which He ascended. What God has thus done in Christ is what He wants us to have communion with. As the Israelites had the law engraven on stones, so by the Spirit should Christ be written on our hearts and ways. The life of a creature may be lost, but what the believer has is the life of Christ; and can the life of Christ ever perish? Christ went through death in order that He might give a character of life which death could not touch. When the Lord God made man, He made him out of the dust of the field, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and therefore is it that the soul is immortal. Adam had this life direct from the breath of the Lord God. Sin, however, may touch it, and the second death — eternal misery in the lake of fire for soul and body. But that which Christ breathed after He rose from the dead John 20: 22) was a life which death never could conquer, nor even assail more, over which nothing had a claim; and such is the life of every believer.

And yet there are those who fancy that the life of a believer may be lost! I can only say that God does not deal with those who so think according to their thoughts of Him. The life is as strong in the Arminian as in the Calvinist, because it is the life of *Christ*. When a man is conscious that he has gravely failed against God, he is in danger of yielding to the fear that his blessing is gone. But no; you have sinned against that life, and against Him who is the source of it; but the life itself is there still, and cannot be touched; it is eternal. Again, where a person is occupied in looking at the spiritual life within him, he will never have comfort. The proof that he is a Christian is that he has received the testimony of God's love in Jesus.

Verse 10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." John does not merely intimate that he had the Spirit as every Christian has, nor that he was filled with the Spirit as the Christian should be, but that he became as completely characterized by His power for the divine purpose of seeing and writing these visions, as he is for evil who is possessed of an unclean spirit. It was on the Lord's day or first day of the week. For the Lord's day" is not at all the same thing as the "day of the Lord (ἡμέρα Κυρίου)." The same expression (κυριακός) was used with regard to the Lord's supper, because it was not a common meal, but a holy and divinely instituted memorial of the Lord. So the Lord's day is not a common day, but one specially set apart, not as a command, but as the expression of the highest privilege, for the worship of the Lord. The sabbath was the last day which Jehovah claimed out of man's week; the Lord's day is the first day of God's week, and in a sense, we may say, of His eternity. The Christian begins with the Lord's day, that this may as it were give a character to all the days of the week. In spirit the Christian is risen, and every day belongs to the Lord. Therefore is he to bring up the standard of each day that follows in the week to that blessed beginning — the Lord's day. To bring down the Lord's day to the level of another day only shows how gladly the heart drinks in anything that takes away somewhat from Christ. The man who only obeys Christ because he must do so has not the spirit of obedience at all. We are sanctified not only to the blood of sprinkling, but to the obedience of Jesus Christ — to the obedience of sons under grace, not to that of mere servants under law. The lawlessness which despises the Lord's day is hateful; but that is no reason why Christians should destroy its character by confounding the Lord's day, the new creation-day, with the sabbath of nature or of the law.

On that day then, specially dear to the Christian, bright visions of glory passed before the prophet's eye. First, John tells us what he saw on that occasion: this is what we have in the rest of the first chapter (Rev. 1: 12-20). It was the vision of the glory of Christ's person in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. "The things which are" (ver. 19) we have in Revelation 2, 3, which describe the condition of the churches at that time. The third division of the Revelation consists of "the things which shall be after these." The version "hereafter" is vague, for it might mean thousands of years after. "After these" expresses the sense of the phrase much better. It means what was about to happen immediately after "the things which are" now — i.e. after the church-condition. Those we have from Rev. 4 to the end of the book. The "things which are" continue still (in the most important application of the book). And what next? "What is about to happen after these things," when the church has ceased to subsist on earth.

Let us look a little at what the apostle saw. First of all, he hears behind him "a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying,* What thou seest write in a book (or roll), and send to the seven churches: unto Ephesus," etc. (ver. 11) "And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And, being turned I saw seven "golden lamp-stands." These were evidently derived from the light of the tabernacle. Only in this case the lamp-stands were separate, so that the Lord could stand between them. They were golden, as in divine righteousness set here to give light. Such was their responsibility. But another object fixes the attention of the prophet: Christ was in their midst as a judge. In the midst of the seven candlesticks

he sees not exactly the Son of man, but "one like [the or a] Son of man." He is really God, but He is not so presented in the first instance here. From John 5 we may learn the force of this, and why it is in this instance Son of man, and not Son of God. As Son of God He is one who quickens, because He is a divine person; He quickens in communion with the Father. Thus giving life He is called the Son of God; but as Son of man He executes judgment, because God will have Him honoured in the very nature in which man outraged Him. This at once shows us the bearing of what we have in the Revelation. It is as Son of Man on the earth that Christ is here presented; and as such He is about to execute judgment upon the seven churches, as well as by and by upon the world. For thus it is He will inherit all things, though otherwise also.

*It is well known that the words in the common text here, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and" have no sufficient authority, and were evidently inserted by the mistake of some scribe. Admirable where God inserts them repeatedly in this book, they only mar the connection here when man added them wrongly.

The "garment down to the foot," with which He was clothed, indicates not activity of work, but rather dignified priestly judgment. "Gold," as here in the girdle, is the symbol of divine righteousness; linen is explained to be what is saintly and displayed before men. "His head and his hairs were white as white wool, as snow." Thus, besides being Son of man, and being seen in the garb and place of priestly discrimination there are the emblems too of divine glory, as appears by comparing this passage with Daniel 7. What is said of the Ancient of days by Daniel is applied to the Son of man by John,* the Ancient of days being the eternal God. John sees here that the Son of man is Himself the Ancient of days; as indeed Daniel shows Him coming as such (7: 22). The same who wrote "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh," beholds now in prophetic vision the combination of humanity with the emblems they appropriated to Deity in the person of the Son of man. The head and hairs being "white as white wool, as snow," show fulness of divine wisdom. There is no mitre as if He were acting as high priest in gracious intercession; He is judging. Still less do we see the crown or diadem. The time for His reign is not yet come. He is set down on the Father's throne; not yet on His own.

*The article is wanting in Greek — to indicate the character in which Christ was seen: "a son of man" therefore is too vague and not the sense. If the article *Lad* been inserted, it would have conveyed the idea of Him as the known person whom John loved and followed on earth, rather than the character in which He appeared now.

"His eyes like a flame of fire" set forth the penetration that marked Him in judgment. "His feet like fine brass,* as if burned in a furnace" — they could not contract any defilement, and are unbending in judicial strength, as dealing with responsible man according to God. "His voice as the voice of many waters" expressed resistless power and majesty outside the control of men (verses 12-15). Such He is personally and relatively.

*The word *χαλκοβάνω* seems compounded of *χαλκός*, Copper, and *laban*, white — a compound of Greek and Hebrew, which has been conjectured to harmonize with the book. Compare in this chapter *καὶ ἄμην*, ver. 7; also Rev. 9: 11; and perhaps elsewhere.

Official description follows in verse 16. "And he had in his right hand seven stars," the emblem of the angels, or representative rulers, of the seven churches. "A sharp two-edged sword," the word of judgment, not morally alone, but to death where needed, and this even against the apostles at the end, went out of His mouth; because in the Lord Jesus Christ to speak the word is at once to strike the blow. "He spake, and it was done." "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Supreme

authority in government was His as man. Such He was officially. The churches angels were represented as "stars" only, as being of course subordinate to the Lord as instruments of heavenly light. Clearly then we have in the Lord sovereign authority, and universal in its range, as the stars are His administrative lights in the churches, which He maintains by His power. He judges by His word those who have it or refuse it.

When John sees this wonderful vision of the Son of man, he falls at His feet as dead. But the Lord puts His right hand of sustaining power upon His servant who lay trembling, nay as dead, before Him, and says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages."* Here is no deprecating the more than homage of His servant, but the reassuring him whose nature was as it were withered up before Him. He is Jehovah yet man; but if He had not died, we should not have known Him in the blessed character and energy of life that He has proved now — life more abundantly. Who then could say, "Fear not" as He? Christianity presents Christ as having passed through death, and as risen in triumph for God and His people. John is going to hear about judgments, and the wiles, power, and wrath of Satan beyond the previous experience of men; but the knowledge that the right hand of Him who was alive for evermore had been upon him, and the words of His mouth, would give him strength and courage for everything to come. And as this is the spirit in which the book was written, so it should be read.

*The "Amen," though read by B and most of the cursives, seems due to the copyists making the phrase a doxology, either through unconscious habit, or designedly adding ἁμήν as a correction.

"Behold, I am alive unto the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades." The succession of these words in the common text is a mistake. Hades follows death, and does not go before it. (Rev. 6) See also Rev. 20 where we have "death and hades" mentioned several times in their regular order. And so in the best authorities it is here. When the Lord says that He has the keys of death and of hades, He intimates that He is the absolute master of all that might threaten man whether for the body or the soul. Satan's power in this respect is annulled; Christ has it all.

Accordingly also, in verse 19, there ought on the best authority to be read a little word which adds somewhat to the force and connection. "Write therefore what thou hast seen:" because I am risen from the dead and am alive for evermore, and the sole ruler of death and hades, write therefore. He who bade John write (verses 11, 19) was the Son of man, with the characteristics of the Ancient of days; but He was also the living victorious Lord, the security against terror and death, the strengthener of His servants in presence of glory. "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to be after these." Human nature might well be confounded by the sight; but He who was revealed to John characterised Himself both as God and as the man who had passed through death and destroyed Satan's title and held the power for His own. And this was to be written, this revelation of Jesus as seen of John, as well as the existing church-state, and the things which should follow (17-19).

Verse 20 explains the mystery of the stars and lamp-stands, as already indicated. It is the connecting link between the vision of Christ and the judgment of the church, or house of God on earth (Rev. 2, 3), as long as its existence there is recognized as the object of His government. After that it is the judgment of the world from God's throne in heaven, and Jews and Gentiles are variously dealt with, but churches never in that part of the book. All this, and the reasons for it, will appear more distinctly as we proceed.

It is plain, from Revelation 1: 4, 11, and from what follows, that seven actually existing churches of provincial Asia were primarily meant. But while it is true that there were special reasons for addressing those particular churches, it does not to my own mind admit of a doubt, that they were selected with the

further and larger design of presenting successive pictures of the church in general from the apostolic days to the close of its existence on earth. Hence it is that there were seven golden lamp-stands, seven being the well-known symbol of spiritual completeness. There might have been other churches as well or better known, and one of these seven had been already addressed formally by the great apostle of the Gentiles. But Ephesus is again taken up, and six other churches are associated, so as to make up a mystical and perfect sketch of the more important moral features which then existed, and which at the same time would successively be developed in the after history of the professing body upon the earth.* Many things which might seem most important in the eyes of men and even of Christians are passed by, for the Lord sees not as man sees.

*Every believer in the inspiration of the Apocalypse of course admits the ever-living application of the moral pictures set forth in Rev. 2, 3, as is true of the Acts in the New Testament, or of the histories in the Old Testament. But the idea that the seven churches represent all churches, or the general state and character in John's day, appears to be mere confusion. The truth is, that each represents a distinct moral state, in which the professing body, wholly or in part, might be at some given time. In a word, that the local assemblies then exhibited the special features described is true; but they could not all characterise the then existing state of the church in general, because they set forth different and even opposed moral conditions. If we admit then, as we must, an enlarged application, beyond that to the actual assemblies or to mere individual conduct, the natural reference is to successive phases of spiritual condition, good or bad, in the history of the Christian profession. Perhaps the extreme partisans of the Protestant school of interpretation are not generally aware that their learned leader, Mede, thus expresses himself in his more mature "Short Observations on the Apocalypse" (Works, p. 905): — "If we consider their number being seven, which is a number of revolution of time, and therefore in this book the seals and trumpets and vials also are seven; and if we consider the choice of the Holy Ghost, in that He taketh neither all, no, nor the most famous church in the world, as Antioch, etc., and such no doubt had need of instruction, as well as those here named; — if these things be well considered, may it not seem that these seven churches, besides this literal respect, were intended to be as patterns and types of the several ages of the catholic church *à principio ad finem*, that so these seven churches should prophetically sample unto us a sevenfold successive temper and condition of the whole visible church, according to the several ages thereof, answering to the pattern of the seven churches here? And if this be granted, viz., that they were intended to be so many patterns of so many states of the church, succeeding in the like order the churches are named, then surely the first church (viz., the Ephesian state) must be first, and the last be the last," etc.

Another striking feature claims our notice and admiration. It might have seemed impossible to reconcile prophetic light, as to the successive phases the church might assume from the apostolic time as long as it is found here below, with the continual expectation of Christ. But divine wisdom solved the difficulty even here, as the same end is secured in the Gospels and Epistles. The Lord was pleased to address seven contemporaneous and actually existing assemblies; but, in dealing with existing facts, He knew how to select and shape His instruction, so as to suit the states which should follow till He comes. What a comment on the Lord's answer to Peter's query, "Lord, what shall this man [John] do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." In this part of the book mere literal time is excluded. It is not future but present, however protracted — "the things which are."

But it will be found, I think, that He has here given prominence to those features, whether good or bad, which should reappear, and most aptly set forth what He foresaw to be of the deepest moment for him who might have an ear to hear till He comes again. And this extensive application seems to be

strongly confirmed by that clause of the threefold division in Revelation 1: 19, which bears on these churches. They are characterized as "the things which are." No doubt they existed then in the time of John; but if they continued to exist, and if seeds that were then sown germinated yet more in after days, and thus imparted a graver significance to the words and warnings of our Lord, that subsisting state of the church on earth would still be fitly designated "the things which are."

Thus Ephesus is the first great sample of decline through a relaxation or abandonment of first love. But was not this the notorious fact in Christendom generally before the last apostle departed to be with the Lord? If in those days and yet more in the times much followed, there was a similar moral state, what more apt and natural than to treat the moral circumstances so as to convey the general lesson? Again, without questioning that the message to Smyrna fully applied at that time, it is easy to see that the great and repeated persecutions which broke out upon Christians from the heathen are admirably set forth by it. So again the Balaam element would naturally come into neat distinctness, when the world patronised instead of persecuting. Then further Jezebel is an immense advance in evil; and though no doubt there was that which furnished occasion for these references at the time when the Apocalypse was given, can it be denied that the outline was filled up in a most striking way, after the throne of the world established Christianity by its edicts, and when at a later epoch still the professing church formed a guilty union with virtual heathenism and enmity to the truth of God

This glance, rapid as it is, over Revelation 2, 3, will show, on the one hand, why I conceive that the Apocalyptic churches are to be viewed as having a real, if indirect, prophetic bearing upon the subsequent states of the church as they presented themselves to the Lord's all-searching judgment. On the other hand it is clear, that to have made this bearing so marked as to be apparent from the first — to have given a distinct chronological history, if one may so say — would have falsified the true posture of the church in habitually waiting for the Lord from heaven. For the Lord has nowhere else so spoken to or about the church as to keep it necessarily waiting for ages upon the earth. Of course the Lord knew that it would be so; but He revealed nothing that would interfere with the full enjoyment of the blessed hope of the Lord's return as an immediate thing. In the parables of the Gospels which set forth His return, while space is left for delay, room is left for His coming, if so it pleased God, in their lifetime whom He then addressed. And so it is here. Thou — in the seven churches the full course of the church on earth is comprised in such varying and at last concurrent phases as it seemed fit to the Lord to notice, He took care to found all on facts then present before His divinely piercing gaze, so as to maintain the balance of truth undisturbed.

Some have taken advantage of this indistinctness to deny that these seven churches have the successive and protracted character which I have alluded to; but the evidence will appear more fully as we look at each church severally. Another consideration which ought to weigh much is, that after these two chapters (Rev. 2, 3) churches are nowhere referred to as existing longer on the earth. In the concluding remarks of the book (Rev. 22: 16) the Lord says that he has sent His angel to testify these things in the churches. But throughout the entire course of the visions, and in all that is intimated of the condition of men here below, after Rev. 3 right onward, there is the most unaccountable silence as to the church on earth, if the church be really there; while nothing is more simple, if that state of things be closed. And this quite agrees with Revelation 1: 19 "The things which are, and the things which shall come to pass *after these*." After the churches are done with, and no longer seen as such upon the earth, the directly prophetic portion of the book begins to have its course.

Further it seems that the introduction of a new phase in the succession of the churches does not necessarily imply the disappearance of what had been before it. In a word, after the new condition appears, there may be still the co-existence of older ones, and each may run on in its own sphere. This

appears to be distinctly true of the last four, being marked thenceforth by a distinct reference to the Lord's coming, as may be seen in Thyatira and the churches which follow.

Thus much may be said of the churches as a whole. Responsibility on earth is the question: not the privileges of the church or the saints in Christ, but the obligation of the churches to represent Him, and His estimate of their state. The lightbearers are formally under His scrutiny and judgment. Paul long before (1 Tim.) had shown the church of the living God to be the pillar and ground of the truth. Nowhere else in the world is the truth so inscribed and held up as in that house of God; but even he (2 Tim. 2) lets us see that such a privilege and responsibility would in no way preserve it from ruin; for in this his last epistle he described its condition as that of a great house with vessels not to honour only but to dishonour, from which last the godly man had to purge himself. John here sets before us the solemn fact of (not the church judging, but) the Lord morally judging the churches by His word. Alas! the church pretending to be a judge, and hence becoming a murderous false prophetess, is a part of the evil that is judged in the church at Thyatira, as we shall see in Revelation 2.

Thyatira has another distinctive mark, in that it first has the Lord's coming, not spiritually or providentially as in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, but actually, and hence, while these may have passed away, goes down to the end, as do those states which follow — Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, remarkable for being addressed by the Lord in characteristics either in part or wholly different from His appearance in the vision of Rev. 1, the characteristics of which last were uniformly employed in the addresses of the first three churches. And if we cannot but discern Popery in the Jezebel of Thyatira, not without the faithful remnant which in its simplicity refused her abominations and bore up against her bloodiest policy, can we fail to see in Sardis the cold correctness of Protestantism verging toward the world, with whose doom it is threatened; in Philadelphia a testimony feeble but dependent on Christ, cleaving to His word and not denying His name, with "that blessed hope" full in view; and in Laodicea that finally nauseous state of self-complacent indifferentism which is more than ever rising up around us?

Revelation 2.

EPHESUS.

We will now look at the first of the seven churches more particularly (verses 1-7). First., let us observe that John is told to write to the angel of the church in Ephesus. The address is no longer to "the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Nor is it to the saints with the bishops and deacons, as the word was to the Philippian church. Why is this? The Lord's ways are always full of grace; but they are righteous withal, and the church was a fallen and falling thing so that He could no longer address them in His familiar love as formerly. Thus there was departure of the most serious kind from Himself, and John is directed to address, not the church, but its angel or representative. The angels spoken of in these epistles were men, and must not be confounded with the class of spiritual beings called angels.* The apostle John is employed by the Lord to send a message to them, and it would be contrary to all the ways of God to use man as a messenger to angels in the ordinary meaning of the word. Angels often acted between God and man, but not men between Him and angels.

*Origen and Andreas adopted the latter meaning, but Epiphanius and others expressly reject it. Many moderns suppose that the term is derived from the synagogue and that it answers to the *שליח ציבור* and *חזן הכנסת*. But if this be so, the angel of the church cannot mean even a presbyter, much less the president or chief of the presbyters, as Vitringa argues, but rather what is called clerk or sexton. The

New Testament term for this chazan or angel of the synagogue seems to be ὑπηρέτης, who had the care of the books, etc. (Luke 4: 20.) The ruler, or ἀρχισυνάγωγος, was quite distinct; and of these there were several. (Acts 13: 15.) Compare Lightfoot. (Opp. ii. pp. 279, 310.) Some on the other hand supposed that envoys may have been sent from the churches in Asia to John, that hence they were called ἄγγελοι ἐκκλησιῶν (as John's disciples sent to the Lord were, Luke 7: 24; others sent by the Lord Himself while here below, Luke 9: 52, and the spies sent by Joshua, James 2: 25), and that the Lord accordingly so addresses them in the messages which He commands to be written to the churches. But I prefer the idea of representatives, as most in keeping with the prophecy as a whole.

But, further, there is no sufficient ground to affirm that the angel here addressed, though a man, is in such an official place necessarily as a bishop or elder.* He might have such a charge, or he might not. "The angel" always gives the thought of representation. In the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah, of the covenant, etc., and in Daniel we read of angels who were identified with Israel or other powers. In the New Testament we have the angels of the little children always beholding the face of their Father in heaven, which clearly means their representatives. So of Peter, in Acts 12, they said it was his angel. We may gather then that the angel here, though a man, is in some way or another the ideal responsible representative of an assembly. Hence, it could be said, "I will remove *thy* lamp-stand." It would be extremely objectionable to make this a defined official place, as it would introduce not merely a novelty, but one that clashes with all that is elsewhere taught in scripture as to the assembly. But it will not be doubted that in assemblies we find, as a fact, a particular person whom the Lord specially links with the assembly as characterizing it: he is morally identified with it, and receives from the Lord either praise or condemnation according to the state of the assembly.

*We know from Acts 20: 17, 28, that in the church at Ephesus elders or bishops were duly appointed, as was usual at any rate in assemblies at all mature where an apostle or in apostolic delegate like Titus could visit them for the purpose. But we have no ground to believe that "angel" ever was an official title for a chief ruler. It is probable, however, that the misunderstanding of this very term may have suggested or confirmed the invention of episcopacy, which was at first congregational rather than diocesan. Ignatius so singularly harps on that dignitary even in the most reduced form of his few genuine epistles as to give the idea of one anxious to accredit a comparatively new institution. It is certain that scripture does not countenance it unless it be in this prophetic book of mysterious symbol — a precarious basis for a most important charge which is ignored in the scriptures devoted to questions of rule.

Here the angel is directly charged with the state of the assembly. The address being to him, and not to the assembly, put them as it were at, farther distance from the Lord. What a tale this tells of the dreadful condition into which the church had got! He could no longer address these assemblies immediately. He had spoken directly to the Corinthians even; for, guilty as they were, they had not so loved Him and then relaxed. But here the message is, "Thou hast left thy first love." Yet, if the church were not faithful, He had a faithful servant at least in John; and he it is who in the first instance is addressed. And be it ever remembered that the church has never since recovered from that failure and place of comparative distance.* The church, the house of God, is a complete ruin here below. And in ruin the first thing that becomes us is that we feel it before Him.

*In this sense it is that we can understand how the churches, turning a deaf ear to these messages of Christ as they certainly did ere long, ceased to be recognized of God, and thus the strictly prophetic part, ἃ μέλλει γίνεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, a might apply in an inchoate or partial and protracted way ever since, while in a full and final sense there remains the absolute cutting off of the faithless Gentile profession, and the brief crisis of the latter when the prophetic portion is punctually carried out to the

letter. This seems to be much confirmed by the mode employed to describe this abnormal ecclesiastical state, ἃ εἶσι, "the thing; which are," which easily admit of indefinite prolongation. It is not the seven churches, nor the messages to them, but a phrase easily applicable both to their then condition, and to the protracted state of ruin in which we are now.

This in no way touches eternal salvation; but the certainty of salvation is abused when employed to lessen what is due to God. In fact there is never a real sense of sin before conversion; for if it could thus be, it would be accompanied with absolute despair. But after we have not conversion only but perfect peace, we can bear to look at our sin, and we can afford to judge it thoroughly. A holy angel does not know God as we ought to do — I do not say as we do, though that be true also. An angel enters into the wonders of God's power, "hearkening unto the voice of his word." But the depths of God come out, marvellous to say, about our sin, and in His Only-begotten, "seen of angels" indeed, but in living relationship with us.

Here the Lord presents Himself as the One "that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands" (verse 1). He speaks of Himself as having authority over all the representatives of the heavenly light, and going about among the vessels of His testimony. The representative is addressed; the assembly is none the less responsible and dealt with accordingly. He is come to investigate, to judge — not yet of course the ungodly world, but — the assembly in Ephesus. What a difference between such a sight as this, and the view we have of Him and of the church too in Ephesians 1, 2! There He is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and there too God has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. His hand is needed; for none but He could meet the difficulties. But is it not solemn that He is so presented to that very church to which Paul had opened out the fulness of His heavenly grace, the fulness of their own blessing in Him? But here He is obliged, as it were, to walk and vindicate His authority, not among those who know Him not, but where His love had once been well known — alas! now forgotten and dishonoured.

Observe the general character, as has been truly remarked, of this the first address throughout all its parts. Such is Christ's description; such too the sin; such the warning to the angel; and such the promise to the overcomer. The Lord's position is ecclesiastical generally, holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and thou hast tried those that call themselves apostles and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name's sake and art not wearied" (verses 2, 3).* Thus there were many things to praise. There was patience, and this is the first if not the greatest, that Paul gives of his own apostleship. More than this, nothing is more ready to break down than patience, after it has stood many a trial. But here at Ephesus there was endurance. (Compare verses 2, 3.) Again, where there is patience, there might be the tendency to pass over evil, or at least evil men. But it was not so here. They had borne for His name's sake, but they could not bear evil persons; and they had tried those that pretended to the highest place — to be apostles, and had found them liars. And thus they had gone on and were not weary. How sweet of the Lord (in His sorrow and, if we may so say, His disappointed love) thus to begin with all that was good!

*The common text, followed by the Authorized version, is in some respects corrupted. Their toil was known, and endurance they were not only eminent for, but they had it still. They had proved intolerant of evil persons, and especially of such as falsely claimed high ecclesiastical authority, whilst they had manifested their willingness to bear wrongs or afflictions for Christ's sake, and in all this they

were not weary. Such is the sense of the right readings and the true order. A few MSS. (16, 37, 38, 69), and versions drop οὐ before κεκοπίακας, perhaps to seem verbally consistent with κόπον in the verse before; but the evidence for what I have given seems overwhelming.

But though there was what He could praise, He had against them that they had left their first love. It is quite evident that this is nothing special, but the general spirit or principle of declension of the church at large. Indeed it is very broad: so the angels that left their first estate; so Adam; so Israel. Alas! we must add now the assembly of God, blessed and loved beyond them all. They had let slip the consciousness of the Lord's love to them, and hence the fresh energy of their own love to Him had waned. What produced love in them was their appreciation of the Lord's love.

Let me just remark that the word "somewhat," in verse 4, seems to weaken the sense. It might convey the idea that the Lord had but little against them whereas, in truth, He was exceedingly grieved. Not to feel His love, not to return it consequently, was no small failure, especially where that love had once been enjoyed. But now it was faded, and what would not follow in time? "Remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I coming unto thee, and I will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place, except thou repent." Solemn announcement! Not only is an assembly liable to lose its place of holding up the holy light of God, but assured that so it must be if it depart from first love and repent not. It is a much easier thing to be zealous in doing than in repenting. But even this would not satisfy His heart, unless they got back to that first love which had produced their first works: otherwise the lamp-stand must be removed. The spring of grace is as gone.

I doubt, on grounds both external and internal, that "quickly" should be in ver. 5. For when He thus comes to judge the ways of His own people, can it be so said? Doubtless, when He comes, whether to fight with the Nicolaitans, or to take us to Himself, it is quickly. (Rev. 2: 16; Rev. 3: 11; Rev. 22: 7, 12, 20.) But the Lord gives space for repentance, even if it were to Jezebel; and how much more to His beloved Ephesians?

The removal of the lamp-stand does not imply that the church might not go on apparently as before; but that it lost its place as a trustworthy witness for the Lord. Here again all is general: it would suit the Christian everywhere. Nothing makes up for distance between His people (or between the soul) and Christ. And such was the case, not merely with the assembly in Ephesus, but with the church generally, I think we may say, even then. This to my mind confirms the successional aim of "the things which are." Outward testimony might go on, but that is not what the Lord most values; though value it He does, as far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this. . . not only for salvation, and for a witness to Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ — a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ. and He at least has proved the fulness and faithfulness of His love to us! But what of ours?

The effect of thus looking at Christ is that the Christian is kept in the dust, and yet always rejoicing in Him. For the sense of failure in ourselves and others would be oppressive, but that we are entitled to find our joy in One who has never failed, and who notwithstanding loves us who have given such a feeble and faltering witness for Him. Hence if we but go to *Him* so known, even in sorrowful confession, He will not let us part without blessing and strength. It is due to Him to own and feel our sin; but to be occupied merely with failure never gives power: Christ. must have the glory. And assuredly He who has delivered us from the wrath to come, He who can save from hell, can keep or

snatch from every ditch on earth. Only let the Christian confess his sin, cleaving to Jesus; this vindicates the name of Him who comes to his succour, and then the victory is sure.

But what a comfort and how reassuring to find that, after His censure, the Lord again speaks of what He can commend! "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (verse 6). The essence of Nicolaitanism seems to have been the abuse of grace to the disregard of Christian or even moral practice. The Ephesian saints had failed in cleaving with fresh fervour to that which is good, but they had fellowship with the Lord, rejecting false pretensions, and abhorring what is evil. People often say, there is no such thing as a perfect church on earth. I would ask such what they mean by a perfect church. Will any Christian man tell me that we are not to aim at everything consistent with the holiness of God? I claim for the church just what must be allowed for every individual Christian. As there may be too many faults in the individual, so there may be in the church. But then there is this blessedness, that as there is One who dwells in the individual to guide and bless him, so the same Spirit dwells in the church, and Christ cleanses it with the washing of water by the word. It is with the assembly as with the individual, that has both the Holy Ghost, who is the power of good, and the flesh which lusts against him. As in a man the soul may be said to pervade the whole body, animating it in every part; so does the Spirit act in the church of God. When persons maintain that unholiness may be tolerated because no man is free from sin, it is Antinomianism; and I believe it to be the very principle of the Nicolaitans. Each individual is bound to be ready to meet the Lord, having nothing left to be wound up when He comes. The Lord looks for the same thing from the assembly, because there is a divine power against evil in the church as in the saint.

Then comes the promise, with the word of admonition before it, but all general, like the danger and the threat. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God" (verse 7).

As for the paradise of creation, man had been put there and tried by the simplest test of obedience in a single instance; but he fell. Now a new scene is opened. It is no longer the garden of Eden, but the paradise of God — "of my God," says the Lord Jesus — not of God only, in contrast with man, but of "my God" as Jesus knew Him. Into this redemption brings us. And therein is no tree of responsibility that could bring in sorrow and death. The tree of life alone is there, which the glorified saint shall enjoy in peace. The church in Ephesus had fallen, it is true, from first love: but is anything too hard or good for the Lord? Did any feel deeply and aright the wrong that was done to His grace? If there was but one who overcame (and overcoming must be by strong faith, not mere preservation of original blessing; it is overcoming inside the church too), to him was this promise given to comfort and cheer his soul. The Lord's grace is just as full now. May there be no soul here who has not ears to hear: if there are any who have, may they hear and overcome!

It is all well to "hear the church" in discipline, confiding in Him who is in the midst. But when the church leaves its first love, and claims all the more loudly to be heard, taking the place of Christ or of the Spirit, pretending to teach, what then? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." Individual responsibility comes distinctly out now as a principle for the Christian, as in Matthew 13 for the disciple, after the proclamation in Matthew 12 of the judgment of Israel.

SMYRNA.

In the message to Ephesus we have seen departure from first standing. The next state is a different one. We have the church at Smyrna in trouble; the saints of God are suffering. They may have thought the fiery trial some strange thing that had happened to them. But, on the contrary, it is more true that

the Lord is grieved with a Christian when He leaves him without trouble for righteousness or for His name's sake. The Lord had Himself known tribulation to the utmost; but in Him it was only the trial of the good that was within, and the bringing out of His perfection. And poor as we are, we too may know trial apart from our evil. The Lord has two objects in view when He lays His hand upon a Christian in the way of chastening. It may come either because there has been something wrong, or because he is in danger of it and this is little felt by him. When David was out of tribulation, he falls into a snare. When his circumstances were full of trouble, then it was that he (inspired, of course, by the Holy Ghost) poured out those sweet strains that we read with joy to this day. The desire to get out of trial is a perilous thing for the soul. The trial may be sent to show us what we really are, or, what is better, to prove what God is for us and to us: but it may be also sent to prevent us from falling into sin. The Lord in His love thus often averts the evil which He sees and we do not. I do not doubt that there is another and a deeper character of suffering, even fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, which must not be confounded with the Lord's faithful discipline, though sometimes it would seem the two things may be in a measure combined. In a certain sense all saints suffer row with Him, though all may not be called to suffer for Him.

In Smyrna the Lord appears to have been meeting the declension from first love that had set in, and in order to do this He sent tribulation. It is no uncommon case — thanks to His name, for He is good and faithful. In what capacity does He speak to them? "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." His title, first of all, is that of a divine Person as against Satan. The Spirit claims for Jesus here, what Isaiah had before challenged for Jehovah. (Isaiah 41: 4.) And what was there that could not be claimed for Him? He "which was dead and is alive." What a comfort for those who were in trial! Who is that speaks to them in their tribulation? The One who had been in the deepest of sorrow and had gone through death itself He who was the First and the Last, and who had formed all — He was the One that had died and was alive again. And this is the very One that I have to flee to in my trial. You will see thereby what a connection there is between the quickening of the dead and the comfort of those who are in trial. (Compare 2 Cor. 1-5) Jesus was God, but He was man also. He was the suffering man, and He was the triumphant man; and as such He was able to comfort them in their tribulation. What had He not gone through Himself?

"I know [thy works and] tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (verse 9). The word "Jews" here is used symbolically. It was a name given to the nation that was known as God's people, above all others, in olden time; and these symbols were taken from the Old Testament. It seems to mean persons who, taking the place of being children of God, went back to hereditary religion. On the one hand, there was this outward trouble, which the Lord allowed for their blessing and, on the other, there were those who were insisting on Jewish principles. (Phil. 3: 2.) But the Lord says, "Fear not those things which thou shalt suffer." Do not mind what persons say, or things done against you. "Behold the devil shall cast from among you into prison, that ye may be tried." Thus, by God's grace, the enemy himself is used as an instrument for the good of God's people in the persecutions which he stirs up against them. There is nothing, on the other hand, whereby Satan more effectually draws aside than through a sort of quiet, easy-going, half-and-half Christianity. God grant that His children may be preserved from having two faces or characters — that the Christian may never be worldly with worldly people, and then put on the ways and words of a saint with his brethren.

It is no new thing for the Lord thus to allow the efforts and enmity of Satan for the blessing of His saints. In the case of Job we see the same thing: indeed the Lord probed his servant there far more deeply. At each successive trial from Satan Job retained his integrity, and blessed the Lord, but the

Lord showed Job himself — the very thing he needed for the full blessedness of turning away from self to the Lord. Then He showed him *God*, and Job's comfort at last was as deep as his self-abasement.

Job had no idea that he thought too much of himself; but this was just what God had to show him he did. He loved to recall the time when the fruits of godliness in him drew forth the respect and esteem of men. But God showed him how evil a thing it is to be occupied with the effects of grace in himself or on others. What the enemy of God and man could not do, Job's friends did. He could stand against the temptations of Satan, but he was provoked to folly by his friends coming to condole with him, and giving their misdirected opinions. When a person talks much about grace, not a little unjudged self is apt to be found there, we may be sure. Even Job had to be put in the furnace to find out that there was a great deal more besides grace in him. But though Satan might tempt without success, and his friends only provoke, when the Lord Himself comes in, then Job is soon thoroughly humbled. He sees himself in the light of the presence of God, and exclaims, "Mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." but the end of the Lord is as good at least as His beginning. He is ever pitiful, and of tender mercy. When Job thinks nothing of himself in the presence of God, the true stream of grace flows out, and he prays for his friends. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

The case of Smyrna follows that of Ephesus. As already hinted, I should apply the church of Smyrna to the time when the church was called to pass through the tribulation that followed the era of the apostles — the persecutions that were inflicted on the Christians by the Roman emperors. But it is good to remember that all is measured of the Lord. "Behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days" (verse 10). The sufferings, death for Christ's sake, etc., of the Christians, were the few bright spots and manifestations of life in the second and beginning of the third centuries.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (ver. 10). The distinction of God's servants in glory is an important doctrine. For while it is essential to maintain that the very same grace which pardoned the thief on the cross was needed to save Paul of Tarsus, yet it would be a grand mistake to suppose that the thief will have the same reward in glory. Nevertheless we must not be afraid when the Lord says to us, "I know thy works." For though the vessels that are to contain the blessing may not be equally large, the little cup will be as full as the big one; and filled, if I may so say, with the same materials of joy and blessing. In a glorified state there will be no such thing, of course, as a person being tried — no question of being faithful or unfaithful then. Before we get there, spiritual differences exist; and when we are there, the distinctions of Christ's kingdom will answer to the character and measure of service here below. though the sovereignty of God must be maintained also. (Matt. 19, 20)

There follows this suited word of comfort to the faithful in Smyrna: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (verse 11). Do not fear the first death; it is only a servant to usher you into the presence of God: the second death will not injure you. The Lord is like that tree of old which was cast into the waters of Marah. He went into the bitterest waters of death, which have thus been changed into sweetness and refreshing for its.

PERGAMOS.

The Lord here announces Himself to the of the church in Pergamos as One armed with all-piercing power by the word of God, the two-edged sword that judges (verse 12). In the book of Revelation the sharp sword is at the command of the Lord Jesus as the instrument of judgment,. What the sword is in

the hands of man, so is the word that reveals God searching out and cutting through all obstacles. This the Lord applies in power; it decides all questions that have to do with Him. There is always a great and beautiful connection between the way or title in which He presents Himself and the state of the church which He is addressing. It was because the word was no longer that which had living energy to judge in the church, that the Lord Jesus takes care to prove that it had never lost its power in His hands. As the first church shows us declension set in, even in the days of the apostle John, and Smyrna the time of persecution from the heathen, so here we have a totally different state of things. Pergamos is the scene of Satan's flattering power or seduction, which was just what he used after the violence of persecution had spent itself. It was a more dangerous device than the second; for when set on anything that is wrong, there is nothing that more shows a case far gone and desperate than God's giving one up to his own will without further remonstrance. "Ephraim is joined unto idols: *let him alone.*" In the case of Smyrna we see the clean contrary of this: the Lord was intercepting the power of Satan through persecution from without, which was used of God to hinder the growing corruption within.

Afterwards the god of this world promised Christians every worldly advantage. The emperor himself offered to become a Christian, though he put off baptism till his death-bed. There was no plainer proof how completely the church had fallen through forgetfulness of the Lord's name, than when it accepted the emperor's terms and the patronage of the world. Even those who were saved had entirely lost sight of what the church was, as not belonging to the world, but of heaven. The Roman empire was essentially the world's power. The church had been called out to be the standing witness of these two things: first of the world's ruin; and secondly of God's love. But when we see the church shaking hands with the world all is gone, and the church slips down into the mind of this age. If the world gains in some respects, the church loses in everything; and no wonder, because it is at the cost of the will and glory of Christ.

Satan's "throne" is the sense: in presence of it, who does not see the propriety with which the Lord presents Himself, as armed with the sharp two-edged sword? It is the same word as is used for "seat" as well as "throne" in other parts of this very book; but here it is properly a "throne," because Satan is spoken of in respect of authority. It is obvious that all this exactly describes the state of things in Constantine's time. Instead of being at the stake and suffering for Christ's sake, the church was now yoked with the world in a mere profession of Christianity; for as the world did not really rise to Christ. the church must sink to the world's level. No wonder the Lord says thereon, "Thou dwellest where Satan's throne is." Yet He allows all that He can, even where this miserable association was found — His assembly dwelling where Satan's throne was. They maintained still His name, and did not deny the faith which was given to the saints; but this was all. They held fast His personal glory, and did not deny that which was revealed of Him because of flesh and blood. They believed of Him what eye had not seen — His Deity. Against this Satan's wiles were directed, as of late he had sought to destroy those who confessed the truth. They had just come out of the great persecution in which Antipas was slain. But now the church at Pergamos, instead of suffering, was dwelling quietly in the world. Like Lot, they too had their righteous souls vexed with the ungodliness of those around.

The Lord accordingly brings forward the things of which He had to warn them. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam" (verse 14). What was the leading feature we see in the son of Beor? He was led by his covetousness to try and serve the bad king of Moab by cursing the people of God. When God gave him an answer, he goes to God a second time, because his heart wanted its own way. And it is solemn to learn that if God gives you up you may get what you want. Balaam afterwards falls into even worse evil. He was indeed a man whose heart was not with God. He said some true things, but his spirit was not in them He always speaks as it were from without, as a miserable man,

afar from the blessing which he saw. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh," etc. He goes on step by step, until he lends himself to be the corrupter through the world even of God's chosen people.

And so it was with the church. Even the philosophers began to take up Christian truth, and in the writings of the fathers we find pretty much what we have here. What fornication is in moral things, such was their illicit commerce with the world in the things of God. There were, I doubt not, witnesses who were made very little account of, save in heaven; but one of the men who had the largest and most lasting influence of all, Augustine, was a true saint of God, and, though it may not mean much, the greatest light of the western church. He had held the name of Christ and had not denied his faith. All agree that these epistles applied primarily to the churches to which John wrote; but many do not see that they also apply to different stages of the church, and describe its various states successively.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans* seems an evil from within, as that of Balaam was rather from without. Such it was in principle and doctrine now. We read of their deeds in Ephesus, but this went farther and deeper. It was a corruption of grace, a turning it to licentiousness. Sanctity is the greatest snare if it be not real, yea, if it flows not from the truth; yet nothing more terrible than that grace, where it is known or at least talked of, should be abused. If we search our own hearts and ways, we shall find that it is the very thing we all tend to do. Grace has set us completely free through Him who died and rose again; and what claim has it not on our hearts? Do we not often treat God's grace to us in the very same way that our children in their most hardened mood treat us? They then take all as a matter of right. Though creation has been brought under subjection to vanity on account of Adam's sin, yet there is no moral evil connected with its lower forms. But in man's case it is not so. Knowing the evil, he yet goes on in it. And even when we have got the certainty of deliverance, if the joy of it have passed away in a measure, we begin to use the Lord's grace just to serve ourselves. This, carried out without conscience, is Nicolaitanism.

*The true reading of verse 15 is "likewise," instead of "which thing I hate," which was probably copied from Rev. 2: 6. The sense is, that there were such as held the Nicolaitan doctrine, as well as those who held that of Balaam.

God's grace was meant to bind us thoroughly to Himself. We might see a person fall into evil (and this, of course, is truly sorrowful in a Christian), but there is a great deal more of evil that others do *not* see. God gives us the opportunity of judging ourselves when no one else perhaps knows anything about it. If we do not judge it, then the end here below is, that the very world may pronounce on it; and we may be sure what a vast amount of evil must have gone on in secret, when God allows one to fall so that the careless world judges one's course as evil. But we must not be discouraged. It is just where the truth is most preached and held that Satan will invariably try to bring in the worst conduct and heresies, in order to bring shame upon the testimony of God. When a man slips from a pinnacle or height, he must have a fall so much the more terrible; as also it will be much more manifest to the world than if he had merely upset on the plain.

The Lord does not say, "I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth," but "against them" (ver. 16). The sword of judgment may, it is true, act in taking them away by death, as in the case of the Corinthian saints, who were judged of the Lord here below that they might not afterwards be condemned with the world. Christian discipline does not mean putting away those who are not Christians from those who are; rather it contemplates the purging out of Christians who are walking wrongly, in order to maintain the honour and holiness of the Lord in their midst. Mercy is the great motive of discipline, next to the maintaining of Christ's character in the church. It is at the bottom of

the Lord's ways with us, and surely it should be so for its with others.

The fact of the church's getting into the world isolated at once the faithful Christian. The church only became invisible sin. It was not God's intention, it is not according to His heart, that it should ever be so, though I believe that all was permitted and ordered wisely. God did not make a light to be hid, but to be set on its due stand. Such was the fact now: Catholicism reigned, if you take the protracted view, which soon paved the way for Popery. But if the word penetrated him who had an ear to hear, it gave secret fellowship with Christ when the public position had become settledly false. Hence to a true-hearted saint, amid all this ruin and confusion, He says, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna" (verse 17). The manna represents Christ Himself as He came down from heaven and took a place of abasement in the world. Those who were slipping away into the world are reminded of the place which Christ took down here. The "hidden manna" refers to the use which was made of the manna for the ark: a certain portion of it was taken into the holy place as a memorial before God. The faithful are to eat not of the manna only, but of the hidden manna.

It is not merely that we shall share in and enjoy with Christ all His glory as exalted on high and as displayed before the world, but God will give us special communion with Christ as He was here below. How sweet in glory it will be, that He who will have brought us into all the enjoyment and peace of heaven is the same One we have known in all His path of sorrow and rejection in this world, with whom we have shared it ever so feebly here, feeding on Him as our portion even now! The white stone was a mark of entire acquittal. May we be thus looking forward to Christ; and may God give us to taste His own delight in His Son as He was here below in His outcast position! Along with this goes the white stone, the portion of souls faithful to Christ in a state of things like that of Pergamos, when the church and the world were enjoying themselves together. When in heaven such will enjoy the same food that sustained them here. Christ will be there more than ever to enjoy on high; and such shall have the white stone, "and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth save he that receiveth it" (*i.e.*, the expression of Christ's own secret satisfaction in the way in which you have suffered for Him and served Him below). Assuredly the heart will most prize what Christ will give between Himself and it alone — what none will know but ourselves and Himself. The Lord grant that we may be separate from every allurements which Satan offers through the world, although none should know all but Himself now. Even in glory the joy of His secret approval will not be lost but known more profoundly than ever.

CHANGE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE APOCALYPTIC EPISTLES.

There is an important change of arrangement that occurs in this chapter, beginning with the epistle to Thyatira. In the first three churches the warning word ("He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches") comes before the promise; but all the four concluding churches have the promise before the call to hear. These at least will be found to be the representatives of states of the church which go down to the end.

Now there must be a reason for such a change — a sufficient reason why the Holy Ghost should uniformly adopt one arrangement in the three earlier epistles, and as uniformly depart from this and adopt another arrangement in the four last. There is nothing haphazard in the word. As everything He has done in His dealings with man, as all that He has made even in creation has its purpose impressed by Him, so is it much more with that word which develops His ways and displays His moral glory. And this is of vast practical moment to us. For remember the secret of strength is in a Spirit-taught

knowledge of God and His ways in Christ. To enter into and enjoy the thoughts and feelings of God, as manifested in what He does and says in His own revelation of Himself, is that which wins and keeps, purifies and strengthens the heart of the believer. Israel did not understand His ways, and therefore never knowing His heart, they erred in their own; as it is said, "they do always err in their heart, for they have not known my ways." Moses, on the other hand, did appreciate the heart of God, and accordingly of him it is written, that "the Lord made known His ways unto Moses."

In the first three churches, then, the call to hear is addressed formally to the whole assembly concerned; but in the last four the change of situation appears to mark greater reserve. It seems to be intimated by this, that none is expected to hear but he who overcomes. Therefore this class is thenceforth, in a manner, singled out from the rest.* Evil has now set in over the professing body; so that the promise is not, and could no longer be, held out in the old indiscriminate way. From this distinction we gather a remnant begins to be more and more clearly indicated.

*It is a singular oversight that any thoughtful reader should meet the question, "To *whom* does the Spirit address these words?" by the answer, "To the angels of those churches," even supposing the angels to be their "bishops," which has been shown to be not only unfounded but contrary to the tone and object of the Revelation. It is a sorry thing to deduce either episcopacy or congregational ministry from a most solemn appeal to him that has ears to hear, when the church is being morally judged. The Spirit speaks to the churches, but the individual is made prominent even here; and this, still more strikingly viewed as following the overcomer, from and after Thyatira.

Something analogous to this appears elsewhere. Thus in the seven parables of Matt. 13 the last three were unquestionably marked off from their predecessors, and were addressed to a higher degree of spirituality. The first four were uttered outside to the multitude, the last three to the disciples only within the house. Wherever we find in the Bible a series of parables, prophetic visions, or the like, grouped together as these are, there is commonly, not to say invariably, some such line drawn between those which commence with a general bearing and those which become more special and narrow as we approach the goal. This is strikingly true of these Apocalyptic epistles, the last four of which sever the overcomer from the unfaithful surrounding mass. In short the formation of a faithful remnant, who were at first, I suppose, only morally separate from the mass which bore the Lord's name (now alas! untruly), becomes increasingly distinct. In the case of Thyatira the Spirit of God seems to make the principle plain and patent, as will appear presently.

THYATIRA.

The Lord Jesus introduces Himself here in His character of Son of God, followed by a description borrowed in the main from the vision which the apostle had seen in Rev. 1. "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God that hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass" (verse 18).

If we trace what the scriptures say of the Lord Jesus viewed thus, two things more particularly are seen. As Son of God, He is the source and sovereign giver of life. (John 5) The life which we by faith derive ("for he that believeth hath everlasting life") from the Lord Jesus Christ is life, in such power, that even the bodies of such as possess it in Him will rise from the graves to a life-resurrection; while others who have it not must rise to a judgment-resurrection. (John 5: 28, 29.) In the resurrection of judgment none can be saved. No Christian will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ as a criminal to be tried. All Christians will appear before it (as must all men); but the result before the world will be, in spite of loss of reward in certain cases, their glorious manifestation as justified men. But if you or I

had to appear to see whether we were righteous, and so could escape condemnation, could there be one ray of hope for us? Notwithstanding there never can be, or at least there never ought to be, a doubt as to the absolute salvation of those who have life in and from the Son of God. The judgment-seat of Christ will clearly display them as justified persons. But we need not and should not wait for the judgment-seat to know that we are justified; we are dishonouring God's grace and His Son's work not to know it now, "whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." Faith is entitled by divine warrant to a full justification now and here below, according to the worth and acceptance of the Lord Jesus in God's sight.

And this leads us to the second of the privileges alluded to, as connected with the "Son of God." He gives liberty as well as life. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8: 36.) These are the two great aspects of blessing which characterise Jesus as the Son of God. He imparts not only life but liberty too. Not that they have always or necessarily gone together. For a man might have spiritual life and yet be in grievous bondage, as one observes too often. This is also what we read of in Rom. 7. A person who is converted has life, but may be withal the most miserable of men in his own experience. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In Rom. 8 we have the answer of grace. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free [or delivered me] from the law of sin and death." Liberty now goes with the life of the Son of God, for He is the risen Lord who died for me and discharged me from all the claims of law, and of every other thing or one which might else arrest my blessing. The servant does not abide ever in the house, he might have notice to quit; but there is no such thing as the son's leaving the house. And it is thus as sons God puts us in His house, in the place of full and holy liberty.

What a searching but blessed title this was for the Lord Jesus to take, especially if He were not only providing for the then need of the assembly in Thyatira, but picturing besides that state of departure from truth, and even the depths of Satan, which characterized the middle ages! In Ephesus, when almost all the apostles had disappeared from the world, there was decay of first love; in Smyrna, persecution from the heathen powers; then in Pergamos, the allusion is plain to the era when Christianity gained the ascendant in the world, and when consequently the church consummated and sealed the loss of her sacred and heavenly separateness upon the earth. The power of the world never gained a greater victory than when it was externally vanquished by the cross; when, by merely professing Christ's name in baptism, all the Roman world was treated as born of God; in short, when apparently heathenism, but really Christianity, succumbed before the rising still of Christendom. In many respects it may have been a mercy for mankind, as it certainly was the greatest event in the government of the world since the flood; but who can estimate the loss for the saints, and the dishonour of their Lord, when the Christian body exchanged their place of suffering now in grace, hoping for glory with Christ at His coming, for present authority in, yea over, the world? In Thyatira we arrive at a period darker still — the natural consequences of those pleasures of sin for a season. When the empire professed the cross and arrayed it with gold, it was not only that God's children were favoured and caressed, instead of having to wander in sheep-skins and goat-skins, or to hide in dens and caves of the earth, but inevitably their enemies were attracted, and the Balaam-state became developed, and man ran greedily after error for reward. But the Jezebel-state is worse even than that, and most significant of the bloody and idolatrous prophetess who sought to be universal mistress in the so-called dark ages, and dark indeed they were! Of this I believe the church in Thyatira to be the remarkable foreshadowing.

But the Lord loves to praise what He can, and it is in a dreary time that He is glad to be able to approve of the least good. Here in the growing darkness of the public state, there was growing devotedness among the real saints. "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service,* and thy

patience, and thy last works [to be] more than the first" (verse 19). "And thy works" ought to be left out, and the clause following should be, "and thy last works," etc., on ample authority. This the sense, I think, fully confirms to a spiritual mind. "But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman [or, thy wife] Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Thus there was much energy and devoted service; but withal the greatest evil threatened them or even then was at work.

*This is the true order.

When Jezebel sat as a queen in Israel all was ruin and confusion; but the Lord did not fail to raise up a suited witness for Himself. It was then that we find an Elijah and an Elisha, and even another where naturally one might least expect it — in the very house where evil was paramount. There was he who gave refuge and food to the persecuted prophets of the Lord. Just as in the New Testament we hear of saints chiefly to be saluted who were of Caesar's household, so of old there was in Obadiah, who feared the Lord greatly, over the house of Ahab, "which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." It was then too was found the remnant of 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. I think the Lord would have said of that remnant what we have in the epistle to Thyatira — "Thy last works more than the first." The wickedness of those who surrounded them made their faithfulness more precious to the Lord; and He praises them more, perhaps we may add, than if they had lived in a day less trying; just as, on the other Lane], He cannot but deal most sternly with evil, which is done in a day of special light and mercy. How many Ananiases and Sapphiras have there been since Pentecostal times, who have not been visited in the same open and unsparing way as when great grace was upon all! This is an encouragement to us who know ourselves to be exposed, not indeed to a storm of persecution, but to a season far more perilous. There never was a time when man thought better of himself; and this is so much the graver sin, inasmuch as the testimony of God's truth to the contrary has been widely spread abroad. I do not deny that it is a day of no small effort anion, Christians. But "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;" and never has there been less subjection to the will of God than at this moment. There is much association, which sounds well, — much taking counsel together; but confederacy is one thing, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit is another and widely different thing. But the Lord says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The matter of real weight is not getting Christians together, even if they were all Christians, but together in the Lord's way, and for the Lord's glory as their object — the "one thing" they have to do. If but two or three are thus gathered unto His name, we have His own assurance that His power and blessing will be there, spite of all appearances to the contrary. Had we two or three thousand together, but not in immediate subjection to the Lord Jesus, we should have only shame and sorrow in the end, however it might look for awhile. If we are seeking to please men, so far we cannot be the servants of Christ.

It was then, it seems to me, when the Lord has before His eye the state of a church which might well prefigure the dark development of an after-day (when the saints should be in great bondage, and that which was altogether alien in the midst persecuting them, and His own authority null in practice), that He brings out His title of "Son of God," whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like burnished brass. Peter of old had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; and thereon the Lord, immediately after pronouncing him blessed and emphatically naming him by the new name He had given, adds, "upon this rock I will build my church." Now alas! the Lord anticipates that the professing church would lose its balance and set itself up virtually in His own place, giving out that she, the lady, "that calleth herself a prophetess," was to be heard in matters of faith, not He, the Lord. Here then we have the assertion of His personal glory and the attributes of His all-searching and unbending judgment

of men — a serious but comforting thought for His own people, who might be in the midst of this sad confusion, and the perfect provision of His wisdom to deliver them from what was setting or set in. They would need and enjoy the immutable foundation, the Son of God, and the assurance that His church built on that rock could not fail, when public appearances were against it as against Himself in Israel. They were worse than nothing in the eyes of their persecutors; they were precious in Christ. It was a severer trial than from Jews or heathens; but the Son of God was no heedless spectator of all. So too His promise (26, 27) ought to guard them from seeking a present kingdom, a so-called spiritual millennium without Christ, where they should be either free to enjoy the world or entitled to govern it as yet.

In the church at Thyatira there were faithful and loving souls, earnest too, especially in good works; but there was this plague-spot also — the sufferance of "the woman* Jezebel." Jezebel, as we are told here, was a false prophetess, who was teaching and deceiving Christ's servants to commit fornication and eat idolatrous sacrifices. This was worse than the iniquity of him who loved the wages of unrighteousness, a step farther even in Balaam's line. "And I gave her space to repent, and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches will know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to you, each one, according to your works" (verses 21-23).

*The Sinai and Porphyrian uncials lend their strong support to the Paris palimpsest, with many cursives and versions, against the insertion of $\sigma\tilde{\upsilon}$, as read in Codd. A. 2, and many cursives, etc., which would require the rendering of "thy wife."

What could be more shocking than the evil here foreshown! Jezebel, as all knew, was one who added violence to corruption, the counsellor of blood, the active hater of all God's witnesses, the patroness in private and public of the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal. And now in Thyatira was found that which intimated to the Lord's eye the dark and cruel idolatry which was to be formally taught and imposed by a pretended infallible authority within the bosom of the professing church. Even now the actual germ could not be hid from Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. Jezebel was there and "her children" too. It was a deep and lasting source of evil. But the judgment of her and of all that sprang from her was severe, however it might seem to linger. The Lord discerns different degrees of connection; but none should go unpunished, let Christendom decide as they might that evil must be allowed under His adored name. Repentance was absolutely refused, though the Lord had given ample space for it. "Fornication" (for such is the figure used) was both taught and practised. Long patience on His part is the sure sign, both that the object to be judged was in a thoroughly evil condition (else He comes quickly in the jealous care of true love that counts on a true answer), and that when the judgment comes, it must be definitive and unsparing. "The woman," it has been long-remarked, symbolizes the general state, as "the man" has the place of responsible activity.

The words "a few things," in verse 20, must disappear. It was not a little complaint, but one of unusual gravity and communication. The phrase crept in, I conceive, from verse 14, as there is otherwise resemblance enough to suggest such an assimilation to a copyist. But on a closer inspection the difference, as we have seen, is great, especially if we are to read "thy wife* Jezebel." The sin of fornication or adultery here is symbolical of that wicked commerce with the world, which is in the same relation to the Christian or the church, as intermarriage with a Canaanite would have been to an Israelite. To eat idol-sacrifices sets forth communion with what had a direct link with the power of Satan; for "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God;" and it is an easy thing, little as men may think it or Christians may estimate aright its enormity, to have fellowship

with devils.

*But see the preceding note.

Besides the leading corruptress and fountain-head of the mischief, we have two classes of persons mentioned who were guilty in a positive way. There were Christ's servants whom she deceived to illicit commerce with the world, and there were others who were the immediate offspring of Jezebel, "her children." With each one the Lord would deal according to his works. He was the righteous Judge, and man as such must be judged, and all, saints or sinners, must be manifested before His judgment-seat. Yet it is remarkable how the Lord avoids saying that the saints will be judged. "I will give," says He, to you, to each according to your works;" and so in Revelation 22: 12, and many similar scriptures. On the one hand we are positively told that the believer shall not come into judgment (for John 5: 24 means "judgment" and not "condemnation," however certainly this is the result of it). On the other hand we know from Rev. 20: 12, 13, that the wicked are to stand before the throne, and to be judged, each one according to their works. Their resurrection is one of judgment (and in effect, of condemnation) contrasted with that of the righteous, which is a life-resurrection. Thus it is certain, that if put on my trial for salvation or perdition, according as my works deserve, I must be lost, for I have sinned and have sin; yet is it equally sure that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love, and so He will give to each one according to his works. Christ Himself, Christ's love, is the only right motive for a Christian in anything; but there are rewards for those who have suffered for Christ and been cast out for righteousness' or for His name's sake.

The remnant comes out with great clearness in the next verse. "But to you I say, the rest (or "remnant;" omitting the words "and unto," which have no right to be here) in Thyatira" (verse 24). Here we have a faithful few, who are called "the rest," distinguished from the mass in Thyatira. The Lord had been speaking of His servants who had been seduced to dally with the evil of Jezebel, and of her own children, for which last class there was to be no mercy from Him. Then another class is addressed, the remnant, or "you that remain." The corrupt exterior body goes on, and there is a remnant that the Lord now hid specially in view. He supposes them to be ignorant of what Christendom then counted knowledge, and only says, "as many as have not this doctrine, who such as) have not known the depths of Satan (as they speak), I put upon you no other burden: but that which ye have hold fast till I come" (verses 24, 25). These "depths of Satan" they had not known. They valued no knowledge which undermined the call to holiness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and this beginning at least they cherished; and they were right. It might seem but insignificant; but they had kept clear of a great evil, and holding their little fast, they would surely have their reward when the Lord comes. There were those who suffered much for Christ, who witnessed for Him in these dark ages. Such were (if not the Albigenses) the Waldenses and others. "You, the rest in Thyatira," I take to refer to these persecuted companies, who held tenaciously what they had from God, mainly practical piety and religious ways. They did not know much, but they were a remnant separated in conscience and suffering from the evil around them, especially from Jezebel. Their comfort lies in no promise of amendment to the church, but in a hope outside all on earth, even the kingdom and coming of Christ in person. Meanwhile they are called to overcome and keep Christ's works unto the end.

There could not be a more admirable sketch in a few words than what we have here. And it is not a little remarkable that the book of the Revelation was much prized by these saints. Indeed this has always been more or less the case in times of persecution: not that it is the best motive; for the book is valued most when the Lord leads His people to wait for His return. But His tenderness to His sufferers in a dark day is most sweet; and what a promise! — "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations," etc. (verses 26, 27). What the

mediaeval church arrogantly and wickedly sought, the saints then persecuted or despised are yet to possess in the coming and kingdom of their Lord, and these hopes accordingly are here brought in as their suited objects. The guilty church was not more cruel towards the true saints than ambitious of power over the world. Things ecclesiastical had got to their grossest point. But it is good to wait for the Lord's way and time: *He* is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. When the earthly power has been put aside and judged, those who have suffered with Christ shall reign with Him. But He adds more than authority over the nations, and ruling them with a rod of iron . . . as Christ also received of His Father. "And I will give him the morning star" (verse 28). Is not this blessed? not merely association with Christ in the day of His power, when the stronghold of men shall be broken to shivers like the vessels of a potter, but "gathering together unto Him" before that day. The hope abides in all its fulness, and as fresh as at the first. Christ only could so speak and act.

The sun, when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning-star shines for those only who sleep not as do others — for those who watch as children of light and of the day. We shall be with Christ doubtless when the day of glory dawns upon the world; but the morning-star is before the day, and Christ not only says, I am . . . the bright and morning star," but "I will give the morning-star." He will come and receive His heavenly ones before they appear with Him in glory. May we be true to Him in the refusal of present ease, and honour, and power! May we follow Him, taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily! He will not forget us in His day, and He will give us ere it comes the morning star.

I would here add, in closing this sketch of Rev. 2, that Thyatira has a sort of transitional place, being linked with the three preceding churches as on church-ground, whatever the corruption allowed which characterized its public state. On the other hand, it is connected with the three churches which follow on the ground of truth or testimony (not regularly ecclesiastical), both as being the first of those marked by the change of position in the call to hear, and as also expressly running down to the end. The others were transient phases. This begins the more permanent states in view of the Lord's advent. It may be noticed accordingly that the dealing after Thyatira, when threatened, falls on the angel: up to this it had been either on the candlestick, as in Ephesus, or on the evil-doers, as in Pergamos and Thyatira. Smyrna and Philadelphia have a special exemption, one in each of the two series. To the angel of the church in Sardis the word is, "I will come on thee as a thief;" when similar language was used in a former case, Christ said, "I will fight against them," etc.; "I will cast her" and "I will kill her children," etc. In the latter series it is a question of a separated witness in Christendom, where fidelity is everything, as with the disciples in the Gospels. Judgment must fall on the whole, though not without distinguishing the true-hearted. In this new part (with a slight exception in Sardis, which is necessary and only proves the rule) the titles of Christ are distinct from those seen in the opening vision of Rev. 1, and point to His future reign. This is seen with special emphasis in Laodicea, so that "the things that are" may vanish away thenceforth, as in fact they do.

Revelation 3.

SARDIS.

It may be assumed that any discerning reader will perceive that we are entering upon an entirely new order of things in this chapter, or, at least, a sort of fresh start. What was described in the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks is not here as in Rev. 2, unless it be the "seven stars," no longer, however, held in His right hand. It is quite true that what we have been looking at in the former

chapter may still exist and be verified at the same time with new features as they are brought out here. Not only may there be points morally like what we have seen in Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamos, but a continuing public state like the evil depicted in the message to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, which goes on to the end in a way that differs from its predecessors. We find in Sardis another condition, and one which answers to the general state of Protestantism after the Reformation. We have not so much open evil, like idolatry and the other horrors that have been described before; but now we have a more correct outward form and orthodox aspect of things. As the four churches in the second chapter follow on consecutively, and describe the state of things before the rise of Luther, etc., so Sardis describes what followed the Reformation, when the glow and fervour of truth and the first flush of blessing had passed away, and a cold formalism had set in.

The way in which the Lord presents Himself is wonderfully suitable. "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (verse 1). This is a new point of view in which to see Christ. In Revelation 1 "the seven Spirits" were distinct from His person and connected with the throne. The seven Spirits of God refer to the Holy Spirit of God, viewed in His various perfections and the ways in which He works; and this not so much in the church as towards the world. In Rev. 5, when the churches are done with, the Lord Jesus is described symbolically as a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth — the Holy Ghost as acting with a view to the government of the earth. It is not the Holy Ghost in all the fulness of the blessing into which He brought the church in its unity or dwelling there. It is the expression of the Spirit in fulness of quality and power to make good God's will on earth.

But whatever might be the condition of the church, the Lord Jesus possesses the complete power of the Spirit of God, and at the same time fulness of spiritual authority. There were no two things more separated than these at the time of the Reformation. There was then a large body calling itself the church, which claimed the power of settling everything, as being the spouse of Christ. No wonder that the claim of infallibility was strongly advanced; for assuredly those who assume irresponsible authority as Christ's vicar to settle the affairs of the church, to define doctrine, etc., ought to be infallible. This body had wrought for acres, gathering influence for itself; but at last the struggle came, and it was proved to be a mass of the greatest evil against God and His Son that had ever been congregated on the earth. There might have been true saints of God in it at the worst of times; and even from an early day some excellent men had even helped to give the see of Rome a false and absurd authority. St. Bernard himself sanctioned the persecutions of the Waldenses.

But God can turn such lessons to our profit. For it is well to bear in mind that there cannot be a greater fallacy than to abide in what is wrong merely because we find true saints of God there. Indeed the great aim of Satan is to gain all by getting good people to do bad things. When at last the crisis arrived, and men rose up in a considerable part of the world against this frightful evil, there ensued a divorce between the two thoughts of ecclesiastical authority and spiritual power. Instead of its being a body that claimed both, in derogation and in spite of Christ's rights, everything ecclesiastical fell into disorder, and men fell back on the power of the world in order to gain freedom from the dominion of the Pope.

Thus Protestantism was always wrong ecclesiastically from the very beginning, because it looked up to the civil ruler as the one in whose hand ecclesiastical authority was vested; so that if the church had been under Popery the ruler of the world, the world now became in Protestantism the ruler of the church. It is not a question of church and state that politicians may discuss; which is a great deal too narrow and low a question for a Christian. There is but one thing satisfactory — to be in the path of Christ, giving honour to Him.

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This describes the cold and formal ways of religion that were found after the Reformation among those that were not really Christians. The Lord Jesus shows what He disapproves of in Protestantism. Why not be thoroughly Christians? It was a poor thing to boast of not being as bad as Jezebel; it was death if not abomination.

In Protestant lands there is ordinarily a measure of truth, as there is still more commonly liberty of conscience. But the object of God is not merely to deliver either from gross evils, or from mistake in detail, but that the soul should be right with God, and should allow the Lord to have His way and glory in the Christian assembly — liberty for the Lord to work by the Holy Ghost according to His will. When He is allowed His right place, there is the blessed fruit of it in love and holy liberty. It is not a human liberty derived from the power of the world that we want (though God forbid that we should speak a word against the powers that be in their sphere), but the liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is the sin of Christians to let the powers assume a false position in divine things. The Lord Jesus touches the root of the whole matter in the way in which He presents Himself to the church of Sardis. Whether it is spiritual power or the outward authority flowing from it, the Lord claims it all as belonging to Him. In Ephesus it was said that He held the seven stars in His right hand, and walked in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands; but here are united the two things, inward spiritual power, and outward authority. He hath the Spirits of God and the stars. It is not said here that He holds the stars in His right hand, but only that they are His, as well as the fulness of spiritual competency; still less is He said to be walking in the midst of the lamp-stands. It is an assertion of His rights, not of their exercise.

In the great mass of Protestant churches they gave up, as it were, the regulation of the stars into the hands of the powers that be. On the other hand, the persons who revolted from that fell into the sad evil of suffering the church to have the stars in its own keeping. There is not such a doctrine in the whole scripture as either the world or the church having this kind of authority in its own hands. The Lord Jesus has still all under Himself. He has not given it up. Therefore let the church only own what He is, and He will act accordingly. When there is faith to look to Him in His place as Head of the church, He will assuredly supply every need. If He listens to the simplest cry of His lambs, does He not enter into the deep need of the church? Is it not an object near His heart and affecting His moral glory? He took His headship of the church only in heavenly glory, and He went on high not merely to be, but to act, as Head. What is the character of His functions in this respect? He exercises authority, having persons to act under Him here below. Thus the existence of rule and gift in the church of God is the result; and these are not touched by the ruin of the church. The Lord, anticipating the time when there would be a revolt from under the spurious authority of the body calling itself the church, and foreseeing all the confusion that would be the result, presents Himself as the One who is superior to it all. Whatever may be the condition of things here, strength is in Christ: and we can never find strength in looking at the condition of the church, but at Christ.

When the apostles were here below, they were empowered to act for Christ in a very special way; but when they were taken away, the real source of the power in which they had acted subordinately to Christ was not dried up; the Lord Jesus has it all in His own keeping still. There was a name to live, but real death. He was speaking of their condition as a body, and not as individuals. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [filled up] before my God." Here we have again a very striking feature of what took place in Protestantism. In the desire to escape from the abuse of works by the Romish system, it is evident that Christian practice lost its due place in the minds of many — its place for those who have been brought nigh to God. For God does look for a real separate and distinct path to be taken by His people; and He finds fault with Sardis because of their failure in this. The saints of God even in Thyatira were

commended of God for their earnestness, in spite of all evil. *Their* last works* were more than the first. Protestantism has weakened the idea of obedience, under the plea of "no perfection," either in the church or in the individual. Thus there has been a lowering of the just criterion wherever Protestantism has prevailed: but our God looks for perfection as the standard His children should judge themselves by — I do not say attain. He has grace to meet failures; but it is quite another thing for persons to settle down in self-complacency, from not having the divine standard before their eyes. The Lord always goes back to this.

*I am far from thinking the Romanist idea of works sounder than their depreciation of faith. The remnant in Thyatira, viewed mystically, were not Romanists, but persecuted by Jezebel.

It is better, in seeking to have that standard before us, to fail in carrying it out, than to succeed ever so much, if we gave it up. For what does the Lord most value? The heart that wants to please Him. The child may come to its father and say, "See what a pretty thing I have been making;" but if the parent had told him to do something else, he would ask the child, "Is that what I desired you to do?" The Lord has His own will, which meets us in our first need as sinners awakened, and is the source of our very salvation. But it is far from the natural thought of the heart, which dislikes subjection to another's will. It is but part of the lie of the enemy. The will of God, we know, was that which accomplished our sanctification, through Him who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will." In Rom. 10 the apostle puts our part of the matter in contrast with Jewish feeling. They thought, if they accomplished as much of the law as they could, that God was merciful and would make up the rest; but the apostle shows that subjection to the righteousness of God is salvation. God's will is the very spring and power of our blessing, not only in the matter of forgiveness, but all the way through. Take God's ways in the church. These were subjects that were particularly neglected at the Reformation. Individual truth, such as justification by faith, was brought out forcibly and over a large field. But this was made the great point and aim of everything, and the consequence was that people never knew thoroughly they were justified. The moment one makes one's own blessing the one or chief object of research in the Bible, never can anything be known aright; but he who receives God's thoughts and objects is sure to know directly that he is saved and blessed indeed. He cannot look at the cross of Christ without seeing at the same time his utter ruin, and his complete deliverance in the resurrection. If a man hesitates whether he is so very bad as God declares, he has to wait before he enjoys the riches of His grace; but if he trust himself unhesitatingly in God's hands, there is not a blessing that does not flow abundantly. We find ourselves to be as bad or worse than Israel, and then we are brought inside a circle of goodness and mercy superior to any thing they ever possessed.

At the Reformation all this was comparatively lost sight of; and, in escaping from the fearful net of popery, men fell into the sin of putting church power into the hands of the civil magistrate. Others again, who avoided this evil, made what they considered a true church to be the depository of this power; whereas it is Christ Himself still working by the Holy Ghost who maintains His own lordship, a truth which is taught at large in the epistles. Supposing a person labours as a pastor or a teacher, from what authority is he to act? Apostles or their envoys did choose those who had to do with local matters; yet wherever it was a question simply of ministry, in the word there was no appointment from the first. Even in the case of choosing a successor to the vacant seat of Judas, the apostles did not themselves elect, but threw it out of their own hands into those of the Lord. (Acts 1: 24.) And when the Lord afterwards chose another apostle, we find "one Ananias" indeed sent to baptize him; but there was no idea of that disciple, or any one else, making him an apostle. In what we have afterwards (Acts 13), i.e. the case of hands being laid on the apostles Paul and Barnabas, it was not a bestowal of any orders or mission, for it was done by men inferior to themselves in point of spiritual gift and power; but was

simply their brethren commending them to the Lord before they set out on a particular missionary tour to the Gentiles. We have a right to look for the Lord to maintain His authority in the church. In all ages we find Him helping His people in their need, and doing His work by His servants. If a person wants to preach, he naturally thinks he must have the warrant of some authority; but if we seek an authority at all, we should have a competent one. Although there may be more respectability in the world where these outward credentials are looked for, the question arises, Does the Lord require authority to validate a person's preaching the gospel? The apostles did appoint elders and deacons; but these might or they might not be preachers and teachers: their being deacons was another thing altogether. Philip was a preacher of the gospel, but this depended on his having a from Christ as the Head of the church, and not on his being one of "the seven." Men have slipped into habitual departure from God's principles; and this is called "order," because it is the most prevalent custom now in the professing church. Yet when we thus give up true principles, we slip into wrong practice. The Lord attaches great importance to our owning Him as the One who has all power and authority in His own hands. The moment we recognise this it so much the more binds the conscience. If one knows a thing to be wrong, the conscience is held to it. One may not be able to see at once what is the right path to take; but to cease from what is evil is evidently the first step, and it is imperative.

The connection between the end of the second verse ("I have not found thy works perfect before God") and what follows ("Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard," etc.) is to be remarked. He recalls them to what they had received from God Himself at the first. No such thought is allowed as that because things are not as they were then, therefore every church has a right to form its own laws. If it would be downright rebellion to say, because the Queen does not live in Ireland, that therefore the Irish people were at liberty to make what laws they pleased, it is as bad or worse if we think that because things are changed, the apostles gone, and confusion come into the church, men are left free to desert the word of Christ and do their own wills: the Lord has left us His. The very word of God which tells me what I once was, but that I am washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, this same portion enters into all questions of the assembly, and the working of the Holy Ghost in it by whom He will. (1 Cor. 12) There may be no tongues, or gifts of miracles, and healings; but is the Holy Ghost here What He continues to do is according to the same principle and presence as at first, though in a very different measure of power: else we have no divine rule in these things.

Remark that the Lord's coming is spoken of just in the way it was threatened on the world. (See 1 Thess. 5) "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief" (verse 3). He would come upon them when they were not aware — suddenly and unwelcome. Had they not got into the world? Let them then beware of the portion of the world. If you have taken the world's ease, you must needs dread the world's judgment. Such is not the way in which the Lord speaks of His coming to the church. In reality and in all the extent of the words, it will be upon the professing mass, and not upon real believers, that the Lord will come as a thief.

"But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, he* shall be clothed in white raiment" (verses 4, 5). The Lord brings in this suited comfort, that as some in Sardis had sought to act faithfully on earth, they should walk with Him in white. As they had maintained real personal purity here below, they should appear in full justification of their ways before God above. But this is spoken of individually. The state of the church as a whole was beyond question worldly, and as such it should be judged.

*The Alexandrian and Paris uncials with a fair support from cursives, and especially from versions,

read οὕτως "thus;" but the Basilian, Vat. and Porphyrian uncials, and most of the juniors with some versions read οὐτως. Cod. Sinaitica gives the former first, and then corrects it by the latter, and perhaps by the original scribe. Externally therefore the balance is nearly even. But in the older MSS. especially the interchange of ο and ω is so common as to make their evidence in such cases of slight value. Internal consideration greatly inclines in my opinion to οὐτως, as in the text.

The moment a person ascertains that his association is contrary to the word, he should feel how grave that fact is, and consider what is due to the Lord. It might seem incredible, if one did not know the fact, that there have been and are men of God, guides of the flock, who not only abide in evil which they know, but seek to find a palliative in the circumstances of a righteous Asa or a godly Jehoshaphat, who nevertheless did not remove the high places. Alas! that the solemn revelations of God should be thus perverted so as to serve the ends of the enemy, and that a repeated warning should be tortured into a justification of sin. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." It is not enough to correct thoughts, and rest there; but if the Lord has given a judgment, is it not in order that the walk may be correspondent? Satan contrives to make the path of the Lord appear dark and sad; as he colours a worldly course with the semblance of humility, order, and the like. But the word makes all plain now, as power will by and by even to the world.

May we walk with the Lord now, and surely we shall walk with Him in white hereafter! Instead of a blotted name, ours He will confess before His Father and the holy angels.

PHILADELPHIA

The tone of the epistle to Philadelphia must, I think, confirm the idea presented as to Sardis, that in this portion (Rev. 3) we have not so much the early church, or that of the middle ages, but what is found, or is developed, in modern times, Sardis is the beginning of this: a state of things not marked by flagrant evil, but by one sad and fatal characteristic — it is negative. Any fair persons, who have thought deeply on what is called Protestantism, must know that this is the sorrowful thing which we, who have been Protestants and thus share its shame, have to acknowledge. Men stand up too much, at least too self-complacently, for certain controversial points, which hide in a great measure their own wants and failures; they pride themselves on keeping apart from certain evils, such as the supremacy of the Pope, the infallible authority of the church, the worship of the Virgin, saints, and angels, the doctrine of the mass, purgatory, etc. Supposing the most rigid orthodoxy as to these, there might be a thousand evils of another character, yet, together with outward correctness, the heart be thoroughly away from the love and honour of the Lord. This is precisely what we saw in Sardis — a name to live, but yet dead. As in Israel when the Lord was on earth, the old idolatry had passed away, the unclean spirit had left the house, and had not returned; so the swept and garnished condition of the house answers to that which followed the Reformation. But we must distinguish between that and the work which God gave the Reformers to do. Let none speak disparagingly of these men, whether Luther or others. But while God was working in that great movement. it would have been better and holier if they had left earthly governments to their own proper functions. No doubt their patrons spared them persecutions and secured them honours, which, instead of helping on God's work, proved a great hindrance. And so, when the fervour of first zeal had passed away, the state of things corresponds with Sardis.

In Philadelphia we have something totally different. The first thing that strikes us is not what the

Lord does or has, but what the Lord is Himself. If there is anything that delivers from mere dogma, with all its chilling influences, it is, I apprehend, the person of the Lord appreciated in any special way. And this is seen in the epistle to Philadelphia. The Lord here presents Himself personally more than in any other of these epistles. It is true He is said to have the key of David; but before anything appears about this, He says that He is the Holy One and the True. In the other epistles we do not find the Lord characterised in the same moral point of view. This is, in my opinion, what grace has been making good in God's children during late years. The impulse given to evangelization by the spread of Bibles and missionary efforts has marked it outwardly; but inwardly the sense of ruin has been used of the Spirit to lead the saints to the word, and hence to a fuller appreciation of the person of Christ — the only object in which we can rest through the Holy Ghost, as He was God the Father's when He walked on earth.

There is something very beautiful in the way in which the grace of the Lord operates, after the epistle to Sardis, which was in a dead worldly state. Christ made Himself known; and He is the resurrection and the life. And what can give new life, put the church in its proper attitude, or bring a remnant to the walk and sentiments which become a time of ruin, but the Lord presenting Himself personally? This is characteristic of John's Gospel; the person of Christ in His rights, not only humbling Himself to death, but baptizing with the Holy Ghost, in the activity of gracious power which is suitable to His glory. The first portion of it brings His person before us; the second, the other Comforter, whom the absent Lord was to send down from heaven. It is beautiful thus to see the place that John's Gospel has in the scriptures of God. It was written very late, the last of all the gospels, and suited to a day of declension. There is no question of Jerusalem or of the Jews, as the immediate object of God, even in the way of testimony. They are noticed as a people outside, whom God has nothing to do with for the time. Hence the Lord speaks of the passover as a "feast of the Jews," and so on. In Matthew, on the contrary, there is the recognition of Israel for the truth of God. The boar out of the wood may waste, and the beast devour, but it is Israel's land still; and Jerusalem is called the holy city, even in connection with Christ's death and resurrection. In John all that is at an end. Not only had Jerusalem and the Jews forfeited all claim upon God, having departed from Him as Jehovah, and the law and the prophets, but they had rejected Christ; yea, and when the Holy Ghost came, they rejected Him too, and would not listen to Him any more; so that there was no resource. God had manifested Himself in every possible way. No manifestation of God, where man was under law, could do any good. Individuals laid hold of God's grace all through, but the nation was under law. The Gospel of John starts from this point, that all was darkness, and there the True Light shines though the darkness comprehends it not. In Him was life. This ever remains true, though He may deal judicially here.

But to return to these churches: there had been declension from first love, suffering from heathen power, Satan tempting through the power of the world, Jezebel seducing to idolatry, and, in short, every kind of evil commerce with the world, with persecution, but now we find a modern state — outward cleanness, but the heart given up to itself. (See 2 Tim. 3) Sardis gives us this picture: some walking purely, but there was no such thing as the heart thoroughly subjected to the Lord. But will He be content with this? The Lord must raise up a witness for Himself; and the only way whereby He makes a person an adequate witness for Himself is by presenting Himself to the affections. The moment we see the Lord Himself, there is strength to serve Him with gladness.

Here the Lord, disgusted with the state of Sardis, comes, as it were, saying, "I want to have the heart, and must have it." He removes the veil brought in through the sin of the professing church. When they see that Blessed One, so to speak, a little nearer, there is a state that answers (but oh how feebly!) to His desires for their heart, which will be made good without fail, when we shall see Him as He is.

"Thou hast a little strength." It is not the way of God to produce great strength at a time of general ruin. At the era of the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Lord wrought in great grace. There was no outward power; on the contrary, they were so apparently contemptible, that it was the taunt of their enemies that a fox could jump over their wall. But we find the same sort of spirit as in Philadelphia. They build no fortification to keep out the Samaritans; the Lord was a wall of fire round about them; but the first thing they erect is an altar to Him. The Lord was the first object of their hearts. If He was their wall, they could afford to wait before building another. There was no such thing as the angel smiting the first-born, no miracle wrought on their behalf, not a word about plagues on their enemies; but "my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." Whenever Israel were afraid of their adversaries, they had no strength; but in looking to the Lord they forgot enemies.

When we lean on Him now, it strikes more terror into the hearts of those who are against Him than anything else. When the heart is true to the Lord, it tells upon the conscience of others. What joy that the Lord's heart is toward His people! It is this which produces proper feelings toward Him and toward one another. The very name of this church is significant of the relationship which He had established; but it is also important to remember that it is a holy relationship we bear to one another. While it is certain that those who care for one another's heavenly interest will not be careless otherwise, still the church is not a club, where men must be ready to help on each other, right or wrong. This would be Chartism or any thing rather than the brotherhood of the Lord.

The first words are the key. "He that is holy, he that is true" (verse 7). Look at the first Epistle of John. The expression is not often used about the Lord, but we find it there. In the second chapter of that epistle, speaking to the little ones of the family of God, it is written, "Ye have an unction from the HOLY ONE, and ye know all things." He that is Holy, He that is true, has all for them. There might be weakness, but He has the key of David. In the genealogy of our Lord in Matthew we find the expression, David "the king," not Solomon the king or any other; because David is the person who first characterized royalty in Israel. He was the man according to God's own heart. As long as David walked in faith, no difficulties could stand in his way. True, the type was imperfect: no type reaches the mark, because it is not Christ, though it may be a witness of Him. We see the failure of the man; but where the power of God wrought in David what was bright, and blessed, and good, we have the germ, as it were, of that which we see fully in the Lord. "The key of David" represents administrative power, the means of access to whatever he possessed. Thus it is said (Isa. 22), "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut," etc. This was the consequence; he who had it had all things under his hand; and it was his business to take care of everything.

The Lord presents Himself as having the key of David. Therefore they ought not to look to the power of the world, nor to man; for if *He* had the key, it was the very thing they wanted. The energy of man might be at work all around, Jezebel, false prophets, etc.; but there was this Blessed One, the Holy and the True; and so much the more needed, because they were weak. They had so little strength that, perhaps, they could not even open the door; but He says that He had opened it for them; He had brought them into a large place where there was no such thing as bondage or constraint. It is plain that the Lord is here marked according to what He is personally and morally; not only as the great source of holiness and truth, but as the Holy One and the True. We find the latter also in the first Epistle of John. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ;" but there he goes farther still, "This is the true God and eternal life." Thus then we have the Lord's person brought before them: it was what they coveted. They valued Christ. They wished to know more of Him; and He knew their heart. So it is said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." They were tried by a mere form of godliness; they knew it was as possible to be lost or to dishonour the Lord in orthodoxy as in the world.

They turn to the Lord, and He presents Himself as the Holy One and the True; not as against them, but full of tenderness and grace, putting before them an open door, and giving them the certainty that no man could shut it.

"Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (ver. 8). Here we have three expressions concerning them. They are in a state not marked by outward note or strength. Like Himself, they are unknown to the world, but they had kept His word; and more than this, they had not denied His name. Consider what it is to keep Christ's word. It is evident there had been a departure from His word. It might have been circulated; but had it been cherished? Had it been loved and sought into, as for hid treasure? Was it for this thing that men met together to pray and read — that they might understand it better? What a movement in advance for the church, where the Lord's person becomes more than ever the object, and the word as His word! It is not mere evangelization, blessed as that is in its place, and in its effect on the world. But here it is the inner circle of the saints, who love, serve, and adore Christ for Himself.

In this epistle we also find the great value of the name of the Lord Jesus. In 1 Cor. 1 the address is not to the Corinthians alone, but "to all who in every place call upon" that name. In other words, the first Epistle to the Corinthians is in no way, more than the second, of private application, but for all Christians everywhere. In fact the generalizing address is not put so strongly in any other; and this, perhaps, because the Spirit of God foresaw that, more than any other, it would be set aside. In these days, when there is no extraordinary manifestation of power, men might say, It is not for us, it belongs to a day that is bygone. True, it is of no use to talk of regulating tongues, if you have not got them. But we have the Holy Ghost, and, blessed be God! the church will never know the day when it will be without the Holy Ghost. Look at its darkest hour — the middle ages, Romanism, etc. The Holy Ghost was always there, not indeed justifying evil, or putting His seal upon disobedience, but He was there for the certainty of faith, according to the Lord's word, "He shall abide with you for ever." The idea of looking for the Holy Ghost to be poured out again on us is utterly wrong. Such is the Jewish hope. For the church to make such a petition is in effect to deny that it is the church. It may be well for us to throw ourselves down before the Lord, and own that we have acted as we had it not. But let us bless God that we have the Spirit, not only dwelling in individuals, but binding us together for an habitation of God. The manifestation of this is broken, it is true, but the fact remains; just as we say of a man whose circumstances are bad, that he is a ruined man, while the man still exists. This gives us ground for humbling ourselves the more; that the church had the Spirit and yet went wrong. Men might say, If we had a Pentecost now, and the Holy Ghost sent down again, we should go right; but the fact is that, when they had the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they declined and fell. What God calls upon us to do is, not now to wait for fresh gifts of power, but to humble ourselves before Him, because we have gone, even as Christians, in the saddest opposition to His will. Alas! though the Holy Ghost dwelt there, one golden calf after another has been set up, till there is as much sin as was in Israel. This is what the Lord calls us to feel. The sympathies of the Philadelphian saints were with Him.

Clearly then what the Spirit presents is a despised company, but the word of Christ specially prized, and the Lord's name maintained. We have learned that the church is never bound to go on in sin. "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." There may be moral iniquity and worldly lusts; and what is there so bad as church iniquity, except that which is against the person of Christ Himself? If a man perseveres in violating the outward order of the church, it is evil, but not to be compared with sin against the Lord Jesus personally. This is the worst evil (2 John 7), and the test of souls. The first of all duties is that the heart should be true to Christ. God looks for it. The Father will have Him honoured Himself.

Here then we see Christ bringing Himself out personally to the church, and this not with a general expression of love, but manifesting a special attachment of His heart to them. Hence it is said, "I have loved thee." The Lord loves all His people, but it is equally true that He has special affections. There may be a peculiar link between Him and saints at particular times of danger and trial. His grace removes the hindrances and makes it to be enjoyed in its strength. They know His place in glory, but that which touches their hearts is that He loves them in all that glory. His love is the great basis and spring of their love.

"Thou hast a little strength." He knows they are weak; but they have "kept my word and not denied my name." See here the personal links — "my word," and "my name." The name of Christ apprehended by the soul is salvation; but it is much more; it is all. When the heart is brought down to submit to God's judgment of its sin, He Himself brings before that soul Christ's name; when it finds that it has no name in which to stand before God, He says, Here is a name, My Son's name. Faith supposes a man giving himself up as a good-for-nothing, and saying, "God has been good to me, when I was only bad for Him." God has laid down this name as a foundation-stone for the poor sinner. It looks weak; it is called a "stumbling-stone," as it is to unbelief; but I ought to believe in it. if I merely look at the gospel, I am lost, because then I reason about it; but if I believe it, I am saved. What did Abraham do? He did not reason; he considered not his own body which was dead, but he gave glory to God. If he had felt strong, he might have sought glory to himself. This is one practical aim that God effects, that we may know our own nothingness.

But is this the only use of Christ's name? No: He assembles round Himself, Jesus is the great object and attractive point to which the Holy Ghost gathers. Suppose it were the question of a person coming in who holds what people call, Calvinistic views or Arminian, never having learnt fully the ruin of man; you may say, "We do not like to be troubled." But the test is, what does the Lord say? Has He no power to judge that question? Has He delegated it to our discretion? The Lord has named His name over that saint, and I am therefore to receive him. Another comes and says, "I hear you receive all Christians; but I do not believe that Christ was exempt from the fall, either in His nature or in His relation to God." "No," we reply, "you cannot use the name of Christian to dishonour Christ." But wherever a man is found humbly confessing the name of the Lord (whether he be churchman or dissenter, that is not the point), we are bound to receive him. It is sorrowful that the church should have these names of variance: they will all be at an end by and by. But we must not gainsay the name of the Lord now. Wherever it is heard it becomes a passport all over the church. It is no question of joining us: he who is joined to Christ is indeed joined to us. True, the Lord has His servants; but we do not acknowledge any one as a centre in the church but Christ.

A further use of the name of the Lord is in discipline. What is the object of discipline? Not to keep up our character, but that His name should have its just place and honour, keeping it bright even where Satan's throne is. In the very camp of the enemy there is a name that cannot be put down. The Holy Ghost is there, not merely to give us comfort, but, having delivered us from anxiety about our own sins, He leaves us free to care for Christ and to serve Him. The question in the maintenance of discipline is, Is there departure from iniquity? The Lord never acknowledges anything as the church where iniquity is sanctioned. There is a difference between sin detected there, and the sanction of sin when detected. Any iniquity may break out; it did in the apostolic churches. The man was put away at Corinth because he was a Christian (as it is said, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"). It might be thought, from the terrible nature of his sin, that he could not have been one. The Holy Ghost shows us thereby that if a Christian slips away from Christ, he is capable of anything except positive indifference to Christ Himself. From this I think the Holy Ghost would always keep; as in the case of Solomon's

judgment, the false woman was determined at all events to have her half of the child, while the real mother would rather yield it than let its life be touched. But a Christian may fall into a cold state of feeling about Christ, unnatural as this may seem; and when in this state, so as not to have a just sense of the name of the Lord, what good can be expected of him? It was not so with the Philadelphian saints. They did not deny His name; and the Lord uses the tenderest expressions of love towards them. All ecclesiastical pretension, it has been well said, was against them. They were quite despised by those who said they were Jews. But He says of them, "I will make them come. and worship before thy feet," etc. (verse 9.) They were in the midst of a great deal of profession that was hollow. But the Lord promises to vindicate them by His own power. What comfort there is in not seeking to vindicate ourselves, but in going on with the Lord!

It is of the utmost importance to see that the name of the Lord will never oblige a man to choose between two evils; and this is, in my judgment, what God has been pressing of late. There is a path without evil. Not that the flesh of man may not bring in evil; but if a man persists in any sin, you say he is not walking as a Christian; he cannot be owned as a Christian, though we pray for him. Again, take a company of Christians. Evil comes in. We cannot say, "These are not Christians." No, but bring in the authority of the Lord's name to put the evil away. He having absolute authority, it is ours to take the place of full subjection to Him. The church belongs to God. If it were ours, we might make our own rules; but woe be to the man that meddles with the church of God, bringing in his own regulations! This was, it would seem, what was felt by these Philadelphians. They valued the authority of the name of the Lord. They avowed that they were weak, but they knew that the power of Christ was strong enough to keep them. Why should they be afraid? When Christians own His name as a gathering centre, it is not said that evil will not come in; but looking to the power of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit, we do not mean to sanction evil. Let us only leave the door open for the Lord to come in. There may be much to try our patience; but what we have to do is to wait on the Lord. This is what the Lord seeks — that we should have confidence in what He is and has, taking the place of weakness and dependence in prayer, however much we may be tried.

It is of great interest to note here the re-appearance of the Catholic system at this point. It developed itself first in its fulness in the era of early heathen persecution under the fathers so called — the Smyrna period. (Compare Rev. 2: 9.) Now it comes up again, the enemy's counterfeit, the real antagonist of the testimony of God in our own day. But the Lord will compel them yet to recognise where the truth is, and where the Lord's approving love rests especially. "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie" (ver. 9). These claimed to be exclusively the covenant people; others (in particular those meant by the assembly in Philadelphia) they regarded as outside, unworthy of a name save of contempt. For this it is which tries the saint, not persecution from open external enemies as also in Smyrna. The boasters in tradition, antiquity, priesthood, order, and ordinances, shall yet be forced to acknowledge those they despised as the beloved of the Lord. Fidelity to Him, however feeble, is precious in His eyes.

In Pergamos they kept His word: here they did more. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (ver. 10). In these churches the Lord evidently looks forward to a state of things up to the very close. It is plain that, as the hour of temptation is still future, room is left for the application of this promise up to the end. This is not His word only, but of His patience. Christ is coming to receive His church, and afterwards to be the Judge of all the earth. But we are not looking for signs. God will graciously give signs to the Jews, but the church was never called to be guided in its thoughts by what it saw, like Thomas. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It was when the Lord was no longer seen that the church was born into the

world; and since then the church is waiting but was never meant to depend on outward tokens. It was when He took His place above as Head that His body, the church, was formed; for there could not be a body except there were first a head. God would have the church waiting not for signs, but for Christ Himself. He will cause His voice to be heard, and the dead in Christ shall rise . . . and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Christ is waiting for this patiently. As far as I have noticed, the Lord does not speak about His coming as if there were any haste connected with it. He waits patiently for it. He lingers in His love, that there may be a lengthening of mercy to the world, and that souls may be brought to Him. The church knows that He is waiting, and is called to the same patience — to have fellowship with Him in His patience.

"I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (verse 10). This is not the portion of the Jews. To them, when the time of trial comes, God says, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers." (Isaiah 26) Ours is the place of Abraham. He had not to fly to a little Zoar like Lot, who was saved indeed out of the judgment, but not much to his honour. The Lord had a heavenly-minded saint, as well as an earthly-minded one. Abraham was not in the sphere of that temptation at all. So the church will be kept from the coming hour. This is our confidence — not merely preserved in or through it, but "from" it. Take another figure — that of the deluge. Enoch had been translated to heaven before the flood, while Noah was carried through its waters. Thus God gives us blessed witnesses from the beginning of the two-fold preservation, like Enoch and Abraham in spirit on the one hand, and on the other like Noah and Lot. These last were in the circumstances of the trial; and this will be the case with the converted remnant of Israel during the time of the dreadful judgments. The Christian's hope is to be with the Lord in heaven, and the church ought to be looking for it. Assuredly the cry is now going forth, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

Let me ask, have you gone out? There were those who not only believed when they heard the cry, but went out. Have you left everything that is contrary to Him? — what you know — not what I know — to be contrary to Him? Ask yourselves whether you are ready to meet Him: if so, you need not be afraid. Be assured that anything the will of man wants to keep is not worth the pains. It is gain to go out from all to meet Him; it is joy to be in the path of His sorrow. Has this reached your heart? Do not be content with saying, "I have got oil in my vessel, and it does not matter where I am." What more selfish and unholy? The Lord grant that such may not be your feeling! He has saved me that I may think of Him. He wishes me to go out to meet Him — to value the precious hope of His coming. Are you then keeping His word? Do you not know? This is a question between your own conscience and the Lord. When you have kept what you do know, you will learn more and find it the truest liberty ever to serve Him.

"I am coming quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (verse 11). This is a precious word. The Lord spoke of coming like a thief even to Sardis, which had taken the world as its mistress, and allowed the unpurged to govern in place of the Lord. Here He comes as one that has a crown to give. The Lord Himself coming to meet us is the jewel He has given us to keep. May He grant us to hold it fast, that it be not taken from us!

We are indeed weak now, but the Lord says, "If you are content to be weak now, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God." A pillar is the emblem of strength (that which supported the temple) contrasted with weakness. It is a hard thing to be content to be weak. To flesh it is comfortable to feel the world's strength under one. But if willing to appear what we are now, the Lord tells us what He will do for us then: "I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God" (verse 12). As I have known my God, I will bring you into fellowship with me. You were content to wait for my coming, and none shall take your crown. For those who have thought of Christ now, Christ will provide all the joy He can give

them then. The Lord grant that this may be our comfort while we wait for Him! We may for Christ be outside all that looks strong and orderly. In that day we shall go no more out, but enjoy the most intimate association with Christ, be a pillar in the temple of His God, and have the name of His God and of the city of His God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and His new name described on us.

Weak as these were they took the place of weakness; and as they had thought of His word and of His name, the Lord says, When I have you in my temple, I will write upon you "my new name," and will make you a pillar "in the temple of my God." He does not say the throne, which would be the expression of power, but the temple, which is another thought from the throne. The temple is the place of worship, where God is exalted in the beauty of holiness. Just so, when it was a question of the worship of God, David wears an ephod. His own wife despised him (she was looking at him as the son-in-law of her father Saul the king) because he did not come out in some robe suitable to royalty: but David had the thought of God before him, and in his eyes it was his greatest possible exaltation to wear the ephod, and so to serve Jehovah and rejoice in His goodness who deigned to be in their midst.

So the Philadelphians seem specially those who entered into worship, because they appreciated the person and character of the Lord Jesus. It is this that draws out the heart. Thus when Jesus revealed Himself after giving sight (John 9), the blind man paid Him homage. Worship is little enjoyed in general even by real children of God. A man might receive favour from God, and give thanks heartily for it, and yet know little of worship. This is a higher step and nearer to Himself. It does not merely appreciate the favours that come down to us from God, but what the God is who gives them. Real worship is always this. The Father seeks worshippers, but it is to draw them back to the source from which the grace has flowed. Not that the word worship is used in the address to Philadelphia, except in verse 9, where it is in quite a different sense, merely signifying that the men, who were now scorers, would have to humble themselves and give honour to these whom they had despised. Worship is the drawing near to God in the appreciation not only of what He does but of Himself. There is this which always prepares the way for worship — the full and simple knowledge of our being brought near to God as well as of the work of Christ and its blessed results for us.

LAODICEA.

We have already noticed the strong contrast between the state of Sardis and the previous order of things. Gross corruption, open evil, persecution, hatred of the holiness and truth of God, false prophets had reigned in Thyatira, though there was a remnant found there, and a faithful remnant. If Thyatira represents the dark ages, when the Lord had His faithful saints hidden away in nooks and corners of the world, in Sardis we have a correct appearance of things — a name to live, and death almost universal; yet even in Sardis there were those who had not defiled their garments. If there is so marked a distinction between Sardis and Thyatira, there is an equally strong line of demarcation between Philadelphia and Laodicea.

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea," not "of the Laodiceans." (So, as to the first, it should be "the church in Ephesus." Rev. 2: 1.)

Let us look at the character that God gives of this church, and what He brings to light of its condition. If there are two churches that stand in more pointed contrast to one another, it is surely these last. The reason, I think, is this; that when God works in any special way, when He puts forth His grace in some new form and light, it always, since the slipping aside of Christendom, draws in its train a peculiarly dark shadow. So we saw in Philadelphia a bright picture. They were weak, but they were to depend on Him in peace; for the Lord had opened the door, and He would keep it so. Christ was all

their confidence, in contrast with the pretentious religionists who appear at the same time claiming to be the people of God with no care for Christ. The church should have been by the Holy Spirit a real testimony to the new creation, of which Christ is both the only source and the bright exemplar. But it had wholly failed and never so much as in this last phase. For when we come to look at Laodicea, what a difference we find!

Does the Lord here speak of waiting upon their need, having the key of David, and presenting Himself as the object of their affections — as the holy and true One, in His moral grandeur, which called out all the heart to worship Him? Does He not now speak in another tone? "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The end of haughty profession was at hand. He was the "Amen," the only securer of divine promise, the solitary "faithful and true Witness," when all else had failed. This presentation of Himself supposes that those to whom He was writing were utterly faithless and had revived the old things which had been buried in the grave of Christ. Even a saint like Job was not in the presence of God when he was thinking so much about himself. ("When the ear heard me and the eye saw me," etc.) We may say he was in the presence of himself and not of God. It is always a poor sign if we see a man stop to look at himself, whether his good or his bad self. Even if converted, why should we thus dwell on the change in ourselves? This is not to forget the things that are behind (which does not mean, by the way, our sins, but our progress): if the Lord has given us to take a step forward, it is that we may get nearer to Himself, and increase in the knowledge of God. Along with this there will always be increase in the knowledge of ourselves, but never in the way of self-admiration. As belonging to Christ, He is the object that happily keeps us low. When Job was brought at the close really into the presence of God, he was in the dust. He did not know what it was to be thoroughly nothing before God till he was brought there, and his eye saw Him. Before, he had been looking more at what God had produced in him, but now he saw himself to be as dust. After this we find him even praying for his friends, and we have burnt-offerings. This was the spirit of intercession and worship too. It appears to me that such was the spirit into which the Philadelphian church had been brought. They understood worship, because they in their measure knew Him that was from the beginning. The Lord loves us to be strong in Christ, growing up into Him in all things.

In Laodicea there was no such thought — nothing like an entrance into the riches of the Lord's grace. There is nothing we ought to feel our lack in so much as in worship, just because we do value it. It is spiritual feeling though feeble indeed, that makes us alive to our little power of worship. Be assured that the spirit of worship is our true power for service. Thus in John 10 the Lord says, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." It is no longer the Jewish sheepfold and the bondage of the law, but perfect liberty, going in for worship and out for service, everywhere finding food and blessing. How sweet to think that the time is coming when we shall go in, never to come out more! It will be always service in immediate connection with the Lord Himself — enjoyment of the presence of God and of the Lamb — eternal worship. And let me again ask, For whom would this be a welcome and happy promise? For those who had valued and enjoyed worship here below; as in Ps. 84, "They will be still praising thee." The place where the Lord dwelt was graven even in the hearts of those going there — "in whose heart are the ways." They felt that they must get where God was, and there they dwell.

The Lord does not reveal Himself in the same personal way, and still less ecclesiastically; but certain qualities and titles belonging to Him are taken up, which reach out from what He had been for God to that which links Him with the new scene in which He is about to be displayed as Head over all. This cannot fail. He was "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of

God." They had failed in everything, they had been unfaithful witnesses; but He as good as says to them, "You have not met a single thought of my heart. I will now present myself to you as all you should have been." He was also "the beginning of the creation of God" (verse 14). Christendom is at its beginning, certainly from apostolic days, a rejected witness. Christ is in relationship with the new creation.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot" (verse 15). This is latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that works this deadly mischief, but the heart remaining indifferent to the truth, after it has been fully brought before it. Such an one does not want the truth, because he feels the sacrifice and the separation from the world which must ensue, if it be really followed. We ought to bear, wherever there is unwilling ignorance; but indifference to truth is quite another thing, and hateful in the sight of the Lord.

Thus latitudinarianism is never the condition of souls that are simple-hearted, but of those by whom the truth has been heard and who are not prepared for the cross. God's truth must put people's hearts to the test. It is not merely something I have to learn, but I am proved. If the sheep is in a healthy condition, it will hear the Shepherd's voice, and not even know the voice of strangers; but if the sheep strays after others, it becomes so confounded that it may cease to distinguish the well-known voice. This arises in Laodicea, and, as it would appear, from despising the testimony given in the former church. Laodicea is the fruit of the rejection of the special truth that formed Philadelphia. There He showed Himself, and assured each heart that received Him, that as His name was everything to us on earth, so He will give us His new name in the time of glory. Every affection that has been spiritual, all that the Lord wrought in our hearts, shall come out more brightly in heaven. To Laodicea He says, "Thou art neither cold nor hot. They must have had some stimulant, as the cold was not absolute. They were not honest. Laodicea is the last state of decay, which the Lord could not allow to go on any longer — a time when persons have had a great deal of truth in a certain fashion, but their souls not touched by it. If the heart had been in ever so little a measure true, even though ignorant, it would have enjoyed all that came from the Lord. In 1 John 2 the persons who are said to have an unction from the Holy One; and to know all things, are not the "fathers" (who of course had been thus anointed also) but "the babes." The ability to judge what is not of Christ depends on the heart being true to Him. Hence the youngest saint, if single-eyed, can discern with certainty, where the theologian is lost in endless genealogies.

Every spirit that confesses not but denies Christ (the Christ of God) is of antichrist. There were, there are now, many antichrists, and the place to look for them is where He has been named. If Christ had not been known, there could not have been an antichrist, which was the dark shadow that followed the truth. As surely as the Lord works in His gracious way, Satan is at work too. To be "lukewarm" was to be false with the pretension of the truth; and the Lord says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." There is not such a contemptuous expression used by Him anywhere else that I know. This is sensibly different from the dealing with Sardis, where the general judgment of Protestantism is given, — judged like the world, and the Lord coming as a thief. Is this the way that we measure things? We should have said probably that Jezebel was to be felt most about; but would it have struck us that to be lukewarm was the worst of all? Yet this was what drew forth all the Lord's indignation, and He only is wise.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods," etc. (verse 16). Here is a plain proof that they had heard a great deal about the truth. They thought themselves rich. Learning and intellectualism in religion they counted a prize. If these grow (at least in extent, even though not in depth), what ground for satisfaction? The spread of the outward knowledge of God is what hastens on the last crisis — God's final judgment and setting aside of all that bears His name falsely and self-complacently.

They had sought man and the world, which promise much to the eye. But this is no righteous judgment; for nature thus allowed in the church is so much loss, to the utter exclusion of what is divine and heavenly — the real and bitter impoverishment unto all true riches. This the Lord proceeds next to lay before the angel. Absence of discernment follows. "And knowest not that thou art the wretched, and the miserable, and poor, and blind" (ver. 17). This was because they had rejected the testimony of God. His testimony always produces the sense of being nothing but it never weakens confidence in Him. There may be tests, — the Epistles of John are full of them; but there never is such a thought as the Spirit leading a believer to doubt God's being for him. He may and surely will work in a soul that is slipping aside from the Lord to bring him back; He may make us feel our weakness; but it is not at all His way to produce a doubt of the truth; and it is ever a sign of the flesh being at work, "lusting against the Spirit," when we give way to distrust. The Spirit of God always, wherever He is, aims at making a man thoroughly humble himself, judging and renouncing the folly of the flesh. There is and must be reality and truthfulness in God's presence.

Laodicea says, "I am rich, and am become rich, and have need of nothing." But we have the Spirit of God pronouncing this to be carnal presumption, the heart knowing not its need, and refusing grace. There had been momentary warmth, which made it so hateful to God. But this is just what men are doing who talk about the church of the future. The early times they call the infancy of the church; afterwards the church became overgrown and haughty: and now they are looking for a church of the future, when it will be no longer subject, but will act for itself — will act like a man. Alas! where will not these aspirations end? For God will be left out of the so-called church, and His authority got rid of.

This is working now extensively. And are God's children lukewarm about it? about God's truth being shut out? Remember what the Lord here says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." It would be a grave mistake to suppose that there were no good men among them. It is no question however of individuals, but of the assembly: as such the Lord said He would spue them out of His mouth. People cannot congregate in large masses without Laodiceanism as the result, if it be not also the spring. Popularity is one thing; quite another the Spirit of God gathering souls to Christ at the present time. The Lord be thanked if there are a few gathered out to His name! Let God's children remember that they must answer to the Lord Jesus, whether they are represented by Laodicea or not; whether they are living for Christ, or for what merely bears His name as a veil over indifferentism.

Yet the Lord does not give them up. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," etc. (verse 18.) Gold is used as the symbol of intrinsic righteousness in God's nature, or divine righteousness; and white raiment or linen stands for the righteousnesses of saints, as we see from Revelation 19.

Divine righteousness had slipped from their thoughts. They were neither appreciating the righteousness of God, which a Christian is made in Christ, nor the practical righteousness displayed before men, which the Spirit leads in. So He counsels them to buy of Him the true gold, and white raiment that there might be the holiness that became them before others. "Anoint thine eye with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." There was the secret — the lack of unction from the Holy One. They did not see anything properly, not even their need of divine righteousness.

"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent" (verse 19). Depend upon it that this is the Lord's voice for the present moment. Here alas! it was what the Laodiceans needed. The Lord is dealing with His people; He constantly puts before them something to humble them in their thoughts of themselves: He does not tell them to do or try something new, but calls on them "to repent." He does not ask them to stretch their wings for some greater flight in the future, but to see

where they are, and to confess their failure. But this is irksome to the light self-complacent heart.

The call to repentance here, however, as in Sardis, differs greatly from that in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, where all were thus urged on penalty of the Lord's solemn chastening, whether general or special. Thyatira had here too an intermediate place: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Hence the threat of judgment followed, and the vast change ensued in all its extent.

It is a far higher thing to suffer for Christ and with Christ than to be active in doing. When the Apostle once asked, "What shall I do?" the Lord answered, "I shall show thee what great things thou must suffer." This is what the Lord specially prizes — not mere sufferings as men, but sufferings for Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Here they were persons as sunken as they were proud, called upon to be zealous and repent, to humble themselves before God on account of their condition. Yet the Lord utters a gracious word, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (verse 20). Is it not a solemn thing that the Lord should be there, thus taking the place of one outside? Nevertheless He was ready to come in where He found a soul true to Him. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him," etc. Need it be said that this is not an address to the world in order to be saved? In John 10 the Lord presents Himself in full grace, saying, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." But here He speaks thus to the church. What a solemn position! How utterly fallen now! What ought to be the enjoyed portion of all the church, whether in approaching God or in display before men, or in the communion of Christ, is proffered in pure grace to him who hearkens and humbles himself before the grace of the Lord. He certainly had no sympathy with their self-satisfaction. He stood outside, knocking at the door, if perchance there should be a heart within, not too much occupied with the things and the persons around, that would open to Him. To such He says, "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." But it is all individual. In presence of the gravest departure, are we to say, "there is no hope"? Not so; for the Lord is standing at the door and knocking. There may not be many to answer His call, but some will; and the promise is, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

It is a mistake to suppose that this is comparatively a glorious promise: we are apt to think so, because we naturally value display. But God does not estimate things thus. His holy love, proving itself divine most of all when Christ humbled Himself, in coming down to man and dying for him — this is the standard of value, rather than power or glory. He could make a thousand worlds with far more ease than He gave His Son to suffer. I do not question the grace of such a word, spite of such evil; but our sharing the kingdom with Christ is not the most blessed thing we shall enjoy. And the promise here does not go farther. What we have and shall have in Christ Himself is much more precious. Yet is this a portion with Christ In John 17: 23 the Lord shows that the display of glory is for the vindication of Himself before the world. All the glory disclosed in the future will be the proof to the world, that they may know that the Father loves us as He loved His Son. But we are entitled to know it by the Holy Ghost now. We do not wait till then to know the love that has given us the glory — a deeper thing than the appearing to the world, or thrones in the kingdom. The personal affection of the Lord to His people is a better portion than anything displayed before men or angels.

Here the Lord closes the churches. He had reached the last phase. The wisdom of God has provided in these chapters not so much deep truth as what requires conscience: this rather than great ability is what we are to understand. The need for guidance is the eye fixed on Christ. Besides these epistles being messages to local churches in the name of St. John, we have seen in them a sketch of the whole

history of the church till the Lord comes. For properly speaking the Lord's addresses to the churches themselves or their angels constitute "the things which *are*," or the actual state in John's day. The addresses, while primarily connected with the facts then existing, go far beyond them, and reach out into a prolonged moral application, till there is no longer any recognised assembly, the last (though with mercy to individuals) having been summarily rejected as a public witness by the Lord. After that we never hear of the churches any more upon the earth. On the contrary the curtain drops, and we have a new scene altogether. The seer no longer turns round to see who spoke behind him on earth,* but hears the same voice above, whither he is now invited to ascend. The government of the world from the throne in heaven, its accompaniments and consequences, are the things which follow, when the church's time — state is closed. After this we have individual. saints both among the twelve tribes of Israel and out of all nations mentioned as such, but this only makes the contrast more striking. Henceforward, if specified at all, they are named as Jews and Gentiles, because there was no longer any thing of the nature of the assembly of God upon earth: for the very meaning and essence of the church is, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because all are one in Christ.

*The chief opponent of the future or rather protracted application of the Apocalyptic epistles, draws from the local direction of the voice that, according to a mode of interpretation then prevalent, the visions about to be shown would refer to events *yet future and behind*, in the course of time. (*Horae Apocalypticæ*, 5th edition, vol. i. page 70.) If there be any truth in that interpretation, it strongly confirms *the future bearing of the seven addresses*. But it is certain from Rev. 4: 1, that when the purely prophetic visions are about to begin, the speaker's voice is above, not behind. What the turning to the voice behind in Revelation 1 really shows is, that the prophet's eye was forward, as it were, in the direction of the kingdom, and that he was recalled to take notice of the churches, "the things which are," as justifying the Lord in His setting aside of Christendom in order to the introduction of His kingdom in power, when patience shall no longer be demanded. For the Lord will create new heavens and a new earth: first, in a partial preparatory sense — the millennium; and then fully and finally, the eternal state. The church state is thus emphatically treated as present time.

In the detail of these seven epistles there is also abundant practical instruction. It is true that the Spirit addressed them to the churches; but "he that hath an ear" is expressly enjoined to give heed; and this to the challenges of the Lord sent to them all. Such application, however, falls more fittingly within the domain of ordinary ministry in the word.

It may be well, now that we have gone over the ground of the Apocalyptic epistles, to notice the objections urged against the larger view of their meaning by Bishop Newton. "Many contend, and among them such learned men as More and Vitringa, that the seven epistles are prophetic of so many successive periods and states of the church, from the beginning to the conclusion of all. But it doth not appear that there are, or were to be, seven periods of the church, neither more nor less; and no two men can agree in assigning the same periods. There are likewise in these epistles several innate characters which were peculiar to the church of that age, and cannot be so well applied to the church of any other age. Besides other arguments, there is also this plain reason; the last state of the church is described in this very book as the most glorious of all, but in the last state in these epistles, that of Laodicea, the church is represented as 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'" (*Newton's Works*, vol. i., p. 549, edition 1782.)

Now it is plain that "it doth not appear" is rather an assumption than a proof. Why does it not appear? Another might urge the same objection, and perhaps with quite as much weight, against the seven seals, trumpets, and vials. God has been pleased to specify in each of these instances seven salient points, so to speak, as His complete account of each. "The main subjects of this book," the

Bishop had just before remarked, "are comprised of sevens, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials, as seven was also a mystical number throughout the Old Testament." If this answer satisfy as to the seven vials, why not as to the seven epistles? Doubtless more spirituality may be required for right discernment in the latter than in the former case; because one series relates to external judgments in the world, whereas the other series takes cognisance of such remarkable spiritual conditions, good and bad, in the history of the church, as it seemed good to the Lord to notice. Hence à priori one might be prepared for a greater divergence of judgment among Christians in their adaptation of Rev. 2, 3, than in their views of any other parts of the book. If there had been therefore a considerable measure of truth in what he says, the general principle would till remain undisturbed. But this is not the case. There is a striking agreement as regards the first three or four churches. This of course is not urged as in the least degree authoritative, but as a sufficient answer to the charge of hopeless discrepancy preferred by Bp. Newton. Retort would be easy on the discordant schemes of interpreting the seals, trumpets, and vials.

It is singular, however, that the Bishop bears testimony in the next page to the mystical meaning of the epistle to Smyrna. For the "tribulation ten days" is there explained of the greatest persecution that the primitive church ever endured, Diocletian's persecution, which lasted ten years, and grievously afflicted all the Eastern churches. Conscious that such an application, not in the promises attached but in the body of the epistle, is fatal to his own exclusively literal application, the Bishop thereon allows that the "promissory or threatening part foretells something of their future condition," and asserts that "in this sense, and in no other, can these epistles be said to be prophetic" (p. 550):

But how stop here, once you own, as he does in the Smyranean epistle, a bearing beyond the bare single church in or near that age, once you extend its scope to all the East, and its date to the beginning of the fourth century? Indeed, that fierce persecution was not confined to the East; for all the empire, not excepting Spain and Britain, was stained with Christian blood. If the principle is true in one epistle, why not in all? And in fact was not general declension within as clearly marked in Ephesus, as persecution from without in Smyrna? and does not Pergamos portray the corrupting influences of worldly exaltation, as palpably as Thyatira sets forth the proud unrelenting false prophetess of Popery?

No doubt the unsatisfactory character attached by our Lord to Sardis must be painful and startling to those whose eye is filled with ordinary Protestantism and its decent orthodoxy. And perhaps yet more distasteful is the sight of another and a subsequent testimony, which sets those who bear it in weakness and scorn outside the religious world, with the coming of Christ their blessed and animating hope.

But it is plain that the picture of the last assembly, in its deplorable lukewarmness and the Lord's peremptory rejection of it, was the great difficulty to Bishop Newton, because of its inconsistency with his theory of the last state of the church, "described in this very book as the most glorious of all." But this is a total mistake. The Revelation never describes the church on earth after Laodicea. The glorious description, to which the Bishop refers is probably in Rev. 19-21, where the entire church is glorified above. In a word this reason is plainly invalid. The bride of the Lamb is to reign; but this does not contradict the solemn testimony of the Laodicean epistle, that the last state of Christendom here below is to be, like that of Israel before it, "worse than the first." The general testimony of the New Testament entirely confirms the witness borne by this particular part, as appears from Luke 17: 26-37; 2 Thess. 2: 1-12; 2 Tim. 3: 1-5; 2 Peter 2, 3; 1 John 2: 18; Jude 11-19. The gratuitous assumption that the last phase of the church's condition on earth must be the brightest is then clearly opposed to the direct testimony of Christ and the Apostles, as well as to the solemn warning of the Apocalypse. How humbling that all this should be explained away for many souls by the unintelligent reasons we have

just disproved! Nor is the evil speculative only, but very great practically; and the danger becomes every day greater for those thus misled. For if the soul be taught to view events as gradually moving on toward a glorious future for the closing years of the gospel here below, it cannot but be thrown off its guard and exposed to a loss of discernment in its desire after such a consummation, instead of being called to watch as during a long sad night, and to judge each new move and measure, as good soldiers in an enemy's land. And if it be certain that the falling away or apostacy is the predicted issue, the means taken for the widest development and apparent triumph of the church on earth, must finally at least be but means for consummating that apostacy, and a prime object for the Lord's judgment at His appearing.