

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

BOOK 1

REVELATION 1:1-3

**NAME, AUTHORITY,
SUBSTANCE, AND SANCTIONS
OF THE BOOK**

EDWARD IRVING

1831



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SUBSTANCE, AND SANCTIONS
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EDWARD IRVING

*Exposition of the Book of Revelation:
in a series of Lectures*
1831

Reprinted 1867 (vol. 1) and 1870 (vol. 2)

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Revelation 1

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John:

² Who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

FOREWORD

THE first time I came across the writings of Edward Irving, deep in the back shelves of the Theology Library at UBC (Vancouver, BC, Canada), I was deeply impressed with the unusual treatment he gave to the final book of the Bible. He wrote as one who knew his calling, and knew that he had a message from God for his generation.

Combined with that urgency, Irving had a large sense of the glory of God in Christ, and God's purposes through Christ to reveal himself unto the world through the Church. He also possessed a large gift for language and expression, and apparently was quite an orator, as well as being a man of great compassion and sensitivity.

His work on the book of *Revelation*, which originally comprised two volumes, but only covered the first six chapters, towers above other similar commentaries because of its unique blend of gospel and prophecy.

Coming from a church founded on the Advent movement of the mid-1800's, I was somewhat familiar with books on the prophetic parts of Scripture. Irving's commentary was nothing like those.

Whereas the standard prophetic works tended to get quagmired in historical events and details, thus dwelling on the vessel by which God's purposes were worked out, Irving kept his eye single to the glory of God, and searched into those deep purposes as far as he was able. He rightly dwelt on the treasure that was in the vessel of prophecy. Like Moses, he wanted to see God's glory, or as much as was humanly possible. And he did see much, indeed.

And because most of the treasure he unearthed is practically lost to the Church today, I have for a long time had a strong desire to make these works more widely available.

In this new edition, I have taken only a few liberties: correcting and modernizing spelling and grammar in a few places (including the language in the KJV Bible references), breaking up large paragraphs and sentences, and inserting full Bible references where appropriate. I have separated the original 2-volume work into

smaller books, one for each of the fifteen original lectures. Otherwise it is as Irving wrote it.

This is Edward Irving's parting gift to the Church of Christ. In his own words, from the exposition on Laodicea:

"But my confidence in truth never fails me. I know that these things are not published in vain. It is not for myself, nor for my flock, but for the church of God, that I write these things, which I pray God for His own name's sake to hasten and bless."

Frank Zimmerman, 2016 (Updated 2023)
practicaprophetica.com

Gather up the fragments, that none be lost.



PREFACE

I HAD intended this Preface to take view of the progress of revelation, from its beginning in the garden of Eden to its completion in the island of Patmos; and to exhibit the gradual and progressive evolution of those ideas which are in the *Apocalypse* wrought together into one comprehensive and complete system of truth: but I have not leisure at present for such an undertaking, and must postpone it until the completion of the whole work.

These volumes contain a minute exposition of the first six chapters, except of a few verses. The sixth and seventh seals, whereof the materials are scattered up and down the *Revelation*, in chapters 6, 7, 15, 16, 19, and 20, I propose to make the subject of another volume, which I will publish, when it is completed, uniform with these; and so continue from time to time, as God gives me opportunity.

When I undertook these Lectures, my calculation was that within the compass of twelve lectures, the number which I delivered in Edinburgh, May 1829, I should have been able to embrace a popular exposition of the *Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

But as I proceeded, there arose in my mind a strong conviction that the thing which the Church needed was not so much another exposition, added to the multitude which she already possessed, of this blessed book, as a practical exhibition of the infinite theological and moral treasures which it contains; not so much another scheme of interpretation, or the scheme of former interpreters corrected by the new lights which have been cast upon the subject, as a demonstration of the excellence of the materials whereof it is composed, and their fitness for the edification of all saints.

For it is beyond question, that the great body both of Christian ministers and of Christian people, are deterred from studying and perusing this book by nothing more than a false notion that it is

mysterious and cabalistical, and only for the edification of those who are learned.

The Christian Church, in respect to it, are in the same state as the Church of Jerusalem was in respect to the Book of God in the days prophesied of by Isaiah:

Isaiah 29

¹¹ And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray you: and he says, I cannot; for it is sealed:

¹² And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray you: and he says, I am not learned.

Well knowing, from my own experience, how false and pernicious this notion is, and fully believing the blessing twice pronounced by God upon those who should read the *Apocalypse*, or manifestation of Jesus Christ,¹ it has been my endeavor to do my part to deliver the Church from this unworthy and erroneous estimate of a portion of the Word of God: from the loss she suffers, and from the guilt she contracts, in habitually undervaluing and neglecting it.

To accomplish this most desirable end, I perceived that the means were, not so much by showing its object as a connected whole, as by exhibiting the excellence of all its parts; the preciousness of every name of God and of Christ, of every saying, of every figure, and almost of every word; and especially by showing the connection of the book with the other parts of Scripture, and the light which it casts upon every book in the sacred canon.

These views grew upon me as I proceeded; for in my extempore *Lectures* I had rather set myself to show forth the various aspects in which Christ is revealed, than the wonderful depth of Divine doctrine which the words of the *Revelation* contain. Then I fulfilled the office of one beholding the glories of Christ in these

¹ *Revelation* 1:3, 22:7.

symbolical representations, and describing to my brethren what I beheld.

Afterwards, as I more and more deeply meditated the language of the record, I passed into the condition of the disciple drinking deeply at the fountain of His Master's wisdom, and desiring to impart the same plentiful supply to others. As these purposes of doing good service for this wonderful book of God and for the Church grew in my mind, I felt it necessary to dwell more and more upon the very words of the *Revelation*, and to gather out the eternal truths of religion and morality which they contain.

And so it came to pass, that upon the vision of the Churches, which in preaching occupied only two lectures, I have spent more than two-thirds of my whole labor. So far from regretting this, I desire devoutly to give thanks to Almighty God for having diverted me from my own purpose to one which I believe to be more for His glory and for the good of men.

He has enabled me to set forth such a portraiture of our great Shepherd's character as I feel assured will bless both the churches and the ministers of the churches; while at the same time I have had ample opportunity of indirectly opening all the other parts of the Apocalypse.

It is now five years since I published my first work on prophetic subjects—entitled, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed*—expository of the Prophecies of Daniel and John in respect to the Christian nations of the world. Since which time there has been one continual series of events accomplishing the things therein laid down; and we seem at present standing on the brink of a great crisis, both in Church and State, which all men now begin to apprehend.

This day, when I write, the Parliament of Great Britain is dissolved, in order to make way for another which may be more obsequious to the passions of the people; for it is an idle thing to talk now of any ruler in this nation but the popular voice, of which the Reformed Parliament will be the appropriate organ.

A very short while will unfold very great events. The time is indeed at hand. In foreign nations we behold the popular voice expressing itself in revolutions, and organizing itself into governments. And one thing is remarkable, that everywhere it prefers the monarchical form—the citizen king instead of the Christian king. When the last infidel Antichrist shall arise—the eighth head, which is also of the seven—there shall be ten kings, who will give their power unto him, in order to accomplish the destruction of the Whore of Babylon.

Can it be that we also shall have a citizen king, and fulfill the same destinies with the rest of the ten kingdoms? Things look very like it at present. I bless God that there is now a voice lifted up from the ministers of the Church, and that the eyes of the congregations are directed forward upon the coming events. God will be glorified by an intelligent Church, however few, in the midst of the fires.

It is now four years since I published the translation of Ben Ezra's book, entitled, *The Coming of the Lord in Glory and Majesty*; and I bless God when I behold the wonderful answer which His Church has given to that voice from a distant land. She knew the voice of truth, though coming through a minister of the Roman Church, and received it with a cordial welcome.

In all the churches, especially in the churches of Ireland, I have heard the voice, "Behold the Bridegroom comes." Expositors of the Lord's coming have arisen on every side, and the land is filled with light. The doctrines of the Church begin to be more and more cleared in our sight; and with the light, life has revived; and with the life, power; and with the power, gladness.

This is to me by far the most hopeful sign of this land, that the Lord himself has returned to the midst of us, with the light of knowledge and with the voice of preaching. We have awakened as out of a deep sleep. The walls of our Zion were almost stormed, but at length the watchmen are aroused, and the city is alarmed; and now comes the fearful contention between the powers of In-

fidelity and of Truth. This kingdom will stand or fall according as the one or the other shall prevail.

The work of which I now present the first portion is one of a larger scope than any which I have yet undertaken; being an endeavor to unfold the whole mystery of God, as it is expressed in this great revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the concentration of all the names, actions, and purposes of God into one.

It is not to set forth my scheme, or to gainsay the schemes of others, but to open the deep things of God revealed in this portion of His Word—the historical applications in these volumes do not amount to the twentieth part of the whole;—it is not to prognosticate concerning times and places, but to apprehend and set forth the wisdom of God that I have undertaken, and so far completed this labor.

The substance of the web is Eternal Truth, however fanciful some of the figures embroidered upon it may seem to be. Therefore I have entered into no questions with system-builders, because it is not as a system-builder that I am laboring, but as an expositor of the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, which I believe to be the end of this book.

May the Lord accept this my labor, and bless it to His saints, and preserve me a faithful laborer, until the day of His appearing!

EDWARD IRVING.

NATIONAL SCOTCH CHURCH,
22d April 1831.



The Isle of Patmos
(The Student's Bible, 1911)

THE WARNING OF THE CHURCH

A PARABLE

They tell of one of England's noblest peers,
Who sought within the shades of humble life
Retreat from sorrow, and for comfort found,
What for man's comfort was by God ordain'd,
A woman of a tender, loyal heart;
Whom for his wedded wife he joyful took,
Nor aught reveal'd of his name and line,
But brought her, all unconscious, to his home,
And there did plant her, partner of his state.
But, ah! She loved him overmuch and thought
His home dishonor'd in his lowly wife,
And, like a flower transplanted, droop'd and died.
—But, thankless Church, thou'rt ready to reject
The Son of God, because in lowliness
He came to woo thee, lowly; laid aside
His heavenly glory; and in mortal weeds
Found access to thy prison, all in thy ear
To pipe soft strains of consolation, meet
T' assuage thy sufferings, and thy love to win;
Then broke thy bonds, thy captors captive led;
And by His Father crowned Lord of all,
Sent thee His Holy Spirit from on high,—
Pledge of His love, of thy inheritance
The earnest;—call'd thee in His throne to sit,
And placed upon thy head creation's crown.
But ah! Strange mock! Thy pride is sore displeas'd
Because He came in mortal, sinful flesh,
From sin and sickness sore to raise its state
And high enthrone it in the height of heaven;
As kings are sometimes wont, in their own guise
To woo and wed fair maids, who to a crown
Did ne'er aspire, nor dream of royal love.
—If thus, O graceless, thankless, heartless Church
Thou spurn that meanness, which was undergone
To purchase thy redemption: Fear, then, oh fear,
Lest unto thee it fare as heretofore

To Michal, David's wife, who scorn'd her lord
For dancing with the throng before God's Ark,
And for her cold and saucy pride was writ
Thenceforward childless, and was doom'd to see
Another wife advanced into her room,
Herself cast out, though daughter of a king;
A base adult'ress raised into her room.
So thou shalt be cast out, O Gentile Church,
Born to a kingdom, for thy saucy pride,
And the adult'ress bond-wife, Jacob's seed,
Shall sit, and share in earth King David's throne!



THE INVOCATION

COME NOW TO ME ONCE MORE, LORD OF MY REASON,
PRINCE OF LIGHT, MOST GLORIOUS SON OF GOD;
COME, HELP ME TO UNFOLD IN FIT DISCOURSE
THOSE MARVELOUS VISIONS OF THY COMING
WRIT IN TH' APOCALYPSE. IN THY RIGHT HAND,
WHERE IS THE HIDING OF THY POWER, I REST,
THY WILLING TOOL; EMPLOY ME AS THOU WILT.
I AM AN ANGEL OF THY CHURCH—GIVE ME
MY CHARGE, GREAT BISHOP; A STAR—ENLIGHTEN ME,
AMIDST THE DARKNESS OF THIS CLOUDY NIGHT,
TO STRUGGLE THROUGH THE WRACK BREW'D IN THE HEAVENS
BY SATAN, PRINCE O' TH' AIR, AND GUIDE THY SAINTS.
FAIN WOULD I KEEP SOME RAY OF HOPE ABOVE
THE HORIZON, LIKE SOME LONELY WATCHMAN,
WHO, FAR OFF AT SEA, DOES TRIM HIS BEACON LIGHT
TO LEAD LOST SEAMEN TO THEIR HAVEN OF REST.

Be not cast down, my soul; my heart,
 Be stirred up with love;
My mind, dwell ever in that Light
 Which cometh from above.
For unction of the Holy One,
 My God, I look to Thee;
That I may rightly know all things
 Which in Thy counsel be.
And what I know, that I may tell
 With words of heavenly grace,
Do Thou, O Word, inform my lips;
 For I do seek Thy face.



John on Patmos - the Vision of Christ
(Feibusch, 1946)

I. THE PROPOSAL

WE TAKE up the exposition of this book, not from any conceit of supernatural wisdom, or spiritual gifts, beyond what any other minister of Christ may aspire to, and ought to possess.

Nor do we do it in the proud ambition of making all mysteries plain, although we believe that this, and this only, is the province of the Evangelical teacher. Still less is this done out of any curiosity about, or speculative research into, future things.

But we have experienced in our own souls the blessedness promised unto him that reads...

Revelation 22 [also chapter 1:3]

¹⁸ ...the words of the prophecy of this book.

And because we think we have received some further insight into the object of God in giving it, the method of its structure, and the application of its predictions, we would fain communicate of our good things unto others, that they may partake of our comfort and joy.

This, and no other, so far as we know our own mind, is our motive for undertaking the most grave and responsible office of presenting to the church an exposition of the *Apocalypse* or *Revelation*, of Jesus Christ.

“And, so we consult for your glory, O Almighty God! And for the good of your church, O our Lord Jesus Christ! And would be wholly under your guidance, O Holy Spirit of Truth! We do most humbly and earnestly pray, that our souls, being filled ‘with power, and with love, and with a sound mind,’ might be enabled to declare, with meekness and wisdom, the deep things of your counsel contained in this portion of your holy word.”

Let me then endeavor, in these Lectures, to speak to my brethren in Christ Jesus with sincerity and truth, as one man ought to speak to his brother-man; and with wisdom and authority, as a minister of Christ, to the flock of God; endeavoring, as

much as in me lies, to cast away the fear of man, which brings a snare, and to remember that I stand before my Judge, before whom also you stand.

In His sight, therefore, I make no scruple to declare before you all, at the outset of these lectures, that my reason for undertaking such a task, in this the chief city of our church at this time, is simply, that I believe this book of the *Revelation* is not perused and studied as it ought to be.

It is not so much my office to search into the cause of this neglect, nor yet to censure or rebuke that indifference to the contents of this book which has come over the preachers and ministers of the Christian church. Rather, it is my part, and belongs to the office of the workman of God, to do what in him lies to remove the evil over which I lament. And this I will do, in the strength of Divine grace, and by His help whom I serve, even the Great Head of the Church, whose minister I am for the preaching of His word unto all people.

With humility therefore, with distinctness, and with simplicity, I will endeavor to lay before the church all my treasures, new and old, according to the gift of utterance which the Spirit may be pleased to bestow upon me, praying always for an increase of knowledge and of utterance to make known to you all the treasures of the riches of this book, which is forbidden to be sealed, and of which the perusal is blessed with an express benediction of God:

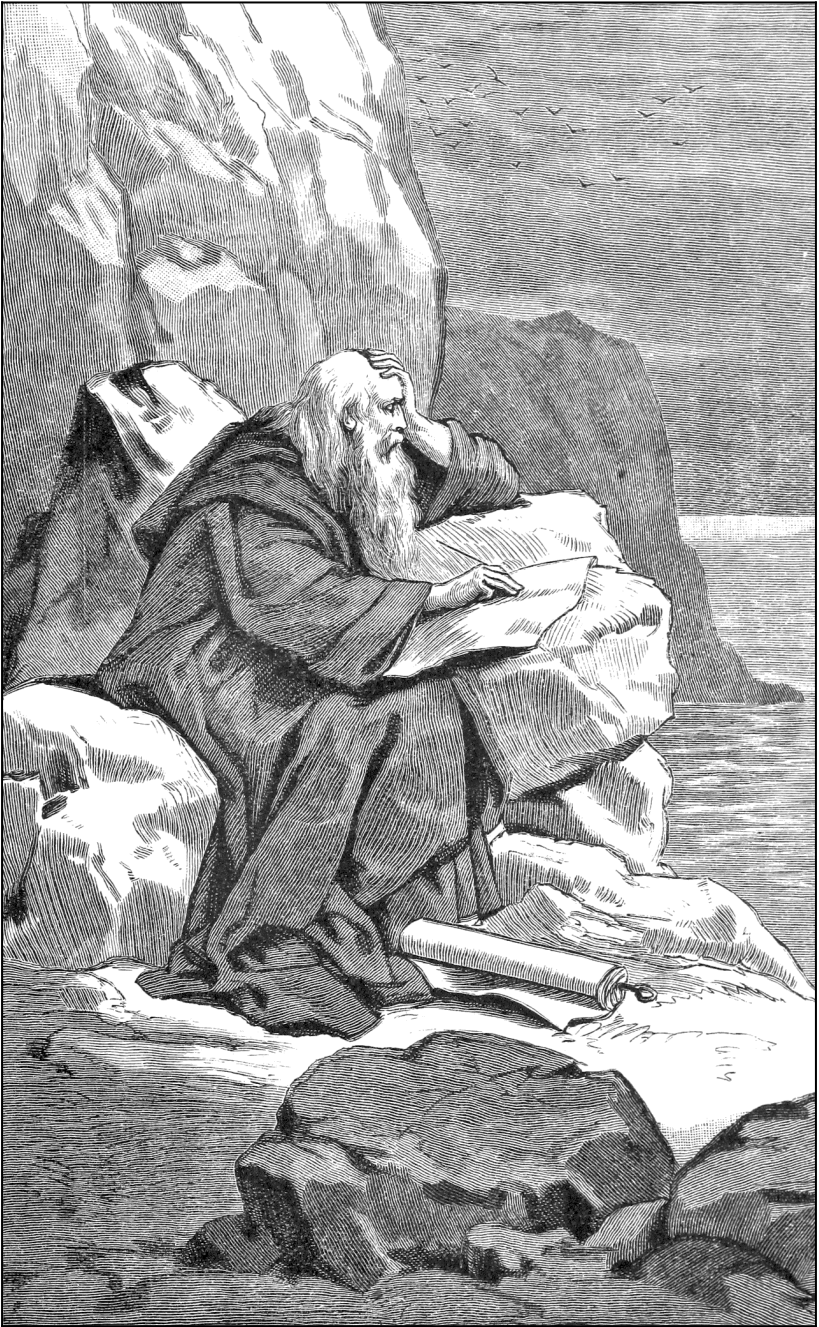
Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

In this discourse, which is intended as introductory to the whole series, I will lay before you a comprehensive idea and general view of the precious things contained in the *Apocalypse*, that, in your leisure and retirements, you may pursue the study, and anticipate me in the daily exposition of it. According to the following plan, I will discourse of:

1. The name contained in the first three words of the book, “the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”
2. The particulars of its transmission unto us, contained in the first two verses of the book, which I shortly term “its authority.”
3. The substance, and the method, and the contents of it.
4. The Divine injunction which God has given to enforce on us the perusal of it; and the encouragement which He has held out to the ministers of the Gospel, to expound it with all diligence; and to the people to give earnest heed to those preachers who gird up their loins to obey the Divine commandment.

These four heads—the name, the authority, the method, and the sanctions of this book—I will now endeavor to lay before you in order.



John writing out the Revelation on the Island of Patmos
(The Story of the Bible, 1884)

II. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

Revelation 1

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

THE name of the book is, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. I have reason to believe that this expression is not generally understood; or, rather, is commonly misunderstood, as if it were meant to convey no more than that Jesus Christ revealed it.

Now, if this be all, there is no distinctness in the title or name wherefore one, in preference to the other books of Scripture, should be entitled “the Revelation of Jesus Christ;” for all the books of Scripture are alike the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God, the Light of the Father which lights every man. In this sense, all the writings of Paul are revelations of Jesus Christ; whereof he says, that he...

Galatians 1

¹² ...received them not by man, neither was taught them, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The same may be said of all the other books of Scripture, which Christ revealed or inspired by His Spirit in His servants; as Peter declared, that they speak by the Spirit of Christ which was in them. Therefore I say, that if this be all that is signified, there would be nothing in the title wherefore it should be the characteristic name of this book.

But, besides this, I observe, as to the fact, that it did not come to John by revelation of Jesus Christ; for it was not Jesus Christ that revealed it to him, but an angel that showed or represented it to him by signs; as in this same verse it is written,

Revelation 1

¹ ...which God gave unto Him [Jesus Christ], to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass...

These words give us to know that this book was given to Jesus Christ by the Father, in order to show the contents to His servants. And what method does Christ take to show it to God’s ser-

vants? He sends His messenger, His angel, and signifies it to His servant John.

So John did not receive the communication directly from Christ, but he received it through the medium of one proceeding from Christ; he received it not in the way of revelation or inspiration, but in the way of outward demonstration; it was shown to him by His angel, and repeatedly in this book is that angel spoken of, to whom John did twice, in the height of gratitude and satisfaction, offer worship, but the angel would not suffer himself to be worshiped.

I am inclined, therefore, to doubt the commonly received interpretations of the name, as if it merely signified that Jesus Christ revealed the contents of the book, because we always find that a Scripture name expresses the substance of the thing named, as all the names of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ do testify. And even those names which the authority or use of the church has given to the books of Scripture, have in them a great propriety and peculiar appropriateness.

For example, *Genesis* signifies the generation of things; *Exodus*, the out-going of the children of Israel from the house of bondage. But when God himself appropriates a name,—for example “the Gospel” or “good news”—it then never fails to contain the very essence of that which is named.

And seeing the Holy Ghost has chosen to entitle this book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, we may never doubt that there is something contained under that name beyond this which belongs to all Scripture in common, that it is revealed by Jesus Christ the Word; and which therefore cannot serve to distinguish one book of Scripture from another.

These reasons are sufficient to make us hesitate concerning the commonly received interpretation of the name or title, and do justify a further inquiry into the subject.

And, when we go to examine the proper meaning and common use of the words “apocalypse,” or “revelation,” or “manifestation

of Jesus Christ,” we find almost invariably that they signify not Jesus Christ *revealing*, but Jesus Christ *revealed*. Except in one doubtful case, they never signify Jesus Christ the Revealer, but always the revelation, manifestation, appearing, or coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ, when, from being hidden as He now is, He shall become once more and be forever revealed in the glory of His Father.

There are, I suppose, not fewer than ten or twelve instances in which this expression “revelation of Jesus Christ” occurs in the New Testament, either exactly in the form in the text, or else in some other form and construction, and, with only one apparent, but not real exception, it always signifies Jesus Christ the Revealed, and not once Jesus Christ the Revealer.

To this solitary exception (as it is thought to be), let us attend first:

Galatians 1

¹² But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This passage is commonly taken as signifying that Jesus Christ revealed the Gospel to the Apostle by direct inspiration or inward working of the Spirit; which, also, I was myself disposed to admit. But a more patient study of the passage leads me to prefer the common, and, I may say, universal meaning of the expression, “revelation of Jesus Christ”:

¹² ...I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but [had it] through the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

For straightway he proceeds to narrate the appearing or manifestation of Christ on the way to Damascus, which, in verse 16, he calls God’s revealing His Son in him.

This signifies, as I understand, that contemporaneous with the outward manifestation of His Son in the brightness of the heavens, God gave to the Apostle an inward manifestation of Him in

the Spirit according to the promise.² But in both cases it was Christ that was revealed or manifested, and the Father who revealed or manifested Him. He was the subject of the revelation, not the agent revealing, which, by essential propriety, whenever the Son is the subject, belongs to the Father, who alone gives faith.

John 16

¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

In this passage, therefore, there is no support whatever for the idea that Christ is the revealer of himself, but every support to the idea that He is the revealed one, and the Father acting by the Holy Ghost is the revealer.

But, though this passage had given support to the idea that Jesus Christ is the revealer, it would have availed nothing in the case before us, where the manner of communication is not by revelation of Jesus Christ, but by demonstration of an angel.

God gives Jesus Christ the account of His own manifestation or appearance, He gives it in charge to Him for the use of all His servants. Jesus Christ gives it to an angel, and the angel shows it out to John, who writes it to the churches: a method of communication quite opposed to the notion that Jesus Christ caused it to spring up in the Apostle's mind by inspiration, or whispered it into his ear by voice of speech.

And when we go into details, and see what the book is made up of, we find that it is Christ revealed now as all-glorious Head of the church, in the midst of the golden candlesticks, now as the Lamb slain living in heaven, and instated by His Father in the possession of universal power and inheritance, opening the sealed book and working wonderful effects in the earth, &c.

Everywhere it is Christ revealed, and not Christ revealing; so that the substance of the book, as well as the style of its name or title, do repel the notion of Christ revealing, even if such a notion

² *John* 14:22.

were found in that passage of the *Galatians*, which I have argued above it is not.

Now this apparent but not real exception, being taken out of the way, all is clear. And to every scholar, yea, to any unlearned but sound-minded man, I will submit the question for a decision, after having referred to some of the passages where the expression in the text “revelation of Jesus Christ” is used, for it is an expression of very frequent use in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 1

⁷ So that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming [revelation] of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The words in the original are exactly the same as the title of our book, “waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And the doctrine taught us is,

⁷ ...you come behind in no gift,

–which the church has received from Christ in virtue of His ascension; and...

“...you wait for your perfection in the day of His revelation, when we shall come with Him in the full participation of His kingdom and glory.”

2 Thessalonians 1

⁶ Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

⁷ And to you who are troubled, rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

Literally, “in the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in His being manifested, in His coming unto the earth from heaven, which we all believe in, though we may perhaps differ in respect to some of the circumstances attendant thereupon.

Another advent has always been maintained by the church; and never otherwise than as a great fundamental doctrine of the orthodox faith has it been held, that Christ is to come again in person to judge the quick and the dead. This event called the manifestation or revelation of Jesus Christ in the passage now before

us, bears the same characters as in the book of the *Revelation*, for in both, Jesus Christ with His mighty angels comes...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁸ In flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel;

⁹ Who are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power,

¹⁰ When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

I next turn your attention to this passage:

1 Peter 1

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you,

⁵ [it is reserved in heaven now, but is] ready to be revealed [or manifested] in the last time, [when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven]:

⁶ Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations;

⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing [revelation] of Jesus Christ.

Here it is declared, that in the assured faith and hope of that heavenly inheritance which is to be revealed, the church endures all fiery trials and grievous losses which God sends for her probation, that she may come out of the fire like silver seven times refined, glorious and bright, and honorable to God in the day when Christ shall be manifested with all His saints to be admired in all them that believe.

In that day of the manifestation (revelation) of the sons of God,³ when we receive the redemption of the body,⁴ all creation is deliv-

³ *Romans* 8:19.

⁴ *Romans* 8:23.

ered from its bondage into their glorious liberty.⁵ So full is the Apostle Peter of this grand revelation or manifestation, that he makes a third reference to it, as the bearer of especial grace and favor to the church:

1 Peter 1

¹³ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now, brethren, as the subject of discourse is large, I do not bring forward other instances to the same effect, but simply lay it down, that without any exception, this expression “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” and the cognate or kindred expressions which occur in the New Testament, are used of the coming, or appearing, or manifestation of Christ. They all bear the sense of “Jesus Christ the Revealed;” and not in any instance can signify “Jesus Christ the Revealer.”

In all these instances, then, of Holy Scripture, the expression, “revelation of Jesus Christ,” signifies His future manifestation, His future coming. Being taken in the passive sense, they signify Christ the *Revealed*, not Christ the *Revealer*.

If this be the proper meaning of it in the passage before us, as sound criticism would conclude, then, standing as it does for the title of any book, it would signify that the book was given for the purpose of informing the church, concerning the time and manner and circumstance of our Lord’s glorious Epiphany.

Paul was delegated to inform the church concerning the mystery of the Gentiles being fellow-heirs with the saints, which he received according to revelation:

Ephesians 3

³ How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.

So John is delegated to make known unto the church, the further mystery of the manifestation of Jesus Christ, after the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in. The title of the book

⁵ Romans 8:21.

should not be *The Revelation of John the divine*, but *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

In either sense, this ought to be the title of the book, whether you understand it to be His manifestation, or that which he revealed. Which of these two, the active or passive, ought to be taken as the true sense of the words, is not only, as I think, clear from the common use of the New Testament, but from certain passages of the book itself. For example, the opening of it:

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him: even so. Amen.

And the conclusion of it:

Revelation 22

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come!

²⁰ He who testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Now if the book did not concern the coming of the Lord, why would it thus open and conclude with solemn invocations for Him to come? But if the subject of it be, to lay open the time, manner, and circumstances of His revelation, then it is well opened and concluded with a solemn averment from Christ's own mouth, that He would quickly come; and a glad response from the Prophet's mouth, that He would so quickly come.

There is another passage in the book, which casts light upon the title:

Revelation 10

⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He has declared to His servants the prophets.

This is the only part of the book where a mystery is spoken of: but a revelation always implies a mystery; and in the very name *Revelation*, the idea of a mystery is contained all throughout. The perfecting of the mystery, therefore, in the days of the seventh

angel, when time shall be no longer, is, I take it, nothing else than that the thing taken in hand to be opened in this book, is then completed.

Now, if we look at the context of that passage, we find that it contains the descent of Christ from heaven to earth, and His taking possession of earth and sea, in the name of the eternal God who created them. The mystery, then, which is perfected, is the mystery of His manifestation; and this book is the evolution of the mystery, is the steps and progression of the Divine purpose, to reveal His Son, with power and great glory, which is not fully perfected, until the seventh angel shall have blown his blast.

Jehovah said unto our Lord,

Psalm 110

¹ Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

This book contains the acts of Jehovah, by which Christ's enemies are made His footstool, after which Christ sits no longer at His right hand, but comes to rule in the midst of His subjugated enemies.

There was a long time to intervene before the grand object of the church's faith and hope was to appear. None of the Apostles were permitted to know the times and seasons, but the Spirit in them did ever witness to the coming and kingdom of the Lord, whereof they preached the good news. And the same Spirit did seal their disciples until that day of the redemption, and did become unto them for an earnest of that inheritance.

But until the great disclosure of this book there were no marks or signs by which the progression and the approach of that great hope of the world might be recognized. God who changes not, and the Holy Spirit who speaks only the unchanging truth of God, had from the beginning conceived, fixed, and determined the times, and the seasons. But the mystery thereof He opens according to the fitness of the times, and consistently with the responsibility and discipline of the church.

For example: He did not tell unto Jacob when he went down unto Egypt, that he and his children were going down to the house of bondage, although He had told this to Abraham from the beginning of the covenant.

Neither did He tell to the children of Israel that they were to wander forty years in the wilderness, and perish there when He made the covenant with them at Sinai, but did reserve this communication till they had ten times contradicted and provoked Him. Then it was told as a judgment.

In like manner He did not tell unto the Jewish people that for two thousand years the Gentiles were to possess Abraham's covenant when they were cast out, but did reserve the burdensome tidings till after they should have rejected Christ and His Apostles.

And as in all these former instances, the communication of evil tidings unto the church was reserved until the evil had been revealed in her, for which they were announced as the chastisement.

So, in this last instance of a communication to the church, it was not until she had much offended God with her backslidings, heresies, and schisms, as we see in the seven epistles to the Asiatic Churches, that the Lord gave forth this book which postponed for a long season, or rather revealed the certain and appointed time at which the Lord is to appear.

In the *Acts* and *Epistles* which are the only documents of the primitive church, the coming of Christ is the great, and I may say only, object of the church's prospective faith.

But there it appears as a mystery, glorious, but undefined; full in their view, but undetermined in its distance; the measure of which, and the fearful things which were to happen to the church before, and upon His appearing were reserved for communication until they could be communicated in the way of a judgment and vexation unto the church for her many provocations of God.

In this way it is, that the unfoldings of God's purpose are made consistent both with the discipline of His church, and the responsibility of every man.

And what I have said with respect to the revelation of the purpose by inspired men, I say likewise of the opening and preaching thereof by uninspired, but gifted ministers, (I mean, gifted with the gifts of the Spirit, communicated to the faithful minister by the laying on of hands). The matter preached to any generation of the church, while it is the constant truth of God, consists of things new as well as old, whereof the new brought out of the treasury do bear a certain proportion in the way of discipline and responsibility to that generation of the church unto which they are communicated.

That this is the true account of the name and title of the book, I have no doubt. It is a point which I have perfectly ascertained, and upon which I am fully convinced; not indeed without much examination, and I do not wish you to receive it without the like consideration.

They misrepresent me who say that I dogmatize and arrogate authority beyond my place, as if I spoke in my own name and not in the name of Christ. It is not good so to withstand and vilify a brother, as I hear that some of them do; speaking maliciously, or else ignorantly.

Boldly indeed I do speak (adding to my faith boldness), because I speak from the heart the things which I have believed; my conscience also bearing me witness. But I am always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in me with meekness and with fear: nor do I wish to overbear any man's conscience.

Therefore, when I state to you that this name and title of the book signifies Jesus Christ revealed, Jesus Christ manifested, I leave it for you to consider those passages which I have read, and so to come to the same conclusion by the blessing of God and the teaching of His Spirit.

The name of the book is therefore the opening of Christ, the disclosing, the unveiling, the discovering of Christ. Now before going any farther, I shall draw one or two inferences from this first head.

If the intention of the book be the unveiling or uncovering of Jesus Christ, it certainly must be a book of the very greatest importance for men to study; for what is there that concerns a Christian, but Jesus Christ? For in Him is hid all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. I know nothing of myself, I can know nothing of myself, I hope nothing of myself. I cannot say I know God, but in Jesus Christ. I know nothing of God, but according as I see Him in the person of Jesus Christ. I know nothing that is to come, or that is past, or that exists around me, but through the same interpretation which Jesus Christ is of God's fullness,

Colossians 1 [RV]

¹⁶ For all things were created by Him,...[and] all things were created...for Him,

¹⁷ ...and in Him all things consist.

If then the person and offices of Jesus Christ be that which all preaching, and all hearing, and all understanding and research into Scripture are conversant with, surely when God has written a book expressly for the purpose of unveiling and discovering Him, it is a very bold thing for any person to say that book is not profitable for men to search into, or that the book is so difficult that it is in vain for men to search into it.

For anyone thus to speak, is to say that God undertook a thing for the good of the church, but failed in His good intent; He gave it to Jesus Christ to show it unto His servants, and yet His servants have no profit or pleasure from it.

For you to say that this book does not unveil Christ but rather hide Him, for you to doubt of its profitableness, for you to believe that it is a matter of uncertainty whether you will derive knowledge of Christ from it, is as much as to say that:

- God has been defeated in His object;

- God has not attained His wish;
- He was trying to unveil Christ unto man, but it is a very doubtful thing whether He has unveiled Him or not to anyone.

To entertain such doubt, such unbelief, and to follow such practices, is, I say, very irreverent distrust, and wicked disobedience of God.

And here I may observe in passing,—for I always love to confirm what I say by my own experience,—that let other persons think and state what they please, truth constrains me to declare, that I have got more insight into the person and offices of my blessed Lord, from the study of this book, than from the study of all Scripture besides. In very truth, it has proved to me the unveiling and discovering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To me it has been the Gospel, not indeed of His fleshy (the Gospel of the days of His flesh being written in the four Evangelists), but it has been the Gospel of His glory: it has discovered to me my Lord glorified, and shown Him to my soul as the great Bishop of souls; and as the great Head of the church, for the consolation of the church, it has shown Him also to my flock; and to myself, the minister over them, it has shown Him as the universal Bishop.

And to many who are not of my flock, I have been enabled to demonstrate out of this book, that the Lord Jesus Christ has been exalted of God to be the Prince of the kings of the earth; who himself, or the Father for Him, brings about all the revolutions of the kingdoms, to the end of reducing all rule and dominion under the Man Christ Jesus, of putting His enemies under His feet.

Here also we have seen Him setting destruction in array against the apostasy of Rome; and while we behold infidelity advancing with giant strides to the supremacy of the kingdoms, we can look on undismayed, because we see herein written, that it shall speedily go into destruction, being overcome by the Lamb, and those who are with Him, who are called, and faithful, and chosen.

Truly has it proved itself in my experience, and the experience of my people, to be a full disclosure, and complete opening of Jesus Christ, whose work, since His ascension until this day, is here discovered; and His better work, when He shall come again in the glory of His power, to be honored in His saints, to deliver the world from its oppressors and destroyers, and to bring it at length to pass that all nations shall be blessed in Him, and all shall call Him blessed.

I do assure you, that it has been to me and my flock the book of the Gospel of Christ in risen glory; as the four Gospels are of Christ in fallen flesh. The Gospels are the revelation of Christ's work in the days of His flesh. The *Apocalypse* is the revelation of all things which He is doing in heaven.

In the one I have seen God manifested in the Man humbled: I have seen in the other God manifested in the Man exalted.

I have seen in the one God manifested by Christ present on the earth among men: I have seen in the other God manifested by Christ working in the Spirit, though absent from among men. Likewise God, to be manifested in Christ's coming to the earth again; and in all the mysteries of power and glory which He is then to bring into accomplishment.

So much does the very name and title of this book commend it to the church. And now we come to speak of the manner of its transmission from God to the church, or its authority.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOOK

Revelation 1

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John:

² Who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

THIS head of discourse includes all that is contained in the first two verses, being:

1. Its origin from God: "God gave it unto Jesus Christ."
2. The end of His giving it: "to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."
3. The method of its communication: "He sent and signified it, (sending He signified it), by His angel to His servant John:" and, lastly,
4. A description of John's identity, "who bore witness of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and all the things which he saw."

These are the four circumstances connected with the transmission from God unto the church of this book, whose title is, *The Revelation or Manifestation of Jesus Christ*. And to each of these particulars it will be necessary that we should attend a little in order.

ITS ORIGIN FROM GOD

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him.—Is Christ himself not God? Yes, He is God, the eternal Son of God, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever. How is it then said that God gave it unto Him? Is not Jesus Christ God? Is not His very name Jesus, Jah or Jehovah, the I AM, and Hoshea the Saviour, the I AM the Saviour? And yet the language is no way qualified, but simple and plain language: God gave it unto Him.

This therefore demands interpretation. Understand you therefore, dearly beloved brethren, that the Son of God, though God when He became man, came into the very condition of man; not ceasing to be God, but acting through the faculties of man, with the feelings and the knowledge of a man. He came into the number of our family, and...

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ ...was tempted in all points like as we are.

As it was with His feeling, so it was with His knowledge; as it was with the senses of His body, so it was also with the faculties of His reasonable soul. He took unto himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He did not take these that they might lie beside him unoccupied, or that they might be used now and then as it pleased him, or pleased him not.

Those ideas which some men entertain, as if Christ now acted in one nature, and now in another, I regard as flat Nestorianism, which makes two persons to be in Him. He is one person, the person of the Son of God, and every act of that person must include both natures, but never in either nature be perfected.

If He did act in the Divine nature anything without the human nature, then there is a person standing in the Divine nature alone; for that which is distinctive of a person is a complete action, feeling, or word. If again He did any act in the human nature alone, where is the Divine?

This ignorant, though common way of speaking, as if now you have an act of the human nature, and now of the Divine nature, makes a person of each, and so you bring in the false doctrine of Nestorius, who asserted that Christ had two persons instead of two natures in one person.

These remarks are necessary to the understanding of the thing declared in the text, that God gave this revelation to Jesus Christ, who in becoming man truly came into limitation of the knowledge, feelings, and complete nature of man; self-contracted, self-humbled, self-emptied of His glory, that He might show His love

to human nature in its lowest forms, and redeem it out of its most miserable conditions; and, through the agency of men redeemed, might bring the universe into blessedness, and fix it there for ever. Agreeably hereto, the Scripture records, that the Lord Jesus Christ grew...

Luke 2

⁵² ...in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

That human reason which He took, He did inform with His personality of the eternal Word; and receiving the Holy Ghost from the Father, in answer to His faith, He did instruct and support the human nature through all the stages of its existence, which was upheld wise, faithful, and true, through the influence of the Holy Ghost.⁶

And thus every action begun in the Godhead of the Son of Man, proceeded into the manhood, and out of the manhood passed complete. So that the creature is fully capable of apprehending God in human nature; while, at the same time, Christ, in the Divine nature, is wholly incomprehensible; out of which He ever condescended from His dignity, from His infinite vastness, from His incomprehensibility, into this creature condition, in order that He might make God intelligible through a body.

And this is the way in which the fullness of the Godhead dwells in a body. So that the first part of His acting, that done in the Godhead, passes all understanding. We cannot know the love, the condescension of God's coming to act in the human nature. But by the acting in the human nature, perfectly harmonizing with the Divine will, we are enabled to comprehend the love and the goodness, and the other affections of the Godhead; and we are enabled to walk in that way which He loves, and to have that mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus.

There is great confusion in the way in which they speak of the actions both of God and of Christ in these times; shrinking from and shunning the language of the Trinity, in which alone a work

⁶ See *Westminster Confession*, ch. viii. § 3. C2.

of God can be truly expressed. And therefore I deem it good thus early in these discourses to express in one sentence the process of a Divine purpose, until it become a realized thing.

The Godhead of the Father, infinite and incomprehensible, communicates to the Godhead of the Son, also infinite and incomprehensible, by means of the Holy Ghost, also infinite and incomprehensible, that purpose which He would have performed: the Son assenting thereto in His Divine nature, which is one of substance and of will with the Father, proceeds to perform that which the Father has communicated to Him.

And to this end He empties himself out of His Divine nature, and passes into the human nature, where He finds himself a very man, with man's very limitations: and there acting faith, as a man He receives the Holy Ghost given by the Father unto His human nature, and consenting to act through the same; by whom He in His human nature extends His human will, ever harmonious with His Divine will to the utmost bound and limit of God's creation.

Wherever the person of the Father wills to work, there the person of the eternal Son in human nature, or the Christ of God, does, by the Holy Ghost acting as the Spirit of Christ, perform the work which the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead of the Father had originated in himself.

So much for the general principle. And now, in order to explain the particular case of an increase of Christ's knowledge, which is now before us, turn to *Mark*, and see what he says:

Mark 13

³² Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

What is the day and the hour here spoken of? It is the day and the hour of His revelation, His coming, His appearing.

²⁶ Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.

Now,

Mark 13

³² Of that day and that hour knows no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Here the Divine Person, Christ, declares, that, when He was on the earth, He knew not the day or the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. Now recollect, that the coming of the Son of Man is the same as the revealing of Jesus Christ. The words “revealing of Jesus Christ,” in those passages which are quoted above, is translated “the coming, or the appearing of the Son of Man;” so that here we have a declaration of His ignorance during the days of His flesh, as to that one matter. And here in our text it is declared, that He received the knowledge of it from the Father; that He received it from God; that God gave it to Him.

We see therefore, dearly beloved brethren, that when our blessed Lord was with us in the days of His flesh, His humility is shown in this no less than in other things, that His knowledge was under a veil, under the veil of the flesh, under the limitation of that form of being which He was then possessed of, having only the limited compass of flesh mortal.

But, when He ascended on high, and received His glorified body of flesh immortal, when He received the promise of the Holy Ghost from the Father to bestow on His disciples, He likewise received by the Holy Ghost further lights and communications, which He bestows on the church through means of the holy Apostles.

It was from Christ that the holy Apostles received their new revelations; and Christ himself received them from God; and, receiving them from God, He received them from His own substance.

Think not that Jesus Christ is another substance from God, or that God is another substance from Jesus Christ. Remember that Jesus Christ is one of the Persons in the Godhead, and when He says that God gave it to Him, it merely signifies that Jesus Christ having humbled himself to the likeness of man, received from the Godhead those communications which the Godhead was pleased

to give Him; and did grow up, as it is said, in wisdom and in favor with God and man. After His resurrection He received new communications; and one of these is the substance of this book.

In the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, our blessed Lord, after He ascends unto, and sits at the right hand of His Father, is represented as receiving all His information from the Father, and not from His own Divine nature; no other way, indeed, than He received it upon the earth where He increased in wisdom, and was guided in understanding through means of the Holy Scriptures, just as all His disciples are. For example:

Isaiah 8

¹⁷ And I will wait upon the Lord, that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion.

We have Paul's authority⁷ for applying these verses to Christ. Here He represents himself as waiting His Father's time and pleasure, during the long night of Jacob's darkness and Zion's desolation.

So also in *Isaiah* 49,⁸ which we have apostolic authority⁹ for referring to the same time, we have Christ under the name of Jacob, and in the language of Jacob, complaining that the wife of His love, the Rachel, the Jewish Church, had not been given up unto Him; and that He had spent His labor for nought:

Isaiah 49

⁴ Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.

Whereupon, Jehovah, His Father, makes known to Him, that He purposed first to give unto Him her for whom He had not labored, to wit, the Gentile church.

⁷ *Hebrews* 2.

⁸ *Isaiah* 49:1-12.

⁹ *Acts* 13:47.

⁵ And now, says the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

⁶ And He said, It is a light thing that You should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give You for a light to the Gentiles, that You may be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

⁷ Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.

And further, He reveals the other mystery, that after their day of salvation He would give Him for a covenant of the (Jewish) people to establish the earth (that it should not again be shaken,¹⁰), and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages¹¹ (the redemption of the purchased inheritance, until which we are sealed by the Holy Ghost,¹²). These two mysteries, I say, of the calling of the Gentiles first, and of His after manifestation to be the glory of Israel, Christ received from His Father, after His ascension.

In the days of His flesh, He knew of them only as a prophecy and He made them known only in proportion to the prophetic measure. And therefore He said, that of the day and the hour of His coming, no man knew, not even the Son, but the Father only.

But when He ascended up on high, He received them as gifts for His church.¹³ And for communicating them unto His church, He chose men, to whom He might reveal them. Paul was the chosen vessel for conveying the mystery of their vocation unto the Gentiles: John was the chosen vessel for conveying the mystery of His coming unto all the church.

¹⁰ *Hebrews* 12:27.

¹¹ *Isaiah* 49:8.

¹² *Ephesians* 1:14.

¹³ *Psalm* 68:18; *Ephesians* 4:8.

Now, dearly beloved brethren, think not evil, neither refuse to look at these things; as if we disparaged the Divinity of Christ, while we thus set forth the economy of the Divine purpose, according to the order of its communication to and setting forth by Christ.

One accession was when He ascended up on high, and received in His manhood that glory and dignity which He now possesses. No one of you refuses to look at, and to believe that He ascended up into glory out of His humility, to honor out of disgrace; and that after He passed through death He received an immortal and impassable body, was seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, and now reigns with all the attributes of the Father, who condescends to act as it were under, and for the Son, who heretofore having glorified the Father, is now glorified of the Father.

No one hesitates to believe that Christ did receive such glory of God on the day of His ascension; that He did then receive the promise of the Spirit; of which it is expressly said by John,

John 7

³⁹ But this spoke He of the Spirit...for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified.

And the Apostle Peter, in the beginning of the *Acts*, says,

Acts 2

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,

³³ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.

If, then, Christ did receive advancement of glory, and enlargement of power in the Holy Spirit, as He himself also declares:

Matthew 28

¹⁸ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,

—what difficulty can anyone have in believing that He received new revelations also? And for the making known of this He used two chosen instruments:

1. The Apostle Paul, to communicate the calling of the Gentile into the union of the body of Christ;
2. The Apostle John, to communicate what is revealed in this book of the *Apocalypse*.

And I know of no other new revelations, except these two. This account of the matter is necessary for the unfolding of the meaning of the words “God gave it to Him;” which bears that He had not the knowledge before, as He himself declares in the passage quoted from *Mark*.¹⁴ And likewise it is needed for the better understanding of Christ’s humiliation, and the acting of God through Christ, without whom He never shall act.

But it is moreover necessary for the exposition of that beautiful passage:

Ephesians 4

⁸ Wherefore He said, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

¹¹ And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

After quoting from *Psalms* 68 the prophecy of Christ’s receiving gifts when He ascended up on high, Paul declares that these gifts which He received for men, He gave to men, in the form of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

And having received from God the gift of the knowledge of His own *Apocalypse* or manifestation, He endows an apostle with it, and gives him to the churches for their edification, being indeed rich only for us, wise only for us, honored only for us. Marvelous love, grace, and condescension!

Observe now what a new dignity is given to this book, what a new importance and value conferred upon it from these considerations.

¹⁴ *Mark* 13:32.

It is a thing which Christ received from God after His ascension; and which God gave unto Him on express purpose to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. God enable us, His servants, to estimate the gift aright.

O may the Lord turn the heart of His church to this book, and make me instrumental to remove some prejudices and false impressions from the minds of His own dear people; and to draw many with energy to the perusal, and study, and meditation of this heavenly gift, which we may well believe has a superiority over the other books of Scripture, commensurate with the dignity and power of Christ risen, over and above Christ in flesh.

If the flesh veiled His knowledge, acting like the microscope, which while it gives minuteness of observation, hinders enlargement of view and distance of perception; then that which He came to know, and was capable of knowing after His resurrection, must have a compass, and range, and glory about it surpassing the other Scriptures.

And this I do firmly believe, concerning the *Apocalypse*, that it is especially the food of the resurrection life which the regenerate have in Christ Jesus. As it most fully declares the honor and glory in which God has set His Son, our Saviour.

More than any other book of Scripture, it also lifts the soul into the fellowship of that Divine place and dignity whereof we are promised the coheirship at the coming of the Lord with all His saints.

ITS END

And now for what end does He give this revelation of His own advent unto Christ?

Revelation 1

¹ For to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.

Observe here, brethren, that the object of the living God is, to make known to His servants future things according to that office of the Spirit,

John 16

¹³ He will show you things to come.

And yet this is our high offense to endeavor to understand the future. It has been rung from the one end of the island to the other, and in the schismatical, heretical, and sectarian magazines, the charge is brought and published against us, that we are a set of blasphemous persons, fools and madmen, because we study what is about to be, and endeavor to know the things that must shortly come to pass. And yet no other reason or object is given by the living God for communicating this book to His church, but that for which we are so slandered.

For this very thing, so shocking in the sight of these blind guides of the blind, God gave it unto Christ, that He might show unto His servants things which are not yet come to pass. Will any man tell me, then, that we ought not to search into that which is future, till after it come to pass? That it is a dangerous thing for me to lead the way, for you to follow after it?

Go tell these self-sufficient babblers, that they speak against the express declaration of God's word, against the solemnity and dignity of that single end for which this book came to be made known to Christ, and by Christ to us. And they will endeavor to frighten us with the breath of their nostrils! Out upon such ignorance.

How then, say you (oh sons of the wise!), that we are not to look out for the things that are coming to pass, till after they come to pass? They say:

“A prophecy, must remain unknown to us; and was not given to be known until the event, that we might see that God knows the end, from the beginning, and that nothing comes to pass without His having foreseen it.”

I do not think it unworthy of God to condescend to teach us the lesson of His foreknowledge, and this lesson prophecy does clearly teach. But does it teach that only, or is it given to teach that primarily? I deny that it is.

In one passage indeed, I do find God challenging the idolaters to prove their gods by this, that they can foretell future things:

Isaiah 43

⁹ Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.

And I do likewise find our Lord saying,

John 16

⁴ But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come you may remember that I told you of them.

No doubt this is one object of prophecy, to prove that God has in Him the power to foresee and foretell. But are there no consolations of the church, no judgments of the world, no justifications of His Providence, no ends of His holiness to be attained at the same time? Is it mere power He wants to convince us of? Is it not rather His power to do thus and thus, to support and deliver His faithful ones, to destroy all who rise up against Him? A part of the truth is not the whole of it. Neither is he wise who calls a part the whole, but he is schismatical and erroneous.

Now, that prophecy is for the knowledge of things before they happen, let all the prophets testify, who, as distinctly as words could utter it, did tell and describe every judgment, time, place, and person, and effect, before it happened.

Did not Isaiah tell king Ahaz, and Jeremiah king Zedekiah, and Ezekiel and Daniel the captives, what things were to happen in their days? Did not our Lord tell Jerusalem what was to happen? Did not Paul and Peter and John tell the church what was to happen? And here is not the *Apocalypse* written on very purpose to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass?

What do these boasters of themselves mean? What means this confederacy of all orthodox and heterodox, churchman and schismatic, believers and unbelievers, gathered together to put down inquiry into unfulfilled prophecy, as the attempt of heated brains, of insurrectionary and state-troubling men.

Was Lord Napier, the inventor of logarithms, such a one? Was Sir Isaac Newton, the demonstrator of the system of the universe, such a one? Were Mede and Bishops Newton and Horsley such ones? Were Durham, and Fleming, and Johnstone such crazy and despicable fools?

You misguided people, destroyed for lack of knowledge! It is not a confederacy (of what you call enlightened and intellectual men) against *us*, but against the prophetic *word of God*, which you would, in your grossest ignorance of what it contains, represent as a sealed book, as a dark riddle, as an unintelligible hieroglyphic, till after it has been accomplished and is become of little further use to the church. For certain he is but a poor churchman, aye and a poor Deist, who needs to have it continually proved to him that God knows the end from the beginning.

Nevertheless, as has been said, we allow this to be an end, though a very remote one, of prophecy; but the chief end we assert in the words before us, is to teach unto God's servants...

Revelation 1

¹ ...things which must shortly come to pass.

It is an end of prophecy to teach us that He who spoke it was inspired of God, according as Christ declares:

John 16

⁴ These things I have told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I have told you of them.

But it is likewise an end of prophecy to give to the Holy Spirit His office of teaching through the word the things which are to come, according as it is written in the same discourse,

¹³ Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.

Now what are these men who will combine against both the work and office of the Holy Spirit (here declared by Christ), and the purpose of the Father (declared in the first verse of the *Reve-*

lation)? They are scoffers, be they called liberal or evangelical, churchman or sectarian, catholic or schismatic. They are the scoffers prophesied as being about to arise in the last times:

2 Peter 3

¹ This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

² That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

³ Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

But to put this matter still farther beyond all doubt, it is written:

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

Turn with me also to the *First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*,

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ But, as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

Nothing can be more mysterious than such things; yet hear what follows:

¹⁰ But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

And if you would find the root of this matter—the secret cause of this objection to receive the Spirit as the interpreter of things to come—you have it from the mouth of God:

¹⁴ But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The expressions, “things which must shortly come to pass,”¹⁵ and “the time is at hand,”¹⁶ especially when connected with the frequent mention of Christ’s coming quickly¹⁷ and the solemn command in the same chapter,

Revelation 22

¹⁰ Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand,

These, and such like expressions, puzzle those who will not study Scripture, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, but must have everything to be conformed to common language, otherwise they call it either mystery or dishonesty in the interpreter.

And I have even heard masters in Israel gravely argue, that something more must certainly be intended by the expression “Christ’s coming” than His personal coming at the end of this age; otherwise the Holy Spirit of truth would never have spoken of it as near at hand. And they find a very convenient event in the destruction of Jerusalem, which they call a coming of Christ, and to which they find little difficulty (in their loose way) in referring the various predictions contained in the Gospels concerning the coming of the Lord.

But this subterfuge being cut off in the *Apocalypse*, which, by common belief, was written posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, I know not how they explain this matter; but do suppose they leave it with incurious ignorance and sapient indifference, to be explained by the event; as being of that numerous class of things to which none but fools would think of applying themselves.

Incurious and self-sufficient ignorance! The true resolution of this difficulty is, to refer to other parts of Scripture, where the Holy Ghost speaks of the time of Christ’s absence, and see whether it be spoken of as a little while or not: if we find that this

¹⁵ *Revelation* 1:1.

¹⁶ *Revelation* 1:3.

¹⁷ *Revelation* 22:7, 12, 20.

is God's method of estimating it, what are we that we should call it long, because it includes many generations of the sons of men?

He who constituted the ages, is alone able to give their comparative dimensions: and if He calls the season of my Lord's absence a short season, I must believe that it is short, compared with the period of His abode when He comes again; that it is a brief season in the reckoning of Him with whom...

2 Peter 3

⁸ ...one day is...as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

In one place,¹⁸ by a parable He endeavored to counteract the erroneous opinion which then prevailed that the kingdom of heaven was then to appear, and therefore, as well as for the propriety of the parable, He speaks of His absence as a season sufficient for a long journey, to permit His servants to trade and make gain of their several charges.

Luke 19

¹¹ And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

¹² He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a *far country* to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Except in this instance (and here also he is guarded against speaking of the time as long, though the distance be called great), we always find the season of His absence spoken of as a short season. I shall quote three instances of this.

The first is *Luke 18*, where by a parable having set forth His church by the similitude of a widow, and her anti-christian oppressor by that of an unjust judge, with whom the widow by urgency at length prevails, he then applies the parable (verse 7, which should be joined to the preceding chapter; the parable of the widow being only as it were a way of half-hiding, half-revealing the endurance of His church, which needed to be spoken by proverbs, and not plainly),

¹⁸ *Luke 19:11.*

Luke 18

⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

That the day of vengeance, and the time of His coming are one and the same event, is sufficiently declared in the discourse of which the parable is, as it were, but an episode.¹⁹ And He expressly declares that the time from which He spoke, until that avenging of the elect, and coming of the Son of Man to the earth, was a short time, the very same form of expression as is used in *Revelation* 1:1, the passage now under consideration.

At the same time He calls it long, in respect to the sufferings of the elect, but short when compared with the other season of their reward. Parallel with this also is *1 Peter* 1:6-7, to which we refer without citing it.

The second passage to which we appeal, in order to prove that it is the common form to speak of Christ's absence as a short period, is:

Hebrews 10

³⁷ For yet *a little while*, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.

Although in the verse immediately preceding, looked upon in respect of the trials of God's people, they are said to have need of patience. So also in the passage quoted in *Hebrews* 12:26 from *Haggai* 2:6, it is there written of the time when both heavens and earth shall be shaken, that it is "a little while":

Haggai 2

⁶ Yet once, it is *a little while*, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land.

Now the Apostle expressly refers this to the removal of these things, and the introduction of the kingdom and glory of Christ, which cannot be shaken.

¹⁹ *Luke* 17:24, 26, 30.

Hebrews 12

²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

²⁷ And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

The third passage, and, perhaps, the strongest of all, is taken from our Lord's discourse, concerning the duration of His absence,

John 16

¹⁶ *A little while*, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me; because I go to the Father.

The little while here spoken of extends over all the season of His absence from the church at the right hand of His Father, and not to the little period of absence that was to occur before His resurrection while He lay in the tomb. For, during these days, He was not taken out of their sight; He was with them on the cross; and He was with them, in the tomb; and during the forty days He was with them, eating and drinking with them, and therefore to none of these can "the little while" during which they should not see Him, be applied.

This will more clearly appear by observing the reason which He assigns:

¹⁶ A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, *a little while*, and you shall see me.

And why?

¹⁶ ...because I go to my Father.

Now, I say, that Christ did not ascend to His Father during the time that His body was lying in the grave, for when He was risen from the grave, He said to Mary Magdalene,

John 20

¹⁷ Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.

The ascension to His Father was when He ascended on the Mount of Olives; and here, therefore, we have a manifest proof that the expression “little time” refers to the time of His absence during which His church has not seen Him,—the interval of time that He is with His Father. To confirm this, let us go on with the context:

John 16

¹⁹ Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, *a little while*, and you shall see me?

²⁰ Verily, verily, I say unto you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

This duration of the world’s joy is until His coming to judge it. The little while of His absence, which is also the season of the church’s sorrow, according to His answer to the question,

Matthew 9

¹⁴ Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but your disciples fast not?

¹⁵ And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Then He likens the anguish of His church for His reappearance, to the agony of a travailing woman, because like this though it has an appointed time, it is ever uncertain.

Matthew 24

³⁶ But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

And so in all the prophets, the resurrection of the saints is compared to travail: *Psalms* 110, *Isaiah* 26, *Hosea* 13 and likewise in *Romans* 8. And the appearing again of Christ with His risen saints unto creation, is this birth of her joyful burden with which she

has been so long distressed. And so the Lord himself interprets His own parable:

John 16

²¹ A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

²² And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man will take from you.

And so, oh you scoffers, it is not so absurd or uncommon as you think, to speak of Christ's coming as in a short time, and after a little while; nor do we make God a liar when we so interpret it, but follow the manifest sense of His word. And surely it is a very little time when compared with the eternal age of Messiah's kingdom which is to follow.

Farther, with respect to the word shortly:

Revelation 1

¹ ...shortly come to pass.

It is a remarkable thing, that in the third verse the nearness of the time should be given as a principal reason for reading the book:

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; *for the time is at hand.*

Seeing, then, the blessing is to come on account of this very thing, that "the time is at hand" we conclude that if God had not known that this book was to be instantly useful, and immediately profitable to the church, He would not have urged the reading of it by the instancy of the time, and the urgency of the events. It is as much as to say,

"You cannot delay it; you must not delay it, because the time it is needed for, is close at hand."

And there can be no doubt, that it was this book which supported the martyrs of the primitive church. And it is observable, that no book of Scripture is more quoted in the writings of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, than this book. And I believe that it was the epistles to the seven churches which supported the hearts of the martyrs.

Of the great attention given to this book in the first centuries of the church, nothing is so clear a proof as that a great part of the heresies of those times arose out of the things contained in it. The heresy,

1 Corinthians 15

¹² ...that there is no resurrection of the dead,

2 Timothy 2

¹⁸ ...that, the resurrection is past already,

—arose out of the leaven even now working in the church, which explains away “the first resurrection,” into the regeneration of the soul, set forth and sealed to the believer, in baptism; and at this door rushed in the heresy of Cerinthus,

“...that the believers should enjoy the earth, and make themselves merry with the abundance of its delicacies.”

The Millennium, we know, was so much thought of and acted on in the first centuries, that Millenarian became a name for a body in the church; among whom, even in the 5th century, Jerome says, there were a very great number of the orthodox. And an earlier father, I think Justin Martyr, says, that those in his time who were altogether orthodox believed in the Millennium, during which Christ’s kingdom was to be set up, and Christ personally to reign on earth.

Papias, also, to whom the opposers of the orthodox doctrine of Christ’s personal reign are pleased to trace what they call *the absurdity of Millenarianism*, lived in the 2nd century, and was instructed by Polycarp, one of the disciples of John.

All which goes to prove, beyond a doubt, what indeed has never been denied, that this book came into immediate use in the

churches, as might well be believed, both from the constancy of the blessing before us, and from the peremptory mandates given to John to send it to the churches. These things are certain.

I will now advance a conviction of my own: that the readiness, the promptness to a fault for meeting martyrdom, was due first of all to the glorious promises of the seven epistles being addressed only to those who should overcome²⁰ and be faithful to the death;²¹ and next, to the most wonderful honor put upon the martyrs blood in the 12th chapter, where no less a consequence is ascribed to their not loving their lives unto the death,²² than this, that thereby Michael and His angels were able to prevail in battle against the devil and his angels, and cast them headlong out of heaven.

Add to this the assurance given in the 6th chapter, that ever as the martyr's blood was poured out before the altar, his soul clothed in white went in before the Lord, and was partaker of His joy.²³

I have no doubt therefore, that the repeated mention of "the time being near at hand," had the effect of bringing forth that "noble army of martyrs," who won for Christianity its seat and dignity upon the earth.

True it is, that when the church began to be leavened with the mystery of iniquity, and to work into the hands of the Roman emperors, and the Papal adultery was consummating, it came to pass that this book, which presents the church as ever suffering from, and ever contrary to Rome, began to fall out of the hands of the preachers, and ministers, and flock of Christ, into the hands of the scribes and the doctors, out of whose hands it has hardly yet been delivered.

And now they went so far as to cast doubts upon its genuineness and authenticity; and to beat down those glorious hopes of

²⁰ *Revelation* 1:7, 11, 17, 26; 2:

²¹ *Revelation* 2:10.

²² *Revelation* 12:11.

²³ *Revelation* 6:11.

Christ's advent and kingdom on the earth, in the faith of which the first Christians had won the crown of martyrdom. And as the light, and life, and liberty of these glorious hopes waned out with the hiding and sealing of that book from which they flow, there came in the bondage, and oppression, and worldliness of the Papacy; until at length in the Reformation, this book was again unclasped by the preachers and opened to the people.

You know well, who are children of the Church of Scotland, that there was no book out of which our reformers took the substance of their preaching against the Pope, more than out of this book: and you may depend upon it, my brethren, that if we are to be roused to make a stand and a demonstration against liberalism, against blind indifference to Papists and Protestants, who in these times are put upon equal dignity and equal trust; if we are to be delivered from union with the confederacy forming against Christ and His church; it must be by again opening this most blessed book, of which it may be said now, as heretofore,

Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads it, for the time is at hand.

I have undertaken to speak sincerely, without the fear of man, and with an open breast before God. And I tell you all that one of the principal reasons which determined me to expound this book in this metropolis where I received my education, and to which my knowledge is in some way due, was the support lately given here by so many distinguished, powerful, and reverend men, to opinions alike subversive of church and state, and their misguided zeal of liberality towards that false religion which our fathers abhorred.

Now, having a love for these men, as well as a high value for the communications of this book, and, from the study of it, having seen the revolution wrought upon the minds of my people, and judging also from my own experience, who was convinced in my understanding from reading it in faith, long before I was convinced in my heart of the error of liberalism; I resolved to do the same office for this city which I had done for my own flock, and

to bring before its thoughtful people the truth of God here declared; to sow the seed of the truth, and endeavor to convince their hearts of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which this book gives to the church.

And I am well assured, that when I am gone away, God will pass it over unto other and abler hands, through whom this book may become the instrument of preserving us, as a church, and as a people, from those false principles and dreadful consequences, which are involved in the grand rebellion of these times, against the prophetic word of God, in favor of human wisdom, policy, prudence, and expediency.

THE TRANSMISSION OF IT

The third particular concerning the transmission of this book is, that He, sent His angel to signify it unto His servant John, and through him to the church on earth. Now, who, or of what kind and order, is this angel?

We have already seen how it does not blemish or impeach the Divinity of Christ, to say that by becoming man He brought himself into the condition of needing supplies of knowledge, as well as of consolation and strength, from the Father, which He received in answer to His faith by the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost.

And with the Holy Ghost thus communicated from the Father, He, the person of the Son, ever contracting himself out of His Godhead, ever emptying himself out of that infinitude of being, wherein He thought it no robbery to be equal with God,²⁴ did act with the weak implements of fallen manhood, a holy blameless life, a powerful triumphant life, making a show of principalities and powers, and triumphing over them openly in His cross.²⁵

Of this the Father's gift of the Holy Ghost to the body which He prepared, the Saviour received the fullness when He ascended up on high; including the fullness of knowledge, as well as the full-

²⁴ *Philippians* 2:6.

²⁵ *Colossians* 2:14-15.

ness of power, and every other kind of fullness which differences the condition of a weak, infirm, fallen (but not sinful) humanity, from the condition of that glorious and powerful, most dignified and beautiful humanity, in which He now sits at the Father's right hand, receiving the homage and confession of every creature of God. This is all signified in that word,

Matthew 28

¹⁸ All power is given to me in heaven and on earth.

Those who ignorantly fear and idly talk, as if this did derogate from Christ's Divinity, must consent to learn the doctrine of the Trinity a little more perfectly; and a little more deeply to study the nature of a self-existent Being, if so be they will set themselves up to be teachers and masters in Israel.

But if they will be content with the degree of learners, they may be taught by every opening of the Holy Scriptures, that Christ did receive something from God on His ascension, which He had not before. And whether this something be much or little, it is equally contradictory to their notion of His Divinity that He as Christ cannot be added to in any respect.

They dare to assert, that to say Christ received more knowledge upon His ascension into glory, is to deny His omniscience and His Divinity (and yet He grew in wisdom²⁶). Well then I say if He received any additional power, it is to deny His omnipotence. And yet He says after His resurrection,

¹⁸ All power is given to me in heaven and in earth;

—and the Apostle says,

Acts 2

³³ He has received the promise of the Spirit,

—or the promised Holy Ghost. And if He received any more glory, why then He was not the all-sufficient One. And yet He prays to be glorified with that glory which He had with the Fa-

²⁶ Luke 2:40.

ther before the world was.²⁷ And, to cut short this reproof of their unscriptural notions, it is written,

Ephesians 1

¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,

²⁰ Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

²² And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church,

²³ Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

But if, not choosing to be taught, they will be teachers, then let them consider wherein lies the difference between a self-existent person, and one not self-existent, but created. Where, but in this? That the created and dependent being has a law according to which He must act out His being, whereas the other is a law unto himself; is the Parent of law, the Law-giver; who is not bound to any limitation or extent of being, but has power to contract himself to what form it pleases Him to come into, and to hold himself there how long He pleases, and for what ends His good pleasure moves Him thereto.

Such power the self-existing Son of God puts forth, when He consents to be made man, and by act divine empties and exhausts himself unto the dimension of the embodied soul, which the Father appropriated to Him; and in so emptying himself and holding himself in limitation, I see the proof decisive of a Divine person.

But being so emptied, is He not emptied? Is it but a show and sham of it? Is His knowledge, His power, His glory, His being, the same as ever? Then where lies the humiliation? It is not a reality, but only a fiction. And is He not God still? Yes, He is God still; but

²⁷ *John 17:5.*

God consenting, or having consented, for God's glory to be ever bounded and limited by man's conditions.

And where stands the Godhead now in its unrestricted freedom and unlimited infinitude? It stands in the person of the Father; ever blessed, ever worshiped: in whose worship the Son is worshiped, and the Holy Ghost likewise.

And for what does the Father employ His infinite power, wisdom, and glory? To bring all things into subjection to His Son; in this humbled form of manhood, to make Him Head over all unto His church, to gather all things unto Him, and in Him to constitute them for ever blessed; and, conscious that their blessedness stands only in Him. Such an exaltation the Father gave Him when He said,

Psalm 110

¹ Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

The Son having done all to make the Father's name glorious by becoming the Christ, the Father straightway does all to make the name of the Christ glorious over all creation. This is the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. I touch upon it often because I love it, and would fain teach my adversaries something for the profit of their souls.

And now when Christ had attained to the supremacy of creation, and obtained that treasury of power whereby all creation was to be enriched, with which the Father himself was to go forth, not His own name to glorify, but the name of Christ, to whom do the supplies of the gift proceed forth? in what streams do they flow? Our text declares in one particular instance, that when He had received of God that insight into His own future power and glory which is contained in this book, He instantly dispatched an angel to make it known by means of John unto His members upon the earth.

The same delight in His church, the same headship over all for His church's sake, is set forth not by a particular instance, but by a general declaration, in that passage from the *Ephesians* which I

have already quoted, but which I think it good to dwell upon a little more in this place, both to edify the believer, and to still the adversary.

The Apostle exhorting the church to unity by various considerations leads them the way unto it, through the knowledge of all the various gifts and offices in the church being appointments and furnishings of Christ out of His resurrection, power, and glory; saying,

Ephesians 4

⁷ But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

⁸ Wherefore He said, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

⁹ (Now, that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.)

¹¹ And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

It appears from this passage, that the grace which every one possesses, he receives from Christ out of that fullness which He received from the Father upon His ascension. It becomes a gift to us, in consequence of its being first a gift from the Father to Him.

This proves that He emptied himself of His Divinity in order to become man. Having done this for the glory of the Father's name, that same Father for whom He had become emptied did fill the emptiness of His manhood, did strengthen its weakness, did glorify its vileness. This vileness he confessed:

Psalms 22

⁶ I am a worm, and no man.

From the moment of His conception, the Father filled Christ's emptiness, sanctifying and perfecting that body which He had taken, and at His resurrection did endow Him with the power of

endowing others, of quickening them, of enriching them, and finally bringing them to the inheritance of His glory.

When Christ had received the promised Spirit upon His resurrection from the dead, and would communicate it to as many as the Father should give Him, He does it not by a promiscuous, even-handed, equal distribution, but by constituting an endowed class, through whom the endowment of the many should proceed. He constituted Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, by gifts of the Holy Ghost, and gave these gifted men to the church, that, through their labors in the work of the ministry, His whole body might be edified and reared up to perfection.

To this same effect it is written in the last words of the Gospel by Matthew, that He came and spoke unto His eleven disciples, saying,

Matthew 28

¹⁸ All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

¹⁹ Go you therefore, and teach all nations...

²⁰ ...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

This was spoken in the understanding that they were to wait in Jerusalem till they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,

Acts 1

⁴ ...commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, you have heard of me.

⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.

⁸ But you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The power which Christ received, "all power...in heaven and in earth," He does at present put forth in the Holy Spirit, and the residue He retains in His hand until He shall come in the glory of His power.

And the power of the Holy Spirit,—be it knowledge, be it holiness, be it healing, be it love, be it any gift whatever,—He communicates to the church through the means of the pastors and ministers of the church, (if so be that the offices of Evangelist and Apostle have ceased). He does not scatter it promiscuously, but He gathers it into the spring heads of living men, and the cisterns of visible ordinances, that He may keep up the form and body of government and obedience in the church till He come again.

Seeing, then, that this truth is both evidenced in the instance of the *Apocalypse*, and broadly stated as the universal rule, both in *The Epistle to the Ephesians* and other parts of Scripture, we are naturally led to expect that the angel to whom Christ committed the ministry of this gift, and who brought it to the vision and apprehension of the Apostle John, should stand closely related, in some way or other, to that church which is His fullness, to those men for whom He has received gifts; and, as He is manifestly a celestial and not a terrestrial person, that He is one of the church in heaven, whom Christ sent on this high and holy legation.

I say this is the natural inference from the general doctrine stated in Scripture, concerning the end for which He has received the resurrection-glory, and the persons by whom He dispensed them.

It is further evident, in a negative way, from certain things which are testified in various parts of Scripture, concerning the invisible beings commonly designated Angels, of whom it is not anywhere said that they teach anything to the church; but in one place it is revealed that they learn from the church;²⁸ where the Apostle declares, that he received his commission and his instructions as an apostle, not only for the sake of the church, but for the sake of the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, who learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God.

The order of revelation is not from the angels to the apostles, and thence to the church; but from the apostles to the church, and

²⁸ *Ephesians* 3:10.

thence to the angels. And agreeably hereto it is written,²⁹ that the angels desire to look into those things which had been openly preached by the apostles unto the church; and such would not be their desire if they knew them already most perfectly, and had received them at first hand from Christ to bring them unto the apostles.

But that which sets my mind at rest, both with respect to the inferiority and posteriority of the angels to the church in this particular, is the continual declaration of Scripture, that while the angels and principalities are under Him, the church is His body and His fullness.³⁰

Now, what is meant by the body, if it be not that to which the head directly communicates its purpose, and through the organs of which it makes it known? And how would the church be His fullness, if others knew more than she does of His mind, from whence she receives it by distribution? And how should knowledge pass from the head to the outward object, without passing through the body; and how return to the body again, without the consciousness of the head?

It is absolutely necessary for the substantiating of that relation of unity which the church stands in to Christ, to believe that there is the most entire consciousness between the one and the other, without the intervention of a third party.

Be it now observed, for the completeness of this idea, that the church is not two; one in heaven, and another on earth; one indolent and inactive in heaven, the other active and militant on the earth. Neither is the church cut asunder into two parts, because the one is within the veil and the other without it; but the church is essentially one and indivisible, whether on earth or in heaven; and it is this one body of the elect and saved which constitutes Christ's fullness.

²⁹ *1 Peter* 1:12.

³⁰ *Ephesians* 1:22.

So far, therefore, from expecting that Christ should fulfill His function of High Priest and mediatorial King without the disembodied part of the church, by the embodied part of the church alone, I believe that such an idea is utterly subversive of the glory of the church, and contradictory to the tenor of Scripture, and especially of this revelation of Jesus Christ, as we shall have ample opportunities of showing at large.

At present, it belongs to our subject to show that the angel through whom Christ showed these things to John, is one of the disembodied church.

When this celestial messenger, this *legate a latere*³¹ of our great Priest and King, had executed His commission, He thus describes himself:

Revelation 22

⁹ I am your fellow-servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book.

A question might be made with respect to the grammatical construction both of the English version, and of the original, whether the thing here declared be that he was one of the brotherhood of the Prophets, or that he was a fellow-servant with John and with them. I incline to receive the former interpretation as the just one, and to believe the sense of the passage to be, that he was John's fellow-servant, of John's brethren the prophets, and of the company of the church who observed or kept the words of this book; expressing three things thereby:

1. That he might not be worshiped, being himself a servant such as John;
2. That his office while on earth had been to prophesy;
3. That in the state where now he was, he was an observer of the words of this book, which, all neglected as it is on earth, has the special observation of the church in heaven.

If anyone should prefer the other interpretation; though it will not bear all this information, it will bear thus much, that he was a

³¹ A papal legate of the highest class, with full powers.

fellow-servant with the beloved disciple, and with his brethren the prophets, and with those who kept the words of this book.

And even this, as it appears to me, is conclusive as to his being one of the church; for though angels be called ministering spirits,³² they are not called God's servants,—which expression is given to the church³³ to whom the prophecy was consigned by God,—but ministering spirits (*spirits of the liturgy*, whose office is connected with the service of God, and how connected is straightway told us,) sent forth unto deaconship, for the sake of those that are about to inherit salvation.³⁴

The meaning of which I take to be this, that angels have not co-equal rank with the Son, or with those who are heirs with Him of glory, but do stand unto them in the relation of deacons to the church, for external ministry and outward accommodation: having, as I shall show hereafter, certain provinces of nature and providence to watch over, which they govern for the glory of Christ and His church, but not intermeddling in the spiritual dignity of the kingdom of grace.

As providence is to grace, so I believe angels are to the church; as the dispensation of Moses was to the Gospel, so I believe angels are to the church. Therefore the Law is said to be given by the ministry of angels, but the Gospel by the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Therefore also the Law is called the elements of this world, and the rudiments of the world, being, as it were, an image, made by means of angels out of those worldly rudiments over which they have the control, but not the reality of grace which came by Jesus Christ.

And therefore the Apostle, admitting that the ages past have been under angels, declares thus concerning the age to come, which it is the object of the *Apocalypse* to reveal,

³² *Hebrews* 1:14.

³³ *Revelation* 1:1.

³⁴ *Hebrews* 1:14.

Hebrews 2

⁵ Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

While, therefore, I firmly believe that under the former dispensation God did make use of angels to convey His mind to the prophets, because that Christ was not yet glorified, I believe that from this great epoch, they have not been made use of for the administration of the kingdom of grace, but glorified saints only, such as can be called with respect to the Apostles: fellow-servants, charged with the same apostolic ministry within the veil, with which they were charged without. And, accordingly, we have those who ministered in word and doctrine to the churches, called angels of the churches.³⁵

But, still further to show that the angel's description of himself will bear no other interpretation than that which we have given above, let me refer to another passage, where an angel (one of those who pour out the vials,³⁶) being in like manner solicited to accept worship, in the same terms refuses it:

Revelation 19

¹⁰ I am your fellow-servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.

The construction of the original is exactly the same here as in the other place. Now, of the angels who poured out the vials, whereof this angel was one, we have a very particular description in the 15th chapter, where, in the sixth verse, they are represented as coming out of the holy place of the temple in heaven, in the raiment of priests, with the girdle as it would seem of high priests, to signify that they are of the church of the firstborn ones, or perhaps that they are both kings and priests, being of the order of Melchizedek.

³⁵ Revelation 1:20.

³⁶ Revelation 17:1.

Revelation 15

⁶ And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

But be this as it may, both their dress and the place from which they issue forth declare them to be priests; and if so, then belong they to the church of redeemed men, to whom this dignity appertained;³⁷ and to whom alone it appertains of all the creatures of God, as we shall show, when we come to treat of the several ascriptions of praise, and loyal attestations of fealty, presented to the Lamb, in the 5th chapter of this book. For there it belongs only to the four beasts, and twenty-four elders, to take to themselves the honor of royal priesthood, as to them only to speak concerning the book, in respect to which the angels and other creatures are entirely dumb.

Now it can be shown, I think, beyond a question, that these four living creatures, and four-and-twenty elders, are the church in heaven.

So much have I to say in this *Introductory Lecture* concerning the angel who intervenes between Christ and the apostle John. The subject will often come before us in this exposition; and we may, in one word, anticipate the conclusion, which is, that every act of Christ towards His church on earth, every movement of our King in His mediatorial kingdom, is brought to us through means of the church now in glory: who have thus the ministry of the most holy place, into which the High Priest is entered, and are the cherubim there, as we have the ministry of the holy place without the veil. And between these two is constituted the completeness of the temple of His body.

This is the idea out of which the Papists fabricated, upon the anvil and with the tools of hell, their abomination of saints mediation, intercession, and worship; and with which we Protestants are too little familiar, in our abhorrence of that abuse, as, indeed,

³⁷ Revelation 1:6.

we are too little familiar with every thing which concerns the church.

THE SEER THROUGH WHOM IT COMES TO US

The fourth and last thing which comes to be considered under this head of authority, or authorship, is the person to whom the angel made it known. This is the last link in the chain of communication:

1. God
2. Christ
3. His angel
4. John

And the question is, who is this John? He thus describes himself:

Revelation 1

¹ ...His servant John,

² Who bore record of the Word of God [he witnessed the Logos of God], and the testimony [witness] of Jesus Christ, and all things that [whatever things] he saw.

If there be a John who witnessed the *Logos* of God, and the witness of Jesus Christ, and things which he himself saw, that is the man. And who is this but John the apostle, the beloved disciple, whose Gospel is wholly taken up with the witness of the *Logos*, or *Word of God*, and with the witness which Jesus Christ gave concerning God, and with the things of which he was an eye-witness?

If, in a few words, the character of John's Gospel, and of his Epistles, were given fully and truly, these were the words by which the Spirit here identifies Him. The introduction to his Gospel, contained in the first fourteen verses of it, is to declare that the Word concerning whom the Jews and Gentiles both believed, or at least speculated, that he was a subsistence in the Godhead, was the person who was generated flesh, and tabernacled among men; and was named Jesus of Nazareth, and anointed the Christ of God.

And the Gospel thus introduced with the testimony of the Word, he thus concludes with the testimony of Jesus Christ:

Revelation 20

³¹ These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.

The same character have his 1st and 2nd Epistles, of which it may be further said, that they do maintain against various evil spirits which were gone abroad, that Jesus is the Word of God, the only Christ, the Son of God; condemning all who refused the same, as Antichrist.

Take all these peculiarities of his writings together, and it will appear that John's distinction among the Apostles was to bear record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

I incline to believe, therefore, that the second verse of the *Revelation* is introduced, on express purpose to give us the personal identity of the writer, and to cut off all disputes which might arise on such a head.

And it is a most important object which it serves, because there grew up in the church, towards the fifth and sixth centuries, a doubt whether this book was written by the Apostle John or by another: and that doubt has been clothed with much show and subtlety of learning, and exhibited to the Christian church in these times in one of those abominable Magazines, miscalled Religious, which do more harm to the church than any thing else; and, if not promptly resisted, will, I think, subvert the church altogether.

There is not the shadow of evidence for such a doubt. The universal testimony of the first three centuries gives the book to John the Apostle. Nevertheless, the pure love of doubting, combined with the desire of casting discredit upon the interpreters of prophecy, has stirred some of those who affect great orthodoxy, and still more good sense and dictatorial wisdom, to rake up the ashes of the question long forgotten and laid at rest; driven on by

Satan, in order to discredit this holy book and us the interpreters, and to lull the people into such a sleep of indifference as they have fallen into themselves, and so make them a more easy prey to the evil spirits of the times.

To confound, as I conceive, all such insidious attempts of the wicked, this second verse gives the identity of John, proving him to be the same who bore record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, in the Gospel and the Epistles.

And while we thus assert for John this prerogative among all the Apostles, we do not derogate from the unity of the doctrine which they taught, but only vindicate for him that special honor to which this beloved disciple was advanced of Christ. He leaned on His bosom,³⁸ and he was honored above all the rest to record the most precious things which fell from His lips: and being thus faithful unto His Lord, he was preferred from all the church to receive this new communication, and to convey it unto the churches.

I know not well how it has happened that the above simple interpretation, and most important application of this second verse, has escaped the notice of commentators, but to me it is not only manifest that the true intention of it is to identify the Apocalyptic seer with the Evangelical witness, but likewise that the common interpretation, which makes it a simple assertion of his faithfulness, cannot stand.

It may satisfy the last of the three clauses, “whatever things he saw,” and I have no objection that this clause be referred to the things in this *Apocalypse*, but the two former clauses cannot thus be satisfied. For though it be true that the witness of Jesus is the spirit of (the) prophecy, yet this is not the proper title of the book, which is, in the preceding verse, called “the discovery, or manifestation, of Jesus Christ.”

And though it be not unusual in rhetorical writings to change the name in successive clauses, for the sake of illustration, it is

³⁸ *John* 13:23.

little so in Scripture: and, therefore, the expression, “witness of Jesus Christ,” cannot with any propriety designate the contents of this book, but must signify either what Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, witnessed of God, or what John himself witnessed concerning Jesus Christ.

I think that the same remark is applicable with still more force to the expression, “the Word of God,” which in this book is applied exclusively to the Person of Christ,³⁹ and never to the subject-matter, or substance of the book, which are often called “the words of this prophecy,” but never “the Word of God,” although in our common way of speech they be thus designated, as also are all the Scriptures.

But, lest anyone should fail to see the same force as I do in these remarks, I may mention, that for the first two centuries, it was certainly received in the church, that no other was the author of this book but John the Evangelist.

In the third century it was by some, rashly and without the slightest ground, ascribed to Cerinthus, an early heretic, who made much abuse of the doctrine of the Millennium here inculcated; on which account, some of his ignorant and rash opponents fell upon the pitiful and wicked expedient of ascribing the book to him, thinking thereby the easier to rid themselves of his errors.

Of this same rash spirit Luther showed an example, in rejecting *The Epistle of James*, and not translating the *Apocalypse* in the first edition of his German Bible; of both of which acts, however, he came to repent.

But if the common consent of all antiquity is to overturn the heady rashness of well-meaning but inconsiderate men of evil name; then have we the most satisfactory evidence that this book was written by John the Apostle, and believed by the church to be most fully inspired. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Jerome, St. Augustine, and a continued

³⁹ *Revelation* 19:13.

stream of orthodox authority to our day, from the age next to that in which it was written, concur in the reception, the admiration, and the observance of this book.

These things I would not have mentioned, but for the base attempt of a critic, in these our days, to bring it into discredit under the guise of upholding its credibility, by a vain parade of learning, calculated to mislead the multitude into a greater indifference to that book, which God has by so many weighty promises and solemn adjurations pressed upon the attention of all His servants.

Methinks these are not times, when the church is gasping in the last stage of the consumption of her faith, to attempt to take away from her that little portion of the necessaries of life which is still left.

This insidious attack, not upon the interpreters, but upon the book, not upon the credibility of the interpretations, but upon the credibility of the book, has met a prompt and sufficient reply in Vaughan's *Expectations of the Church*, to which it is not necessary that I should add anything.

But to me, the book contains, in that second verse, a sufficient testimony to the author, declaring him to be the same who witnessed the Word of God, and the witness of Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to the completeness of this evidence, that the question, whether the Gospel or the *Apocalypse* was written first, should receive a solution in favor of the Gospel; or, indeed, should receive any solution at all. For it is to be believed that the substance of the Gospel was the subject-matter of the Apostle's preaching and teaching among the churches of Asia, where he is believed to have had his residence before his banishment to Patmos. So, when inditing this book, he refers to himself as the same who had borne, among the Christians, witness to the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And moreover, it seems to me to agree with the custom of the apostolic writings, when they make mention of themselves, as in Paul's Epistles, Peter's, Jude's, and James's; in all which they give a designation of their identity, according to some distinction and

well-known characteristic. And altogether it gives the best sense of verse 2, to understand it as fixing the identity of John to whom the book was given, with that John who delivered and defended the doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth was the Word of God, and the Lord Christ.

And with this I conclude the second head of discourse, in which I have shown some very important things concerning the authorship of this book, and various weighty grounds on account of which it ought to have authority over us.

It has its origin from God, and may be expected to contain the fullness of His mind, the completeness of His purpose, the consummation of His end, the establishment of His long-delayed and long-marred glory. From God it comes as a gift unto Christ, after He has raised Him from the dead, and signified His pleasure that in Him all fullness should dwell.

Of high price, therefore, we may well believe it; a gift of no ungenerous or poor personage, but of the inexhaustible and bountiful God; a gift to no secondary or inferior personage, but to Him whom He has delighted to honor and exalt to the right hand of His throne in the heavens.

It concerns the exaltation of His Son, and is conferred with the single object of discovering that excellent glory in which He shall yet come arrayed, those surpassing wonders beyond creation and beyond incarnation, by which He is to gather all things up unto Him as the Head, and there to uphold them for ever in infallible blessedness.

Oh! What composition may we expect to be in it, when God is the author and Christ the subject. It is brought to us by the intervention of the church in glory, who receive it from Christ, to communicate and convey unto the church on earth. And being from our Head, and through our brethren now in bliss, what affection it comes redolent withal, and what love, what reverence, what delight, should it bring to us, who are thus honored with that with which God honored His Christ. How welcome, oh, how welcome should we make this book of highest original, far borne

from the secret of the abysmal will of God, presented to our Lord as worthy of His resurrection-honor, and instantly by Him shared with His body, both that which is within and that which is without the veil!

And I think it should add to these glorious qualities one of a very tender and endearing kind, that it comes through that disciple whom most our Jesus loved, was given to him in his comfortless exile, visited to his eyes in his lonely prison, and made it the most gladsome and most honorable spot in the wide world.

Wherein perhaps is contained an emblem of that consolation in distress, with which this book has ever irradiated the dark and gloomy days of the church; and with which, if I err not, it shall ere long irradiate our night; proving to us...

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ ...as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

These high and holy considerations, by which this book has a claim upon our reverence and veneration, will be multiplied manifold, when we shall have considered, in the third place, “The Substance and Method of the Book.”

IV. THE SUBSTANCE AND METHOD OF THE BOOK

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

UNDER the first head of discourse, when treating of the name of this book, we discovered that the words by which its name or title is expressed, are in other parts of Scripture translated “the coming, or the appearing, or the manifestation, or the revelation of Jesus Christ;” an event which no one can mistake, or by any ingenuity turn aside from that appearing again of Christ, which all believe in, but so few are waiting for.

Adhering to the use and word of Scripture, we have no doubt in laying it down as certain, that the substance of this book is the second coming of Christ: an event in which the primitive church took the deepest interest; whose very intensity was apt to pass over into painfulness and astonishment and consternation. Most wise therefore was it, and most considerate, and most worthy of God’s goodness and grace, to take measures to inform His church more particularly, concerning that blessed event on which they hung expectant with a breathless desire.

And because the Father does nothing but by the Son, He first gives it to the Son, and leaves Him how He may to communicate it to His church in heaven and on earth. Being communicated to the church in heaven, He uses their instrumentality to communicate it to the church on earth, through the medium of John, whom, however, He urges and requires to write it in a book, and send it forth to all the Christian churches.

To us, indeed, who make as little account of Christ’s coming again as if it were not to be, and better that it should not be, it must appear a very strange thing indeed that a book should be written to advertise the church concerning the succession and

progress of events leading on thereto, and terminating therein. But to the primitive church, who were of another mood, it was all in all to be informed and enlightened in this matter.

But, because the enemies and opposers of His second coming will be ever alleging that there is little mention thereof in the New Testament Scriptures, I count it good, for their confusion, and for the justification of the truth, and for the demonstration of this book's importance, to take up some apostolic writing, as it were at random, and to show how constantly this theme is introduced, and with what circumstances of dignity and importance entreated.

Let it be *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, where I find it put forth upon the same level with the worshipping of God, as if these were the two great divisions of a Christian's duty:

1 Thessalonians 1

⁹ For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

¹⁰ And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Next I find it looked forward to by the Apostle himself, as the time at which he with his converts were to receive their crown:

1 Thessalonians 2

¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Next I do find it looked unto and desired as the time at which all fallibility shall be abolished, and all spot and wrinkle done away with from the members of Christ; when all anxiety shall cease, and all stability and blessedness be perfected:

1 Thessalonians 3

¹² And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

¹³ To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Next I find the hope of it used as the means of comforting the church under the loss of her members removed by death:

1 Thessalonians 4

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

And again, I find it preached as the great consummation of holiness, and the perfection of devotedness unto God.

1 Thessalonians 5

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On all which accounts it ought still to be as desirable now as it was then. But, lest the gainsayer, whose ears are as cold as death to any word or argument about the second coming of the Lord, and whose tongue is bold enough to assert anything, should assert that this Epistle is peculiar in that respect, I go on to weed out from the next Epistle also those weeds which are so obnoxious in their sight,—in mine, blessed as the tree of life.

Lo! The whole of the 1st chapter is taken up with it, presenting us with Christ's coming to the death and destruction the over-

throw and overwhelming of all antichristian and ungodly men; and their separation from His presence by swift and fiery judgment, at the time that He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe:

1 Thessalonians 1

⁶ Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

⁷ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power;

¹⁰ When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

And again, lo, the whole of the 2nd chapter is taken up with the same obnoxious subject; being a regular didactic discourse concerning the progress and success of Antichrist until the day of Christ's appearing to consume him with the breath of His mouth, and to destroy him with the brightness of His coming:

2 Thessalonians 2

² That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.

After this our loud railers against, and most taciturn expounders of the doctrine of Christ's second coming, should no longer pervert the church with the falsehood that this is only a secondary and not a primary doctrine of the Christian faith.

These passages may also show us how strong a hold the hope had of the minds of the first Christians; and how safe and kind and profitable it was that they should be more largely informed upon the point, and have a scheme of those signs which shall usher it in. To give them this information I believe to be the main object of this book; and not to them only, but to all of us who love and desire His appearing.

While I regard this as the main object of the book, a little reflection will convince us that to attain this object much method is needed. The coming of Christ was at the distance of many ages, and it is the purpose of God to keep it in the expectation of every Christian of every age. And how is this to be done? How is attention to be kept alive? How is long-delayed hope and desire to be kept from fainting? The chief means to this great end, and what God would have all to use, is the uncertainty, the impenetrable cloud of uncertainty, which is expressly hung over this event,—the only event into the time of which we may not curiously pry, nor even presume to say that we have discovered it: for it is written,

Mark 13

³² But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

The perfect certainty of the event, the entire uncertainty when, is God's own device for keeping His church in a continual state of expectation, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

But besides this, it is accordant with the frailties of man's faith, and with God's kind accommodations thereto, that He should not suspend it upon one promise of the coming event, but add thereto signs of its coming, in a series of revelations which as they occur might fill the church's heart with more and more assurance, and produce an ever-accumulating mass of evidence, even unto the end.

It was so with the first promise, "the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," which opened more and more into

its accomplishment. And I cannot see any reason to suppose why it should not be so with the promise of His coming again, which became a new form of the promise when He had come once. That He should come again is as much the palladium of the church, and her morning-star of hope since His resurrection, as that He should come at all, was from the beginning of the world.

It is most natural, reasonable, and accordant with God's purpose, that this our hope should be opened under the conditions of time, place, and circumstance, as was that of theirs. And if so, where should these conditions be found, but in the book which is expressly given for that end?

If any wise man will reflect upon it, He will discover that without such a setting and encasing in the conditions of time, and place, and succession, any object of distant hope will always drop away into an ineffectual and idle saying, like those local prophecies which you find in all parts of the country,—those guesses at prognostication which are handed down by tradition.

God, to deliver the great objects of hope, His special truths of prophecy, from such an uncertain faith, makes all things work together to their accomplishment; and in His inspirations sets out, with such a distinctness as is proper to hope, the great events which draw on the great conclusion.

I say with such distinctness as is proper to hope; because we are not to look for that degree of minute information as to a future thing, that we have as to a thing past; otherwise all liberty of action would be taken away.

The operation and the advantage of the hope would be lost, if perfect distinctness were given to the object hoped for. An object of my hope acts upon me, and influences me the one way or the other, just because it is not certain, so far as I am concerned, until I take measures to make it so. The liberty of my action is an element in the accomplishment of every object of hope; which liberty would be taken away if the object of hope were fixed, as to its manner of accomplishment, with that iron certainty with which the manner of events past is fixed.

In order therefore to bring this hope of the Lord's coming again to be operative upon the church during the ages which were to intervene, a succession of great events, all ending in the consummation, is given.

This succession is always sevenfold; seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials; and the consummation always is the coming of Christ, to which the precedent events are but the signs for keeping the faith of the church. The seventh always brings Christ, the former six prepare the way of His coming.

This is true both of the seals and of the trumpets, which are a nearly parallel succession of events. And the seventh of each contain the period of the coming of the Lord.

And that this event might be the more distinct, that period is again subdivided into seven parts, which are the seven vials, whereof the last brings the Lord in the destruction of Babylon, and the others lead on to it.

But it is not for the purpose of entering into details that we introduce this subject here, and therefore let this suffice.

From this short sketch of the substance and method of the *Revelation* it must be manifest, that though the coming of Christ to destroy His enemies, and to give the kingdom to His saints, be the proper object of the book, yet it contains, in a way subsidiary and subordinate thereto, all the events whatever which Christ has been doing upon the earth, or God doing by His means, from the time of His ascension until now, and which He is to do from this time till the time of His coming again.

This book therefore, in respect to its subject-matter or substance, may be said to consist of these two parts: the signs ushering in Christ's Second Advent, and the Advent itself. Of these two portions the latter is by far the more important, and to it the former is subsidiary.

But it would be a great mistake to conceive of it as being therefore, secondary, for those signs do consist of a series of events from the time of Constantine until this day, demonstrative of

Christ's Headship of the church, and supremacy over the state; and setting forth the various attempts of Satan against this Melchizedek-priesthood, and God's successive judgments for the same, within the bounds of the fourth kingdom of *Daniel*, which is the Roman empire, where the church has had her chief battles right unto this day.

To Christendom, therefore, does that historical succession of events, leading on to the judgment of Antichrist, and the coming of Christ, serve the very same ends of consolation and support, which the Jews derive from the historical prophecies of the Old Testament, whereof they are the rightful heirs, as we Christians are the rightful heirs of the prophecies of the *Apocalypse*.

But in like manner, as by reason of the typical and anti-typical relation between Jews and Christians, the Old Testament is as profitable to us as to them. To them literally and carnally, to us spiritually and typically. Even so has the *Apocalypse* an indirect relation to them also, being written in the language of the events described or foretold in the Old Testament.

This is a very nice matter, and requires no little elucidation, which I shall endeavor to give it; thereby exhibiting another view of the subject-matter of the *Apocalypse*, and showing its intimate relation to, and dependence upon, and exposition of, all the prophets whatsoever.

The Jew and the Christian can be as little separated as the body and spirit of a living man; and, like these two constituents of a living man, neither can they be confused or mixed up with one and another, but must be treated of as distinct, though co-essential to life.

And as the sense, and the faculty acting by the sense (which is the understanding as distinguished from the reason), do give the only language through which spiritual truths or ideas of reason can attempt to express themselves; even so the events of providence and ordinances of religion whereof the Jewish people were the subjects, and which are recorded in their religion, their history, their law, their polity, their psalms, do present us Christians

with the only language which is at all adequate for the expression of those spiritual truths which are our peculiar and proper treasure.

The language of the New Testament is no more than the appropriation of Jewish words to spiritual ideas; for example: redemption, baptism, sacrifice, atonement, propitiation, eating of flesh and blood, imputation, substitution, prophet, priest, &c. &c.

But far beyond the power of particular examples is the fact that the psalmody of every Christian church chiefly consists of the Jewish *Psalms*, almost all of which have the most intimate reference to the history of that people.

It ought not therefore to astonish us to find the sublimest book of the New Testament written entirely, or almost entirely, in the language of the Jewish history, either the past or the prophetic. Such a book is the *Apocalypse*, as we shall fully justify in the sequel of these lectures.

There is not an ordinance of any prominence in the Jewish system which has not here its exposition in spiritual and invisible truths. The tabernacle, the altar, the candlestick, the cherubim, the court of the Gentiles, the high priest, the king, the redeemer, the sacrifice, the redemption of land, the redemption of the wife, are all most prominent objects in the typography of the *Apocalypse*, being as it were the types with which it is imprinted.

Again, the events of their history: their coming out of Egypt, their wilderness-wanderings, their deliverance from Pharaoh the dragon in the waters, their imprisonment in the stronghold of Babylon, and their deliverance thence by the Lord and His sanctified ones, &c. &c. These events are not only used in the *Apocalypse*, but the various passages, historical and prophetic, of the Old Testament which have reference to them are, as it were, diligently ransacked for striking and characteristic words and expressions, which are wrought into one beautiful mosaic, arranged according to the interpretation of the Holy Spirit of truth.

And not only so, but the most conspicuous and famous of the prophecies of the Old Testament which point to things future, in the history of the Jews—as, for example:

- Their being sealed against the judgments which fall in consuming destruction upon the Gentiles;
- Their being brought up from the valley of dry bones, and raised as it were from the dead;
- Their looking upon Jesus whom they have pierced, and mourning with a godly sorrow and penitence;
- Their being assailed in their own land by Gog and Magog;
- Their becoming the nation of kings and priests upon the earth;
- Their inhabiting their New Jerusalem of holiness, with the waters flowing forth from it to heal the nations;

All these, and a vast deal more of the like glorious prospects of that people, are liberally used in the *Apocalypse* to express the parallel conditions of the spiritual seed of Israel, the regenerated sons of God, who have their mystical Babylon to be delivered out of, their mystical dragon to escape from, their first resurrection to wait for, their reign with Christ upon the earth, and their city of the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven.

And what is of higher importance still, the offices of our Lord and Saviour, His present High Priesthood within the veil, His present royal dignity at the right hand of His Father's throne, His right as the Redeemer of His bride and of her inheritance, His future action as the roan of war, His future enthronement upon the earth, and all other His functions, during His absence and during His presence, are here set down in the terms of the Jewish polity, which was for this as its chief end constructed of God.

So that upon the whole, without going into further particulars, we may say that the *Apocalypse* is the key of the Old Testament; the revelation of things which, though revealed, were hidden, until this book should be given to open them, and which therefore is commanded not to be sealed.

And besides this, there are all the predictions of the New Testament, concerning Christ's coming and the signs of it, the harvest and the vintage, the mystery of iniquity and antichrist, the bruising of Satan under our feet, the acts of Michael and His angels, and many more hints of things which receive their full development in this book.

Then to all this must be added a regular succession of events within the bounds of Christendom down to the present time, which give veracity to the prophecy, and prevent its being rejected as a visionary set of conjectures, or treated as a grand mystical poem for the embodying of sublime ideas.

When I consider the subject-matter of this book as I have sketched it above, so various, yet with such unity written; scattered over so wide a field of revelation and of providence, yet condensed within the space of a few pages; I almost start back from the undertaking of expounding it. But when I consider its preciousness, and the blessing pronounced upon those who peruse it, I am encouraged.

Its transcendent value consists in this, that it sets out Christ—that it sets out our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—it takes the veil from off the invisible to man, and draws us up into heaven; and shows us how the Son of Man has been rewarded by the Father, and what work and what offices under the Father, and for the Father, the Lamb slain is able to discharge.

And not only does it show us the history of Christ's amazing person, all-glorious in heaven, but also what offices He is discharging for the Father throughout all creation, especially in the church, and in the apostasy, and in the world, until His coming again. It also shows us His coming from the presence and in the power of the Father, attended with all His church and all His saints and all His angels. And finally, when He comes, it reveals what condition He finds the earth in, and how He establishes it forever.

In one word, it is to disclose to us what Christ is, what He is doing, what He has done, all that He is to do; from the time He as-

cended up on high, until the time that He comes to plant His glorious throne in visible majesty, and exercise His kingly power over the thrones, not of this world alone, but of all the redeemed universe.

And as in a great sphere, which a man cannot glance over at once, this side must be turned to him, and another side and another, before he can take the whole into his limited vision; so the many-sided and most various office of Christ is revealed to us in this book, by several successive acts and effects of the manifesting angel. And this is the reason why it is divided into several divisions.

Now I must show you what are the sides of Christ's glorious person, so to speak, and what are the offices of His vast function, that are set out to us in succession. They are chiefly:

- The seven epistles to the churches;
- The seven seals;
- The seven trumpets;
- The overcoming of the Beast, or Antichrist, in his three several forms; and
- The establishment of His church and kingdom on the earth forever.

CHRIST THE UNIVERSAL BISHOP

The first vision, or manifestation of Christ, which is contained in the first three chapters, reveals Him as the Head of all the churches, and the universal Bishop over the ministers of the churches. The number seven, as we shall show more fully hereafter, is intended to denote completeness in subdivision, unity in distinctness.

This vision opens to us Christ as the only Bishop, who alone has the seven stars, or all the ministers, in His right hand; all on a level, all equally dear to Him, no one over another, not upheld but by Christ's right hand.

The only Bishop over Christ's church who has superintendence over the ministry is here shown to us; the only Overseer of the overseers of the church.

And not only has He the seven stars in His hand, but He stands and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; that is, all the churches; seven particular individual churches being chosen in order to give place and circumstance to the prophecy. For all prophecy must rest on a basis of fact; otherwise it is a mystery, and not a reality,—a promise, but not a prediction.

It is an invariable principle that every revelation must exhibit itself by means of facts: and there must be both time and events to substantiate every prophecy; without which it may be truth spiritual, but cannot be truth realized; it may be truth universal, but cannot be truth individual and particular. It is not truth fit for man's soul, acting through a body, until it is brought into the condition of space and time.

Space, therefore, and time being essential to every prophecy, these seven churches of Asia are taken, in order to show Christ's universal care over the church in all times.

If, for example, you wished to show forth the excellent wisdom and vigilance of some governor or king, you might choose seven cities out of his realm, in very different circumstances and conditions; one commercial, another agricultural, another manufacturing, another a seat of learning, &c. &c. and by showing his wise proclamations unto, and discriminating care over, each one, you would display the manifoldness and completeness of his care much better than could be done by a single instance, or an abstract discourse.

So, in order to show out the superintending watchfulness of Christ over His church, seven are chosen diversely conditioned, unto whose several cases His ability and His willingness to minister, shows forth the same more completely to the whole church and to all the members thereof, and likewise His episcopal charge to all the ministers, and the Spirit's encouragement to all the people.

The end of the vision therefore is, to exhibit Christ as the Bishop of your souls; the Pastor of the soul of every believer; Christ as the Head of the church; Christ the only Bishop over the ministry; Christ the universal Bishop; for the testimony of which, this very church, the Church of Scotland, has suffered more than perhaps all the churches of Christendom put together. In the various churchyards and solitudes throughout Scotland, where the martyrs sleep, there is not one stone upon which it is not engraven, that he who rests beneath died for Christ's headship and royal office in His house.

Our church has also borne witness against the Prelacy of the Church of England, which puts one minister of Christ over another; and we maintain, that the ministers are of equal order and dignity, lying side by side in the right hand of our common Bishop.

We have borne testimony likewise against the supremacy of the man of sin, ever standing for the parity of all the ministers of the Gospel. In which, her faithful and true testimony, the Church of Scotland is borne out more completely by this vision, than by all other books which have been written. For Christ, in addressing the members of the churches, proceeds upon the principle that they are equally honored of Him, and equally dear to Him; and with equal respect does He give them instruction with regard to their ministerial charges.

Such is the substance and intention of the first vision, to claim for Christ the sole dignity of universal Bishop and Head of the church; and, if possible, to prevent all priests and all kings from usurping that divine name and dignity; which accordingly did acquire such sacredness, that for seven centuries it was never adopted by any creature.

And when the patriarch of Constantinople, in the pride and ambition of the devil, did dare to arrogate it to himself, he was held a blasphemmer and Antichrist by all the wise and faithful in the church. And by no one more denounced than by Pope Gregory the Great, who lived himself to assume the divine dignity, and

had power to transmit it to his successors in the See of Rome, who now, without a blush, take both the honor and the power of it, and are wondrously indulged in the claim of spiritual supremacy even by Protestants, who deny their claim to temporal supremacy.

Therefore I have opened my mouth against that man of sin, and will not shut it till I die. But the men with whom I am surrounded have no such burning hatred and consuming zeal against that pretender, and usurper, and executor of my Lord's high office. They do not hate the beast in these times; because they know him not; or bear with what he has assumed, and upon whom. His hand, like Amalek's, is upon the throne of God, he has assumed the dignity of universal bishop, and headship of the church of Christ, which belongs only to the Son of Man, for which I will call him a usurper, and fight against him while I live, not with carnal but with spiritual weapons.

But to return—this first vision, in respect to time, constitutes the time present, the now of the Apocalypse: not that it is confined to the events which came to pass during the Apostle's lifetime, for we shall see in the sequel that it extends over the first three centuries, until the time of Constantine; but that it is confined to the period when the church was exhibited under trial and tribulation, fighting and overcoming.

From the time of that emperor, it began to be exhibited in power, and state, and authority. First the powers of the world were set in array against it. After Constantine, the powers of the world were set in array for it.

Not but that the church is always in subjection and militancy; but that, till the time of Constantine, it did not embrace the kingly and magisterial powers of the earth in that service and warfare against its enemies.

There is an essential difference between Christ acting in His church by the means of His persecuted saints, and Christ acting in the same church by the means of fostering and nursing princes.

- In the one, He secretly undermined Paganism; in the other, He forcibly overthrew it.
- In the one, He spread the truth as a Prophet and a Priest; in the other, He began to act forcibly as a King.
- In the one, He presents himself as gathering souls through great tribulation unto God; in the other, He presents himself as banishing and expelling from the thrones and dominions of the earth, those idolatrous and apostate kings who filled them, to the dishonor of God, and the service of Satan.

CHRIST THE REDEEMER AND HEIR

Accordingly, when we come to the second vision, which introduces things that are to be hereafter, and which is contained in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters, we have a door opened in heaven, and a grand council of the spirits above assembled; the secret, spiritual counsel of the world is revealed. And what does that council consist of? The Father, King of heaven, shown forth in the flesh of Christ glorified, with a book in His hand, and His throne encircled with a rainbow.

And what are His subordinate and viceregal powers? Twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, whom we discern by their song to be no other than the church of the redeemed, represented first as kings, and then as priests. I say these elders and living creatures are the church in glory; for they say,

Revelation 1

⁵ ...Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

⁶ And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.

Revelation 5

⁹ ...for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

And who can so speak of themselves but redeemed men? Therefore we must conclude that these are God's dignitaries, the enthroned ones of heaven, seated round according to the number of the twenty-four chief officers of Israel, who waited upon the

kingdom of David and Solomon; and the four holy priestly supporters of the throne, according to the number and figure of the ensigns which the four squadrons of Israel bore around the camp in its marches through the wilderness.

There is the church advanced, in the right of redeemed men, to the height of the highest ascendancy of the uppermost seats in heaven. The language of the twenty-four elders and four living creatures, in which they speak of themselves, shows them to be the supporters and the encirclers of the throne of God, dwelling in the throne, and reigning round about the throne, all seated in royal dignity in the heavens, though they be no other than redeemed men.

Then the angels, in undistinguished multitudes, compass the thrones around; but without thrones, or crowns, or any song of redemption, or any assurance of reigning on the earth. Like dutiful subjects, they render unto the Lamb:

Revelation 5

¹² ...power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

This is according to those several spheres of creation and providence which they occupy and intend.

And finally, every subject creature, every thing which God created and made, whether in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, express their gladness and their mirth on this grand and solemn occasion, saying,

¹³ ...Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

Such is the wonderfully sublime scenery with which the second portion of this book, which concerns the future, is introduced.

The vision of the Son of Man and the candlesticks in the 1st chapter is the introduction to the things that are, as revealed in the former part of the book. The vision of the throne and the Lamb, contained in these two chapters, is the introduction to the

things that are to be hereafter, as revealed in the latter part of the book. They are emblematical features, to which reference is continually made from those two parts of the book, at the head of which they severally stand.

The first concerns the church only. The seven stars which are the ministers of the churches, and the seven golden candlesticks which are the churches, reveals Christ in His office as Head of all the churches.

The second refers to the whole creation, visible and invisible, rational and irrational, of God; seeing the creatures do all take such a deep interest in the transaction, and express such lively joy on beholding the Lamb put into possession of that mysterious book, which, somehow or other, reaches its powerful effect from the center to the extremest bound of creation.

The simple contemplation of the august assemblage, as it is arranged in its order before the eye of the seer, suggests some ideas which every one without inquiry must at once assent to. Suppose there was a grand assemblage, as in the days of old, of the strength and glory of the kingdom, upon some of the ancient moats (as the moat of Urr), artificially cut for the high occasion, and that you, being present, did behold one throne, magnificent above all, in the center, and a majestic person seated thereon.

And encircling it around you saw twenty-four inferior thrones, whereon sat most venerable persons, clothed with robes of office and crowned with crowns of dignity, which ever and anon they acknowledged to be derived from the great majesty of the central throne, and on Him dependent.

Suppose, moreover, that closer to Him still, and in His very bosom and upbearing His person, as Aaron and Hur upbore the hands of Moses, you saw four others of mysterious appearance, through whom the voice of the throne came forth, its thunderings also, and its lightnings, and all its expressions whatsoever.

And finally, engirdling the sacred throne around, and as it were guarding them from offense, and waiting to execute their high

commands, you beheld an innumerable host of equal and undistinguished people.

What would you say concerning such a sight, and how would you interpret it? You would say, this sublime throne in the center holds the king of kings, and these are His inferior kings.

With respect, however, to these four living ones in His throne, no similitude on earth could explain it. But we shall find ample explanation of it in holy Scripture, proving that they represent the church in its priestly character, bearing up the throne of the Eternal. And the four-and-twenty crowned elders represent the same church fulfilling the kingly office unto the Eternal, who is the Father represented under the symbols of Christ. And the innumerable angels standing around are the subject people, the ministers of the kingdom, as it is said,

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?

So much does the dumb show and inactive scenery of the vision declare unto every contemplative mind—that God in His kingdom over all is served by subordinate thrones, and they who sit on them declare themselves to be redeemed men (verse 9). And He has in His bosom, for the strength and very consistency of His throne, others who likewise declare themselves to be redeemed men. While the angels, and the other works, of creation besides men, stand at a wider distance from the throne, and occupy the place of the indiscriminate multitude. This is declared by the simple beholding of the economy and order of the heavenly council.

From this we turn to consider the action which is done, and several things suggest themselves at once to every thoughtful mind. The book in the right hand of the Great King is the one prize and reward which God challenges all creation, visible and invisible, to come and take. But they dare not even look upon it, so utterly foiled are they by the challenge; till one, a Lamb that had been slain, but living still, who is seen every where up and down in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the four liv-

ing ones, and in the midst of the four-and-twenty elders, being the living principle and vivifying heart of them all, takes individual place and enter into action immediately after the proclamation of this challenge, and the astonished terror of all created beings and things on the hearing of the same. But He, the Lamb, moving forward, takes the book and does with it according to His will. This demonstrates that:

1. He is Head Person of heaven, above them all in strength and power, able to take up the challenge at the bare mention of which the hosts above fainted with weakness.
2. This book, whatever it is, invests Him with a supremacy over the redeemed church, the unfallen angels, and all creation whatsoever. The creation then concurs in one grand demonstration of fealty and homage, celebrating Him and worshiping Him, with what strains they celebrate and worship God himself who sits on the throne.

These things, and much more, come directly and openly out from the scene and act placed under our eye in these introductory chapters.

Then in the 6th and 7th chapters we have the effects which come upon the earth from His opening the several seals of the book, into which we cannot now enter particularly. But this is apparent upon the face of the narrative, that it ends in the expulsion of all the kings and mighty men and chief captains of the earth, from their delegated seats and places of authority under Christ, being terrified to death under the sixth seal.

And full of awful apprehension of the seventh, they are utterly made away with,⁴⁰ in order to make room for Christ and His saints raised in the first resurrection, who possess forever the thrones of the earth.⁴¹ This is the fulfillment of what their souls in glory were assured, as soon as he received the book:

⁴⁰ *Revelation* 19:18, which, though in a different place, refers to the same event as is referred to in *Revelation* 6:15-17.

⁴¹ *Revelation* 20:4.

Revelation 5

¹⁰ ...and we shall reign on the earth.

Therefore, the action of opening the seals has for its object the dispossessing of the present rulers of the earth, and the bringing in of the redeemed saints to rule and to possess it. It is the revelation of Christ, invested by His Father with the inheritance, and by successive demonstrations of His right, chasing out the usurpers, until the devil himself being ejected, Christ with His saints, takes the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven, to hold it forever.

Concerning the sealed nation, which is preserved in the direful destruction of nations, we discourse not at present, but shall show that while the severe parts of the vision has respect to the ten Papal kingdoms of Christendom, this gracious part has respect to the Protestant kingdom of Great Britain, which is held up by this sealing for an example to all kingdoms to continue faithful, and so to escape the overwhelming deluge of the wrath of God and the Lamb.

For how long, and to what extent, we shall afterwards discourse: but we observe at present, that without an example presented to all nations of God's grace and preservation in the judgment, the righteousness of God in not confounding the innocent with the guilty would not have been shown forth. But it would have seemed one indiscriminate act of destruction, freezing hope, and fixing action in the obduracy of fate.

The latter part of the 7th chapter brings us back to the vision of the heavenly throne, no longer planted in the heavens, but abiding among men.⁴² And before it there is the great multitude of the nations, gathered out of the tribulations of Papal persecution, which answers to the church in the wilderness, and keeping the feast of tabernacles with joy and gladness, in commemoration of that glorious land into the possession of which they have been brought, after their long and wearisome wanderings.

⁴² *Revelation 7:15.*

So that doubt remains not that the 7th chapter brings us down to the end of the Papal persecutions, as the 3rd chapter brings us down to the end of the Pagan persecutions; and that the 8th chapter, which, as well as all from the 4th, concerns the things that are to be, we must go back again to the time of Constantine, and reveal Christ acting in some other aspect, unto some other end, yet subordinate to that of His being the great heir of the earth, which is doubtless the one grand object of the second part of the book, concerning future things.

The great use of this vision is, therefore, to teach the kings and magistrates of the earth, under whom they exercise authority, and for whom. And how do we find them? giving ear to the revelation contained in this vision? Would it were so. But, alas! this nation, which stood out for Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth, against the pope, who usurps that Divine prerogative, has at length succumbed.

And what now is the language of the nations?

“We are independent of the Prince of the kings of the earth; and bring everything to pass, or not to pass, as we please, according to our might, wisdom, and policy.”

And even churchmen, certainly all sectarians and schismatics, do uphold that kings derive their power from the people, and for the people hold it. And further, with most open throat they do proclaim and promulgate forth that religion has nothing to do with politics, and politics nothing to do with religion, and that any question, because it is political, ceases therefore to be religious.

Ignorant panderers to arbitrary irresponsible government, or to popular anarchy, study this vision of the *Apocalypse*, and be wise. Ah me! what an awful thing it is, that they should put in contrast the political and the religious, and by this most arrant blunder or knavery should have succeeded in advancing servants of the pope, who has his authority from the devil, to equal power and

trust with servants of the true Protestant church, which has her authority from Christ the Son of the Most High God.

All proving, even to our consternation, the immense ignorance, the direct error, and the fatal measures which the church has fallen into on the subject of this great vision, which reveals Christ as the Prince of the kings of the earth.

And I hesitate not to confess, that one of the principal objects which drew me to this city at the present time, was to show out the principles of this great subject, to proclaim in the ear of the drowsy church, and rebellious nation, the rights and titles of my Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, who has purchased the earth and the world by His perfect righteousness and spotless sacrifice upon the cross; and who, though now for a season hid with His Father, shall come forth again to honor those whom He finds honoring Him, and to destroy all who are giving His honor to another.

CHRIST THE INTERCESSOR AND AVENGER

The next vision, being the third in order from the beginning of the book, and the second under the head of future things, opens in chapter 8 with the exhibition of Christ employed in fulfilling the High Priest's office on the day of atonement, and offering unto God the prayers of His persecuted and oppressed saints.

Of these prayers, the substance is briefly set forth⁴³ to be judgment upon their adversaries, the oppressors and destroyers of the earth; and deliverance of the righteous into the possession of that inheritance of the earth which they have from the beginning had the promise of,⁴⁴ and received the full assurance of, when the Lamb slain got possession of the seven-sealed book.⁴⁵

We are thereby led to think that this vision of trumpets is to reveal Christ as our High Priest in heaven, while the vision of candlesticks revealed Him as our High Priest on earth.

⁴³ *Revelation 6:10.*

⁴⁴ *Psalm 37; Matthew 5:5; Romans 4:13.*

⁴⁵ *Revelation 5:10.*

On the day of atonement the high priest of the Jews went into the most holy place, the type of heaven.⁴⁶ That it is the action of the day of atonement we know by the golden censer which might be used on no other occasion.

In this thought, suggested by His action of offering out of His hand in the golden censer the prayers of saints, we are confirmed by looking at the consummation of the vision or the state of things attained by the seventh trumpet, which as it is declared,⁴⁷ consists in these tidings:

1. Christ's reign entered upon, and celebrated by His church, the joint-heirs of His kingdom.⁴⁸
2. The judging, righting, and rewarding of His servants the prophets, the saints, and them that fear His name, together with all the dead, great and small, who had died in the Lord.⁴⁹
3. The destruction of the nations who had so long destroyed the earth in the day of Christ's anger and wrath.⁵⁰
4. The opening of the temple in heaven, to the showing of the inmost recesses of the holy of holies, which I understand to be the manifestation of the heavenly things, the revealing of the inheritance, the coming down, of the new Jerusalem.⁵¹

Being confirmed by the consideration of this which the vision consummates, I go back to the beginning and find that, besides the action of offering the prayers of saints, there is another action⁵² of taking fire of the altar and casting it into the earth whence arose voices, thundering, lightnings, and an earthquake. Then seven angels go forth one after the other, and bring on seven woeful inflictions of the wrath of Christ until His enemies

⁴⁶ *Hebrews* 9:24.

⁴⁷ *Revelation* 11:15-19.

⁴⁸ *Revelation* 11:15-17.

⁴⁹ *Revelation* 11:18.

⁵⁰ *Revelation* 11:18; *Psalms* 2; *Psalms* 110.

⁵¹ *Revelation* 11:19.

⁵² *Revelation* 8:5.

and the enemies of His church are utterly consumed from the earth.

Now taking the interpretation of this symbol from *Ezekiel* 10:2, where the casting of the fire upon “the city of Jerusalem” signifies the destruction of its glory and its sanctity in the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and from *Hosea* 8:1, where, as in all the Scriptures, the blast of the trumpet is the harbinger of woe; we come to this conclusion upon the whole, that the vision of trumpets is to reveal Christ in His character of effectual Intercessor for His saints, receiving power from God to avenge their death upon His enemies and theirs, and to bring them through great tribulations into the inheritance of the earth.

The whole vision of trumpets is but a commentary upon that text twice written in the prophet Isaiah concerning the day of atonement, which was also the day of redemption, when all bondsmen went free, and all inheritances returned to their proper possessors:

Isaiah 34

⁸ For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

Isaiah 63

⁴ For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

Both chapters do reveal that desolation of the Gentile church (the cruel Edom or Esau) which shall make way for the return of the Jews. While our vision of the seven trumpets reveals the larger but parallel mystery of:

- the destruction of all apostate Christendom, and the casting out of the devil its master,
- the opening of the prison-house of death where the bodies of the saints lie in loathsome bondage,
- the redemption of the inheritance of the earth, and
- their installation in the government and possession thereof as the royal priesthood who minister from the opened tem-

ple, the celestial city of the new Jerusalem, holiness and blessedness to the earth and all the inhabitants thereof.

The first vision sets forth Christ as Head of the church.

The second which extends over all the rest of the book, but specially includes the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters, sets Him forth as the Inheritor of the earth.

This third vision, in subordination to the second, sets Him forth as doing seven actions of vengeance upon the oppressors of His church and their inheritance, ending in their final expulsion from the face of day, or rather in their being put under His feet, and the feet of His saints.

It is Christ the Intercessor, presenting the endurances of His people and receiving power from His long-suffering Father to bring one act of retribution after another upon the wicked, until at length He comes in person, under the seventh trumpet, to judge the quick, and to govern the survivors in righteousness during the Millennium.

After which having judged also the dead, and cast the wicked into hell, He gives up the mediatorial kingdom of the earth with all the sons of glory perfected and completed: in reward of which He, with those made kings and priests, receives from the Father the whole encircling universe, sun, moon, and every star, to govern and to possess in everlasting righteousness and blessedness.

And what serves such a revelation to the church? Much every way:

- It shows Christ in His character of Judge, in which the Father has constituted Him,⁵³ but which we are too apt to sink in His character of Saviour.
- It shows Him Head of the evil as well as of the good, over Satan and the wicked dominant as well as over the church and the righteous, bringer of all judgments which come, as well as of all bounties; in one word, Head over all unto His

⁵³ *John* 5.

church, pouring out judgment. And for what reason? To avenge the truth.

This is the end of the vision, to keep in the minds of men that Christ is to judge the world, that He who rules over all restrains the wickedness as well as patronizes the good of all. He is the one who is to stop in its high flood the wickedness of the wicked by the judgment of the quick at His coming, and to establish the pains and misery of the second death, which is the undoing and preventing of all iniquity, and all iniquitous things.

All this coming judgment and woe upon the world is here set down in successive acts, to the end that the church may properly understand and believe that horrible pit from which she is herself delivered, and that she may be ever stirred up to preach grace and mercy, and salvation, from the wrath which is revealing itself more and more until the consummation, when the despised Saviour shall come as the righteous Judge who is to condemn the world, and to make good unto His saints that which they have committed to His trust.

These are the objects of this the third part of the book, which has also its realization in time and place, to show that Christ is executing on a small progressive scale that wrath which He is at length to execute on the largest scale of God's righteous judgment.

These things are revealed so that the church, rightly reading and apprehending them, might be preserved from that falsest idea of a God all merciful, of a Saviour all grace, and that the Gospel might be no encourager of licentiousness or of indifference, but a trumpet-alarm unto the world, in the midst of whose terrors there should be ever heard the still small voice of peace and salvation.

Salvation is salvation from something. What is that something?

Romans 2

⁵ ...the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

But will God not relent? This vision verifying itself in every successive trumpet, proves that He will accomplish it all. I would that preachers and people knew and felt that there is a power and holiness and righteousness in every word of God. For often we preach, and they hear, as if there was no judgment, as if He had laid aside the thunderbolts of His power; which these seven successive strokes of judgments, almost all already arrived unto the earth, and being just about to close, are intended to make manifest.

Before proceeding to the fourth vision we may observe that this third vision is contained in chapters 8, 9, and 10 to verse 8, with which a new series of prophesyings is introduced. The seventh trumpet is however brought in out of its place, at chapter 11:14, for reasons which we cannot enter upon here, but shall fully explain in their proper place.

And yet these concluding verses of chapter 11 do not contain the particulars of the seventh trumpet, but only the consummation of good which is brought about by the action thereof. And herein they serve the same purpose which the concluding verses of chapter 7 did to the action of seals: each setting forth in their proper language the end and consummation of Christ's work and office, as it is severally represented by the symbols of these visions.

But for the particulars of the seventh seal and seventh trumpet which are parallel with one another, as indeed are the other seals and trumpets, they are in both cases suppressed at the place where they should properly have been given (namely: verses 7:1, and 11:4), being reserved until all the intermediate doings having been developed, as they are in chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

The whole causes for such a fearful act of wrath must be fairly set out. The act of the seventh seal, and of the seventh trumpet, and the treading of the wine-press,⁵⁴ are one act: the act of anger, the great day of wrath. These are fully and distinctly laid out in

⁵⁴ *Revelation 14:20.*

chapters 15 and 16, and illustrated in chapters 17, 18, and 19. The seventh seal and seventh trumpet, and the treading of the wine-press, do occupy five complete chapters of the *Apocalypse*, which stand immediately antecedent to the first resurrection, the reign of Christ, and the millennial blessedness, and the New-Jerusalem state of the world.

This only is necessary to be remarked further, before leaving the vision of trumpets, that the facts or accomplishments of the several predictions are done upon the eastern half of the Roman empire, of which Constantinople is the head; whereas the seals have their proper locality in the western Roman Empire, of which Rome is the head.

This division of the fourth or Roman Empire into two parts began from the time of Constantine, who gave the ground of it in the building of Constantinople, and in the subdivision of his empire into three parts: whence in this vision we have always a third part, and no more, affected by the several judgments.

The sufficient grounds for believing that the scene of these two visions is different, while the action of them is contemporaneous from Constantine's time down to the coming of Christ, together with the ends served by this two-foldness, will more fully appear in the sequel of these lectures. But we mention it at present that the method and the substance of the book may be brought thus early under one point of view.

CHRIST GATHERING HIS CHURCH

Now the fourth vision occupies the remainder of chapter 10 from verse 8, and the whole of chapter 11 (except the verses containing the seventh seal, which are introduced there for the sake of synchronism; that is, to mark the time of the slaying of the witnesses as being the same with the time of the seventh trumpet and the seventh seal), and the whole of chapters 12, 13, and 14. This important vision chiefly concerns the church, which is set forth, first, by a woman, and then by a select company of one hundred and forty-four thousand standing upon Mount Zion.

And her circumstances are laid out by the church-symbols of:

- the wilderness,
- the beast like a lamb, and
- the harvest and the vintage.

The vision is introduced with a command to measure the temple and them that worship therein. Now the great question always is, What does it reveal concerning Jesus Christ?

This will, as in the former cases, be best understood by observing the manner of His appearance, which is given in chapter 10:1. He descends from heaven “clothed with a cloud”, just as He ascended, and is to come again.⁵⁵

There is also “a rainbow upon His head,” which was given to Noah as the sign of the covenant which God made with men for the safe possession of the earth, and the preservation of all flesh thereon.⁵⁶ This rainbow-assurance of the earth’s perpetual safety from the destruction of water, is seen surrounding the throne of the glory of God in heaven, both by Ezekiel,⁵⁷ and by John,⁵⁸ to signify that God remembers His covenant with man for the earth; and the seven-sealed book, which imparts the title to the inheritance He has in His right hand.

This book, the Lamb (Representative and Saviour of all flesh) having received and opened, He becomes proprietor of the earth, the true Noah, the Redeemer of the inheritance, whose work of presenting spotless flesh upon the cross, and rising again immortal, being foreseen, obtained for Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and every other man, those terms of favor which God was pleased from time to time to give.

Christ, the Purchaser and the Possessor and the Bestower of all redemption, being come, the sign of the covenant becomes His by right. And from around the throne the rainbow passes to encircle

⁵⁵ Acts 1:11.

⁵⁶ Genesis 9:9-17.

⁵⁷ Ezekiel 1:28.

⁵⁸ Revelation 4:3.

His person, and show that He is the invested one, who shall yet inherit and possess all things.

I think that the open book in His hand likewise points Him out to be the Redeemer of the inheritance, who,⁵⁹ according to the custom, was possessed both of a sealed and an open book. The sealed book He receives in the presence of the elders,⁶⁰ in virtue of being the Redeemer. And now He presents himself with an open little book.

Whether this be the sealed book now opened, or whether it be the other form of the evidence of the purchased redemption, is not at present to be inquired into, nor does it affect the great result, that Christ appears at the head of this fourth vision in His character of Redeemer of the inheritance, clothed with all the rights thereof; and bent on the very purpose of taking possession of it. For He sets His one foot upon the earth, and His other foot upon the sea, and proclaims the age of time concluded, and the eternal age begun.

Now, as we have already observed, though these visions of Christ's glory be set forth by a succession of acts, commencing from Constantine's time, this is only to keep attention alive and carry it forward to the great ultimate act, which attends upon Christ's coming or revelation. In the symbols of the visions He is always arrayed at the head of every vision:

- At the head of the first, as the Lamb receiving in the presence, and with the adoration of all creatures, the title-deeds of universal creation, and exalted into the fellowship of the Father's throne;
- At the head of the second, as the High Priest on the day of atonement, which is the redemption of the church out of her thralldom by the destruction of her enemies in the day of His appearing; and now,
- At the head of this the third of the visions of future things, He is represented as coming in power and great majesty to

⁵⁹ *Jeremiah* 31:10-13.

⁶⁰ *Revelation* 5:5-9.

take possession of the earth which He has purchased and delivered. Accordingly, at the close of that vision,⁶¹ we find that He comes seated on the cloud, to gather in the harvest of His people, and with His feet to tread the wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God.

The object of this fourth vision is to present us with Christ, as the Head of the church and the rightful Proprietor of the inheritance, coming to chase out of the earth every Antichristian pretender to the supremacy, and to bring himself and His church into the glorious and everlasting possession thereof.

Accordingly, the great enemy of God and man⁶² appears in three Antichristian forms: that of chapter 12 and chapter 13 and chapter 17. These are, as we shall show, the Roman empire in its Pagan, its Papal, and its Infidel conditions, of which we have already seen two complete, and the initiation of the third under Napoleon, but wait for its completion in another mightier and more terrible than he, just about to arrive.

Satan, embodied in the first of these three forms of Rome and its ten dependent kingdoms, sets himself against the church represented as a woman, whose seed or man-child—Christ not personal but Christ mystical, at least so many of the church as suffered under Paganism—overcomes him, and work a straitening of his condition, and a confinement of it to the earth.

He then takes to himself the artifices and subtleties of superstition, and in the form of a lamb counterfeits the true church, and guide the beast into the utterance of all blasphemies and the commission of all cruelties whatsoever.

Meanwhile Christ, acts by means of His church. This church is set forth during this Papal period of one thousand two hundred and sixty years, by the symbol of the Jews in the temple, contradistinguished from the Gentiles in the outer court and city,⁶³ and also by the one hundred and forty-four thousand on Mount

⁶¹ *Revelation* 14:14.

⁶² *Revelation* 12:9.

⁶³ *Revelation* 11:1.

Zion,⁶⁴ who are the same as the sealed tribes.⁶⁵ This represents a Protestant church and nation which has been redeemed from the Papal earth.⁶⁶

This is no other, indeed, than this British nation, or the British church-nation, which has been in a state of Protestantism during all the period of the Papacy, and not from the time of Luther merely. By this, Christ maintains His cause in an embodied form, fitted to withstand and counteract the embodied error in the other Papal kingdoms acting under Rome. And for this service our nation has had the singular grace of being sealed from all the chastisements of infidelity inflicted on Papal Europe for nearly thirty years.

When the infidel form of Antichrist shall appear again in the glory of its strength and make war with the Lamb,⁶⁷ by whom the standard of the truth shall be upborn, it is not now the place to say expressly, because, being a future thing, it needs much care to present it in its due form. But I may just hint, that I believe this honor is reserved for the kings from the East, for whose march I believe the way to be even now preparing, by the drying up of the waters of Euphrates, or the wasting away of the resources of the Turk, who for six or seven centuries has held Israel's inheritance in his thralldom, and spread himself like an impassable river between the Ten Tribes and their inheritance.

However this may be, it is enough for this sketch to have said, that during these three weary attacks of Antichrist, the church, in the strength of her Captain, has maintained the post, and will maintain it, till He shall come, who will come and will not tarry.

There is another view of the contents of this little book, which I think myself justified in thus early submitting as confirmatory of the above, and well combining with it, and necessary indeed to its

⁶⁴ *Revelation* 14:1.

⁶⁵ *Revelation* 7.

⁶⁶ *Revelation* 14:4.

⁶⁷ *Revelation* 17:14.

complete explication, and derived from a source altogether different, and therefore the more strengthening to the conclusion.

This little book, out of which all the prophecies concerning the beast and the woman, or Antichrist and the church, comes, is thus described:

Revelation 10

⁹ Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but it shall be in your mouth sweet as honey.

And it is again repeated:

¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

The particularity of this, without any use whatever of or reference to it afterwards, made me to suspect that an important link of connection was in it, like that so often contained in several other seemingly extraneous things in the *Apocalypse*. And being at the head of the book, and characteristic of it, it seemed to me that it would have an importance proportionate to its place.

Moved by this suspicion, whereof no one can estimate the force who is not well versed in the structure of the *Apocalypse*, I found that the same character belonged to Ezekiel's prophecy, and to it alone, at the head of which these words are written:

Ezekiel 2

⁹ And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein:

¹⁰ And He spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel 3

¹ Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

² So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll.

And the effect which it produced upon him in his belly, or inward parts, is thus described:

¹⁴ So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

This very remarkable coincidence led me to reflect a little more deeply upon the points of coincidence, between Ezekiel's prophecy and this of John. I perceived that as this is expressly to the church and of the church, so Ezekiel is commissioned to the Jewish church, and to that only.⁶⁸ Furthermore, I perceived this to be the substance of Ezekiel's prophecy:

- the Shechinah or glory of the church (chapter 1),
- the argument for removing it away from the children of Israel (chapters 3-10),
- the removal of it (chapter 10),
- the desolate condition of the church in this state of privation and destitution (chapter 11-34),
- the preparation for its return (chapter 34-43), and
- its final return and perpetual abode among them (chapters 43-end).

Ezekiel may be characterized as the prophet of the departure, the absence, and the return of the visible manifest glory of God to the Jewish church and nation.

That the Shechinah, or glorious Presence which led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and settled with them in the most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple, should be removed, was an event of such fearful import as must have entirely overwhelmed the church, except for the previous prediction of it by a prophet, to whom, this office being fulfilled, God gave to predict also the re-edifying of His temple, and the return of His glory thereto, never to depart from it any more.

Returning with this information, which I believe to contain the true and characteristic honor of Ezekiel as a prophet, I find that the little book of the *Apocalypse*, sweet and bitter, has exactly the

⁶⁸ Ezekiel 3:4-6.

same intention by the Christian church: which it first presents⁶⁹ in the glory of those resurrection-raiments with which Christ invested her in the days of Apostles, and which wore not out till after, by her body of martyrs, she had overthrown Paganism from the supremacy.

Soon thereafter the glory departed, and the next vision represents that same woman who had fled into the dreary wilderness, to escape the rage of the beast, and abode there for 1260 years, coming right lovingly up thence as his paramour and his prostitute. This is the condition of the church with her glory departed; under which, with the exception of the sealed nation, she has continued over all the ten kingdoms which are the bounds of this prophecy, during the twelve hundred and sixty years of the Papacy.

This inglorious and adulterous church being removed by consuming judgments (for she, being the free wife, cannot be treated by chastisement merely for her adultery, like the bond-wife of the Jewish church, but must be put to death), the true glorious bride of the Lamb, which is the New Jerusalem, with the glory of God, descends from above and abides for ever.

So that the little book as contra-distinguished from the seven seals and seven trumpets, contains nothing else than the Christian form of Ezekiel's prophecy, the glory in which the church is inhabited at first, its departure, and therewith the departure of her honor; its return and eternal abode upon her in the New Jerusalem for ever and ever.

These two ideas are combined together:

1. The controversy of Christ in His church with Satan in the apostasy, for the possession of the inheritance which He has purchased and claimed for her, and
2. The lamentable picture of the degradation and abandonment into which she was to fall, and utterly to perish, in or-

⁶⁹ *Revelation 12:1.*

der to make way for the election according to grace gathered into glory.

These two views, taken together, contain the object and intention of the little open book, which is contained substantially in chapters 12, 13, and 14, and has its last act of Babylon's destruction opened and explained in chapters 17, 18, and 19.

Chapter 11 is an introduction to, and summary of its contents, yet most full of all manner of references, both to the other parts of this book, and to the other books of Scripture. It is the dovetailing which binds the timbers of a house, or the hooks and clasps which joined the coverings and veils of the tabernacle.

It presents the Church under the figure of the Holy City with its temple; all of which, except the temple itself, is for 1260 years trodden down of the Gentiles. This is throughout all Scripture the period of the little horn of the beast,⁷⁰ that is, the Papacy.

Against this profanation of the Gentiles of Christendom, two witnesses testify, clothed in sackcloth, which are the two olive-trees and candlesticks of *Zechariah*. Now Zechariah the prophet is chiefly taken up with the fate of Jerusalem and its temple, almost from the beginning to the ending of his prophecy. As the Shechinah of glory is the key to *Ezekiel*, so the building and condition of Jerusalem is the key to *Zechariah*. This is shown in:

- the introduction to the book (*Zechariah* 1:19; chapter 2) which answers to *Revelation* 11:1.
- In *Zechariah* 3 and 4 we have the two witnesses, Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel, prophesying in the midst of the city trodden down by Babylon, and occupied with the re-edification of the temple, which answers to *Revelation* 11:3-6.
- Then at the conclusion of *Zechariah* (chapters 12, 13, and 14), we have Jerusalem reduced to great extremities, at the last; and out of the article of death, yea, out of death itself (chapter 14:1-2), she arises to great and eternal glory (chapter 14:8-end), which answers, as I conceive (in what way I

⁷⁰ *Daniel* 7.

say not), to that earthquake shock, and destructive beast out of the bottomless pit (*Revelation* 11:13), after which great glory arrives to the witnesses of God, and the full and free inheritance of the whole earth is by the seventh trumpet proclaimed.

Now besides bringing us into conference with the prophet Zechariah, this chapter connects the church-history of the little book, with the trumpet-history, and, through this, with the seals. While also it gives us the first notice of the infidel power, arising from the bottomless pit, to slay the witnesses which the Gentiles of Christendom had only clothed in sackcloth, but not in any way hurt or maimed.

With respect to the 12th and 13th chapters, they carry us directly to the 7th chapter of *Daniel*, which is again by its times connected with the 10th, 11th, and 12th, and by its symbols with the 8th, and by intrinsic evidence with the 2nd. So that we may say, these two chapters of the *Apocalypse* do bring us into conference with almost the whole of *Daniel*.

But chapter 14, which is a regular succession of the Jewish feasts and seasons, the first-fruits, the harvest, and the vintage, brings us into conference with the whole Mosaic ordinances, especially with the great feasts thereof.

And thus it is that this church history is written in the emblems, and full of the prophets of the former church. I have dwelt the more upon this point, in order to show how much interwoven with the other Scriptures is this precious book of the *Apocalypse*, and what light it reflects upon them, and how necessary to the interpretation of it is the knowledge of God's most holy word, whereof it is as the keystone clenching with its fine adaptation and great strength the whole fabric of the Divine testimony. That stone in the arch which serves this end of stability and confirmation, is called the keystone. That book in the scheme of God's word which serves the same end, is called the *Apocalypse*, or the KEY-book.

These streams of historical events start from the same origin in time: the era of Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century. The time preceding contains the things that are, and the time following the things that are to be.⁷¹ One is the prospect, the other the being and constitution of the church.

The seven seals are realized in the Western, the seven trumpets realized in the Eastern Roman Empire, and the little open book realized partly in both, and because the Eastern church came early to its end, chiefly in the West. These three coeval and collateral streams of events, coming down through nearly 1500 years, do reunite in the last great catastrophe of the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, and seven vials. This brings destruction direful and complete upon the infidel government and apostate church, the beast and false prophet of Christendom.

This event of consummate destruction is contained in the 15th and 16th chapters as to the order of it, and further opened as to the particulars of Babylon's destruction in chapters 17 and 18, and as to the particulars of the beast's destruction in chapters 19 from verse 11.

But the intervening verses at the beginning of chapter 19 do show us how, when the adulterous mother of harlots is removed with the besom of destruction, the true church and pure bride of Christ prepares herself to come down from heaven and take possession.

But first her Lord must come forth as the Man of War, according to the order of that *Epithalamium* or marriage song, *Psalms* 45, and also according to the order of that song of triumphal entry into the everlasting habitation of the New Jerusalem and its holy temple, *Psalms* 24.

And the rest of the book contained in chapters 20, 21, and 22, are the marriage consummated, the New Jerusalem possessed.

⁷¹ *Revelation* 1:20.

But this last vision casts so much light upon the whole purpose of God, being its glorious consummation, that we deem it right to include it under a fifth head of the subject matter of the book.

CHRIST TRIUMPHING AND REIGNING

The fifth great division of the subject-matter of this book is the consummation to which all the rest tends:

- The title, “Revelation of Jesus Christ”;
- The exordium, “Behold He comes with clouds,” &c.;
- The first vision whereof every promise made by the Spirit to the churches looks to a state of things upon the earth at or after His coming, and in His kingdom;
- The seven-sealed book, which is the title-deeds of the inheritance of the earth;
- The seven trumpets, which is Christ’s consuming wrath upon the usurpers of it;
- The little book, which is the controversy with Antichrist for the possession of it.

All these have no meaning, but in the anticipation and foreview of this fifth act of revelation, which is contained in the last three chapters of the book, and is looked forward to and held out in every promise whatsoever which the book contains, and I may say which Scripture contains from the beginning to the ending of it.

And what then is this most excellent of all the revelations of God? It is the exhibition of the redeemed earth under the government and administration of the Redeemer, and the Redeemer’s bride the New Jerusalem, which is His church, the election according to grace, the martyrs, the witnesses, the saints great and small, who have not forsaken the law of their God, but overcome the enemies of God and of the Lamb.

Blessed consummation of this weary and sorrowful world! I give it welcome, I hail its approach. I wait its coming more than they that watch for the morning. Over the wrecks of a world I weep, over broken hearts of parents, over suffering infancy, over the unconscious clay of sweet innocents, over the untimely birth

who have never seen the light, or have just looked upon it, and shut their eyes for a season, until the glorious light of the resurrection morn.

Oh, my Lord, come away. Hasten with your congregated ones. My soul desires to see the King in His beauty, and the beautiful ones whom He shall bring along with Him; when I shall see these sweet babes, snatched from a parent's weeping eyes, and a parent's sorrowful, yet joyful heart.⁷²

1 Thessalonians 4

¹³ ...sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For...them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

Now, this consummation of all our hopes, and conclusion of all our trials, in which I so greatly rejoice, is set forth, as it seems to me, under two aspects:

- the one looking unto the governed, the other unto the governors;
- the one describing the condition of the earth and the nations upon it, the other describing the condition of the New Jerusalem and the raised saints which are therein;
- the one revealing Christ as King of men in flesh-and-blood, sitting on David's throne, and from thence ruling all thrones and dominions of men, the other revealing Christ

⁷² Irving well knew the bitterness of losing children. He lost four of them, including his first, young Edward, at 15 months. One biography (*Blinded Eagle*, H.C. Whitley, 1955) describes it thus:

"It was a terrible personal agony to the father. No David grieved more bitterly over Absalom. To the end of his life the pain was there. The 12th of the month was kept as a fast in his memory. Mrs. Irving was still weak after the birth of a little girl, so he went home alone, to fight out his agony, often on his knees. Quite a while after, at the death-bed of a young man, when someone closed the boy's eyes he writes, 'I wish they did not do so. I so loved to see Edward's eyes.' Yet he fought through to a rock-hard faith, and would not let even the Angel of Death go till he blessed him. He wrote to his church, 'The Lord has made His peace to be known unto us...by His grace I shall be a more faithful minister unto you and unto all the flock. Now is my heart broken—now is its hardness melted; and my pride is humbled and my strength is renewed.'"

as Head and Husband of the church in the New Jerusalem, dwelling with His bride, Immanuel, God with us.

Which division to exhibit still more distinctly, it is necessary to bear in mind, that though the earth and the nations be brought into that blessedness, everywhere prophesied of in Scripture as attendant on the coming of the Lord, still it is not the eternal condition of its blessedness, but an intermediate stage thereto, wherein Christ and His raised saints, the church, are exhibited triumphant over their enemies,—kings and priests over a subjugated world, which they bless with infinite blessings, in reward of those infinite sufferings which they endured upon it in the days of their flesh, by the glorious triumphs of grace.

Yet still is the earth under the law of growth and decay, and the animals under the law of death, and man likewise, but such a death as Christ has power over, and not the devil; a death for judgment of wickedness, for preservation of righteousness; in one word, death the executioner of the Holy King, the servant, not the monarch, of things created.

While this is the state of the redeemed earth, blooming in beauty, rife with happiness, and all redolent with the holy incense of joy, such is not the state of the habitation of the redeemed, the city of the great King, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from above, into which nothing enters that defiles or makes a lie, where there is no death, where God's tabernacle is with men, where is the light inaccessible and full of glory.

This is the antitype of Eden, in the midst of an uncultivated yet sinless world; the antitype of the Holy of Holies, separated by an impassable veil from the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High, which is the land of Judea, and from the court of the Gentiles, which is the rest of the world no longer profaned.

Here, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, where flesh and blood cannot enter, we have God and the Lamb, and the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders (which are the church of the first-born);—in one word, we have the vision of the 4th chapter made visible or present on the earth, the reality of the

heavenly court and government clothed upon with the glorious flesh of the first resurrection; all angels attendant upon this eternal and unchangeable residence of the God-man and His church, and all creatures having their blessedness suspended from the same.

And to the intent that not only the beings intelligent may be blessed with the knowledge and sight of that blessed condition to which their faithfulness shall at length come, but also that they may have a kindred hope for the inanimate and organic creation upon whose goodly fruits their life is sustained, this city of the blessed is presented in those clarified and most glorious forms of unchangeable matter, wherein there shall be no decay or death, nor sinful stain, nor ray of darkness, nor harbor of evil, nor occasion of temptation, nor accident, nor fallibility, but God's attributes shall stand ever glorified therein, and man's service ever done thereby; creation redeemed, creation united unto Christ, and in Him beautified, and in Him blessed, and with God's own countenance lighted up, without stain or wrinkle or any such thing.

Of this the unity of creation blessed, the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven at the coming of Christ, is the form and subsistence, in itself the subsistence, and to all other parts of creation the form of their hope, the reality of that spiritual and immortal blessedness, whereto they may through faithfulness attain.

That same office which the risen body of Christ now serves unto the church, being the ground of their hope of a resurrection, will the New Jerusalem serve to the world after the coming of Christ, being the ground of their hope of spiritual glory; the only difference being, that the body of our hope is not now visible, because this is a dispensation of faith, whereas the body of theirs will be visible, because it is a dispensation of sight.

And as we now receive a firstfruits of life and nourishment in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, granted to our faith upon Christ's risen body, so shall they receive out of that New Jerusalem, that blessedness of every kind which they enjoy, granted unto their faith, and hope, and desire of that fullness of

spiritual blessedness, in which the church that reigns therein is instated under Christ, and in union with Christ her Head.

I may not enter into these things in detail, but have thought so much necessary for the understanding of that double picture of blessedness which is contained in the last three chapters of the book: the former in chapters 20 and 21 down to verse 9; the latter from thence down to verse 6 of chapter 22; and the remaining verses do contain the solemn sanctions and injunctions with which Christ sends forth this book, blessed and defended, at once its treasure of precious blessings and its armory of defensive weapons, of both which this generation is alike unmindful.

Now the first of these delineations has a history; but the last has none, nor can have, because it is unchangeable. The earth, on which mortal men do dwell, and mutable creatures exist, is capable of change, and therefore of a history, the history of its events, until it be brought into the condition of the New Jerusalem, which is unchangeable.

And this we have recorded in the language of time or change; but the New Jerusalem, in the language of eternity and unchangeableness. The events of the history are these:

- The two forms of Antichrist, the beast and the false prophet, are taken alive and cast into the lake of fire, and the kings of the earth confederate under their banners, are slain;
- The devil, prime mover of the earth's wickedness and misery, is restrained in chains within the bottomless pit;
- Straightway the first resurrection ensues, and Christ with His risen saints takes the reins of the government of the earth.
- The earth, thus delivered from the headship of Satan and wicked men, rejoices in great blessedness, under the headship of Christ and righteous men raised from the dead;
- Being thus constituted under Christ and His saints, men have the power of going themselves to Him as a head of sustentation; for the work of redemption is then complete.

All are redeemed, earth and every creature and the souls and bodies of men upon the earth are redeemed, from the power of all captivity. But still there is a work of faith, which is to acknowledge Christ as the Author of this redemption, and to join themselves to Him after what way Adam might and ought to have done; and the angels that fell not did.

And they shall in general do so, and so doing shall exhibit that blessedness which God bestows upon creatures who are frail and mutable, through their dependence upon Christ.

There shall be exceptions,⁷³ and these exceptions shall, I conceive, go down to the pit quick, shall be judged with instantaneous judgment, to the end it may be truly a kingdom of righteousness.

And thus shall things stand constituted for the period of the thousand years; whether literal years we say not, nor does it at all concern us, but certainly a limited time, however short or long, and certainly not shorter than a thousand literal years.

At the end of which finite time, the wickedness of men haply increasing, and the grace of God being accomplished, Satan shall be loosed, and men in this better condition shall be tried; and it shall appear that except the Jewish people who are under a covenant of their own,⁷⁴ all the nations, envious haply of that distinction, and disobedient to their supremacy, shall give way, and come up in proud revolt to try their might against the people of God's covenant, and against His holy city, which has its seat within these bounds.

This last confederacy of evil is written in the language of Ezekiel's vision of Gog and Magog (chapters 38 and 39), and will find its best illustrations from that confederacy of the nations against Israel settled in their own land, before the Millennium commences.

⁷³ *Isaiah* 65.

⁷⁴ *Ezekiel* 16.

Then it is that God shall interfere and show His mighty power in Christ, who shall consume them with fire out of heaven. This fire of destruction to the wicked shall be also the fire of purgation to the earth, accomplishing the completeness of that purification of the heaven and the earth, and total destruction of the elements of change and trouble which is mentioned in the 3rd chapter of 2 *Peter*, and every other part of Scripture, and of which the fires of the beginning of the Millennium are only a partial and limited foreshowing.

Out of the bosom of this grand act of conflagration and purification, shall the bodies of the dead arise, from the earth into the mid-heaven, and receive their sentence of final settlement, some being doomed unto the lake outside of creation, others to the several dignities and governments in creation under Christ and the church and the New Jerusalem, and the infallible earth which shall for ever hold the metropolitan dignity of the works of creation.

That lake of fire, hell, the second death, great grave of being, dread monument of sin and wickedness, is, I think, spoken of in Scripture as without:

Matthew 22

¹³ ...[the] outer darkness, [where] there shall weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Revelation 22

¹⁵ ...without are dogs...

But creation itself is represented as all redeemed:

Ephesians 1

¹⁰ ...He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.

This is the history of the death of death, the undoing of the undoer, the destruction of the destroyers, the perdition of a rebellious will, the eternal monument of the wrath of God, the great negative by which the great positive has been demonstrated.

And herewith concludes the history of this earth, the great arena whereon the debate between good and evil has been carried on, and its great pilgrimage to eternal blessedness, signed and sealed in the blood of Christ is ended.

And God honors those who have stood the fiery brunt of such fearful controversy, and done this work of pioneering the creature's road to infallibility, by appointing them kings and priests over the various orbs that swim in space, and are bound together by the unity of the one law of gravitation; perhaps each of them the living head of a living race, each the vicar for Christ over a world, over all which He is the Head. But again I must restrain myself till the proper place for the details.

Such is a sketch, my Christian brethren, of the subject-matter of the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, over which, when I cast my eye, I know not whether wonder or delight possess me more: wonder at the immensity of the truth which it contains; or delight at perceiving the harmony, the unity, of the whole. It is a mighty work which I have undertaken; but I would not shun either the labor or the responsibility of it.

[PRAYER]

I do engage myself, O my Teacher, in the confidence of your instruction; for I seek not my own glory, but the glory of your great Name.

Your providence was strange, and very gracious was your will in drawing me to the study of this book; very good have You been in furnishing me with every help; and why should I doubt that You will enable me to overcome every difficulty, and to present unto your church such an exposition of it as may evidence the knowledge You have given me in your mystery, and put to silence the slanders of misjudging and unbelieving men; as may show unto your church the unspeakable treasures of wonder and goodness which lie here unheeded by many; by too many despised, and only by a very few prized aright.



John the Evangelist receives the Revelation of Christ
(Bibliche Figuren, 1560)

V. THE SANCTIONS OF THE BOOK

Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

¹⁰ Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto Him the plagues that are written in this book:

¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

AND now we come to the fourth and last head of the lecture, which is to lay before you the sanctions or obligations of the *Revelation* under which it ought by me to be expounded, and by you to be listened to.

And without repeating anything which has been said above upon the title, authority, and substance of this book, I observe, that every thing already advanced is of the nature of the most sacred sanction and binding obligation to every believer.

If it be sufficient at any time to command attention to know that it is God who speaks the word, how much more when God sends that word for our information, upon that subject which is the joy and the desire of a Christian's heart, the coming of the Lord. The thing spoken, as well as the person who speaks it, should then bind us with breathless attention to hear and to keep the saying.

When to this is added, that it comes from the hands of our crucified and risen Lord, being one of those resurrection gifts which

He received from the Father, and upon receiving, communicated to His church, by the mediation of His angel, some principal one of the saints in glory, and of the Apostle John, the most beloved of the church on earth; uniting God, Christ, the church in glory, and the church on earth, in one sweet fellowship of love; methinks a new sanction of a most extraordinary kind is added to it.

And, finally, when to God the author, Christ the subject and the most honorable channel of its transmission, is added the manifoldness of its details, the deep mysteries of the Godhead which it opens, the offices and actions of Christ which it reveals; the revolutions of Christendom already past, which it explains, and yet to come, which it foretells; and the sure and certain signs of the day of the world's redemption, which it hangs out in full view, that it may not overtake us as a snare; it is a most amazing thing that the church should not have bound it about her neck, and written it upon the tablet of her heart.

But God, foreseeing the end from the beginning, and wishing to prevent by all means consistent with human responsibility the catastrophe of the church, which is fast drawing on through unbelief of, or indifference to, that glory which is fast approaching, has set in various parts of the book, sanctions which are not to be found in any other book of Scripture. And these it shall now be our endeavor to lay before you.

We arrange them under three heads:

1. The sanction of Blessing;
2. The sanction of Knowledge;
3. The sanction of Fear.

THE SANCTION OF BLESSING

The sanction of blessing is contained in these words:

Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Than this sacred benediction, with which the book is so solemnly opened and concluded, there can be nothing higher or better, or more worthy to commend it to the minds of His people.

It is not like those benedictions with which the apostolical epistles are ordinarily introduced; being not the general expression of good will and invocation of grace and peace, but a positive and special promise of blessing resting upon the book itself, which cannot, so far as I remember, be found appropriated to any other book of Scripture whatsoever.

Nor is it in the room and stead of the ordinary apostolical benediction which we find given, in verse 5, by the Apostle unto the churches, to whom he was commanded to send the precious gift in deposit, or rather in trust for circulation among all the churches of Christ.

The blessing, therefore, twice repeated, is nothing else than a sanction given to this book, in order to preserve it safe in the heart, and holy in the veneration of the church. And it consists of two parts: the one the promise, the other the reason of it.

The promise is unto him that reads or peruses, which I consider to have a special reference to the office-bearers, the ministers, and doctors, and readers of the church, whose office it is to choose out, in the public services of the church, the parts of Scripture to read, and to lecture upon in the hearing of the people. It applies in like manner to heads of families, to masters of schools, and all others to whom the same dignity appertains.

And let all such know that, despite of vulgar prejudices, and even ecclesiastical examples, there is a blessing in preferring rather than in postponing this book to the other books of Scriptures. I say ecclesiastical example, because, if I err not, there is not one of the lessons of the Church of England taken from the *Apocalypse*. For this exclusion I cannot well account; but certainly it has been sorely punished in those frequent attempts of ignorant

churchmen to bring about an alliance or union between her and the Roman harlot. The remedy ought to be promptly applied by the extraordinary diligence of her ministers to take a larger proportion of their subjects of discourse from this book.

Now I can trace a very marked contrast between the feelings towards the *Revelation* which I find in Scotland and in England. In my native land it is looked to as the most profound and deeply concerning book of Scripture, and for a minister to take his subjects of discourse from it endears him to the people.

In this, the land of my abode, which I have much reason to honor, I find that, as well in the Church as among the Sectaries, there is a decided preference of the other Scriptures; and I am told it is not unusual both in schools and in families to pass this book over in their ordinary readings.

Against all such undervaluings I present these words of the eternal and unchangeable God:

Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads...the words of this prophecy.

And the man who gives no heed to God thus promising a blessing upon that which should of itself be our delight, will not give much heed to a creature's voice: and if he did, it were only to enhance his sin in rejecting the voice of God for the voice of a man.

But, oh reader! after these words have met your eye, know that if you be not desirous and delighted to read this book, you reject the blessing of your God, and set His good and gracious promise at nought. Of what kind the blessing is, will better appear in the sequel.

³ Blessed...[also are] they that hear the words of this prophecy.

This has reference to the congregations, or families, or audiences of any kind, in whose hearing the chapters and verses of this book are read out, for the subject of lectures or sermons, or simply for a lesson of Divine truth. And it ought to carry its weight with all upon whom God's name is named, and who take upon them the profession of Christ Jesus.

I trust it proceeds from my own caution and timidity, rather than from any real dislike among the people, but certain it is I have an intuitive perception, or a suggestion of the Spirit, almost every time I preach from this book leading one to put forward this promise of God, as my warrant, and their encouragement to hear me patiently.

And after all my caution, O my soul, declare how, by the learned and the unlearned among the ministry, by the pious and profane among the people, I have been treated as a fool and a babbler, or something worse, for my perseverance in this cause.

But, be you patient, win your own crown, and be an example as well as a voice unto this incredulous and doubting generation. Let me find acceptance among you, O you children of the daughter of my people! I bring with me a heart both loyal and true to the kingdom and the Church of Scotland. I come among you in the name of the Lord, seeking nothing but that together we may inherit this blessing; you of hearing, I of reading and expounding this blessed book.

But this is not all: something more than reading and hearing is necessary, in order to win the prize of this blessing, which is added in these words:

Revelation 1

³ ...and keep those things which are written therein.

These are not words of course, but describe some very high degree in the school of Christ; as is manifest from the words of the demonstrating angel:

Revelation 22

⁹ I am your fellow-servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book.

Now, it is no low degree to be placed in the same company with the angel of Christ, with His beloved disciple, and with the prophets; and it indicates to me this great truth, that under the expression,

⁹ ...that keeping of the sayings of this book,

—God contains such an act of faith as under our dispensation is parallel with the faith of the prophets under the Old Testament, and of the Apostles under the New; that this book is the Christian prophecy, to keep which, in every age of the church, will try men’s faith, as the faith of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the old prophets were tried. For in no other way can I find the worthiness of coupling those who keep it with the ancient prophets and with John.

I do see, moreover, in this use of the expression by the demonstrating angel, that another great truth is taught us, namely, that as the heavenly angel was Christ’s messenger, to proceed forth into the visible spheres, and as John was Christ’s messenger to the visible church, and as the prophets had been God’s messengers to the various nations to which they were sent, so those who keep the sayings of this book should be His messengers to the generations of men, in the midst of which they should be called. For how otherwise could there be any fellowship of service between them and the angels?

It is not a fellowship of mere dignity, but a fellowship of dignity arising from the commonness of the service.

Revelation 22

⁹ I am your fellow-servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book.

Between the angel, the apostle, the prophets, and the keepers of the sayings of this book, there must be a community of service: and this is the principle which we would lay hold of for explaining what is signified by the word “keeping;” for there is no difficulty in the other words, “the things written therein.” Keeping must signify such a conservation and preservation of it in our hearts, as that no power, visible or invisible, shall be able to bereave us of the faith thereof, or prevent us from expressing and acting thereupon.

He rises into the noble degree of a conservator of this prophecy’s integrity, who is not ashamed of the testimony thereof, nor hesitates to express his belief, by referring to this

book, but rather seeks occasion so to do, and finds pleasure when such an occasion arrives.

What will you say to this, my heedless brethren, who look askance upon everything which derives itself from this dubious source?

Oh my God! When these your promises I meditate upon, I seem to myself to have done no adequate honor to this blessed book: and in time to come I ask your grace to enable me both to be more faithful and bold for your sake, and for the sake of a heedless, unbelieving generation of men.

Now that I see the power and meaning of this blessing, I will serve You for the inheritance of it. By keeping the prophecy, and ever declaring it, I will humbly seek to attain the good degree of being a warning voice, a prophetic voice to the people where you cast my lot.

And, oh! make this word of your servant to kindle in many hearts the glorious ambition of being fellow-servants with the prophets, and with the apostles, and with the angel which showed these things!

If now I be asked to give some more particular description of what the blessing here promised is, and why such ones should only partake thereof, this will appear in the other part of this sanction, which is the reason of it expressed by these words, “for the time is at hand”⁷⁵; and in the parallel passage by these words:

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

The reason why the coming of Christ is described as being about to be in a short time, we have explained under the second head, by showing that this is merely a relative expression of which God only can judge the propriety, who knows the times and seasons before appointed; and that seeing He has chosen thus always to speak, men had better not cavil but meekly reverence His word.

⁷⁵ *Revelation* 1:3, 22:10.

But why this speedy coming should be in both cases connected with the blessing, is another question upon which we have an observation or two to make, in order completely to elucidate the nature of this sanction.

For my part, I can see no connection between the blessedness of keeping the sayings of this book and the coming of Christ, except in believing that the blessedness which comes with Him, shall in some way or other fall to the lot of those who are full of the perusal and the faith of this revelation of Jesus Christ.

And if this book be written, according as its name bears, on express purpose to unfold the coming of Jesus Christ, it is but reasonable to believe that without careful heed to its instruction, that glorious event will drop out of our mind. For if the church might keep that blessed event in mind, without the constant help of this book, why was it given, and why has it in its name embodied the claim to do this thing which no other book of Scripture claims to do, namely, to show unto God's servants the coming of Jesus Christ?

I am the more confirmed in this opinion, that the blessedness here spoken of is no vague nor general good, but the particular good attendant upon the hope and realized in the coming of Christ, by two considerations.

The first, that the blessing of Christ's second advent is always described as pertaining to those who look for Him, to those who watch for His coming, to those who are ready to receive Him with oil in their lamps, to those who are keeping their garments, &c. Whereas the miserable judgments of that awful event are described as alighting upon all others who are not filled with this glorious hope.

And, as if to show us that, it depends upon no other thing whatever, those taken into glory and those left to shame, are represented as being in all other respects the same: grinding at the same mill, walking together in the same field, and sleeping in the same bed.

From which I am led to believe, that at the time of our Lord's coming every other anchor of the soul shall have failed men in the antecedent or accompanying perils, and this only shall be holding against the stream-tide of infidelity and wickedness. I believe, though this be not the place to demonstrate it, that the hope of the Lord's instant coming shall distinguish all who in that day shall obtain redemption. And if so, we may well understand how much blessedness rests upon the reading of this book.

Let it be remembered that this book, though it contain many precedent and consequent events, has yet as its avowed and capital object the very event of Christ's coming, which like a pearl of great price it sets and encloses in a splendor of circumstance worthy of its grandeur, and which are to be the harbingers and attendants of its noblest state. And being so, I think that among the rest might well stand blessings upon that book which alone should preserve the glorious advent from entire oblivion.

If now anyone be puzzled to comprehend how this blessing should attend upon all times and persons in the ages which have occurred since it was written, they will be relieved by considering that the book dresses out the glorious event unto the faith of men, without reference to time or place; and that every one who apprehends it with faith has the blessing, whenever that blessing shall in time and place be manifested: all the generations that have passed, as well as the generation that then is.

It is no part of the revelation of Jesus Christ to make manifest the very day or time of His coming, which were to destroy its efficacy, but to give forth its glorious certainty together with all the blessedness unto all things, and especially unto the church attendant thereupon.

The other consideration which leads to this same interpretation of the blessedness, is, that in this book the expression, "Blessed is he," has in it a sort of formal application to the time of the coming of the Lord. For examples, take these:

Revelation 14

¹³ Blessed are the dead from henceforth.

Now the very next action is Christ's coming in the clouds to gather His people out of the earth before the vintage of wrath.

Revelation 16

¹⁵ Behold I come as a thief: blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

And immediately vengeance is done upon Babylon.

Revelation 19

⁹ Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This is the New Jerusalem estate when Christ is with His church on the earth.

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

How blessed? By being admitted to that marriage supper; by being found keeping their garments; by being gathered with the sickle of Him who sits upon the cloud, into the garner of God.

Now, believing brethren, think you what a sanction this is; what a blessing is here held out to your constant perusal and faithful keeping of the sayings of this book. It is your ark of salvation against the stormy winds and sapping streams of infidelity which are overthrowing the house of those who will not rest on this only foundation.

- Justification by faith is become anything, and everything, but that which it is in the Gospel and the articles of the church.
- And of the Spirit as a Person, and the Servant of the Man Christ Jesus, we may say with the Samaritans, "we have not even heard whether there be a Holy Ghost."
- And of the Trinity it may be no longer spoken or preached, but with an aspect of profound ignorance and devout helplessness.
- And of the sacraments it is monstrous to speak otherwise than as empty signs.

- And everything else most precious in our doctrine is worn away by the spirit of infidelity.

And one only rough hard truth remains, which no metaphysics can adulterate: That Jesus Christ is to come again in flesh, and take the government of the world upon himself. Yet in this one seed of truth there is a pregnancy, that will restore all the rest from the shadowy emptiness into which they have been brought. Therefore:

Revelation 1

³ Blessed is he that reads, and they who hear the words of this prophecy and keep the sayings that are written in this book; for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold, I come quickly, blessed is he that keeps the words of this prophecy.

THE SANCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The second sanction which I propose to all men for perusing this book, is the sanction of the knowledge, the saving knowledge which they will assuredly derive from it. And this I build upon these words:

Revelation 22

¹⁰ Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

I believe, upon this solemn attestation of God, that the *Apocalypse* is not a sealed book; and that all the doctors of the church, with all the enemies of Christ to help them, cannot seal it: and as an unsealed and unsealable book I take it up to read it; surely believing that—let wise men and prudent men say what they please, and do what they please—it is a book unsealed and open, a parent book to the babes in Christ Jesus, which no power earthly dare, which no power in hell can, and which no power in heaven will seal.

And this assurance I receive from God as a great, a very great boon; knowing that it was not wont to be so with the prophecy in the old time concerning which it is said by the mouth of Daniel:

Daniel 12

⁴ Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.

⁹ Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

With this compare the corresponding passage of the *Apocalypse* now before us:

Revelation 22

¹⁰ And he said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

¹¹ He that is unjust let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

¹² And, behold, I come quickly; to give unto every man according as his work shall be.

Of the command not to seal the prophecy of this book, I have to say simply, that I believe it is effectual, like every other word of God; and that the sayings of this book neither are nor can be sealed to him that believes, aye and never have been sealed to any believer. Sealed indeed they have been, and still are, to many called believers, and as such regarded by those who measure themselves by themselves; but nevertheless they are not sealed.

Let God be true, and let every man be a liar: let God be Almighty, and let all creatures be as nothing before Him. And seeing He has said,

“Seal not the book,”

–I say,

“It is not sealed, and cannot be sealed;”

—and the same will maintain against all doctors, councils, and assemblies of the church. Without any apparatus of commentators or accomplishment of learning, a believer should go to and read it, using for his keys these two—faith and hope; faith that it is an open book, and hope that it is a book full of blessing.

But if men, instead of serving themselves with these blessed keys, will go about to believe that the book is dark and obscure, and without commentators unintelligible; then what shall I say, but that, denying God’s asseverations and holding Him a liar, they will reap a harvest of lies into their own bosom, and come forth from their studies more perplexed and entangled than they went into them.

And is not this the case with most of the commentators who have entered upon it, with almost every Christian who reads it? There lurks in the background of their minds a feeling that it is a forlorn hope to which they are giving themselves,—a set of desperate men who have adventured upon a desperate undertaking. And what can such a spirit of contradiction to God’s commandment obtain for itself, but confusion worse confounded, darkness that may be felt?

Is God thus to be mocked, who has said,

“Seal it not?”

—and who is he that has said,

“Seal it?”

Out upon you, you men-worshipers! You God-despisers! How dare you take upon you to call that book a mystery which God has named a revelation; that book a lock which God has named a key; that book a sealed book which God has written unsealed forever?

While I thus rebuke the spirit of skepticism with which this book is read, even by the faithful and holy, and am zealous for God’s service, and for the church’s good, I am far from encourag-

ing rashness in myself or in anyone. From this we are well defended by the next sanction, which is that of fear, contained in:

Revelation 22

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

I do not say that everyone, or anyone, is to be let into the whole matter contained in this body of Christian prophecy. But I do say, that it is the open book of church-prophecy, out of which every Christian will obtain that insight into the future hopes and expectations of the church which is needful for his soul's salvation.

It is one thing to open the door of a spacious temple, and another thing to say that every one who enters therein shall be able to comprehend the whole Divinity who is worshiped there. But because no one person can with his mind attain unto the vastness of the revealed Godhead, anymore than with his body he can fill the arched, vaulted, amplitude of a spacious temple, is the temple therefore to be shut; or rather, are not its doors to stand forever open, a symbol of the ever-approachable God?

So open I the door of the Apocalyptic visions, and ensure every believer that therein he shall find ample light, revelation, information, and enlargement to his soul, in all the things which concern the glory of God and of the living Christ.

We appeal to our future discourses, for the proof whether this book is opened or sealed, is manifestation or concealment of the great mystery of God in Christ; whether it be an eye-glass through which to look upon the Scriptures, or itself a dark chamber which needs illumination.

Who will illuminate the illumination of God? Who will reveal the revelation of God? He who undertakes such a task darkens counsel by words without wisdom. We go to the perusal of it as a

book which has already opened to us many mysteries, which has been to our soul light and not darkness; which has unfolded itself to our faith in God's most holy declarations; and we ask our readers not to look upon us as the openers of a mystery, but as the setters forth of a revelation; not as prognosticators of future uncertainties, but as the preachers of the great certainty—the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While thus I solemnly and soberly, though most earnestly, and as some may think unguardedly, do present this book as full of light and of knowledge, and bearing to the future the same relation which the sun in the heaven does to darkness; and do exhort everyone with such deep conviction of its blessed light to peruse it, in the perfect assurance of being enlightened in the knowledge of the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; I guard every one from thinking that he comprehends all the light which is therein, though I urge him onward to the apprehension of still more and more.

It is the chart of the church, whose bark has been beating these two thousand years upon the stormy waves. As she is driven hither and thither, if she look into this divinely constructed chart, she will discern that all her passages of peril have been foreseen and provided against. It will save us; and if another generation is to follow, it will save them; and so on till Christ come.

But what a thing it is to lock the chart up in concealments tenfold, and let the ship drive upon shoals and quicksands! This is what your doctors and divines do, who seek the honor to themselves of steering the church by rudder and compass of their own learning and prudence.

Away with such opposers of the glory of my God and of His church, and of this blessed open and unsealed book! Come one, come all who have faith in God's word; read this unsealed book with me, and see whether it require man's authority, man's wisdom, man's scholastic learning, to find in it that knowledge of the future coming of Christ, which their worldly apparatus of wisdom and prudence has only served to hide from them.

Matthew 11

²⁵ I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.

²⁶ Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight.

I do most steadfastly believe therefore, that all the ignorance which at this day rests upon the church concerning the great hope of Christ's coming, and the signs of the times in which we live; and the apostasy of Rome, and the infidel antichrist, and the speedy destruction of both, and the first resurrection, and the kingdom of the saints upon the earth, and every thing else most concerning to this weary and sorrowful earth, arises from the indifference, and apathy, and self-sufficient ignorance in which they stand to this book, which is the chart of the church's perilous voyage, and the light of a Christian's prospects into the future.

And therefore I do place the hope, yea, and the certainty of knowledge, as another great encouragement for the believer to attend me in my prelections upon this book; which is not darkness, but light; which is not doubt, but certainty; which is not speculation, but most true knowledge to every one who believes.

How man desires to be taught insight into the future! It is by far his noblest desire. It is not to be rebuked, but to be encouraged, and to be guided. This office belongs to God, and to Him alone:

Isaiah 43

⁹ Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.

¹⁰ You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

¹¹ I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour.

¹² I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God.

Isaiah 44

⁶ Thus says the Lord the King of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

⁷ And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.

⁸ Fear not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? you are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Prophecy is His method of enlightening the future. And should the light itself be darkness, how great is that darkness? But, believe God rather than man, if you are not already sunk in unbelief. Believe that the prophecy is a light in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise on your hearts. Go then with this book in your hand, and know as much of the future prospects of the church, as God has seen it good to give unto us.

How much light of knowledge of things to come there is here, I say not; but this I say, that all which there is, is here, and nowhere else. Therefore come here to seek and find it. Study this book for that most precious knowledge, the knowledge of the future; which it is vain to say you care not about: for about it man must care; and either by man must he be nursed into all error, or by God guided into all truth, through the only appointed means of His prophetic word.

THE SANCTION OF FEAR

And now I come to speak of the third and last sanction with which God has sought to protect this book from neglect and contempt, and preserve it in the reverence of His church; which is the sanction of fear addressed to such spirits as are not to be moved by sanctions of blessedness and of knowledge. It is written

in these fearful words, with which the mighty God, as with a thunderbolt, closes and clasps the awful volume:

Revelation 22

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto Him the plagues that are written in this book:

¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Now being a man of flesh and blood, and no devil incarnate, I stand in awe of these fearful words. I have looked on fearful sights without trembling, and heard the threatenings and denunciations of many an enemy without dismay; but I tremble and exceedingly quake before these words of the living God. And I would rather face the legions of hell in full array, than meet the Word coming against me with the terrors of this accusation:

“Oh, man! you did add to the words of the prophecy of this book, therefore unto you be added all the plagues that are written in this book!”

Or of this other accusation:

“Oh, man! you did take away from the words of the book of this prophecy; and from you shall be taken away your part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book!”

I say I am not an incarnate devil, but a man in flesh and blood; I am not a hardened and annealed infidel, but a humble and faithful believer of God’s word, to every jot and tittle: and, being so, I read this with deep emotion, and can say from my heart,

“Oh God, I tremble at this your word.”

Let us now lay open this sanction. And, first, oh you dreamers! who think that you are safe in neglecting the *Revelation* about which so much stir is beginning to be made, who hug yourselves

up in your great wisdom not to search into mysteries, and flatter yourselves that it is safest to be indifferent; know of a verity, that if God stand to His word, you are standing in a most perilous condition. For, through your neglect, you do not take away a part, but you take away the whole of what is written in it.

So far as your faith goes, it is no part of it; so far as your influence goes, you withdraw it from the faith of others. What can you expect, oh you despisers! oh you self-satisfied worshipers of your own ease and prudence! your ease is disease, your prudence is imprudence, you are treasuring up unto yourselves the wrath and indignation of your God.

Find me such an awful sanction as this appended to any other book of Scripture if you can. That which our Lord adds to the Law and the Prophets⁷⁶ is strong, but this is fearful. It is much, to be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but, ah, how much more is it, to have all the plagues and judgments of antichrist and of the devil himself added to us!

And yet such a spell has bound both men and ministers fast, that they cannot, they will not, be roused to the scrupulous and exact consideration of this book, but will treat the most of it as an inscrutable mystery, which is more honored in the neglect than in the meditation of it.

Oh! I could stay and weep when I think upon the cold heedlessness with which my brethren in the church have treated my endeavors to awaken them to the sense of this book's awful importance. Even at best they consider me as a harmless enthusiast, a heady speculator; but many of them do regard me as a misleader of the people.

It is vain that I cry out on every occasion, Not me, but my subject, oh, my brethren! Not me, but my Lord; not me, but your own salvation. Time after time I lift up my voice to move them to give heed to this book; but heed to it they will give none.

⁷⁶ *Matthew* 5:17-19.

Haply they take a text from it for the splendor of its diction, to form the basis of some spiritual interpretation or misinterpretation; haply to repel and gainsay all interpretation; haply to put another fold around the mass of prejudice and neglect with which these people already cover it.

I see the dead sleep in which the church is sunk: and I must do my office as a watchman, though I should speak like Isaiah to the heavens and the unconscious earth; for I do soon expect my Lord to arrive, and demand of me an account of my stewardship. Oh, my Lord, I willingly serve You, and I patiently wait for You: help me to be faithful. Oh! help me to be faithful among so many faithless.

The two verses in which this sanction of fear is written are spoken by the Lord Jesus himself, who is the speaker both in verse 16 preceding, and in verse 20 following them. He who had received it from the Father would well honor and guard His Father's gift: He who knows the sacredness of the Father's word, and loves not that the church should incur His Father's displeasure, would fain by timely warning prevent the evil, and therefore, in His own person, utters the fearful sentence upon those who dishonor this book; and with those lips which shall hereafter when He enacts the Judge, carry the sentence into execution.

Now it is a threatening, then it shall be a judgment. He utters the threatening to every one who hears the prophecy of this book; not ministers only, but people also; every one to whose ears it may in any way be brought.

And the first part of the sentence lies against every one who shall presume to add anything to this complete code of Christian prophecy; which is a book in itself complete, a full orb of truth, that may not be increased nor impaired.

Our gracious God perceiving how Satan would in all ages tempt men to take unto themselves authority as prophets, and even to personate Christ himself—as almost every impostor, and arch-heretic, and mystagogue has done—by this word warns all against the awful consequences of such presumption, and defends the

church against receiving any of their prognostications or pretensions.

The book of the *Revelation of Jesus Christ* is all that has been, is all that ever will be given to the church upon the subject of His coming again, and I may say upon the subject of future things. And, therefore, let no one hang dreaming on, as if His coming again would be ushered in by some fresh heraldry, and the world duly warned thereof. In these twenty-two chapters, the whole manifestation is contained. Therefore let us make the best of it: and if anyone come to us in his own name, pretending to other revelations than those herein contained, let us denounce against him the terrors of this curse.

Now I ask if this book itself were impenetrable and impervious to the sight of sanctified men, then what a case were we in! Deprived of all further light, and having none given to us, we must stumble onwards darkly, and that day overtake us as a thief in the night: whereas of the church, it is said, that day shall not come upon them as a thief, because they are children of the light and of the day.

Now lest, haply, anyone should be deterred from coming to peruse and to understand this book by the fear of adding something to it of his own; while I would have a careful watch upon my lips and heart not to do so, I have no fear that the ground on which I tread is dangerous. It is holy, but it is not dangerous.

I have great faith and entire confidence in the Holy Spirit, that when I am seeking to know the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, He will not lead me into error. I am jealous over my own proud imaginations and empty thoughts; but I know that the Holy Ghost is not to be resisted or overcome by them. My wandering propensities are not so strong but that God can bring me back to the Bishop and Shepherd of my soul. The teaching of the Spirit is not honored by doubting Him.

If we abstain from reading the *Apocalypse*, because of the false interpretations which have been made of it, we should likewise

abstain from reading the rest of Scripture, because of the heretical opinions which have been grafted thereon.

It is a remark of Sir Isaac Newton, that no one has devoted himself earnestly to prophecy without having been honored to bring something to light. And it might be added that the one thing which every one is made instrumental in bringing to light, is that which the church in this generation most needs, and for which God stirred up His servant to inquire.

And if, as we see, there be now awakened in the church a lively interest in the study of prophecy, we may rest assured that it will lead to discoveries most profitable to her present condition. Yet I cannot enter upon this work of interpreting this oft-interpreted book, without a solemn act of prayer to God, that He would prevent me from adding out of my own ingenuity any thing to that which is contained therein. I do most solemnly disclaim all inventions of my own; I pray that nothing whatever may be taken on my authority: for me to desire to have authority over the conscience of anyone, for you to give me such authority, is so far forth to incur the guilt here denounced.

By the solemnity, by the fearfulness, by the terrors of this sanction, I do entreat everyone who hears these discourses, and anyone who now shall read them, to look upon me in no other light than as a reverent inquirer into the meaning of God's word, and a patient, painstaking preacher of the same.

The second part of this sanction is the proper safeguard against the fearfulness to inquire, and backwardness to know, which might be produced in timorous and doubting minds by the first. For now Christ denounces against those who take away from the words of the book of this prophecy; and as if this were the more perilous side, it is protected by a threefold denunciation:

Revelation 22

¹⁹ God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

I cannot help observing what an entireness this bespeaks in the very words of Scripture, and how it confirms the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Also how it should guard us against wresting the words of Scripture to make them suit an hypothesis.

I have no hypotheses to support. I want to discover Christ, not the measures and proportions of any scheme. I desire to teach the church whatever pertains to the person and dignity of Christ; His actions as King within the veil, and His coming forth from it in the glory of His Father. So far only shall I look into the scheme and structure of the book as is necessary to reveal that unity in it which belongs to the unity of its subject, which is the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Now, who are guilty under this second sanction? They are most guilty who doubt or deny, or go about to cast suspicion upon the Divine authority of the book altogether, and these are far more numerous than the church dreams of. If they dared speak out, they would be found a great multitude. What but rooted infidelity can make the great body of ministers and people, especially ministers, smile within themselves, perhaps openly rail, when they hear of anyone setting himself in right earnest to the work of expounding it?

I set it down, secondly, as bringing a man under this charge, when he cares nothing for it whatever, gives his soul no concern about the book or its expounders, and assumes to himself many airs of a wise and spiritual man, because he rather takes his texts and his readings from the Gospels and the Epistles.

What, you scorners! is it not Scripture? How dare you, in the name of the living God, thus pitch one part of His word against another in vain and wicked emulations? I cannot excuse or indulge this spirit in any man, much less in a minister of God.

I am no accuser-general of the church; but I am a maintainer of God's most holy cause, against all the church if need be: and I do before God's tribunal impeach such ministers of the Gospel, and members of Christ's church, as do undervalue this book, as guilty of taking from it its essential value, not abstracting a few words,

but abstracting the pith out of every word. And I appeal to honest men, whether it be not to destroy this book for all good, and to defeat God's end as far as they can, thus to go about to withdraw men's hearts from it, and rail against those who would draw them to it. God is very merciful, or else He would not endure so much.

Further, they are guilty of taking words from it, who, in order to make it answer an hypothesis, will explain away the plain meaning and power of its simplest expressions: as, for example:

- When the saints in glory sing, "And we shall reign with You on the earth"; and
- When it is said, that there is a first resurrection, and that the souls of the martyrs live and reign with Christ on the earth; and
- When it is said, that God dwells with men, and that Christ comes at a certain time and place, and in a certain order of events; and all this is studiously denied and explained away.

The very words of this prophecy are defended with awful sanctions and let them be most sacred. Rather a thousand times let me err in keeping close to the words, than once in departing away from them. These are very grave and solemn considerations; but I feel that it is good to have brought them all before our minds in full array.

Oh, how this book stands up the rebuke of the church and of the land! No wonder Christ's advent is forgotten: the way in which this book has been treated is sufficient to account for it.

If anyone ask by what connection the crime of adding to or of taking from the words of the book of this prophecy is connected with the penalties of all the Apocalyptic plagues, of losing place in the book of life, and the holy city, and other the Apocalyptic promises, I refer to what I have already said upon this subject under the sanction of blessing; and, without repeating, do simply add, that the connection between this book and the things pertaining to the coming of Christ, is exactly the connection between word and deed, between faith and works.

If we believe not the word, the work we shall not have; if we value not the word, we shall not have the work to value: the despising of the word is the despising of Him that gave it; and this He will not bless, but, contrariwise, will curse.

This *Apocalypse* is to the Christian church, what the Law of Moses was to the Jewish state; and these two verses are like the curses pronounced upon Mount Nebo,⁷⁷ or rather those declared in the Song of Moses.⁷⁸ In the neglect of it our enemies have got the mastery over us, and we are in bondage. Whenever it has been observed again, like the book of the Law under king Josiah, then we are favored once more; and when it drops into oblivion, darkness comes up and covers the church.

This, in one word, is my view of the *Apocalypse*; that it was intended to be at once the chart, and the pole-star, and the light of the Christian church, over the stormy waves of time, until the Great Pilot, who walks upon the waters and stills the waves, should again give himself to the sinking ship, and make her His abode, His ark, His glory for ever and ever.

⁷⁷ *Deuteronomy* 28:16-68.

⁷⁸ *Exodus* 15:1-19.



The Angel gives John the Revelation of Christ
(Unknown)

VI. CONCLUSION

I DO NOT say that it is a thing in the power of any one man to accomplish, even though strengthened to the uttermost by the Holy Ghost. But I do believe that the Holy Ghost will strengthen some men in this generation, whom for that end He may choose, and by them will open unto the church this book, after another manner than has ever yet been done.

Hitherto it has been studied with a view chiefly to the church, or to the world; and in this respect it has been singularly blessed to the church, by opening her eyes to the discernment of that apostasy which so long ruled like God over the earth. From the earliest times, Rome was discerned to be the Babylon of this book, and even in the darkness of the middle ages, there were men who knew and preached the Pope of Rome to be the beast. It is recorded of our First Richard, that, when detained in Sicily, he and another of the kings engaged in the same crusade, heard a famous friar preach, that the Pope was the beast of the *Apocalypse*.

But it was reserved for the time of the Reformation, and especially in Scotland, to demonstrate the abomination of Rome out of this book. I believe that in the Church of Scotland there have been written upon it more commentaries than in all the Protestant churches besides. And it is the only church in which the *Apocalypse* is as much, if not more, used by the common people, and by the ministry, than any other book of Scripture.

And this view of the book, as it bears upon the church visible, is beginning to arm the servants of the Lord against the infidelity which by a hundred channels is hastening to overspread the church. What is better, it is beginning to open once more to us the object, the glorious object of our hope,—which is, the advent and kingdom of our Lord.

But all these services which this book has rendered, and is rendering to the church, are little compared with what it will do, when opened with the higher aim which we have now before us,

of discovering therein the offices, and the glories, and the future purposes and performances of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the church shall set themselves,—when the church shall by God be stirred up,—to work in this mine, as at the Reformation they wrought in Paul’s Epistles; there will arise upon her vision such a coming glory, her Lord will present himself to her love and confidence, in such transcendent beauty and majesty, that the primitive times themselves will not surpass, if they equal, the devotedness of those who are nourished with that precious food which this book contains.

The Reformation made good the perfectness of Christ’s sacrifice. In Scotland it went a little further, and made good Christ’s headship of the church; and this was enough for the labors of one generation, who expected from their successors a continuance and enlargement of the work.

But, alas! Their successors converted the work which had been done into an idol, and worshiped it. The landmarks of doctrine which the Reformers drew, to mark off the clear ground which they had won from the abyss of Papal error, they expected that their posterity would have extended more and more into the waste, until they had reclaimed the whole sum and substance of Christian truth.

But, alas, how otherwise it has been! Not only has no further encroachments been made upon the realms of the old anarchy, but even that truth which we had attained to, has been almost reft away from us, by Arminian errors, or by a system of fatalism and necessity, a doctrine of right and property, of selfishness and personal safety, falsely called Calvinistic, but of which Calvin is one of the ablest confuters.

We have lost the idea of the church, we have lost the idea of the sacraments, we have lost the idea of a redemption of love, as a basis of an election of grace; a common redemption, as the basis of a particular election. In a word, we are fallen as far beneath the Reformers, as they were beneath the primitive church in every thing

except the doctrine of justification by faith. There, I may say, the Reformers were on a level with the primitive church.

But this precious jewel of the Reformation has almost perished in our hands; so that, in my judgment, the Evangelical method of preaching justification by faith, is a more subtle form of error than the high-church method of preaching justification by works of morality; or the Papal method of preaching justification by merits of saints, and pilgrimages, and severities, and other self-inflicted acts of the will.

But into these things I enter not, nor would have named them, save to express my conviction that something must be done, or else the church, and the faith also, of which it is the pillar, will go to wreck. And I believe that something is, the exposition of Christ's person and offices and coming, which are all-inclusive and all-comprehensive.

He is the Applier of His own sacrifice; He is the Head of the church; He is the Prince of the kings of the earth; He is the Contender against the apostasy, He is the Destroyer of it; He is the bringer in of the Millennium, and He is the Upholder of it.

Here is a theme, large as human knowledge; not the doctrine of His sacrifice merely, by which the Reformers did so much, but the doctrine of His complete living person, and of His complete and perfect work.

And where is this set out? In that book whose name is, *Discovery of Jesus Christ*; a book which, being looked upon in respect to His person and dignity, I will say, he that runs may read. Once possess yourself with the idea contained in its name, that it is Jesus Christ revealed or discovered, and read it for the purpose of knowing the truth made known concerning Him, and you shall, in one reading of it, have more distinct apprehensions of His personal glories than from reading any, or I will say all, the Scriptures besides.

It is the shutting of this book, which has made Christ's glory to be so little known, and so little discoursed of. Indeed, and in truth,

I may say, that Christ's glory in His manhood is hardly believed at all.

The church, when she contemplates Christ glorious, is wont to have her mind directed to the period which preceded, and not to the period which follows, the Incarnation. Now that glory which He had with His Father before the world was, is a glory of the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, which comes not within the scope of man's understanding. And indeed, save for worship, it enters not within the region of man's concerns.

But the glory to which He attained in His manhood, in which He now subsists in redeemed flesh of man, and which He now puts forth, by and in humanity's form, holding with an arm of flesh and guiding with faculties of reason, the scepter of God,—this is a thing wholly cognizable by man, and to that end brought to pass that the creature might know it, and in knowing it be blessed.

And seeing that God has given us a book, designed for nothing less than the unfolding to human knowledge of that glory to which His Son is advanced, and of that glory in which He is yet to be revealed, how diligent ought we to be, who have fellow-feeling and co-heirship in it all, to discover the might, the fullness, the beauty, of that Person in whom we have believed, and who has promised to enrich us with the same endowments, and to fill us with the same fullness!

And how diligent should pastors and ministers of the church be, whom He gave and continues unto His church for the very end of conveying to her the gifts which He received when He ascended up on high. How diligent, I say, ought we to be in meditating this book, which professes to reveal Jesus Christ, which Jesus Christ received as a gift from His Father, and which He sent straightway unto His servant John, that through him it might be shown unto all believers!

Be it understood, therefore, by you all, that I have so much faith in God's faithful word, that I will never suffer this book, in my presence, to be treated lightly; that I will never shrink as a divine

to draw from it my chief illustrations of the glories of Christ, of His rights and prerogatives in the day of His absence, and of His performances and possessions when He shall come again.

I will resist unto blood those who say that another than He is head of the church; those who say that a magistrate or king may govern well, with an eye only to the people's well-being, and with no respect to Christ the Priestly King; and those who say that there is to be a millennial kingdom without His presence, and a destruction of Antichrist without His power.

I am resolved by the grace of God to make a stand for the revival of this book from among the rust of obsolete interpretation and the dust of neglect. I feel that I can do little in such a work as the evolution of the glories of Christ, written in the history of the church, and of the world. But we must be faithful in the least, as well as in the greatest. The Lord will raise up better and wiser servants in our room, whereat we shall much rejoice. We must be up and doing, for the time is at hand:

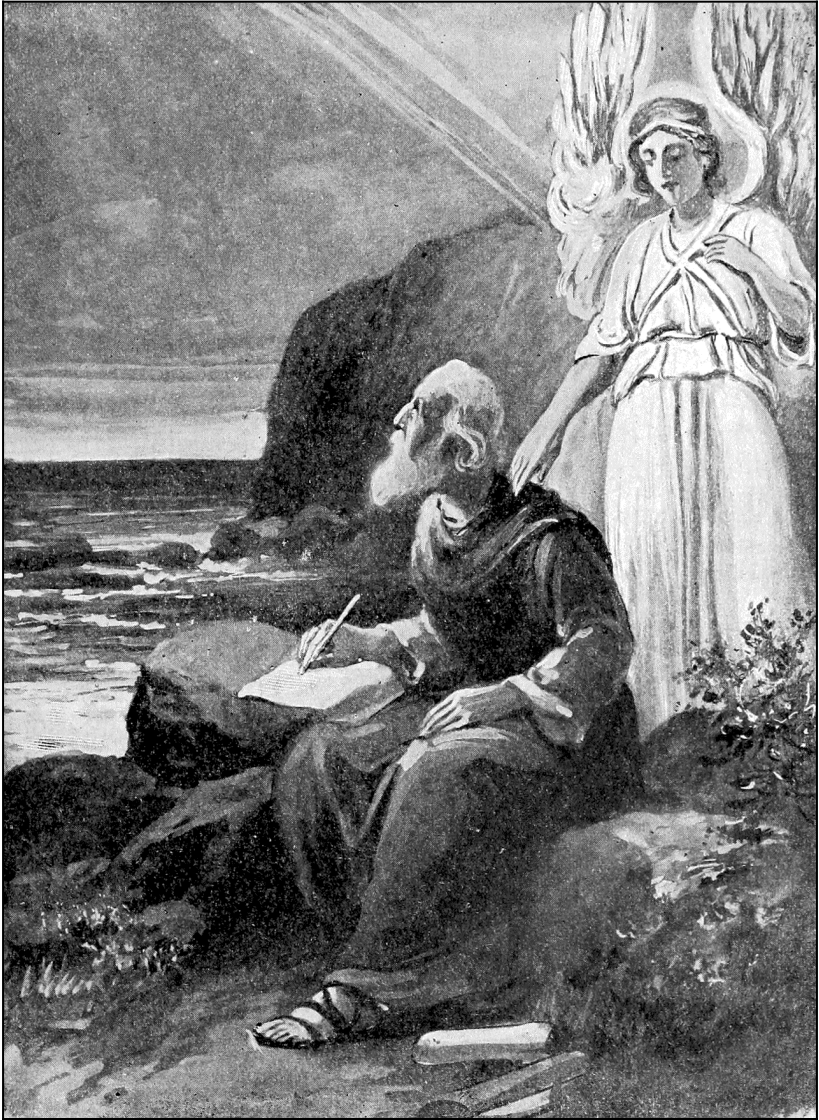
Romans 13

¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand...

May the Lord set forth in an earthen vessel the preciousness of this His treasure; may the Lord prosper the undertaking of His servant; may the Lord bless it to His native land, and to His mother-church! God hear this prayer, and answer it for His glorious Name's sake.

THANKSGIVING

I THANK THEE, LORD, THAT THOU HAST TAUGHT MY SOUL,
LOW LYING AT THY FEET, TO RISE AGAIN
IN MAJESTY OF TRUTH. HER NAKEDNESS
THOU HAST ADORN'D WITH ROBES OF HEAVENLY LIGHT;
HER BLEAR-EYED, SICKLY VISION PURGED WITH SALVE,
WHICH COST THE PRICE OF THY MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD!
AND NOW, BEHOLD, FAR LOOKING THROUGH THE DARK
AND DEPTH OF FUTURE TIMES, I CAN DESCRIBE
THE ENDS AND PURPOSES OF GOD; AND TELL
UNTO THY CHURCH GLAD TIDINGS OF THYSELF.
OH, WHAT A WRETCH WERE I, THUS HIGH ADVANCED
FROM GROVELING IN THE DUST, DID I REFRAIN
MY LIPS FROM SERVING THEE, MY KING, MY GOD!
I THANK THEE, LORD: MY LORD, I GIVE THEE THANKS.



Christ's Angel comes to show John the Revelation
(Story of the Seer of Patmos, 1905)

