

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

BOOK 3

REVELATION 1:9-20

CHRIST
THE UNIVERSAL HEAD
AND
BISHOP OF THE CHURCH

EDWARD IRVING

1831



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REVELATION 1:9-20

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THE UNIVERSAL HEAD
AND
BISHOP OF THE CHURCH**

EDWARD IRVING

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

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Revelation 1

⁹ I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

¹¹ Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

¹² And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

¹³ And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

¹⁴ His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

¹⁶ And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

¹⁸ I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.

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.



I. THE VISION

THE PLACE AND CONDITION

WE ARE now come, in the progress of our exposition, to the first of those symbolical visions which were given to the Apostle John during his exile on the island of Patmos where he had been sent, as is believed, in the time of the Emperor Domitian:

Revelation 1

⁹ I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In this verse he designates himself as the person who bore record to (or, *witnessed*) the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And here he asserts, that for this witness he was on the island of Patmos. It seems to me that, in an age when so many testified and suffered for their testimony, the seer would not have taken this characteristic to himself unless there had been something conspicuous in the place which he occupied among the many who witnessed in the same behalf.

Now this was the case with the Apostle John, and with no other disciple in those times. For other than writing the gospel of the Word of God, and the epistle of the true witness of Jesus Christ—which, doubtless, contained the sum and substance of his preaching in the churches—he was at that time the only apostle, and perhaps the only survivor of those whom the Lord had familiarly conversed with.

As the great head, therefore, of the witnesses, he would be regarded as the great maintainer of the truth against the numerous errors which were abroad. For his zeal and forwardness in this work he incurred the notice and censure of those in power, and was banished to the island of Patmos, where he had this vision; of which Irenaeus says:

“It is not very long ago that it was seen, being but a little before our time, at the latter end of Domitian’s reign.”

To this, his persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ, he alludes in these words:

Revelation 1

⁹ Who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

He was their brother and companion in tribulation, inasmuch as he was enduring, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, exile in a lonely island—for Patmos was one of those islands where the Roman emperors used to confine offenders. He was their brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as he endured these afflictions for the hope of that kingdom to come, which he patiently waited for. This expression of their co-fraternity, this badge of their persecuted order, “the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,” speaks to me volumes, as to that which was considered in those times to be the essence of the gospel.

Men speak in these times very much concerning essentials and non-essentials. What then were the essentials of the apostle’s day? They were to suffer for the testimony of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and patiently to wait for it. These were the characteristics of a brother and companion in Christ. But in this age of the Church it is the common badge to be silent concerning the kingdom, and not to be in waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ. These have changed place, from being the great essentials, to be the non-essentials of the preaching of a minister and the faith of a believer.

But this can never be, that the Church of Christ should change their faith and hope. It is only the world which has taken the name of the Church. But those of the true Church will still be found full of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. And for the fullness of that faith they will be doomed, as heretofore, to suffer persecution. Blessed is every one who can say,

“I am a brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.”

THE TIME

Having thus given the place and condition in which he received the vision, he next gives us the time:

Revelation 1

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...

This expression, *the Lord’s day*, shows us, that derived by the authority of the apostles, it is likely, from the higher authority of Christ himself, and perhaps communicated during those forty days after His passion in which He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, one day had been set apart under the name of the Lord’s day: with the peculiar use of which the Christian churches must have been well acquainted, else it would not thus familiarly have been referred to as a note of time.

And in confirmation of this, it appears that it was the custom of the Christians to...

Acts 20

⁷ ...come together upon the first day of the week,

...for certain holy observances. Moreover, Pliny, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan, written not many years after the death of the Apostle John, declares that it was their custom to meet together on a set day. And Justin Martyr, who wrote within forty years of the same event, declares that it was the custom in his time for the churches to assemble on the first day of the week for the same holy occupations which we still observe.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the appointment of the first day of the week, as the day of our Lord’s resurrection, to be observed for holy and pious purposes, has the sanction and authority of the Church from the times of the apostles.¹

¹ Editor’s note: see [Appendix A](#) for a discussion of Edward Irving’s comments regarding “the Lord’s Day.”

And as the Scripture has no higher authority than the inspiration of the same apostles, and the continual reception of the same Church, we may fairly place the Christian institution of the Lord's day upon the same high authority.

If now anyone inquire why the observation of the Jewish Sabbath has ceased, we answer: it ceased with the other ordinances of the law, when the substance of these shadows was come in Christ. And if it be asked, what the substance of the Sabbath is, I answer, the sabbatism of the millennial rest which remains for the people of God.

This we hold by faith; into this we are baptized. By our baptism the interval is over-leaped; we are supposed to be already risen, and living a super-resurrection or millennial life. A Christian, therefore, inasmuch as he lives not by sight, but by faith; inasmuch as his fleshly body is put to death, and his spiritual body raised with Christ, is regarded by God as keeping a sabbath.

The distinction in time between holy and unholy, as in meats and everything else, has been done away, and his work and his rest are equally holy, being done in faith. So that for him to keep the Jewish Sabbath were indeed to dishonor the liberty of Christ, and to introduce a distinction of time, which sanctifies a part at the expense of desecrating the other part.

The same evil effect will be produced if we connect the Jewish idea of consecration with the Lord's day: it will desecrate the other six, as if they were not days of the light of faith as well as the first.

It rests for its authority upon apostolical sanction, and the traditional approbation of the Church; and for its uses, it has the same high sanction. And believing, as I do, in the Holy Catholic Church, I receive its traditions as authoritative, when they do not contradict any declaration of holy Scripture; which we know is inspired by the Holy Ghost. And therefore, whatever is contrary thereto cannot claim for itself the same weight, for the Holy Ghost is nothing contrary to itself.

IN THE SPIRIT

On the Lord's day then, when it is to be believed that the apostle's mind was elevated with the remembrance of the glorious resurrection of the Lord, which sealed the certainty of our resurrection to an inheritance of rest; on this day, which carries the hope of a Christian continually forward to the millennial rest, when every creature of God will enjoy the long expected Sabbath: the holy seer—dwelling apart, haply, in some solitude of Patmos, or in some dungeon immured—was visited with this glorious succession of visions, some on earth, and some in heaven; whose overpowering splendor that he might endure, whose great variety that he might faithfully remember and record, whose various places of representation that he might be transported to, he is first transformed into that condition or mode of human existence which is called being “in the Spirit.”

What this is, I take it, we must feel, in order either to understand or to describe it. It was that state into which Ezekiel was brought in order to fit him for his visions and revelations of the Lord:

Ezekiel 2

² And the spirit entered into me when he spoke unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spoke unto me.

Ezekiel 3

²⁴ Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spoke with me, and said unto me, Go, shut yourself within your house.

And here again, I remark the similarity between Ezekiel and John; for I do not remember any other of the prophets of whom this is affirmed. It is the state, also, in which Paul seems to have been when he had visions and revelations of the Lord, and

2 Corinthians 12

⁴ ...was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [or, *possible*] for a man to utter.

And this state he describes to have been such a state of ecstasy, or rapture, as to have deprived him of the encumbrance, and almost of the consciousness, of a body; for twice over he says:

2 Corinthians 12

² ...whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows...

³ ...whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;

Whatever it was, it was no doubt necessary for the sustaining of that communion to which they were called; not for impression's sake, but for utility's sake, to enable them to know and to record the things which Christ wished through them to communicate to the Church.

If I might venture an idea of my own upon this subject, it would be that in all these instances, and in that of Philip, who was translated from place to place, and in every other instance in holy Scripture recorded, we have no more than properties portrayed of that spiritual body which we shall receive in the resurrection; and which shall be capable of bearing us about from place to place, and of sustaining all communion of sight and intelligence which it pleases the eternal Godhead through Christ to reveal to mortals.

So that, as the things revealed concern the future condition of the raised saints, so the circumstances of receiving them fore-shows the powers of that resurrection-body, of that living being which we shall then enjoy. In one word, what the transfiguration was to Christ's future being and glory (a foretaste and an instance of it), such were those spiritual states and conditions to the saints who enjoyed them.

A GREAT VOICE

Being thus prepared for receiving and sustaining the divine communications, John heard behind him:

Revelation 1

¹⁰ ...a great voice, as of a trumpet,

¹¹ Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last:

⁸ I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending...which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

And with sublime announcement came, in the same trumpet voice, this solemn command:

¹¹ What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

This announcement and command were made as with the voice of a trumpet; but the voice with which He afterwards spoke is said to be...

¹⁵ ...as the sound of many waters.

In like manner, when the seer was transported to heaven, he was summoned there by a voice:

Revelation 4

¹ ...and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me;

So, also, when the Lord broke silence from the top of Sinai it was with the...

Exodus 19

¹⁶ ...voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled.

And when at length the silence of the tomb shall be broken at the advent of Christ, it shall be with...

1 Thessalonians 4

¹⁶ ...the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:

1 Corinthians 15

⁵² ...at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

And when the service of the temple opened in the morning, it was with the sound of the trumpet: then the great door was

opened, and the service proceeded. So, likewise, when the year of Jubilee commenced, it was ushered in with the sounding of the silver trumpet. The people were mustered in their camp by the sound of the trumpet; and thus also were alarms given to the host.

The trumpet, therefore, is well used in this vision, both as breaking the silence of the Church, and calling it to still higher revelations; and likewise as introducing our Lord in the character of High Priest, which we shall find He assumes to himself in this vision.

With respect to the style in which He announces himself, we have nothing to add to the large exposition which we gave of it in our last lecture, where we delivered it as our judgment, that the eighth verse was the proper announcement of Him who speaks with the trumpet voice; and that the first clause of the eleventh verse, if it be a part of the original text, is only a repetition for the connection's sake. Most likely it was introduced by some transcriber, and may have been first inserted in the margin, to show the continuity which had been interrupted by the ninth verse, and afterwards drawn into the text itself.

But as our object is to use the authorized text and version both, though we take the advantage of whatever light has been cast upon either by critics and commentators, we would now take up the exposition of the name, "the First and the Last," did it not occur in another part of our text (verse 8) and in a connection which gives it still more interest; and, therefore, without adding anything in this place to what has been said in Book 2² upon the style of the annunciation, we come to the injunction laid upon the apostle,

A BOOK FOR ALL CHURCHES

Revelation 1

¹¹ What you see, write in a book.

² *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 2, "Christ Revealed by Names," Chapter: "Names of Christ," Section: "Beginning and Ending."

The whole Apocalypse is here expressed by the words “what you see” which confirms me the more in my interpretation of the second verse, as referring, not to this book at all, but to the former writings of the apostle; identifying him with John the apostle, and nullifying the vague and unfounded speculations which have been gone into, to mystify the authority of the book, by casting doubts upon the person of its author.

This injunction to write what he was about to see in a book, and send it to the churches, stamps the matter of this prophecy with an importance beyond that of any other portion of Scripture. In this provision, that no part of it should be lost, there is not only a security that no part of it would be suffered to be lost, but there is also an exquisite value given to every jot and tittle of what was seen.

And what a commendation of it to the churches, that by special injunction of Christ the seer should be commanded to write it fairly out, and for security’s sake, send it, not to one, but to seven Christian churches!

Why these seven churches should have been chosen, in preference to all others then existing, we can see no other reason than that which is mentioned in our former lectures: they were found in such various conditions as to afford excellent instances for the counsel, reproof, consolation, and other attributes and functions of the common Bishop; so that, when He should have given His charge to each, that seven-fold charge should present a complete charge to all the ministers of all the churches in all time to come, and contain:

- A complete body of principles and rules for the regulation of the Church, and
- A complete picture of our Bishop’s care, and
- A full and sufficient warning of our various temptations, and also
- A complete exhibition of the manner in which we must be delivered out of them.

Much have I thought upon the various theories which have been given of these seven churches, as if they were symbolical of seven successive states of the Christian Church, or as if they represented seven integral portions of the Christian Church. But all such hypotheses I have come to reject, not as erroneous in their principle, but limited in the application of the principle.

Universality and completeness is doubtless the mystery of the number seven, whether applied to churches, or to spirits, or to seals, or to trumpets, or to vials; and when applied to the Church, it is beyond a doubt the universal Church, that is intended. So far from objecting to this symbolical use of the number seven, upon which these hypotheses are founded, I object to the hypotheses because they do not fully express the symbol.

If succession, indeed, had been a part of the vision, there might have been a ground for laying out that succession in seven parts; but from this we are expressly prevented, by having given to it the completest unity in respect to time which can be given; by its being made the time present, the *now* of the Apocalypse, and containing the things which are, in contradistinction from the rest of the book, which contains the things which must be *hereafter*.³ It is a universality therefore also in respect of time; which is not to be obtained by a succession, but by a universal present; a *now*, extended over all the duration of the Church.

A specialty of application it had, no doubt, to those seven churches, as every prophecy has to some event therein predicted. But as no prophecy is thereby made of any private interpretation, so these seven epistles are not the less universally applicable because they are specially appropriate.

Moreover, though they have a special application in time, as we shall show beyond question, to the season of the persecutions of the Church under paganism, which preceded the exaltation of Christianity to become a national institution in the days of Constantine; yet are they not by that specialty of application in re-

³ *Revelation* 1:19; 4:1.

spect of time the less to be used as the great document of our Bishop's mind unto all His churches in all times, till He shall come again.

It is the Bishop's charge to His *one* Church, in many several places subsisting, and of many several members composed. Such is our idea of this vision, which we shall have occasion to explain more fully as we proceed.

A COMPLETE REVELATION OF CHRIST

After this introductory annunciation of himself and charge unto His minister, we have the person of Christ exhibited to us in such a guise as in all points to befit the character in which He appears and acts. The form, and figure, and features, which He assumes at the head of each vision, are not for sublime effect, but for much information and exact teaching assumed. Whether as:

- A robed Priest, with various peculiar and striking additions to His person, as in this vision;
- A Lamb slain, yet living still, as in the next vision, (chapter 4)
- The mighty Angel with the golden censer ministering the prayers of saints, and shedding down fire on the earth;
- The Angel clothed with the rainbow coming to take possession;
- The Word of God riding forth from heaven against His enemies;

—or in whatever other form or figure Jesus is represented in this book, the representation is always chosen with divine discernment, and adapted with divine wisdom to the part which He has to perform, to the revelation of himself which He is about to make.

Most necessary it is, therefore, with the greatest pains to examine and to decipher the complex figure which is presented in the verses that now come under exposition. In doing which there is neither need for great ingenuity, nor yet for great learning, but

simply for good sense, with large knowledge and honest faith in Scripture.

Here, then, is the description of that scene which the apostle beheld when He had turned round to see by whom that majestic voice was uttered with a trumpet note:

Revelation 1

⁸ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

¹² And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

¹³ And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

¹⁴ His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

¹⁶ And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.

Sublime and appalling as such a sight must have been, it was not assumed, as has been said, either for sublime or terrific effect, but for fully and completely expressing the nature of that office which He was about to discharge in dictating these epistles to the churches. What that character is, we have now to learn, by perusing point by point the sight which is so carefully described to us in these verses. And first let us look at it as a whole, and then consider it in parts.

CHRIST RULING AMONG HIS CHURCH

As a whole, the vision exhibited one person, and three distinct objects, which are:

- the seven candlesticks,
- the seven stars, and

- the sharp sword going out of His mouth.

And of these objects we have an express interpretation given to the first two:

Revelation 1

²⁰ The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.

And of the third, the sharp two-edged sword, if we have not in this book so explicit an interpretation, we can yet gather it beyond a question from various parts of Scripture. Whatever symbol or mystery in these visions is not explained by a direct interpretation, is so treated, not that it might be left in the dark, or, as they say, for time to explain it; but because it needed no explanation, but might well enough be gathered from a general knowledge of Scripture language.

I am convinced in my own mind that an interpreter of the Apocalypse needs little or no apparatus of hieroglyph or symbolical learning, but simply a sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures in the original tongues, and a thorough acquaintance with the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament, and, above all, with that part of the Word of God which stands in forms and times and seasons and figures, such as the Mosaic economy, with the institutions of the Jewish state.

But as for any knowledge derived from sources other than the Scriptures, such as the use of hieroglyphics in the picture-writing of the East, I give little authority to it; believing that Scripture is the only interpreter of Scripture, and that there is a unity of language, as well as a unity of subject, from the beginning to the end of the volume.

Now, in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, it is written:

Hebrews 4

¹² For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

And in the *Epistle to the church of Pergamos*, which needed the wholesome exercise of discipline, it is said:

Revelation 2

¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come unto you quickly, and fight against you with the sword of my mouth.

And in the vision of victory, where He comes forth by His name, “The Word of God”:

Revelation 19

¹⁵ And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the sword proceeding out of the mouth signifies the word of His power, with which He will slay the wicked; as it is written:

Isaiah 11

⁴ He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

It signifies the word as a word of judgment, and not as a word of mercy. The symbol of a sharp two-edged sword cannot, without the utmost violence, be applied to the word of grace and consolation, but to the word of wrath and indignation. This is put beyond a doubt by the use of that sword which is made in the last verse of the nineteenth chapter of this book:

Revelation 19

²¹ The remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Taking this for the interpretation of the sword, and recalling the interpretation of the candlesticks and the stars, what have we in that group of objects of which the first vision is composed? We have the Son of man standing in the midst of His churches, holding in His right hand the ministers of His churches, and speaking from His mouth words which shall pierce unto the quick, and divide asunder between soul and spirit, between joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Here, now, are three distinct ideas:

1. The idea of episcopacy, oversight, or supervision, suggested by the person of the Son of man standing in the midst of the golden candlesticks;
2. The idea of preservation and action, suggested by His holding the stars in His right hand, the seat of safety and the instrument of power; and
3. The idea of pruning discipline, and even entire rooting out, expressed by the sword with two edges proceeding out of His mouth.

This much we gather from the general and combined aspect of that which the apostle saw: that it represents Christ in the midst of the churches, watching over them as a good Shepherd, as their great Head and Bishop; and serving himself herein with the instrumentality of their angels or ministers, whom He holds in His right hand; threatening also severity, and having the intention and the means, if need be, of utter destruction.

It is most worthy of observation that in this symbol of the Church universal, with all its ministers (for so much have we seen imported in the number seven), there is only one Person—the person of the Son of man—and all the rest are symbolized by things. It is not, as in the next vision, where the Church is represented by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures; for here the ministers are symbolized by stars, and the churches by candlesticks. They are but adjuncts of His one person, circumstances for setting forth His pastoral office. He is the one Life, the only Liver, in the whole. Both ministers and people are but earthen vessels, in which He puts the glory of His great name. We rise into the dignity of persons only in virtue of our conjunction with Him. We are but the materials of His one body.

From looking, therefore, at the vision as one thing, we gather that it is the vision of Jesus Christ, the universal and only Bishop of His Church, and intended to show forth the use He makes of us the ministers, and the care He takes of you the people.

THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS

Let us now take up the objects in order, and consider them apart. The first thing which the seer beheld was the candlesticks:

Revelation 1

¹² And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

²⁰ ...and the seven candlesticks...are the seven churches.

In all languages truth and knowledge are likened to light; and that by which truth is propagated or sustained is frequently called the lamp of truth—the torch of truth. In the Old Testament such expressions as the following are frequent to characterize the word of God:

Psalm 119

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

The Psalmist prays:

Psalm 18

²⁸ For You will light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

These floating expressions of likeness were stamped with divine authority, and combined into a symbol, at the institution of the Mosaic economy which prefigured the good things to come with Christ. For while the inmost place of the sanctuary which was not yet open, and only entered once a year, in promise that it should be opened, was lighted with the light of the glory of God, which shone forth from between the cherubim, the holy place into which the priests did continually minister was lighted by a lamp or candlestick consisting of six branches, whereof each contained a light, with a seventh in the center.

This candlestick was fed with oil of a consecrated kind, and trimmed by holy hands. It stood in the holy place where none but priests might enter. It was an emblem of the Church which then was, as the seven candlesticks in our text is an emblem of the many Christian churches which now are.

In the holy place there was, besides, the table of shew-bread, of which the priests alone might eat. This was the symbol of our

Lord's offered body, upon which the royal priesthood of His Church are supported. The candlestick was also the symbol of the Church; His body the fullness of the wisdom of God, giving light unto the world; as it is written,

Matthew 5

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

Christ says of himself,

John 8

¹² I am the light of the world: he that believes in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The Church, therefore, of enlightened men holding forth Christ's light in the midst of darkness, is the true antitype of the candlestick which stood in the holy place.

In the former dispensation the unity of the Church stood in the Jewish nation, restricted to place, and under conditions of time, and standing in the entireness and uniformity of various ceremonies and circumstances. Therefore the lamp was of one piece—one lamp.

But under the Christian dispensation, where the unity of the Church stands not in the conditions of time, place, and circumstance, but in the oneness of the sustaining Head and quickening Spirit, the symbol is not one candlestick, but seven candlesticks; having a separateness in appearance, but a unity in the one High Priest, or Bishop, the Son of man, who walks in the midst of them.

Yet though the candlestick under the former dispensation was one, it had seven burning lights: one in the center, and six upon the branches, to signify, as I take it, that out of the Jewish stem was to come forth a sevenfold or universal light (according to the power of number seven, set forth in the two former books⁴).

⁴ See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*: Book 1, "Name, Authority, Substance, and

And as the one candlestick of the tabernacle, with its seven burning lights, did signify the one Jewish Church limited to place and to nation, so the seven candlesticks, now watched over by the true High Priest, do signify the same Church with its partition-wall broken down, its handwriting of ordinances destroyed, the veil of its temple rent in twain, in order that it might embrace all nations, and all countries, without distinction of Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.

In one word, I consider the candlestick to signify the Catholic Church, made up of many parts; the one body of Christ, made up of many members, and these members gathered into several individual churches: so that this symbol of the seven candlesticks does not express mere unity, but a unity made up of several individuals, which are not persons, but churches. And the truth taught is that the Catholic Church under Christ was to consist of several distinct churches, which yet should be one in faith and in spirit, though different in place, in time, and in circumstance.

When, therefore, you hear from the mouths of men affecting much purity and zeal such expressions as these,

“I know no Church of England, nor of Scotland, but only one Church of Christ,”

You do so far forth hear a confession of their ignorance: for we are taught that Christ’s Church was to subsist in several individual churches. I do not say how much malice and contempt of authority may be contained under this speech, which I so often hear; but this I know, that it contains a direct disavowal or entire ignorance of the thing conveyed by this symbol of seven distinct candlesticks.

It is a mean interpretation of this grand symbol of the seven golden candlesticks, to limit its application to those seven churches of Asia then existent: whereas the substance of the epis-

Sanctions of the Book,” Chapter: “The Substance and Method of the Book,” Section: “Christ the Universal Bishop”; and Book 2, “Christ Revealed by Names,” Chapter: “The Prelude, or Overture,” Section: “The Number Seven.”

bles is, as we shall see, altogether universal as to persons and as to time; ranging onward through all time, until He come who shall proclaim that time shall be no more, and His eternal kingdom begun.

But, while this limitation of the symbol to the then condition of the seven Asiatic churches is narrow and mean, it is perfectly true so far as it goes, seeing they were true specimens of Christian churches, and did actually exhibit those varieties of condition to which Christian churches should be liable, standing also in need of those instructions which they received, and actually sustaining those judgments that were threatened, or actually receiving those promises which were held out and therefore forming the basis of fact, which verifies and authenticates all the lessons taught. So that to apply the lessons to these churches is altogether right, but to limit them thereto is altogether wrong.

Yet this is nothing so much to be blamed as is the method of those who would throw the matter of fact altogether out of the question, and hunt for allegorical interpretations of the seven names, and then endeavor to substantiate these allegories by finding seven successive conditions of the Church answerable thereto; which is, not only to let in first the refinements and subtleties of the fancy, and next, the accommodations of the ingenuity of man, but likewise to destroy the very character of the prophecy, which, unless it rest upon some basis of fact then present or coming into being, altogether loses the nature of certain prophecy, and passes into the nature of a mystery or morality.

But the true view, of which these two are the disjointed parts, consists in regarding all that is said of these seven churches as most veritable matters of fact upon which the great High Priest of our profession, the universal Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, builds a superstructure of commendation, counsel, reproof, instruction, promise, doctrine, discipline, and laws, unto His universal Church, in all times subsisting, until the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and His kingdom shall be come.

If, now, any one inquire into that which constitutes the individuality of a Church, I seek my answer in the consideration of the seven churches before us, of which

- One was in Ephesus, the metropolis of proconsular Asia;
- Another in Smyrna, a city of great celebrity both then and now;
- Another in Pergamos, the metropolis of Mysia, and the seat of the Attalian king;
- Another in Sardis, the renowned capital of Croesus, and the Lydian king;
- Another in Philadelphia, a city still abiding in considerable dignity;
- And the last in Laodicea, of which the ruins testify its former grandeur, and God's severity upon its impenitence.

These seven churches therefore, being all constituted in different cities of the same Roman kingdom (for all Asia within the Euphrates had become a Roman province a full century before this time), have their distinctness not from diversity of civil government or kingdoms, but simply from diversity of place. For it is not to be believed that at this early time there had crept in any diversity of doctrine, or discipline, or government, or forms of worship. Mere diversity of place, therefore, constitutes the individuality of a Church. The language is, *the Church in Ephesus, the Church in Smyrna, &c.* It is also to be observed, that the saints in each of these cities are considered as constituting one Church.

Over these churches there was one person who presided in the word and the doctrine, and likewise in the discipline, to whom is given the name Angel. And what was his proper dignity and preferment above the rest of the Church, best appears from considering the responsible style in which he is addressed by the universal bishop in the epistles themselves.

No mention is made in these epistles of the elders of the churches, though we know from the charge given to them, in *Acts 20*, by Paul, that there were several in the Church of Ephesus. And we know from the charges given to Timothy and Titus,

that there ought to be several in every Church, and therefore we are sure there were several in every one of those churches here addressed.

As there was one angel or minister of the word in those several churches whom the Lord regards as the responsible person, we conclude that in order to the being of a Church in any place, there must of necessity be a minister of the word to constitute it by word and sacrament. And seeing that the offices of elder and deacon are not here mentioned, we ought to conclude that theirs is a dignity emanating from the former, and seen represented therein.

As the mayor of a corporation represents the whole members and office-bearers thereof in the presence of the king, so the angels of the churches are looked upon as representing the whole established government of that Church, and is spoken to by Christ in that capacity.

However, we are not to suppose that He was the only responsible office-bearer in the Church, the only delegate of the great Head, because He is the only one mentioned. For this would be to contradict the known fact with respect to the Church of Ephesus, and the known ordinance with respect to all the churches, that they were furnished with both elders and deacons.

But this much we may distinctly conclude from the fact of the angel being the only person mentioned, that without such an office-bearer no Christian body can be spoken to as a Church, and likewise that from Him as the Head, the authority of the elders and deacons is derived. He is the one who ordains or sets them in their stations. They are not necessary to the existence of a Church, but they are good for its right government. Whereas an angel or minister of the word and the sealing ordinances is necessary to the existence of a Church in any place.

Moreover, where a Church in any place became more numerous than that they could assemble under the preaching of one ministry, or sit down together at one communion table, and it became necessary to divide it into several parts for the ends of worship and communion, then no elder might, as an elder, or presbyter, or

priest, take upon himself to minister word or sacraments to such divisions of the flock upon the pain of excommunication to himself and all that should adhere to him. So sacred by the apostolical canons, and indeed all the primitive canons of the Church, was the distinction between a minister of the word and sacraments, and an elder, presbyter, or bishop, and overseer of the flock.

Nor was it competent to any minister of the word and sacraments to delegate that duty to any one who was not thereto set apart in the same manner as he himself had been. The selection of a person to take upon himself the ministry of the word, rested with those who already possessed that gift and office.

He must be examined and tried of his knowledge and soundness in the faith, and his ability to utter by preaching the mind of Christ Jesus. They must seek for a person whom God had thus endowed, whom His Spirit in the diversity of dispensations had furnished with this gift; and such a one being found and proved by the ministers of the word, might with the assent of the people be set over them by the laying on of hands. And this done, a new Church is thereby constituted, which may indeed acknowledge a certain obligation, and pay a certain deference to the Church from which it came not by schism, but by consent, and for edification. But it may not on any account give up its own integrity as a Church, which now it has in the dignity of its minister.

Then it will become him to ordain elders and deacons from such of the flock as he shall find to possess the gifts appropriate to these offices, and thus from one Church in Ephesus many churches will in the progress of the truth naturally arise. At the time that these epistles were written, this had not come to pass in those seven cities, and therefore one angel is spoken to as presiding over word and doctrine in each.

But this is only an accidental circumstance, and not a substantial matter; for if, as I have argued, and shall show more fully when I come to treat of the stars or angels of the churches, the dignity of an angel stands in the ministry of the word and sacra-

ments, every one who administers these has a dignity, and is spoken to as the head of a Church.

And let every one assure himself who reads these words, that if he be ordained to minister the word and sacraments by the Church, he is, in the eye of the Head of the Church, as much His vicegerent over that Church for ecclesiastical affairs, as a king is vicegerent over his kingdom for civil affairs, or as the mayor of a free town is vicegerent for Christ over that community.

This is a great point of doctrine, to ascertain what constitutes the individuality of a Church; and therefore I have been at the more pains to ascertain it from the context. The conclusion is, that the Church of Scotland, or the Church of England, has as many integral churches as she has ordained ministers over appointed flocks. Not according to the number of the presbyteries in the former, or bishoprics in the latter, but according to the number of pulpits for preaching the word, and of communion tables for administering the sacraments.

What is the precise place and office of the presbytery or prelate, is another question, which is not before us. But there arises the inquiry,

“And how is the unity of these several individual churches to be maintained?”

For, as we have argued, the mystery of the number seven is not manifoldness merely, but manifoldness in unity. To have shown therefore what constitutes the individuality of a Church, is only to have unfolded half the mystery, and we now come to speak of the unity of these several parts.

“I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and the communion of saints,”

—is one of the articles of the Apostles’ Creed, and occupies the very next place therein to the articles of the faith of the blessed Trinity; and deservedly so. It stands before the forgiveness of sins, which, in these selfish days, has come to absorb almost the whole creed.

The Catholic Church is the universal Church; universal as respects time, place, and persons. And to have added locality, as the Romanists do, is to express a contradiction in terms. They say *Roman* Catholic Church: inasmuch as it is *Roman*, it is not *catholic*; inasmuch as it is *catholic*, it is not *Roman*.

The true Catholic Church is not the saints on earth only, but likewise the saints in glory; and not these two divisions only, but also the saints that are to be; who are one in the Father's purpose of election, one in the membership of Christ's body, one in the enjoyment of the Holy Ghost, one in the first resurrection, and one in the occupation of the throne of Christ. To this one Catholic Universal Church these epistles are addressed; and instead of being addressed to one as the mother, and the rest as the children, they are addressed to all the seven co-ordinate and co-equal.

There is, indeed, a mother in the Apocalypse; but it is the mother of harlots, Babylon the Great, that great city which rules over the kings of the earth. And no such city is, or ever has been, save old Rome, since the days that the apostle wrote.

No; the Christian churches here addressed are co-ordinate and co-equal; and their unity stands not in the metropolitan usurpation of one, and the provincial diminution of the rest, but it stands in the unity of the common head. These seven candlesticks had no unity in themselves. Seen alone, they would have been seven distinct objects. But with Christ in the midst of them, they have a unity as His charge, and His possession. And because His episcopal charge and lordly possession includes all churches, we know that in these seven all are contained.

If, then, there be such a viceregal dignity in the angel of a Church, as we have argued in the above remarks, and such a separate independent standing co-equal and coordinate in his parish, diocese, or congregation, how shall the unity be preserved without sacrificing the separate completeness of each Church within itself? This is the great question, which we would now endeavor to bring to a conclusion.

It cannot as we have already shown, be in the way of inclusion, for then the distinctness and co-equality would be swallowed up. If not in the way of inclusion (as the mystery of iniquity falsified), then it must be by confederation under the common head. Two communities acknowledging one head, to whom they are in all things obedient, cannot be separated among themselves. In spite of diversity of place, and diversity of tongue, and all other diversities, they will come, under the same formative principle of life to feel and to maintain a unity with one another; a *unity*, though not a *uniformity*.

That mother of harlots would have *uniformity* of language, *uniformity* of dress, *uniformity* of rite and ceremony. And the same craving for uniformity wrought havoc first in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and next in the Episcopal Church of England, at the hands of one another, and has left them in an unfriendly and unbrotherly attitude to one another.

Uniformity of appearance, or even of gift, is not of the essence of unity. The one formative life of the body does not show itself in making all the members *uniform* in shape, or in use, but, contrariwise, all *diverse*. And this diversity it is which shows the unity of the life.

The life is proved not to be in the hand, by finding that it is also in the foot; not to be in the eye, by finding that it is also in the ear. But if the life exhibited itself always in one form, and in one use, then should I be led to suppose that the life lay in this visible form and particular use. And accordingly where uniformity is absolutely insisted on, the life is lost in the form, the spirit in the letter.

Not, therefore, I argue, in uniformity will the unity show itself, but rather in a diversity, all tending to the observance and obedience of the same head. Therefore has it been ever held by the soundest and wisest divines, that forms and ceremonies may, and ought to change, without changing the substance of obedience, or introducing schism into the Church. Any number, therefore, of churches acknowledging the common headship of Christ, will ap-

proach more and more near unto a unity of doctrine, government, and discipline, without any outward striving after uniformity of rites and ceremonies.

When questions arise, as in the Church of Antioch, they will submit them to the ministers and elders of the churches round, who meeting together in their co-ordinate and co-equal capacities, will take measures to remedy the evil. When the churches are deprived of their ministers, they will seek to the ministers around in whom is the gift to find one who may stand in the room of him whom they have lost. And thus by degrees out of the necessary wants of the churches, if they be regarded as co-ordinate and co-equal, must Presbyterian confederation arise.

But this is not an accidental or conventional arrangement, but necessary to the existence of the churches. For there being one minister of the word in each, possessed of that dignity which I have explained above, who shall be the judges of one fit to occupy the same room, but those who are conscious of the gift within themselves, and accustomed to know its manifestations?

Without a continual confederation therefore of the ministers seeking out men in whom the Holy Ghost is, and appointing such to make probation of their gifts among the churches, it is clear that the churches would soon be found without ministers. And whether I look at the primitive Church, or, farther down the stream, at the discipline of the Culdees, or at the foundations of our colleges and universities, I see this work, of seeking for gifted and called persons, to have been a principal object with the governors of the Church.

Moreover, whatever may be said of the right of the people to call their minister, and I am inclined to regard this as essential, still it belongs to those who are already in possession of the gift and calling, to discern in whom that gift is found, and to set him solemnly apart by the laying on of hands, when he has received his call.

It is not only natural, but even necessary to the continuance of the Church, that there should be confederations of the ministers

for ministerial purposes. And as in the council of Jerusalem for questions concerning discipline, elders should be conjoined with them in this common cause.

This presbytery may appoint over itself a permanent superintendent, or choose him for the occasion as their president, or proceed in any other way which they may judge best for the management of the matters in hand. But such a superintendent does not thereby subordinate to himself in any way the other ministers of the word, whose indefeasible right to represent Christ stands in his ministry of the word and sacraments, which are the symbols of his vicegerency. Yet did this superintendent or moderator early attain to himself the dignity of metropolitan, which at length issued in the assumption of the Papacy.

When thus presbyteries are formed with their permanent or movable moderator, it is not necessary nor to be desired that in everything they should seek or practice uniformity; and I believe if they give themselves to the Lord in this matter, he will not work among them uniformity, but accommodate each to the condition of the place where it is seated, making it able and vigilant to meet the form of temptation which besets the people there, and conforming it to that mode of discipline which may best serve the ends of God's special dealings with the Church in that particular province.

The spirit of uniformity I regard as the greatest antagonist to the spirit of unity. Uniformity is unity turned into an idol.

So far indeed do I carry this principle of unity as perceived in diversity, that with all the existing differences between the Churches of Scotland and England, I can maintain in my heart, and do maintain a unity of love and brotherhood without losing one jot of my Presbyterian preferences. And the same can I say of every reformed Church as constituted in their standards, among whom when any great vital question arises, the means of preserving the unity is by a general synod or ecumenical council.

The council of Trent has put the Roman Church out of the pale of Christendom. He that acknowledges that council,

1 Corinthians 16

²² ...let him be Anathema Maranatha.

But churches which acknowledge it not, though not Protestant, however far gone in corruption, I can still look upon with brotherly regards. But those which adhere to the most damnable decrees of that council, I utterly reject from the communion of the Christian Church, until they shall have purged themselves from that abomination.

But still this matter is not yet told out. What I have said concerning the preservation of unity, applies only to the preservation of unity in place. I have shown the natural methods by which the churches will come to work together as one through their observance and dependence on the one common Head. But the true Catholic Church is not merely the Church in all places subsisting at one time, but in all places, subsisting in all times, generations, and ages, from the former to the latter coming of the Lord. And therefore it is of necessity that there should be a provision for preserving the unity of the Church against the separation of times, generations, and ages, a provision to connect generation with generation, as well as to connect Church with Church.

And this is provided by means of regular succession in the ministers, who are the constituent heads of a congregation. By regular succession, I mean ordination from the hands of those who already possess the prerogative of ministering the word and the ordinances. These in the persons of the apostles had the dignity from Christ, and they transmitted it to others, and so it passed downward with a continual recognition of the principle in the Church, that the right could not be derived from any other source but those who already possessed it.

At the Reformation, this principle was a little shaken in the Church of Scotland; but it soon recovered itself, and was fully recognized in the Second Book of Discipline, which is the more perfect form of our government.

There is a question, in whom the right of ordination lies: whether in those ministers called diocesan bishops and prelates,

or in the parish priests and ministers of the word. This question, our former remarks on this vision have, I think, set at rest. If the dignity of an angel stands in the ministry of the word and ordinances, then he who actually has this function is, and must be, the judge of him who ought to have it.

And accordingly in the Church of England the parish priest lays on his hand in ordination along with the bishop; and, I maintain, is co-equal in that act with the bishop, who has it only in right of his being a minister of the word and the sacraments.

In our Church, through all ages thereof, excepting only the two centuries in which we proved the dark oppression of the Papacy, the act of ordination was in no diocesan bishop, but in those who ministered the word and sacraments, and who formed the little Culdee College or Presbytery of the neighborhood. They set a man over any particular flock, or sent him out on any particular mission, by the laying on of hands.

And from the first times of the Church it was so. Ordination never stood in one person, but in two or three: and I hold that the characteristic of that person in whom it stood was the preaching of the word and the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is not Church-of-Scotland doctrine; I hold it to be the doctrine of the true Catholic Church, of Scripture, and of reason itself.

Ordination at the hands of those who already possess the office of ministers, is that which continues the unity of the Church against the disadvantages of time, as mutual confederation is that which maintains it against the disadvantages of place. By what ministers this act should be done is not material to the essence of it, so that there be two or three. But it has always been deemed by the Church convenient, that it should be by the ministers of the bounds, with the consent of, at least without any objections from, the ministers of the province.

The Church has always looked upon this as a thing which should not be done in a corner, but with great publicity, and likewise with great deliberation; for it is the life-continuing act of the

Church, in which should be embodied everything symbolical of and necessary for unity.

The unity in place is preserved by its being done by the ministers of the Presbytery; in the Church of England, by the bishop and his priests; but if there were any hindrance to other ministers taking a part, then the unity of the Church in place would not be preserved, and therefore this is carefully avoided.

All ministers of the word present, may, and ought to lay their hands upon the head of him whom they would ordain. This union of their right hands signifies the oneness of the rulers of the Church. Their lack of a single head signifies that the great Head is still invisible, and will continue so all the days of the Church, until the kingdom. Their uniting without a visible head to install another, commonly one of another generation, over the flock, signifies the unity of the Church in time. The union of the people to call one whom the ministry thus searches into and places over them, signifies both the unity of the members and their subjection to their rulers.

But, besides all this, there is a thing still wanting, which is the acknowledgment of the gift to the Holy Ghost; namely, that the qualification depends not on the calling of the people, nor yet upon the approbation of the ministry and their authorizing of him, but reaches higher and acknowledged the invisible work of Christ, the Head, by the invisible Spirit.

Now this, which is most necessary to prevent the whole of the apparatus of the Church from becoming a great idol, is beautifully provided for, not only by the questions put to the person before ordination, but by this invariable rule of our Church, that anterior to the act of ordination, years perhaps, certainly months, the person ordained shall have been tried, as to his gifts of preaching, and, after satisfactory evidence of his having the gift, been licensed to preach the gospel, as a probationer among the churches, unto the end that if any Church, void of a minister, should feel satisfied of his fitness to edify them, they may call him to be their pastor, as one in whom the gift has been found by the

presbytery. And he, as one gifted of God, and who has found favor of the people, may now receive the presbytery's sanction, to minister word and ordinance, and represent the great Head over that community of his members; and by this means it seems to me that in the great radical matter of continuing the ministers, our Church has been well directed of God, for which I desire to render Him humble thanks.

Now let no one think, because in laying out these great ideas I exemplify them in that Church with whose constitutions I am best acquainted, that I do this in a spirit of bigotry, or of schism. Nor have I any object in view of making proselytes. Nor have I any object in view of justifying the most noble reformation of Scotland from the abuse which has been cast upon it by many dignified men, nor have I any covert object whatsoever.

As an honest man, I am honestly interpreting the visions of the Apocalypse, and having now before me the grand symbol of the seven golden candlesticks, representing the unity in number of the Christian Church, it was absolutely necessary that I should unfold this much agitated question of the Church's unity. And how should I unfold it, but in my character of a churchman, whereof I am not ashamed; in my character of a minister of the Church of Scotland, whereof I am proud.

To every man I owe love, to every member of Christ's Church pastoral care, to every minister of Christ's Church I owe true brotherhood; and honor, above that with which I honor myself. This spirit may my God enable me ever to preserve, and especially in these days of irreverence and insubordination; which evil spirit, as I have much rebuked, so would I fain preserve myself a witness against it, and an example of the opposite spirit of love and subordination.

Having now acquitted myself of this difficult task, than which I anticipate none more so in the course of our expositions, I have one remark further to make upon the symbol itself, of Christ standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

By the raiment of the High Priest, with which the Son of man is here invested, as well as the candlesticks, it is proved that the vision is not of things within the veil of the heavens, but of things without the veil; that is, of things in this visible world. And therefore, most surely, the churches and the ministers of the churches, should look to these three chapters of Holy Writ, as containing the form, order, and stability of their constitutions until Christ shall come again.

In the next vision, on the other hand, Christ as the Lamb slain, is represented within the veil of the heavens; and inasmuch as that vision heads up the rest of the Apocalypse, until the time that the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven, we may see in this distinction that He is nearer to His churches, being in the midst of them, than He is to the nations of the earth, whom He affects in various ways from within the veil by opening the seals of that seven-sealed book. In other words, that He is nearer to us, as the Head of His Church, than He is to the world, as the Head of Providence. He has us in, beside Him, within the holy place; but then He removes himself from, by retiring into the most holy place.

And when He does come forth in the vision of trumpets to do His judgments upon them, He takes His stand at the altar, outside of the temple altogether; and from thence He scatters fire among the nations, “the Gentiles, who trod the altar, and the holy city under foot.”⁵

Here, then, is the beautiful arrangement:

- Himself in the most holy place of the heavens within the veil;
- We who are His true churches, in the holy place of the golden candlestick;
- The Gentile, or Apostate Church, without, treading down the holy city, for forty-and-two months; after which they

⁵ Revelation 11.

begin to be destroyed, and the earth to be delivered from its destroyers.

To go further into this at present would be to anticipate what belongs to a future lecture.

THE SON OF MAN

So much have we to say upon the symbol of the seven golden candlesticks, from which we now pass to the subject of the vision, “the Son of man”; for the revelation of whom all these visions are given, and whose dignity as the Head of the Church is set forth in the vision before us.

He, the Person, and the only person in the scene presented to the seer, is described with a minuteness which bespeaks a purpose, even the purpose of conveying by every contrivance of attire, and of aspect; of word, and of act; the full information of His character, as Bishop of the churches.

Revelation 1

¹³ And I saw in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man.

This expression carries us directly to the visions of Daniel, the first which he received; and being considered in an historical point of view, the most important perhaps in the whole canon of Scripture. It is the vision contained in the seventh chapter of that prophet, which may be entitled: *The Vision of the Son of man, and of His kingdom, with all His saints.*

In this vision, the oppression of the saints, and of the earth, their future kingdom, is set forth by the similitude of four beasts which in succession spoil the world, whose wicked times being ceased and determined, it is said,

Daniel 7

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven...

¹⁴ And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him...

²⁷ The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

This same title, the *Son of man*, is given to Messiah in two other parts of the Old Testament:

Psalm 8

⁴ What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?

⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶ You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; You have put all things under his feet:

Psalm 80

¹⁷ Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for yourself.

In both cases it has reference to His dominion and the dominion of His saints. But the allusion is evidently to this 7th of *Daniel*, from the expression *like the Son of man*.

He took to himself the title of Son of man during the days of His flesh, and in some places rests much doctrine upon that name. For example, in the 5th chapter of John's Gospel, where, after speaking of himself as the Word of God, and the Father's great representative, to whom the Father has given to do everything for Him, He adds these words:

John 5

²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, *because He is the Son of man*.

And accordingly when He comes to gather His elect from their graves, and to judge the quick, it is always in this character, the *Son of man*:

Matthew 24

³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall

see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Matthew 25

³¹ When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

And here also in our text, when exhibiting Him as Head of the Church, it is in the same character as *Son of man*. Why this continual thrusting forward of His humanity? The answer is that it is the dominion of the man which it is the purpose of God to exhibit. It is the ultimate fact, and the one constituting principle of creation, that man was to govern it, and show forth to it that image of God in which he was created.

Government of the creatures is not an accident of manhood, which passed from him at the fall, to be forever lost; but it is the essence of his being, the object of his creation, which Adam lost, only that the second Adam, the true Head of mankind, might regain it, and, in regaining it, show forth the depths of the grace and love of God. This is the reason why, as *Son of man*, He effects every work of the redemption of the creatures:

- His body of manhood, presented holy on the cross, redeemed us from the guilt of sin.
- By that offered body, we are nourished, fed upon His flesh and blood.
- By God in manhood, death's potentate was destroyed. He took flesh to do it.⁶
- By God in manhood, we shall be raised from the grave.
- By God in manhood, the Church is governed now.
- By God in manhood, the Church shall be brought into her dominion hereafter.

Reason this matter out as you may or can, the matter is a matter of fact, written in the Word of God, and needs no confirmation from our reasoning, nor from our reasoning can derive any detriment.

⁶ Hebrews chapter 2.

The object of man's creation was to reveal God to the creatures in a likeness, and in that representative likeness to govern them all. This object for a while was deferred by our fall, yet not hindered thereby, but rather prospered. Christ substantiates it in His own person, and is substantiating in the Church, and shall finally substantiate in the kingdom.

When I have said this, I have said all that I can say upon the subject; yea, and all that can be said; for what more is there in putting forth creation, than to communicate God's own being to the knowledge thereof, and to govern it according to God's own blessed and most harmonious law? By the fact, therefore, that Christ takes to himself, as Head of the Church, the title of the Son of man, we learn, that the Church is the preparation of the kingdom, and that He who is to possess the earth is the same who now feeds His flock like a shepherd.

And we are taught, moreover, that God acts towards His Church not otherwise than through the manhood of Christ:

- Between us and Godhead, the man Christ Jesus, does in all things mediate and intercede.
- The Father has committed all things to the Son of man, has vested His glory in the Son of man, and in Him, and by Him, who is our brother, is instructing, leading, and guiding us.
- The Holy Ghost comes not to us in the plenitude of Godhead, whose fellowship Godhead only can sustain, but comes to us all humanized, so to speak, proper to man's conditions, accommodated to man's frailties, and fitted to re-establish manhood's likeness unto Godhead in every feature.

In one word, He comes to us, through the veil of the manhood of Christ, as life flows to the unborn child through the veins of its mother.

This mystery of the Holy Ghost's subjection unto the man is little understood, and little cared for, in these times, which are too busy with printing and circulating Bibles, to think of interpreting

them. But they are the glory of the Spirit of God, and the glory of the Christ, and the glory of the Father, and explain the ineffable grace which together they have shown unto manhood.

Oh, what a grace of Godhead to His creatures thus to apprehend its fallen, mortal, corruptible substance; and by personal union therewith, to exalt it to be the mouth, the hand, the every instrument of Godhead, for doing every work of goodness and blessedness unto creation.

What a work of the Son, thus to condescend! What a work of the Father, thus to do by the condescending Son! What a work of the Spirit, to become the servant of the servant! And what an honor of the Father, by the Son, and by the Spirit, thus forever to serve His glory!

Oh, my soul, be filled with this glorious mystery of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, working out their own glory in creation and redemption! Let your delight be to know God, and to speak of Him, and to serve Him.

This, this, is your salvation, to know your God.

This, this, is your blessedness, to see your God in Jesus Christ; and seeing Him, to see your own great archetype.

This, this, is your sanctification, to look into that face of perfect beauty and purity, and by beholding to be transferred into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God.

Oh, if again, as I fear, this doctrine of the Trinity should be consigned to a tacit oblivion, and thrown into a corner of the Church's ruin, then I ask of my God the highest honor of contending against such an obscuration, such an oblivion. And if, again, it should be resisted in the Church, I ask no higher degree than to contend for it with the patience with which the saints and fathers of the third and fourth centuries did contend.

Before passing from this title, "like the Son of man," I have another observation upon the import of the word *like*. Why, in *Daniel*, and in the passage before us, should He be called "like the Son of man"? For the same reason that He is said to be...

Philippians 2

⁷ ...in the likeness of men,

—and,

Romans 8

³ ...in the likeness of sinful flesh,

—and,

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ ...in all respects made like to the brethren.

Because His proper being is Godhead, His proper person Son of God; which being, which person He laid not, neither can lay aside, though He did assume into the fellowship thereof, the being of a fallible and fallen creature, to the end He might raise that creature into the state of infallibility.

Therefore it is said that He was “like unto the Son of man” and made in the “likeness of men,” to the end we might be taught that there was a higher being in Him than that perfect manhood in which He appeared, acted, and shall for ever subsist. He was the Word made flesh, the God made manifest in flesh: He was the Son of God revealed as the Son of man.

But this form which He assumed in the fullness of the times was not an appearance or a similitude, but the reality and substance of manhood. We have seen that, so far from being an accident, it was the very end of creation, that God should be made manifest to creation, and forever revealed to creation in a creature form: and the form selected was that afterwards assumed: the form of man.

There is not a notion so full of evil—of all heresies it is the most fatal, both to God and creation—as to put forth that the Son of God’s taking upon Him human nature, was only for the particular and private end of redeeming fallen men,—that it was merely a phenomenon in Godhead’s ever-busy administration, that it was only one act of which many such may succeed, or may have gone before, in creation’s history.

I say that this is the fellest conclusion and foulest error which can be promulgated, equally subversive of God's glory, and creation's well-being. And the truth is, that all things were created in the Christ, and by the Christ, before the Son of God had really become the Christ; creation being the foretelling and foreshowing of the great purpose of God, to assume a creature form.

The Christ was to come into subsistence, not by creation, but by generation, out of a fallen creation, in order to show that the Son is eternally generated, and not created; so likewise, in order to show that creation is an act of God, far short of generation; and that it is only through the knowledge and in the strength of the generated Son, that creation recovers from the poison of sin, and the corruption of the grave.

If, therefore, I be asked how He was in the likeness of men, I answer, in all respects, according to the declaration of the apostle:

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ Wherefore *in all things* it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.

I answer, *even unto our sinfulness*; so far as that is our condition, and not our act. Yea, it is the essence of the mystery that He should take the creation under the disguise, the deformity and the weakness, and the sorrow, and the enmity of sin, in order that He might prove truly its salvation, its life, its beauty, and its stability. To those who set these things at nought, or deny them, I say stoutly, and fearlessly, you are setting at nought the truth and the glory of God; and the sooner you are warned of the peril thereof, the better it may prove to your immortal souls.

THE GARMENT

So much for the name which He takes to himself in this vision; and now we come to the raiment with which it has pleased the Divine Wisdom to invest Him, for the fuller manifestation of His person and office.

Revelation 1

¹³ [He was] clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

Both these pieces of raiment were proper to the Jewish high priest, and to him only. The first, rendered in our version “a garment down to the foot,” is one word in the original, formed from the word signifying the foot, and therefore denoting a garment reaching down to the feet. Now this very word is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for the high priest’s robe, upon which was suspended the breastplates and the ephod:

Exodus 28

⁴ And these are the garments which they shall make; a breast-plate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broided coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.

This is further described:

Exodus 28

³¹ And you shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue.

³⁵ And it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and his sound shall be heard when he goes in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, that he die not.

In like manner, in the vision which Zechariah had of Joshua the high priest, he is represented first as clothed with filthy garments, upon which it is said in the hearing of Zechariah:

Zechariah 3

⁴ Take away the filthy garments from him...Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with a change of raiment [in the Greek, with a *Podera*].

⁵ And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head: so they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments.

Under this vision it is expressly declared that He is signified whose name is “the branch.”⁷ And the substance of that vision is, the changing of the high priest’s raiment. Jesus, or Joshua, is pre-

⁷ *Zechariah* 3:8, 6:12.

sented to us, first with filthy garments, and Satan at his right hand resisting him in the work of building the temple of the Lord. This signifies to us our High Priest once clothed in the likeness of sinful flesh, in order to resist and overcome Satan, who has the power of death. And it is promised that these filthy garments should be taken away, and a high priest's royal garment (a Podera) given to him.

Accordingly, the first time the Son of man is exhibited to us in the book of *Revelation*, after His controversy with Satan, He is clothed with the garment which was promised to Him. He has the ensign of the high priest; He has the garment of blue color of heaven; He has heavenly humanity, in which He shows himself as the great High Priest of His Church.

The crowns which were promised to Joshua,⁸ he has not yet received in this first of his Apocalyptic revelations; for the time to manifest Him as a King, is not yet arrived. But when the kings of the earth have been removed from their vice-regal thrones, or rather when He comes by force to dispossess them when their period of probation is over, He comes with many crowns upon His head:

Revelation 19

¹² ...on His head were many crowns;

–but with those seven eyes, which were upon the foundation-stone of the temple, laid before Joshua,

Zechariah 3

⁹ For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes.

The Lamb which was slain, and whose redeemed flesh is the foundation-stone of His Church, is exhibited in *Revelation 5*.

I touch these points of similarity between the high priest of Zechariah and the high priest of the Apocalypse, to show their identity, and thereby to exhibit the importance of this feature of the vision, His being clothed with the robe of Aaron. It is no less

⁸ *Zechariah* 6:11.

than the fulfillment of the prophecy in *Zechariah* 3, as if God had said,

“I will clothe You with the High Priest’s robe; vile though your garments heretofore have been, in your mortal controversy with the prince of corruption.”

The second piece of His vesture is likewise proper only to the high priest,

Revelation 1

¹³ ...girt about the paps with a golden girdle,

—whereof the particular description is given:

Exodus 39

⁵ And the curious girdle of his ephod, that was upon it, was of the same, according to the work thereof; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as the Lord commanded Moses.

Though it be commanded to be made of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, yet was it commonly called the golden girdle, as indeed all the glorious garments of the high priest were called his golden garments. But the girdles of the other priests, and of Aaron also, save when he was gloriously arrayed, were simply of linen, as is laid down in *Exodus* 28 and 29.

But that girdle of the high priest, which shone with gold and glorious colors, is always distinguished as the girdle, the holy girdle, the curious girdle, of the ephod. And thus the one corroborates the other; and both together put it beyond a doubt, that the Son of man is here attired as the High Priest.

Now if we would know how much of Christ’s office is by these symbols pointed out to us, we have only to study the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which, throughout, is the exposition of Christ, the great High Priest of our profession.

The proper dignity of the high priest stood in this, that he could come into God’s invisible presence; and this is the prerogative of Jesus, that of all creatures He alone as a creature stands in the presence of the Father. And wherefore? Because He only has a

holy being and substance to present unto God, in whose sight nothing unclean can stand.

It is a vulgar error, that the separate soul is in that presence of God which was figured by the holy of holies, of which figure the reality is declared to be heaven,⁹ and the presence of God. If the tabernacle of God were now with men in bliss, what is the meaning of giving this as the characteristic of the time when, the harlot Babylon being destroyed, the bride New Jerusalem comes down from heaven?¹⁰ But this common error has been already sufficiently refuted in the first Book,¹¹ by the consideration that our Lord, after having been a separate Spirit, did, while He abode upon earth between His resurrection and ascension, declare, that He was not yet ascended to His Father.

It is not only to destroy Christ's proper and peculiar dignity of High Priest, to say that the souls of the faithful are at present in the very presence of God; but it is to anticipate the proper characteristic of the New Jerusalem condition of the risen saints at the beginning of the millennium, and of this whole earth at the end of the millennium. It is to destroy the difference between the blessedness of the departed spirit, and the glory of the risen saint, and to gainsay the tenor of all Scripture, and of all the creeds of the orthodox Church.

Christ's single and sole prerogative it is to stand in the presence of God: as other priests must do their ministries by the light of the holy lamp, and the high priest only might do his by the light of the glory of God, so verily must every creature for a while continue at a distance, and Christ only be in the presence of God; through whom every creature must approach God, in whom the Church by faith indeed regards herself as now in the heavenly places; but only by faith, and not as yet by possession. This faith

⁹ Hebrews 9:24.

¹⁰ Revelation 21:3.

¹¹ It's not entirely clear which part of his first book Irving is referring to. It might be the following: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 1, Chapter: "The Substance and Method of the Book," Section: "Christ Triumphant and Reigning."

of our oneness in privilege with our High Priest gives us boldness to enter within the veil, as the apostle declares:

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

But we shall not in very substance be brought into that most holy presence until the time and the event, whatever it be, which is declared in various parts of Scripture, such as:

Ephesians 5

²⁷ That He might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle;

Colossians 1

²² To present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight;

Jude

²⁴ To Him that is able to present you faultless in the presence of His glory.

The same is signified by the bride being brought unto the king:

Psalms 45

¹⁴ She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto you.

¹⁵ With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

And in the parable by the king coming in to look upon the guests of the marriage chamber:

Matthew 22

¹⁰ ...the wedding was furnished with guests.

¹¹ ...the king came in to see the guests,

And also what is signified by the delivering up of the kingdom unto the Father:

1 Corinthians 15

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

And by the tabernacle of God being with men:

Revelation 21

³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Not that any one shall at any time see the Father in His God-head, but that it shall be the privilege of the Church glorified to see a manifestation of Him in Christ, which now we wait for, but not until our gathering into the New Jerusalem shall enjoy.

This, therefore, I place first in the proper dignity and peculiar prerogative of Christ, our High Priest, that He ever stands in the presence of God.

Now what kind of ministry did the high priest then perform, when once a year he was admitted into the most holy place of the dwelling of the Most High? The ministry which he performed on that most solemn day of atonement, was to make intercession for the tabernacle and the priesthood; which two, the holy things and holy persons, were supposed according to the law to drink up the blood, and eat up the flesh of those victims which had been offered for the sins of the people all the year round.

The sin confessed was supposed to pass over to the victim on whose head it was confessed. And from the sinful victim the blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar and before the mercy-seat was supposed to transfer its defilement to them, and the flesh eaten by the priests to transfer its defilement to them: so that all the sin of Israel was understood to accumulate all the year round upon the tabernacle, and upon the priesthood. Upon the day of atonement, the high priest, and he only, might offer victims and make intercession for the sin of the tabernacle, and for the sin of the priesthood, which thus represented the sins of all Israel.

To this the day of atonement, the high priest stood the consecrated minister, and for this ministry he went into the holy presence of God, yet not without blood: which blood of the goat and of the bullock typified Christ's blood, as is expressly declared:

Hebrews 9

⁷ But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

⁸ The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

⁹ Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

¹⁰ Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

¹¹ But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

¹² Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 13

¹¹ For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

¹² Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.

What then have we signified by this great action of atonement? For this is the proper act of Christ our High Priest. The sacrifice is the offering up of His own spotless flesh. His going with its blood into the holy place, is His rising from the dead and ascending into the presence of the Father, to present there the Lamb which had been slain for the sin of the world.

There the Son of man, first born from the dead, rightful High Priest by primogeniture, being the first-begotten, of God, presents or offers in the holy place of the heavens His spotless sacrifice; first for all the priesthood,—that is, for the chosen ones, who are kings and priests, and shall fill the royal priestly office of creation. For them He makes atonement, and for them His intercession is

accepted; in proof of which acceptance He seals them with his Father's Spirit of promise. And this is the offering for the priesthood, for the whole family of Aaron.

Next, that sacrifice which He offered on the cross prevails to purify the sanctuary in its threefold divisions; the most holy place, the holy place, and the court of the altar. And what is this?

We know that the most holy place is the heavens; and the heavenly things which needed to be purified with better sacrifices are, the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven; the inheritance of the saints now in heaven, but ready to be revealed in the last time; the new Jerusalem where is the tabernacle of God, and of which God is the light. This part of creation is the most holy place, in which, when we shall be raised in the likeness of Christ, we shall have our habitation.

And the holy place, considering things as they are to be in the millennium, is the land of Judea, where is the nation of kings and priests in flesh. And the rest of the world is the outward part of the temple, or rather the tabernacle.

But as the millennium is not complete purification to anything save the true Jerusalem, inasmuch as death and decay are in every other place, I carry forward the complete fulfillment of the type contained in the atonement for the tabernacle to the period consequent upon the judgment, when, as I believe, the whole earth shall be the holy place, and the rest of creation shall be the outward court.

All the tabernacle or thing in which God is worshiped, that is, all creation considered as a place being holy, yet with a more holy, and a most holy, the most holy being the New Jerusalem, occupied by Christ and His risen saints, the Church; the more holy being the rest of this earth, and the holy the sun and moon and stars, which are created in a subservience to this earth all puny, as scientific men may regard it, in respect of magnitude and physical importance.

But if out of man's loins the King of all the universe came, out of man's habitation the citadel, and palace, and temple of the universe may likewise well come. Now Christ, when He carried the body of man free into the presence of God, did carry the dust of the ground in thither, did carry all subservient matter of sun and moon and stars in thither, and finding acceptance for that body of His, did find acceptance for all body; that is, for all matter. And thus has He made an atonement for the whole fallen visible creation, and for those who are to minister in it as kings and priests.

This now I conceive to be the one great act of our High Priest; as His one great prerogative is to stand in the presence of God. To know therefore that Christ is our High Priest, as the raiment which He wears in the vision teaches us, is to know that atonement is made for us and for the whole world.

If anyone say,

“But where now is the universality of the atonement as to persons?”

I answer that the day of atonement is not the typical form of that truth, but of the truth which I have explained above. The day of atonement is Christ's acting as High Priest in the heavens: but Christ in the heavens acts only for the election of the Father, for the true Israel; not for the Israel that is so in the flesh, but for the Israel that is so in the spirit. And therefore this day of atonement was special in its application to the priests and to the tabernacle, and through them to all Israel.

There are other typical forms of the truth of the universal atonement, of which Adam is the chief: but into this we are not called upon to enter here; only as it is a matter much agitated in the Church, and a question of the highest importance, I deem it good to guard everything which I say with respect to the special and peculiar application of Christ's work, from being misconstrued into a gainsaying of the universality of the atonement made by His death, which I regard in my heart as a foundation of the faith as it was once delivered to the saints.

Nevertheless, everything which concerns the Jewish people peculiarly, is for a type of the election, who are the true kings and priests. And so also I may say that everything in the Apocalypse also concerns the election, being the history of their battles for the throne and scepter of creation under, or rather in fellowship with, Christ, creation's Head.

This now is the great doctrine involved in the High Priesthood of Christ, that He for me has been accepted of God, and I in Him am admitted into the presence of God; that He for me has redeemed the lost inheritance of the world, and I in Him am crowned a king and priest for God. All for me a poor worm, a wretched sinner, an infirm helpless creature!

Oh, what is it to know this truth, that God looks upon Christ as perfected High Priest, not for himself alone, but for all over whom He is High Priest anointed! A high priest without many for whom he stands to minister, is no high priest at all. A high priest does nothing for himself; he is an intercessor for many; he is a sacrificer for many; he is accepted for many; he is honored as the head of many. To look upon Christ, therefore, as accepted before God for himself alone, is to deny His High Priesthood, is to make void the very name of High Priest.

If so be then that the substance and essence of this name and office of High Priest is, that what befalls Him, and what betides Him, befalls and betides Him not for himself alone, but for all in Him represented, all in Him elected before the foundation of the world.

Then what are my fears, and what are my doubts, and what are my surmisings grounded upon my shortcomings? What are they but a denial that Christ is all accepted, all honored, not for himself, but for many! If I believe Christ to be my High Priest, I believe myself wholly accepted, wholly perfected, wholly dignified in Him; and to introduce fictions of transference from Him to me of righteousness, and from me to Him of guiltiness, is, in verity and truth, to do away with His name and office of High Priest, which cannot be a truth if such fictions are permitted.

Let then this first manifestation of the Son of man, in robes of the High Priest, assure every believer that:

- As Christ is in the sight of God, so is he;
- As Christ is in the favor of God, so are you, O believer, whosoever you are;
- As Christ is in the purpose of God, so are you, O believer, whosoever you are.

This is the meed of faith, this is the purchase, this the power, this the excellency of faith, that gift of God,—to bring you, without let or stay, into the unity of Christ’s favor, safety, perfection, dignity, and glory.

Such is the great and precious truth presented to us by means of the robe and girdle of the high priest, with which our Saviour in this vision appears invested: and methinks it should stop the mouth of those ignorant and pestilent decriers of the *Apocalypse*, who consider nothing so meritorious as to prevent a Christian from making it his special study.

And it ought to teach wiser and better men to give more considerate heed to the symbols of this book, which are nothing less than the language for appropriating unto Christ every type, history, and prophecy, which had been thrown out before, as anticipations of His all-inclusive person and office.

But there is yet another great truth taught us under the vesture with which He is clothed, and which the high priest might not wear in the holy presence of God, but only without the veil, according to the commandment of the Lord:

Leviticus 16

⁴ He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with a linen miter shall he be attired.

Thus went he, all in white without an ornament, without any glory, into the presence of God, on the high day of atonement. But when he was finished with this, the holiest part of his office, and had no more to go in before the Lord, but only to finish the

work of the day, in the presence of the people it was thus commanded him of God:

Leviticus 16

²³ And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there.

²⁴ And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments and come forth to offer his burnt-offering, and the burnt-offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself and for the people.

Now inasmuch as our great High Priest appears in the vision arrayed not in the holy but in the glorious garments, not in the pure whiteness of unrefracted light, where God abides, but in the glorious vestments of many colors, for the instruction and entertainment of a creature's sense, we gather beyond a question that the scene of the vision is not in heaven in the presence of God within the veil, but on earth without the veil, in the presence, and for the edification of living men. In other words, that it is a vision concerning the Church in flesh, and not the Church disembodied, seeing we know that the flesh is what the veil signified:

Hebrews 10

²⁰ ...through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;

The vision therefore concerns what is called the Church visible; which truly is the only Church on earth. What divines have chosen to call the Church invisible upon earth, is not recognized in Scripture by such a name. In Scripture, visibility is essential to the Church in flesh, and is indeed its proper and peculiar distinction from the Church disembodied.

The true opposites are not Church visible and Church invisible; for these are one, as the tabernacle was one, though part invisible within the veil, and the other visible without the veil; but Church visible and apostasy visible. Or, to drop the use of the word visible, where it is of no use, the true opposites are, the Church and the apostasy. This vision, therefore concerns the Church on earth,

Revelation 11

¹ ...the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein,

–and not...

² ...the court which is without the temple,...[which] is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

In this remark, I anticipate the progress of the *Revelation*, in which there is no distinct mention of the apostasy before the 9th chapter. There is first, Christ revealed as Head over His Church on earth, contained in the first three chapters, which are all addressed to churches subsisting in cities of the earth: there is next Christ revealed in His relations unto the Church in heaven, and His acting as the Head thereof, against the kings of the earth, who being put in the place of vicegerents or lord lieutenants of Christ and His saints, seek to usurp the power unto themselves, and therefore are, after a sevenfold succession of judicial visitations, at length dethroned and dispossessed by the Lamb which was slain, who, by conquering death, appeared in heaven Redeemer and rightful possessor of the inheritance promised unto Him who should bruise the serpent's head.

This second revelation of Christ, acting from the invisible, and with the invisible Church, is contained between the 4th and the 9th chapters; after which we are introduced to the knowledge of the Church and the apostasy, as the two great opposites in the world, –the one the head of all the good, the other the head of all the evil. This occupies from chapter 11 to chapter 20.

Now the difference between the first and the last of these revelations of Jesus Christ and His Church on earth, is, that the first, or the vision before us, deals with the Church as in peril of apostasy, to preserve her from it as God dealt with Adam before he fell. The second deals with the Church fallen into apostasy, to preserve a people in the midst of it, and to embody a people who should protest against it, in whose favor and behalf God might

appear, and by whose means He might work His wrath and indignation upon the harlot spouse, Babylon the Great.

We conclude, therefore, from the raiment in which Jesus chooses to appear at the head and front of this vision, as well as from the substance of the vision itself, and from the comparison of it with the other visions of this book, that it has wholly reference to the Church on earth, considered as apart from an apostasy, while the apostasy or man of sin was not revealed.

And so it applies also to wherever the apostasy is not yet revealed as a dominant power, and wherever he has been cast out from his dominion; for example, to the churches in this land, not considered as national, nor yet considered as Protestant, but as many churches, with their angels, presbyters, and deacons, and ordinances of divine appointment; for example also, to the churches in America, the churches in Germany and other parts of the world, where the apostasy has been cast out, as a ruling power.

While I thus give to this vision its proper and peculiar application to the times of the Church, before the apostasy, and to those churches where the apostasy has been ejected or suppressed, or has never come; as, for example, the Syrian churches in India, I do not prevent its application likewise to those witnesses who are found among the apostate nations. Because, no prophecy, though it have a proper and peculiar application, can at all be restricted to that private interpretation, but, revealing the truth of God and of Christ, must in its bearings and its effects, be co-extensive with the rights of God and Christ,—that is, co-extensive with creation.

In this larger sense, the vision is intended to set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church to every saint, and to every believer, for a High Priest, a Mediator, and an Intercessor, between God and every one of His people; and likewise as the universal Bishop, from whom every minister and pastor does receive his charge and his orders in the Church, counsel and consolation in fulfilling his painful yet blessed and gracious office,—from whom also every member of His Church, through the pastor

and minister whom He has set over them, receives guidance and encouragement in every time of need, so as that we may say,

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters.

³ He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

HIS HEAD

The seer describes the most remarkable features of His person, beginning with the appearance of His head:

Revelation 1

¹⁴ His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

Or, being literally rendered, “white as snow-white wool;” that is to say, those parts of the head of a man which are covered with hair, were as wool for whiteness, even such wool as in its whiteness rivals the snow. For of the other parts of his countenance they are said to be...

¹⁶ ...His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

What now is conveyed to us by this symbol? Let us betake ourselves to the Old Testament, whereof the Apocalypse is the key. In the vision of *Daniel 7*, we have the Ancient of Days thus described,

Daniel 7

⁹ ...whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool.

The person here represented is doubtless the person of the Father, as distinguished from the person of the Son, who is represented as one like the Son of man receiving the kingdom from His Father's hand. If so, then these are symbols of the pure and absolute Godhead.

Now, how whiteness should symbolize the Godhead, I have already touched upon more than once. It is the appearance of unbroken light, ere yet it has passed through any medium, or been reflected from any terrestrial object. As light, after it has passed through various elements, changes its pure whiteness into the various colors, both primary and secondary, with which the earth and the heavens are diversified, so Godhead, which in itself has no variations or diversities, when it has passed through the medium of humanity, in the person of the Christ, assumes the various forms of human reason, which are expressed in the holy Scriptures, and which were seen and handled in Christ Jesus, who is the Word of Life. This, I take to be the root of the symbol.

Why it should be placed in the hairs in our vision, I know not, except that every other part of the body is occupied with symbols of another kind. The robe covering His body, His feet being as fine brass. When there is no occasion for such various information, as in the transfiguration,¹² it is said that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And when He appeared to St. Paul, on the way to Damascus, there was around Him, and proceeding from Him, such a glory as surpassed the brightness of the sun at noon-day.

And I have no doubt, that had it not been for the variety of the things to be expressed by this symbol, He would have been exhibited exactly as the Ancient of Days appeared unto Daniel, with His garment white as snow, and the hair of His head as pure wool. And why should the characteristic symbols of the Ancient of Days be here applied unto the Son of man? In order to teach us, that Christ is the manifestation of the absolute Godhead; that he who sees Christ, sees the Father; and that whatever forms, ap-

¹² *Matthew 27:3.*

pearances, names, or attributes can by human language be given to the Father, are given to Him as seen in the Son.

Moreover, by having the person of our vision thus identified with the Ancient of Days, we have also the action there assigned to the Ancient of Days claimed for the Son of man. And what is that action? It is the destruction of the fourth beast, or Western Roman empire, in the ten Gothic kingdoms subsisting, that is, Papal Europe, with fiery judgment, because of its obedience to that usurper of Divine dignities, the Pope, symbolized by the little horn.

This is the chief action attributed there to the Ancient of Days; and after a season there is a secondary action of destroying the remnants of the three former beasts, which are the Assyrian, Babylonian, or Euphrates power now subsisting in Turkey, the Persian power, and the Greek power, which has now reappeared again. This act of judging the apostate kingdoms of Papal Christendom, and the other kingdoms of the world, is attributed to the Ancient of Days, in the book of *Daniel*, in order to show the activity of God, in human affairs, and His purpose at length to give the kingdoms unto the Son of man.

Here, however, where everything which God does is represented as done by Christ, as surely it ever has been, and ever will, this act of judgment is assigned to the Son, according to Christ's declaration in the days of His flesh, that God had committed all judgment unto the Son, because He is the Son of man.

From this feature of His person, therefore, we learn, not only a new lesson of His Divinity, but likewise a new lesson of His office; that it is He by whom God will bring the judgment upon the apostate kingdoms, according as it is written:

Psalm 2

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

And, because this same honor is promised to all His saints, in *Revelation 2*, and in the very language of the *Psalm*, I cannot but

believe that before the judgments fall in upon the apostate kingdoms, we shall be taken from this earth to be with the Lord, and to enact along with Him that direful seventh woe, the last of this sinful world.

If we reflect upon the undertaking which God proposed to himself of bringing in His only-begotten Son, as the Redeemer and Head of a creation already in existence; we will see the wisdom, and I may say the necessity, of that method which we are now unfolding.

It is necessary, first, that God should assert unto himself the right over all creation by a series of events, proving Him to be the Owner, the Governor, and the Upholder thereof. For it is necessary unto a bequest, that he who bequeaths should be proved the possessor. Then there must be, in the next place, a series of promises and prophetic actions, giving over the possession into the hand of His Son, made man.

This now is what the Old Testament contains: God's acts to prove himself rightful owner of all, and God's promised acts to transfer that ownership to His Son, when He should be brought into the world. But it needs all along to be likewise shown that this Son, the receiver of all, is likewise, as to His Godhead, one with the Father, the giver of all; whereby the undertaking is rendered more difficult, and the method must be more involved.

The language and acts in which God asserts His ownership, must be such as may be capable of being claimed by Him to whom the ownership is transferred. Yea, all along while there is a sufficiency of distinctive language to represent the personality of the one as absolute God the Father, in His distinctness from the personality of the other, as God and man united, the infinite passing into the finite; there must be such identity of language, also, as to prove that Godhead is not the peculiar property of one, but the common property of both. And yet in such wise must this be done, as that it may not appear a fictitious but a real transaction, that the Godhead is giving up the creation into the hands of the God-man, Redeemer of it.

This is very carefully guarded against in the Old Testament; for to suppose even the appearance of a fiction in any transaction of God, is to subvert all reality whatever, is to sanction all deception, is to deify a lie.

This distinction then between the Father in the absolute Godhead alone subsisting, and the Son as He subsists acting within the bounds of manhood, being most carefully preserved, as in that very vision of Daniel is exemplified by the transaction between the Ancient of Days and the Son of man; there arises a necessity for another, and a supplementary revelation which shall guard against the error of believing that these two, though distinct, are separate in their essence.

That is to say, there must be a revelation gathering up into one, and claiming for Messiah all those actings of the Father for reducing the world into the possession of the Son; to the end it may be seen, that though the absolute Godhead be the originator and designer of this transference, the actor and executor thereof is not the absolute Godhead of the Father, but that same Godhead acting in the Son. Or to give the matter in the simple and true language of Scripture that it might be manifest that the Father does nothing without the Son.

John 5

¹⁹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son likewise.

²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that himself does: and He will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

²¹ For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will.

²² For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son:

²³ That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent Him.

O my God, I give You thanks that you have taught me the mystery of God and the Father, and of the Son and of Christ, and that I am able to testify of the Father and of the Son. This is my purpose and my delight in these expositions, O God; in these expositions of the revelation of Jesus Christ my Lord. I see that this book is but the knitting up of many threads into one glorious tissue for adorning the person of my Lord. I see that it is but the gathering of many flowers by God's own hand planted, by God's own hand culled from the garden of heaven, to wreath one glorious chaplet for the brows of Him who erewhile was crowned with thorns.

O cold age of the world! O degenerate age of the Church! Which discerns not, which feels and acknowledges not, the grandeur and the excellency of this undertaking of God, by one book of wisdom to condense the spirit of all prophetic books of wisdom; by one mighty act of divine wisdom to write Jesus Christ the doer, the possessor of Godhead's mind and purpose, the inheritor and upholder of creation's fullness.

HIS EYES AND FEET

Revelation 1

¹⁴ ...and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;

This carries us to the last vision of Daniel contained in the 10th, 11th, and 12th chapters, of which vision the revealer is thus described:

Daniel 10

⁵ Then I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

⁶ His body also was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude.

Of this vision three of the principal features are embodied in the vision before us—the girdle of fine gold, the eyes like lamps of

fire, and the feet like polished brass. It is only a novice in the study of the *Apocalypse*, who will consider these coincidences as accidental; and the question therefore occurs, What purpose does such a coincidence serve? This purpose it serves, of teaching us that the Divine Person who revealed that glorious vision is the same who stands before the seer of the *Apocalypse*. He who showed himself to, and in the Prophets spoke, is the same who became man of the virgin's substance, and died upon the cross. Or to express it again in the pure language of revelation,

John 1

¹⁶ ...of His fullness did they all receive.

Moreover, this coincidence instructs us, that the Person who watched over the Jewish Church, is the same who watches over the Christian Church, for that vision is expressly given to teach Daniel what shall befall his people in the latter days. Also it is the same Jesus who has determined the times before appointed: for hear what is said of Him:

Daniel 12

⁷ And I heard the man clothed in linen which was upon the waters of the rivers, when He held up His right hand and His left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that lives for ever and ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished, to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

In one word it proves to us, that Christ and He only is the revealer of the secrets of God, as it is written,

John 1

¹⁸ ...the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

What confirms this conclusion derived from the reference to the Prophet Daniel, is this peculiarity of that vision, or rather of the revelation connected with it, for there is first a vision, and then a revelation of it by the person seen: of which revelation the object is, to teach the things which should befall the Jewish peo-

ple in the latter days; but the source of the revelation whence it was derived is very remarkable, being thus expressed:

Daniel 10

²¹ I will show you that which is noted in the Scripture of truth.

It is not unusual in the Scriptures to represent God's remembrance of things past, and purpose of things future, as written in a book:

Psalm 40

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.

Psalm 56

⁸ You tell my wanderings: put my tears into your bottle: are they not in your book?

Psalm 139

¹⁶ Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Malachi 3

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

And in the 7th chapter of *Daniel*, to which our attention has already been twice directed in this vision, it is thus:

Daniel 7

¹⁰ ...the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

But nowhere do I find in the Prophets, except in this place, an expression such as this:

Daniel 10

²¹ I will show you that which is noted in the scripture of truth.

And while the use of it stamps this vision as most important and most certain, it teaches us that the person who ushered in the vision, is the keeper and the opener of the Scripture of truth. In other words, He is the occupier of the bosom of God, and the re-

vealer of the secret things thereof unto the Church, counselor at once from God and to God's creatures.

And seeing that this person's official characteristics of golden girdle, eyes of fire, and feet of polished brass, are all put upon the Son of man in the vision before us, we know that Christ was the fountain where Daniel drank up his wisdom; that Christ was the glorious One whose aspect turned the vigor of Daniel into corruption, and took away his strength; whose voice of his words when he heard them, laid his faculties into a deep sleep, until some one of the ministers who waited upon his glory helped the prophet out of his entranced fear, and expounded to him those words of the Scripture of truth.

There is yet another peculiarity of this vision, which is, that the glorious personage who makes it known, performs an action when the revelation is finished¹³ which is interpreted¹⁴ to signify His taking possession of the terraqueous globe, and His proclaiming the end of time, and the beginning of the eternal age.

Now it is remarkable that in the same place He appears with a little open book in His one hand; even that same writing of truth into which He gave Daniel some insight, but afterwards¹⁵ commanded it to be closed up and sealed till the time of the end. When this time of the end is come, when the seven thunders have uttered their voices; or rather, while they are doing it, behold this same person, with His face as the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire,¹⁶ appears to John with that book now opened, and commands him to eat it, and then to give it forth, which also John has done, in the chapters of the *Apocalypse* following the 10th, where this vision occurs.

This remark casts another light upon that part of the *Apocalypse*, showing it to be the expansion and opening of the last vision of *Daniel*, containing the particulars of the time, times, and a

¹³ *Daniel* 12:7.

¹⁴ *Revelation* 10:5-6.

¹⁵ *Daniel* 12:9.

¹⁶ *Revelation* 10:1; *Daniel* 10:6.

half, of the one thousand two hundred and ninety days, and of the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. Of this remark we shall make use in the proper place.

Meanwhile we put it forth, to show what wonderful, what divine wisdom there is in the *Apocalypse*, which our blind guides do glory to be ignorant of; and, lest their ignorance should be exposed, religiously and sanctimoniously, and with great affectation of humility would prevent the people from exploring for themselves, or listening to those who, like me, are bold enough to face the obloquy and contempt of an infidel Church, in daring to interpret it.

Having thus gathered to our Lord that glory which is given to Him by the appropriation of those symbols, peculiar to Daniel's revealer of the Scripture of truth, we now come to explain the substance of the symbols themselves:

Revelation 1

¹⁴ ...and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.

To the interpretation of these, and the other symbols contained in this vision, we have a great help in the seven epistles or charges, which the personage clothed upon with these emblems sends to the angels of the several churches. For there is this remarkable rule observed, that each of these charges has its signature, as we would say; or superscription, as the ancients would have said—that is, the designation of the person from whom it comes—in this most important part of the epistle, written in terms derived from the emblems with which the Son of man is clothed upon in the vision, or from the words which are put into His mouth.

Taking the first chapter from the twelfth verse, where the vision begins, including always the eighth (which we have shown reason to believe is the Person's annunciation of himself), and taking these eight verses (the 8th, and from the 13th to the 18th inclusive), which contain the portraiture by form and word of the inditer of the letters, you have the materials out of which the

seven superscriptions of the letters, the seven designations of the inditer, are taken. That vignette, or emblazonment, which stands at the head of the seven writings, is referred to in them all for terms and figures by which the writer pleases to designate himself.

To the Church of Ephesus, He takes this designation:

Revelation 2

¹ These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

To the angel of the Church of Pergamos:

¹² These things says He which has the sharp sword with two edges;

And to the angel of the Church of Thyatira:

¹⁸ These things says He which has His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass;

And so in the other four, not but that there are additional words thrown in, further to illustrate and explain the character of the Universal Bishop, but that the substance, and in general the very words, of the seven signatures or superscriptions by which Christ pleases to designate himself, are taken from the picture and from the words issuing out of the mouth of the pictured person.

Now, while I observe, in passing, what a stamp of dignity and importance is thus put upon the emblematic imagery of this book, and justify myself to all wise men who tremble at the word of God, in that minuteness with which I am going into these emblems; I do draw the particular and patient attention of those who are minded to study this prophecy, to the fact stated above, as a great help to the interpretation of the symbols. For, doubtless, it is not without a meaning, and a most significant end, that to each of these churches He selects such a designation of himself. And therefore, by studying what be the peculiarities of these several churches, we shall be led to discover the reason why this or that symbol, rather than another, is chosen to designate himself in

writing to that Church; and thus a very great light will be cast upon the meaning of the symbol itself.

Now to return from this general observation, and to apply it to the exposition of the symbols before us, we find that they are used in addressing the angel of the Church in Thyatira, who had permitted to remain in its communion certain vile and abominable persons, who should have been separated, and, if they repented not, cast out of the communion. To a Church thus careless of separating the precious from the vile, to the minister of a Church, soft and relenting, where he should have been firm and severe, Christ thus proposes that knowledge of himself which He would have such ministers and such churches ever to bear in mind:

Revelation 2

¹⁸ These things says He which has His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass;

I am inclined therefore to believe that this title taken towards a Church into which much impurity had crept, denotes holiness, putting itself forth in the way of distinguishing between the vile and the precious, between the evil and the good; and not only distinguishing, but likewise bringing into great tribulation, and even destroying, in case they repent not. For to such extremities He declares that He will proceed (verses 22 and 23).

²³ By which, [says He,] all the churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

And this seems to me to afford the proper key to the two symbols; “His eyes like a flame of fire,” and “His feet like fine brass;” both denoting holiness and purity.

The eye like a flame of fire, signifies looks which cannot bear iniquity, but will consume it, as fire does the chaff, and the stubble, and the wood,—looks before which nothing can stand that has not been tried in the fire, and there purified of its dross.

Thus He also appeared in the vision above referred to, unto the Prophet Daniel, when about to tell him of the long judgments and vexations with which Israel should be tried, until the time of the end. And in like guise He appears unto John, now that He is about to try His Church with tribulation, and cast her into the furnace to be refined.

It is that constant feature of our great Bishop, before which iniquity in His Church should be scorched up. It is that aspect of His holiness, which being present to us, will scatter and put to flight those impurities of the sense which ever arise to vex and trouble us. We may not expect to be without these trials of the flesh; and therefore it is necessary that we should ever have before us these eyes like flames of fire, in order to dispel them.

Look upon your Bishop as the holy one of God; let Him ever be in your mind as the Son of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire; and so you may expect to stand in all holiness, and to be filled with the fellowship of the same. He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. He was the holy thing from His conception, which should be called the Son of God.

Albeit He was of our very substance, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and liable to all our sinless infirmities, and not to be known from a common man, in every respect. Yet was there in Him that Almighty Spirit of holiness which showed itself at the resurrection, by changing the mortal into the immortal, the corruptible into the incorruptible.

And in like manner is He revealed in the Spirit to every one of His children in whom there is a spirit of holiness, which, like fire, feeds upon the corruptions of the flesh, and consumes them. So that the true servant of the Lord delights well to contemplate his Bishop as having the eyes of fire. And every one to whom He has given power to become a son of God has likewise an eye of fire to search into and consume iniquity within himself and others.

That this is the right interpretation of the “eyes like unto a flame of fire,” clearly appears from the words with which He concludes this epistle:

Revelation 2

²³ ...all the churches shall know that I am He which searches the reins and hearts:

–as it is written,

Psalm 7

⁹ The righteous God tries the hearts and reins;

–and again,

Psalm 11

⁴ His eyes behold, His eye-lids try, the children of men.

After the same manner do I interpret the second symbol, by which our Bishop is set forth:

Revelation 1

¹⁵ ...and His feet like unto fine brass.

The word translated *fine brass*, is one which has puzzled the learned to interpret aright. It is composed of two words; the one the common word for brass, and the other derived from a root which signifies to flow, or to be liquid, or to melt. The true meaning of the word therefore would be, brass made liquid, or melted.

Now we find that the laver and it's foot,¹⁷ in which the priests washed themselves, was made of the looking-glasses of the women which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Working upon this idea, it is a discovery not many years old, that if you take the finest brass, such as mirrors were made of, and cast it into the furnace, you produce another kind of brass, which will take on no rust, nor tarnish from exposure to water or weather of any kind. Of this the laver and it's foot were made, to the end that, though filled with water, and ever exposed to the action of the air, they might never tarnish.

¹⁷ Exodus 38:8.

And of this brass melted over again, I believe our Lord's feet are represented to be in the passage before us. And because it is never tarnished, it is said that His feet were like unto melted brass, as if they burned in a furnace.

Now what is the meaning of the symbol thus explained? It is, to express His holiness, that when He should come to tread down His enemies, to tread the wicked under His feet, to tread the winepress of the wrath of God, though He walked among defilement, and did tread upon abomination, yet were His feet not tarnished therewith, but remained in their original purity and brightness. This metal, brass molten, is chosen because, as now appears, it takes no tarnish from the pollution of the air, nor from the pollution of the earth, nor yet from the pollution of the sea.

So also His eyes, though they look upon all iniquity, are not polluted by it. And His feet, though they tread down all iniquity, are not polluted by it. The fire refines all things, and is not polluted by them. They come in contact with it, and their impurities are expelled. Their dross is carried off, and the pure metal flows out in a pure stream. So likewise these feet of brass trample upon the lion, and the adder, and the young lion; upon the mire and the clay, and the mass of rottenness, upon the devil, upon the grave, upon corruption; but are never defiled by any of them.

This is the mystery of the Son of God dwelling in flesh of sin, dwelling there in the days of His flesh, looking into its vileness from the center of the soul within; looking upon it with eyes of fire, which did expel and consume the sin within it, laboring in the midst of it, as the Holy Ghost says, as one brought...

Psalm 40

² ...out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay.

But being the Son of God, endued with eyes of fire, and feet of untarnished brass, He looked upon it, and walked throughout all its polluted chambers, and was not polluted by it himself. Yea, He did cast it into death, as into a refining furnace, and raised it thence again, holy and incorruptible. And as He abode in the days of His flesh, so now He abides in the renewed whom He sanctifies

and purifies, with those all-penetrating eyes of fire, and those incorruptible feet of brass, and so also abides He in the Church, as we shall see from considering His epistle to the angel of Thyatira.

There is yet another confirmation of the interpretation given above of the eyes of fire, as denoting holy and penetrating insight into the hearts and reins of men, and inward secrets of actions. And I deem it a confirmation of the greater importance, as being derived from the *Revelation* itself. In the 4th chapter the Holy Ghost is set forth under the symbol of seven lamps of fire:

Revelation 4

⁵ ...and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Now, in chapter 5, the same seven Spirits of God are set forth as the seven eyes of the Lamb:

Revelation 5

⁶ ...seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

These two passages being put together, show us that the eyes of fire which are in the head of Christ, do denote that spirit of holiness which proceeds from His humanity, even the Holy Ghost, who in the greatness of His condescension, has consented to become eyes to the Lamb of God, by means of which His manhood may be enabled to discern and to scorch up the iniquity of all the things which the Father would have redeemed and presented unto himself.

Moreover, when Christ comes forth out of heaven, in righteousness to judge and to make war,¹⁸ His eyes are as a flame of fire. This symbol being introduced into such a vision, which concerns the destruction of Antichrist and all who adhere to Him, and in which these symbols represent nothing else than powerful majesty and destructive war, we may not doubt that the eyes of fire with which our Bishop pleases to present himself, are an em-

¹⁸ *Revelation* 19:12.

blem of that holy severity which visits transgression in His Church, and will maintain holiness therein.

I have one other remark to make upon the feet of brass, confirming the interpretation above, that it signifies down-treading of iniquity, without any stain derived unto himself from that most necessary exercise of His holiness. This confirmation is derived from the prophecies of Micah where the nations being gathered together with the foul and arrogant purpose of destroying Zion at the time of her pain and labor to bring forth, say:

Micah 4

¹¹ Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

It is then added,

¹² But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither do they understand His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

¹³ Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass: and you shall beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

This refers to the custom in the East of treading out the corn with the hoofs of oxen, and signifies that God would use His people in that day to thrash the nations, and tread out of them with severe strokes, the substance of His own glory, and of the world's after well-being.

And to the end His people, the Jewish people, might be well accomplished for such an undertaking, He would make their horns, with which to push them and toss them and scatter them, of iron which breaks all things; and He would make their hoofs, with which they should trample them, of brass, that they might not be soon worn out with their much labor. To the same effect it is said:

Malachi 4

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

They shall grow to be stately and powerful oxen; and then, says he,

³ You shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts.

But His people, in this great work of breaking the nations to pieces, are but the battle-axe in the hand of the Lord; who in that day shall put forth His power as an avenger, as it is written in the same figurative language:

Isaiah 63

³ I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garment, and I will stain all my raiment.

⁶ And I will tread down the people in my anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

He refers here to the great action of the 19th chapter of the *Apocalypse*, where He comes with that stained raiment, to execute the direful purpose of God against the beast, and the kings of the whole world, who dare to defy God, and to make war with the Lamb.

No doubt therefore can remain upon the mind of any person that these symbols of the eyes of fire and feet of brass are rightly interpreted.

HIS VOICE

The next characteristic feature of our great ecclesiastical Head is expressed in these sublime words:

Revelation 1

¹⁵ ...and His voice was as the sound of many waters.

His voice was so liquid, and so strong. The preceding features, as has been said, are taken from the last of Daniel's visions, where as in the vision before us, the characteristic of His voice

follows immediately that of His feet, but is given by quite another similitude:

Daniel 10

⁶ ...His feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude.

Whereas in our vision it is:

Revelation 1

¹⁵ And His feet like unto fine brass...and His voice as the sound of many waters.

Why is it that so sudden a transition is made from the vision of Daniel? Because by this new feature God would claim for His Son identity with another great vision of the Old Testament, and put Him in possession of another of His rights. That vision is the vision of the likeness of the glory of the God of Israel, which Ezekiel saw, whereof it is thus written,

Ezekiel 43

² And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and His voice was like the noise of many waters, and the earth shined with His glory;

³ And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar.

This is the only place in the Old Testament where the similitude of our text occurs, and therefore there can remain no doubt, that to this our attention is solicited.

Several times indeed in the Psalms and the Prophets, the tumultuous gatherings of the nations against the Lord and His Christ, are compared to the waves and floods of the mighty deep, and to the rushing of many waters. And the Lord's voice which stills them, and forces them back to their caverns of silence and restrains their impotent rage, is set against them and declared to be mightier by far. But this is altogether a different use than in Ezekiel's vision: not in the way of similitude, but in the way of

contrast; not as the emblem of His voice, but as the emblem of the voice of the wicked.

There are two opposite kinds of impression made by the rushing of mighty waters:

1. The one, the fearful commotion of the tempestuous and troubled sea, the stunning noise of many waterfalls around you, or the roaring violence of the impetuous stream, which are not fit similitudes for the majestic melodious mighty voice of God, but fit enough, yea, the fittest, for I have heard the like, to express the confusion and the turmoil of a thousand agitated, fearful, passionate minds;
2. The other impression made upon the mind, and methinks it is the fullest that enters by the ear, the impression of a mighty river flowing in its strength between its silent banks, whose sound fills the spaces around, and has you, and possesses you, wherever you stand, and wherever you look; and is in your ear more satisfying than any choral symphony; over your soul is more powerful and overawing, yet tranquilizing, than any melody, save that which it is intended to represent.

There is such a melody, and I have heard it likewise, the melody of ten thousand voices, lifted up in praise to God amidst the dales of my native land. To one who hears from a small distance, this stream of multitudinous voices sweetly attuned to the praise of God, wafted along upon the well-pleased bosom of the evening gale, and reaching the ear haply at some sudden winding of the valley, it entrances the faculties of motion, of speaking, and suspends the vital act of breathing; so sweet and so powerful it is, so liquid and so strong.

O my dear native land, and you worthy devout dwellers therein, how I rejoice to have been born of your stock, and to have been reared in the midst of your occupations! I would not part with the remembrance and associations of your open-field worship, and your hill-side sacraments, for all that I have since seen and heard of royal concerts and cathedral services, though

with these I have likewise great sympathy, and have derived from them much pious enjoyment. Be not ashamed, O Scotland! of that freedom in worshipping God, which was the salvation of our Church in most perilous times.

I judge, therefore, that the similitude chosen to represent Christ, is taken from its being equal to the voice of a harmonious multitude; and this I have, from the use of it in the *Apocalypse* twice over, to represent the voice of the Church in heaven:

Revelation 14

² And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters...

³ And they sang as it were a new song, before the throne and before the four beasts, and before the elders...

Revelation 19

⁶ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.

In both these cases, the voice like many waters proceeds from the congregation and general assembly of the Church of the first-born in heaven. And in both cases, with the similitude of many waters is conjoined the similitude of thunderings. Not that these two are intended to express the same sound, but that the stream of the melody was at times burst in upon with thundering Alleluias, as in some of Handel's oratorios you have thunder bursts of the full chorus, every now and then in the midst of the stream of melody.

Now if any one inquire why the voice of Christ and the voice of His glorified Church should be set forth by the same similitude, I think I can give a satisfactory reason for this coincidence which occurs not only in the *Revelation* but also in *Ezekiel*, when, speaking of the cherubim, or four living creatures, and their wheels, which are a figure of the Church, He says,

Ezekiel 1

²⁴ I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech as the noise of a host.

The reason is, that as the voice of a man, though guided and instructed by the head, is yet acted and performed by organs of the body, being therefore at once of the head and of the body, so the voice of Christ and the voice of His Church, which is His body, are but one, and therefore must have the same similitude. In confirmation of this, the voices in the *Apocalypse* are made not to proceed from Him that sat upon the throne, but from the throne itself:

Revelation 4

⁵ Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices.

Now within the circle of that throne was nothing but those cherubim, or living creatures,¹⁹ and when the living creatures speak, at the opening of the successive seals, their voice is, as it were, the noise of thunder.²⁰ So likewise in *Ezekiel*, in that passage where the noise of their wings is compared to the voice of the Almighty; it is said,

Ezekiel 1

²⁵ And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

²⁶ And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

²⁷ And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.

So upon this firmament there was the likeness of the throne, and the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And

¹⁹ *Revelation 4:6.*

²⁰ *Revelation 4:1.*

this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, whose likeness is declared to have been like the noise of many waters:

Ezekiel 43

² And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with His glory.

Our idea, therefore, of the symbol is that it is derived from the great multitude of those who utter the voice of Christ, as it is written:

Psalm 68

¹¹ The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it.

It teaches us the very great completeness and closeness of the symbol, that the Church is the body of Christ. It teaches us that He never speaks, but through His numerous Church; as it is written:

Hosea 2

²¹ And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, says the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

It signifies that while other things are outward, the Church is inward unto Christ, composing with Him one organized frame, and acting with Him one unanimous purpose.

It signifies that as He by His personal Godhead has the pre-eminence over all, we by our oneness with His manhood have the superiority of every other creature; angel, archangel, and every name named in this world, and in that which is to come.

And because Christ thus honors His Church to speak, to preach His mind to all creatures which have a being, and that Church is the voice of a multitude: therefore it is that the symbol of many waters is used to express the voice of Christ.

And in confirmation of this interpretation of the symbol we have to adduce the authority of the Holy Ghost, who says,

Revelation 17

¹⁵ The waters which you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

These people from their numerousness are compared to the numerous drops which compose the waters of the ocean; or, if you please, the waters of many confluent streams. Now the Church in heaven is described thus:

Revelation 7

⁸ ...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

Therefore their voice, which as we have seen, is likewise the voice of Christ, answers to the interpretation of the symbol of many waters.

So much for the substance and significance of the symbol, by which the voice of the Son of man is expressed. And now let us further examine what light this note of identification between the persons of our vision and the glory of *Ezekiel*, casts upon both passages.

By comparing the expressions of *Revelation* 14:2, and 19:6, setting forth the Church in heaven, with the expressions of *Ezekiel* 1:24, it will clearly appear that the four living creatures in *Ezekiel* are the same with the Church in heaven, and that He above the firmament whose throne they upbear is surely no other than the Son of man, is surely no other than the enthroned one of the vision of John.

Now, this is a conclusion of the utmost importance, inasmuch as it first of all determines what was the meaning of those cherubim which stood in the holy place over the mercy-seat, bearing upon their heads, and upon their bosoms, and upon their wings, the glory of the God of Israel.

His throne, His resting-place, which well He loves, even His Church out of mankind, with whom were His delights before the

world was made; elect in Him before the foundation of the world; coming into manifestation the moment Adam fell, because then the mystery of God was ripe for that revelation. Election could no longer be concealed, and now became the palladium of the hopeful world.

And symbolical of the high office of the Church to be kings and priests, they stood and watched on Eden's walls to guard the tree of life; God's wardens, God's watchmen, God's men of might and standard-bearers, foundations of His royal city, pillars of His holy temple; not only possessors of Eden yet to be, and privileged of the tree of life, but likewise resisters of the evil for the foe's sake, that they might still the enemy and the avenger.

Then when the Lord built unto himself a tabernacle, He gave them the holiest place of the tabernacle of the Most High, as His wings, as His body, as His organs of speech, there they stood upon the mercy-seat; and the ark containing laws, and the nourishment of flesh was beneath their feet, under their government.

All this mystery of the cherubim, which we shall have ample room to discourse of under the next vision, is explained by our study of this symbol of the voice of Christ and of His Church, because Ezekiel who had the vision of that glory by the river of Chebar first, and next in the temple of Jerusalem before its destruction, and next returning in glory to the re-edified temple, expressly declares that he knew it to be the cherubim:

Ezekiel 10

²⁰ This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

It is not now the place to inquire into the particular forms and appearances of those cherubim; it is enough for our present purpose to have identified them by their voice with the body of Christ, the glorified Church in heaven. This is the only point which is brought under our consideration in the passage before us: the rest will take its proper place under the visions of the 4th and 5th chapters.

Only we do now claim, by this token of identity of voice, all the greatness and glory which pertain to that appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah which Ezekiel saw, for our High Priest. From this glorious person he received his commission as a prophet; and from Him he likewise received the roll of his prophecies.²¹ Ezekiel therefore was a servant sent by Christ to prepare His way, one of those many who received of His fullness.

Moreover, it was from this same image of the invisible God, that he received commandment to destroy the city of Jerusalem.²² And these cherubim furnished the fire with which it was consumed,²³ teaching us that the judgments in times past, were brought by Christ through His prophets upon earth, and through His Church in glory, even as in the visions²⁴ they continue to be brought.

Moreover, for a habitation of this glory is the house of the temple rebuilt at Jerusalem, which, being finished according to the pattern and dimensions,²⁵ is taken possession of by this same glory riding upon the cherubim,²⁶ whereupon He that dwells between the cherubim uttered these words:

Ezekiel 43

⁷ Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile.

I know not whether these illustrations of the glory and the greatness of our Lord may prove wearisome to some, who have not understood, nor reflected upon the mystery of Christ, to prefigure which and keep up the hope of it, all prophecy, yea, all providence, yea, and creation itself, were ordered of God. But to me, who have learned to desire the sight of Christ in all things,

²¹ *Ezekiel 2.*

²² *Ezekiel 9:1.*

²³ *Ezekiel 10:11.*

²⁴ *Revelation 8 and 9.*

²⁵ *Ezekiel 41 and 42.*

²⁶ *Ezekiel 43:1-5.*

and to discern the unity of the purpose of God in the diversity of all His operations, these followings of the Apocalyptic thread through the intricacies of the past, these openings of the various prophetic chambers with the Apocalyptic key, do impart an unspeakable delight.

And in the hope that some chosen servants of God will take up the method, and use it for the opening of Scripture by means of this book of *Revelation*, I do brave the scorn of being esteemed a fanciful and ingenious enthusiast, who hunts for curious coincidences to amuse his fancy withal.

Verily, if preachers of the gospel will not be at pains to compare spiritual things with spiritual, they shall never discern the consistency, the beauty, and the unity of God's word. If, instead of explaining Scripture by Scripture, and wooing the Spirit by most patient and painful searching of the word, they will search for forms of argument and rhetoric, in order to make the small store of truth which they possess acceptable to the people, they may find thereby the unity of their own thoughts, and strengthen their own natural spirit whatever it be, and get for themselves a name of renown with men of natural understanding, good taste, and cultivated minds.

But the glory of my God, and of His Christ, never, never by such methods shall they procure, nor their own souls attune to high and heavenly things, nor the various diversities of human character join and knit together into the body of Christ with bonds of loving unity, nor (shall I add it? I will add it with fear and trembling, not in judgment, but in love for my brethren's souls) shall they be able to render an account of their stewardship unto Him who sent us to testify of himself, and of nothing besides, even as He also testified only of the Father. Many will say,

“Why these digressions to the state of the Church and the state of the ministry?”

My answer is, I cannot help it. Out of the fullness of a loving heart I speak, deep-seated convictions I utter. The time is short; I

look daily for my Lord, and I wish to leave my testimony behind me.

THE SEVEN STARS

The next feature of the vision is one of great importance, and to which I enter with an earnest prayer to be enabled to speak the truth:

Revelation 1

¹⁶ And He had in His right hand seven stars...

Rightly to unfold this symbol will require of us a twofold inquiry: first into the meaning of the stars themselves; and, secondly, of their being in His right hand. Now, with respect to the first of these questions, we have this information:

Revelation 1

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand...the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

With respect to the number seven, we have nothing to add to what has been said in this and the preceding lectures²⁷; that it is to signify all the ministers, as the seven churches signifies all the churches. All that then were, and all that were to be thereafter; all that now are, and that are to be hereafter, while the ordinance of a ministry continues, and the number of the elect is accomplished, and the new covenant introduced, under which...

Jeremiah 31

³⁴ ...they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them...

And what is that office? And who is that office-bearer, which is thus represented by the symbol of a *Star*, and interpreted by the name of an *Angel*? The word *Angel*, is a Messenger; and the word *Evangel*, or Gospel, is the good message; and the word *Evangelist*, is the good Messenger.

²⁷ See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 2 “Christ Revealed by Names,” Chapter: “The Prelude, or Overture,” Section: “The Number Seven.”

Ofttimes in the Old Testament is Christ called the Angel or Messenger of the Covenant; for example,

Zechariah 3

¹ And the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in.

Ofttimes in His discourses does Jesus claim to be the Angel, or sent one, of the Lord:

John 8

⁴² ...neither came I of myself, but He sent me.

²⁹ ...He that sent me is with me...

¹⁶ ...I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

¹⁸ ...the Father that sent me bears witness of me.

And again,

John 10

³⁶ Say you of Him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, You blaspheme; because I said, I am the Son of God?

And the substance of all faith is made to stand in this,

John 17

⁸ ...[they] have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send me.

Now in that same discourse He does declare, that in the same sense in which He was the Angel, or Sent One, of the Father, His apostles and those who should stand in their room, were His angels or sent ones:

John 17

¹⁸ As You have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And indeed the word Apostle means no more than one sent from another: therefore also does Paul take unto the Christian ministry the title of ambassadors for Christ from God, in whose beseeching God besought, who stood in Christ's stead entreating men to be reconciled to God.

And taking them under the similitude of stars or lights, we have Christ denominating himself in one place the Light of the world,

John 8

¹² I am the light of the world.

And in another place giving the same denomination, saying,

Matthew 5

¹⁴ You are the light of the world.

He, containing the fullness of the light which is inaccessible and full of glory and so bearing it up, and representing it to us, so that we shall be able to receive, and to reflect it upon others.

Likewise the Holy Spirit, whose ministers we are, does not take anything save of Christ's, and show it unto our souls. So that the more faithful and gifted a minister is, the more entirely is he a messenger of Christ. Now it is a messenger's office to report a message. He is the bearer and the utterer of a word. It is not an act, but a word that constitutes a messenger. A messenger is not he who carries into effect, but he who declares what another desires to be believed, and haply also to be carried into effect.

These considerations do lead us at once to the conclusion, that the angel of a Church is he who bears the message of Christ to it; he who speaks in the name of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ; he who preaches unto that Church the glad tidings of salvation. This accordingly is the interpretation which all sound commentators give of the name Angel of the Church.

A man he is manifestly, from the things for which he is approved or censured in these several epistles;—a man who owned no superior in the Church of which he was angel, but was himself supreme over it, seeing upon him, as upon one who had the power, falls all the blame of any disorder or transgression in the Church. I mean, he has no spiritual superior upon earth, and none in heaven save the Lord Jesus Christ. For if he had deferred to any other, or been in any way under the authority of another, then surely that other would have been spoken to with approbation or with censure, whereas there is not a hint of any such coordinate or superior power to the angel in any of the seven churches.

And to this conclusion we are likewise drawn by the place these stars occupy, which is the right hand of the Head of the Church: side by side they lie there in coequal and coordinate rank and dignity. Nor is there a hint in all the epistles of any superiority which one possesses over another. Equally near are they, and equally dear unto the Angel of the Father. There is no difference, except that which arises out of their greater or lesser faithfulness to that one office with which they are invested.

Now this is a most important observation, to which I call the attention of the Church, as casting a most steady and glorious light upon the office of a minister of the word. If, as we have shown, the essence, the only meaning indeed, of the name Angel stands in his being the person who delivers the message of Christ unto the Church, then most clearly is the person who is invested with this prerogative the chief responsible person, and the head of that particular Church, under the Lord Jesus Christ, lying in His right hand, hearing His word, and repeating it to the people.

I do not say that there ought not to be councils in the Church, whereby the government and discipline of the Church may be administered. God forbid! I believe the orders of presbyter and deacon to be of divine appointment, and that the presbyter or elder is indifferently denominated also bishop or overseer, whose office is to give himself to the pastoral care of the flock. I believe that there is no difference between the pastoral care of a bishop, and the pastoral care of an elder or priest. So far as the watchful cure of souls is concerned, I believe bishops and priests, as we say, ministers and elders, to be alike responsible unto our common Head. I believe furthermore, that any difference in this respect which has crept into the Church is an innovation, a burdensome and evil innovation.

But while thus I most firmly believe I do see another dignity, and a higher one, another responsibility, and a larger one, which appertains to him who is appointed to minister the gospel, to be Christ's mouth unto the Church. He is the angel of the Church in right of that very ministry, and every Church ought to have such

a one; and there is no intimation that it should have more than one such.

Herein, therefore, stands our superiority to the eldership; even in this, that upon the minister of the word there is superinduced, if he be already an elder, a new office, function, and dignity altogether. It is not by deprivation of the elders dignity; it is not by an oversight of a different and higher kind than theirs; but it is by a new function in the house of God, to which they have neither call nor orders, that the minister of the word takes precedence over them.

As a minister of the word, he instructs them, the deacons also, and all the Church; and they, the deacons also, and all the Church, ought to hear him as the angel of Christ, who is the angel of God. But when he acts in the capacity of a bishop or elder merely taking oversight, he has no precedence in their councils of such a kind as to impose a negative, or to weigh further with his judgment than any of them do.

I have reflected much upon this subject: and I have, likewise, discoursed much of it to divines of both the Churches established in this land. And to me, and likewise to others, it has yielded no small consolation, and afforded no small strength, to see our office as ministers of the word so distinctly defined as it is in this vision. For, as has been argued many times, this vision is essentially universal as respects both time and place.

Those who make so much of the apostolical age, and the extraordinary gifts, can have no argument here, where all the apostles, all the seventy, and all the deacons may well be supposed to have been no more. But what is universal is universal; and I will not allow one jot of this vision to be cast in any narrower mold.

Whatever dignity a minister in the Church of Scotland claims over the elders thereof; whatever dignity a bishop in the Church of England claims over the priests thereof; whatever dignity any man, in any Church, claims over those in whose hands the care of watchmen is given,—that dignity he has in no other right than as a minister of the word.

I utterly reject the discipline of those churches which consider that the office of an elder entitles him to minister the word. It is the radical error of the Independent scheme of Church government, to give men, in right of elders, the right of ministers, which is, in fact, to do away with the ministerial office altogether. And methinks it may be seen in the character of their ministry, which has almost no knowledge of doctrine beyond what is necessary for an elders office,—that is, exhortation and admonition.

I observe further that there were many elders and many deacons in the churches which the apostles planted. But in none of the churches addressed by our Lord does there seem to have been more than one in whose mouth was the word of doctrine. And long after this or at least, some time after it, in those canons called apostolic, which are considered of most authority in the Church, and most likely reach near to the apostolical times, it is a crime of the highest penalty for any presbyter or elder to take upon him to minister the word, or set up another altar within the diocese of him who was already appointed to that dignity.

For example, if any of the elders of the Church of Ephesus, of whom there were many in Paul's time, and it is likely not fewer in John's, had taken upon him the office of him who is called angel, he is, by the apostolical canons, sentenced to excommunication, with everyone who did adhere to him.

I consider all the conclusions concerning the Church, which we may be able to derive from this vision as the more valuable on two accounts.

First, because, at the time the vision was given, the Church was not taking, but had taken, form; had been proved with heresies and schisms manifold; and, therefore, we may well believe that the state of things spoken of in these churches is consistent with that ordinance which the Lord intended to continue.

Secondly, because this vision was intended to instruct not the seven churches and the seven ministers, but all the churches and all the ministers of Christendom. On this account, as being posterior in time, but still more as being universal in purpose, and fur-

ther on in the progress of revelation, I am not at pains to confirm the lessons which it teaches from the other apostolical writings. But it is manifest from the very constitution of the Church, and the ordination of elders and deacons at the hand of those who preached the doctrine, as Timothy and Titus, that the dignity and nobility of office, and that from which the others emanate, does go with the preaching of the word. I find, also, the distinction taken among the elders in these words:

1 Timothy 5

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine.

Here, place of superior eminence is given on this very account. I find, also, in the Second Epistle of *Timothy*, a particular instruction given with respect to the office of teaching distinct from those given with respect to the office of bishop and deacon:

2 Timothy 2

² The things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

But the thing needs not confirmation. There was an angel, and only one, in each of those seven Churches, in whom the Church is looked upon as represented, in whose person it is spoken to with words of judgment. Now this is enough to teach me that it should be so in every Church, in every city, and in every town, where Christians gather together to hear the word, and to receive the sacraments, and to keep the other ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE SHARP SWORD

Revelation 1

¹⁶ ...and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.

The sword is in all countries the symbol of the office of the magistrate or judge, who have it on solemn occasions carried before them. To this, distinct reference is made by the Apostle Paul:

Romans 13

⁴ For he is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil.

As such a minister of God, as the great revenger, into whose hands God has committed the execution of His judgments, the Son of man is here set forth with the symbol of the sword. The Father reveals Him to us as the great Vindicator of His righteous and holy government, who shall yet come,

2 Thessalonians 1

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.

This much is expressed by the sword, without any respect to the position which is given to it of proceeding out of His mouth.

The radical meaning of the symbol is, power going forth in acts of righteous severity. There is no civilized nation which does not know what is meant by *the power of the sword*. It cannot be misinterpreted by any man of common sense and common knowledge. Nothing but the blindness of a sect or school can turn it out of this meaning into the very opposite meaning of grace and mercy in the preaching of the gospel.

And yet the false hopes of converting the whole world and bringing about the millennium by preaching, have taken such a fast hold of men's minds, that with the greatest coolness and indifference, they do so misinterpret this symbol. This arises not merely from great ignorance of, and daring liberties with, the word of God, but chiefly from a low and inadequate view of the purpose of God, and of the office of Christ; which, they think, consist not well with any great stroke of judgment upon the wicked, but stands in a gradual enlightening of the whole world with the beams of His grace and truth.

But what and if the whole world should reject the light of the beams of the gracious Sun of Righteousness? Is not this the condemnation? And is this condemnation to issue also in grace? No, it is to issue in the revenge of Him, who has said:

Romans 12

¹⁹ Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Those who think this way virtually deny a judgment of the quick. For the judgment of the quick is another and a different mystery from the judgment of the dead. But without going about to spend our time in endeavoring to undeceive those who love to be deceived, and would fain have it to be as they desire, instead of seeking to desire only God's revealed will, I refer to the two instances in which Christ presents himself with this sword, acting, or about to act, towards the Church.

The one is to the Church of Pergamos, to which writing He takes to himself no other title whatever but this one:

Revelation 2

¹² He that has the sharp sword with two edges.

And in the charge to the angel of that Church He thus proposes to use it:

Revelation 2

¹⁶ Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Now, I ask any man of common sense, if this can mean anything but a threatening of judgment? Can it mean, that if they did not repent, He would come and preach the gospel and convert them? Such liberties to take with the word of God, is the most terrible of all profanations. I dare not be guilty of it. I dare not overlook it. I dare not but rebuke it.

The other instance when Christ presents himself acting with this sword, is in the destruction of the apostate kings, and the apostate ministers of Christendom: when He is coming against them and their armies, accompanied with the glorious company of His saints, it is written,

Revelation 19

¹⁵ And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Here are three symbols to express the same or kindred actings of one mood of the Godhead, the mood of wrath; of one office of Christ, the office of executing that wrath. The one of these symbols is the sword from His mouth, of which the effect is to smite the nations; and the nature of this smiting is thus described:

Revelation 19

²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

I know that this can be misinterpreted into an act of mercy and grace; because I know men who do so misinterpret it, and men and ministers whom I believe to be orthodox and evangelical. But how they dare to do it, is what I cannot understand. For the words are the strongest possible to express consuming wrath, and they are the part of an action, of which the other part is:

Revelation 19

²⁰ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

These being the heads of the confederate against God and His anointed, have therefore the sorest judgment; the kings who gave their power to the united apostasies of infidelity and papacy, have their lives taken from them, and lie in their graves till the resurrection of the dead after the millennium. But the others have their portion in the lake of fire before it, and feel during all that while the torments and the tortures of hell, which even Satan knows not till after the thousand years are fulfilled.

The second symbol by which this action of the sword is expressed, is the iron rod:

Revelation 19

¹⁵ He shall rule with a rod of iron.

And what the import and effect of this is, we have written in the second *Psalm*, from which it is taken. In that wonderful *Psalm*, the same confederation of the might, and dominion, and warlike prowess of the earth against God and His anointed, is set forth; and the Son is sent out against it; and what ensues?

Psalm 2

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Can any similitude so describe the whole institution of power and priesthood, of Church and state subverted forever, irreparably broken, as a potter's vessel dashed upon the ground and shivered to pieces which can by no means whatever be repaired again or turned to any use whatever? Observe also the kind of exhortation founded upon this prediction, and addressed to the kings and judges of the earth:

Psalm 2

¹⁰ Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Now, that it is wrath which He comes to execute with that sword of judgment and scepter of iron, is expressly declared in the third of the symbols, which are used to express this action:

Revelation 19

¹⁵ ...and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

What this means, and with what effects attended, is set forth to us in these words,

Revelation 14

¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

I do not anticipate the matter by entering particularly into the exposition of their symbols, but merely transcribe them to show what is the action thus variously set forth by “the sword of the mouth,” “the rod of iron,” and “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

I am very patient, and some may think tedious; but I am very desirous to convince my brethren, both ministers and people, that there is an act of terrible judgment coming upon Christendom, to be done and executed by Christ, whereof the symbol is “the sword which proceeds out of His mouth.” For I feel every night as if I should not see the morning: so near do I think and hope His coming to be, for the redemption of His people from these snares of Satan, which are on every hand of us.

Having thus satisfied every one, as I trust, that the radical meaning of this symbol is “execution of righteous judgment,” I now proceed to explain why it proceeds out of His mouth, and is not placed in His right hand. Of this we have the exposition in the 49th chapter of *Isaiah*, from which the symbol is manifestly taken. In the way of a proclamation, Christ thus issues His word to the isles and peoples afar upon the earth,

Isaiah 49

¹ Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, you people, from far; the Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name.

² And He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver has He hid me;

³ And said unto me, You are my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

Now what can the expression “has made my mouth like a sharp sword” mean, but that the words of His mouth could not by any means be resisted, but were sharp and powerful as the sword of a mighty man. It is a usual thing to give this similitude for the word of God:

Ephesians 6

¹⁷ ...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4

¹² The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This attribute of the word of God to carry its own sharp execution into all regions, visible and invisible, of creation, is here given to Israel, which being interpreted is, “the Prince of God,” not the son of Isaac, but “Him in whom God is to be glorified.” It is He, who, after wrestling with His Father’s strength put forth against Him all the night, does in the morning receive the name of Israel, or Prince of God. Jacob was His name while serving for His wife, and bearing all extremes of ill. But Israel is His name when, having redeemed her, He enters into the presence of God, and is crowned King and Priest, Lord and Christ. Then a dialogue commences between the Father and the Son, and runs on through the whole chapter unto the conclusion of it, which is in these words:

Isaiah 49

²⁶ And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Saviour and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

This is the action for which “Israel’s mouth was made like a sharp sword,” and until the time of which He was hidden in the shadow of God’s hand during this time of His absence. But when He shall be no longer hidden but revealed, then shall He come

forth as the arrow of the Lord from the quiver, in which He is now hid.

There is another prophecy in *Isaiah*, which doubtless refers to the same final catastrophe, and which for its language might be characterized as the prophecy of the sword of the Lord. It is likewise addressed or proclaimed abroad to all nations:

Isaiah 34

⁴ And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree.

⁵ For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

That it refers to the same conclusive event of the seventh seal is manifest from the quotation of the fourth verse under the sixth seal, which ushers in the seventh:

Revelation 6

¹² And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

¹³ And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And also by the treading of the winepress which is in Bozrah:

Isaiah 63

¹ Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

² Wherefore are you red in your apparel, and your garments like him that treads in the winefat?

³ I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

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

⁵ And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore my own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

⁶ And I will tread down the people in my anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

This prophecy corresponds to the sword of the Lord being bathed in the blood of the mighty ones of the earth.²⁸ This chapter furnishes a key to the nature of the judgment which is to fall upon the territories of Rome, into which we enter not at present; except to refer our readers to it for the fate of Idumea and Edom, with this intimation that under that name Rome is signified, as indeed the Jews have always believed, and also the few students of prophecy which there are among Christians.

If the sword which destroys and devours the enemies of the Lord proceeds out of His mouth, it may be asked what is meant by this:

Psalm 149

⁵ Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

⁷ To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

⁸ To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron,

⁹ To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise you the Lord.

The difficulty consists in this, that here the saints are represented with the sharp two-edged sword in their hand. Now it is not to be doubted that as He rules the nations in that day, His saints also rule them: for in the same language in which His Father gives Him the dominion, does He give the same dominion to us.²⁹

²⁸ *Isaiah* 34:5.

²⁹ Compare *Psalm* 2 with *Revelation* 2:27.

If then He is not to draw the sword with His right hand, but speak slaughter with the breath of His mouth, we also, in like manner, under Him should act: being that arrowy lightning, those whirlwinds and tempests, the ministers of His word to fulfill it: not then as at Sinai; for at Sinai He was served by the angels, then by His saints.

And accordingly we find that in the emblematic vision,³⁰ when He and they come out on this high emprise, they are arrayed likewise with Him, only that they have no sword in their right hand, or proceeding out of their mouth. The only weapon of battle among them all being the chilling breath of the lips of the *Word* of God.

And how then is this to be reconciled with the passage quoted from *Psalms* 149? By remembering this great canon of prophetic interpretation, that while the letter of it is fulfilled by the Jewish people, the spirit of it is fulfilled by the spiritual people of the Lord. They in the visible and apparent, we in the spiritual and real, are the fulfillers of the prophecy.

To them I believe it is reserved in that day to arm against the apostate enemies of the Lord, and do exploits: to them is it reserved to bind the kings of the heathen with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. The Lord shall yet bend Judah and fill the bow with Ephraim, and raise up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece.³¹ The tribes shall yet be the battle-axe of the Lord, and His weapons of war.³²

But while this slaughter of the apostate nations is proceeding, I believe it will proceed under the banner and ensign of the Son of man, who with His risen saints will manifest himself in the cloud; He, enthroned upon the cherubim which is His glorified saints, shall appear at the head, and shall fight for them as heretofore He did against the Egyptians and the Canaanites. So that while the Jews stoutly and bravely under the leading of his banner achieve

³⁰ *Revelation* 19.

³¹ *Zechariah* 9:13.

³² *Jeremiah* 51:20.

the victory, we shall serve the Lord Christ in being to them for a spirit of victory, and to their enemies for a spirit of confusion, and in many other ways which to the resurrection body may be easy and possible, yea, and proper, though as yet we know nothing of it. In this way will all the prophecy be harmoniously fulfilled.

This then is the sum of the matter with respect to the sword proceeding out of His mouth. The sword with two edges is the symbol of judgment and execution of judgment; and being used against the Church, is the symbol of discipline,—for all the judgment in the Church, is discipline of love. Therefore it is said:

Revelation 2

¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them [that is, *these heretical persons*] with the sword of my mouth.

It is called the sword of His mouth, because it is the word of His mouth and His word is...

Hebrews 4

¹² ...sharper than any two-edged sword.

By revealing himself to the Church under this symbol, He teaches two things:

First, that He is not only a physician to heal, but likewise a surgeon to cut off; that He uses not only the balm of healing, but likewise the knife of excision; that He suffered no unholiness in His house, according as it is written:

Psalms 101

⁵ Whoso privily slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off; him that has a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

⁷ He that works deceit shall not dwell in my house; he that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight.

⁸ I will early destroy all the wicked of the land: that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

This office, as Bishop of His Church, He early put in force against Ananias and Sapphira. Paul required it to be put in force against the incestuous person in the Corinthian Church, and the Lord threatens it against the heretical and impure persons in the

Church of Pergamos. We may no more doubt that this is a standing office of our great Bishop, and a constant experience of His Church, than we may doubt of the other aspect of His episcopacy already mentioned.

The second thing which we learn from this character of our great Bishop is, that He uses not, He serves himself not with the civil sword, but only with the sword of His mouth. He, as Head of the Church, stands not in need of help from the civil sword: His word is sufficient to execute itself.

But that pestilent usurper of the universal episcopate, the Pope of Rome, took upon himself to use the civil sword, and brought it to pass, by his enchantments, and sorceries, and witchcrafts, that when he had pronounced any one a heretic, the kings of the earth should draw the sword against him.

But we Protestant Churches hold other doctrine, rightly believing the sword of the Church to lie in the word that proceeds out of her mouth. We cut off by the sentence of excommunication; and we neither ask nor expect that the state should thereupon inflict any punishment. But if the state, ordering itself according to divine laws, should say,

“No one shall fulfill the office of a magistrate, or be capable of any preferment under the crown, whom the Church has cut off from the body of Christ.”

Then what is that to us, who are bound to be in subjection unto the state, and not to subject it? That state, which does so determine, does so in reverence of Christ, the Head of kings, and that state which does otherwise determine, does it upon her responsibility to Christ the King. We meddle not otherwise than as preachers of God’s verity, to instruct all ranks, and make intercession for all men.³³

³³ **Editor’s note:** Irving is obviously thinking of the State making laws out of respect to the true Church. He did not consider, in this comment, that the State has often erred in misidentifying the true Church, and has therefore made laws to please a fallen or apostate Church, as in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, and the persecuting support given her by the kings of Europe. The

Contemplate, then, O my brethren, Him who holds the angels of the churches in His right hand, and walks among the churches, who is...

Revelation 2

⁸ ...the first and the last, who was dead and is alive again.

Him contemplate, as the Judge in His Church, as well as the Saviour of His Church. Him contemplate as continually exercising discipline, as well as preaching salvation; as cutting off apostates, as well as introducing new believers into His Church.

HIS COUNTENANCE

Revelation 1

¹⁶ And His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

Both in the Old and in the New Testament, Messiah is represented as the light and glory of His people:

Luke 2

³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

This He was in a moral and spiritual sense, when He appeared as the Prophet of God in the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, wherefore these words of the prophet are applied to him by the Holy Ghost:

Isaiah 9

² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

They that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

And by the prophet *Malachi* He is denominated the Sun of Righteousness, without whom, as He himself declares, the world walks in darkness.

Nevertheless, His countenance was dull during the days of His flesh, as the countenance of another man, so as by no external marks to be distinguished. But when He would show unto His

difficulty, on this earth, of the State making laws to support the Church is simply this: that the true Church is often not seen or recognized as such.

disciples, Peter and James and John, the Son of man coming in His kingdom, and was transfigured before them,

Matthew 17

³ His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light;

And when He appeared to St. Paul,

Acts 26

¹³ ...it was with a light above the brightness of the sun.

And again, when He appears to our seer,

Revelation 1

¹⁶ His countenance is as the sun shining in his strength.

And when He comes to take possession of His purchased dominion,

Revelation 10

¹ His face was as it were the sun...

—which all answers to the description of His coming:

Psalms 18

¹² And at the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed.

And in one word, this majestic presence with which He shall appear, is what is meant in Scripture by His coming in His glory. In that better condition of the world which is described, it is said:

Revelation 21

²² The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

²³ And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

Now in my opinion Christ did not take that glorious appearance on Mount Tabor, and elsewhere, for the purpose of amazing and astounding the beholders, but for the very purpose of showing them in what aspect and appearance He was to come again. And I have high warrant for so opining.

The Apostle Peter, in his Second Epistle, willing to assure the Church that the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ which he preached, was not a fable cunningly devised, but a real and literal truth of eyesight, does thus write:

2 Peter 1

¹⁶ We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty:

¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;

¹⁸ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.

Now I ask, what is the apostle reasoning about in this passage? About the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is he reasoning! And look how he reasons! He asserts that it is not a fiction but a reality. And why a reality? Because they had been eye-witnesses of it. The whole force of his argument rests upon this very thing, that what they saw in the mount was the reality of that personal presence in which Christ is to come again.

I hold it therefore for certain, that Christ will be not only morally but physically, not only figuratively but literally, the light of the New Jerusalem. If anyone be shocked with the sensuousness (if I may use that word, to avoid the figurative application of sensuality) of this notion, he will be pleased to reflect a little, and to take one or two things into consideration.

1. Christ did so appear on the mount of transfiguration, and whenever after His resurrection He did appear:
2. God is always said to dwell in light that is inaccessible, and full of glory:
3. The great type of the New Jerusalem, which is the most holy place of the tabernacle, was lighted with no material light of the sun, nor of the holy lamp, but with the light which proceeded from between the cherubim; a light without a cause, but the First Cause; the light of God's own glorious presence.

What does this signify, that there should be a portion of space from which all light was excluded, save the light of God's own presence? It signifies that there is to be a portion of space in the world to come, which shall not otherwise be enlightened! And what place is that? Where God makes His tabernacle. And what place is that? The New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven, over which, as it descends, this word is pronounced:

Revelation 21

³ Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

But God is seen in Christ, in whom alone He is visible. Therefore that as truly as the holy place of the tabernacle was enlightened with God's presence between the cherubim, so truly shall the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven be enlightened by His dwelling in the midst of His saints, who shall every one of them be arrayed in His glory. In token hereof, when He showed himself to John, His countenance radiates forth like the sun shining in his strength. How sublimely is this expressed in this anticipative prayer:

Habakkuk 3

³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.

⁴ And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power.

⁵ Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet.

⁶ He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; His ways are everlasting.

I have quoted the whole of this sublime passage, because of its wonderful parallelism with the vision before us, in many other points besides the brightness of His countenance. For example, the horns proceeding out of His hand, where is the hiding of His power, I conceive to be parallel with the seven stars in His right

hand, unto whom He has committed the dominion of His Church, and through whose faithful testimony the earth is smitten, as heretofore Jerusalem was destroyed by the word of *Ezekiel*:

Ezekiel 43

³ ...when I came to destroy the city...

And the coals of fire which went forth at His feet are parallel with His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. And the destruction of pestilence and earthquake that went before Him is parallel with that sword of power proceeding out of His mouth, whose effect is to judge the earth like that flying roll, which the Prophet Zechariah saw:

Zechariah 5

¹ Then I turned, and lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

² And he said unto me, What do you see? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

³ Then he said unto me, This is the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that steals shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that swears shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

⁴ I will bring it forth, says the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that swears falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Such, then, is the complete portraiture of the likeness of the Son of man; the great, the only universal Bishop of His Church, whose majestic lineaments and mighty powers when I survey I am lost in adoration of that goodness and grace, and power and might, which lie reposed by the Father in His person.

I see Him no longer as the man of sorrows, who through weakness was crucified and laid in the grave; but I do see Him as the Lord and Christ, whom God has seated in His own throne, that the knees of creation might bow before His feet, and the tongues

of creation might confess before His all-knowing and all-gracious mind.

What do I see, in this majestic vision, in this prolific symbol, in this Divine hieroglyphic? I see the Godhead of the Son unhumiliated, unalloyed by His manhood; yea, but I see the Godhead of the Son, and the manhood too, being of the Christ, set up highest; and the Godhead of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost, in their personalities, doing all their diligence to bring creation under His feet, and to bow every lofty neck to His obedience, unto the end that His dignity might be asserted against power, and it might be known what humiliation He voluntarily underwent heretofore, and what humiliation He forever undergoes, by consenting to be in subjection to the Father, when He shall sit on David's throne, and from the throne of David rule the created worlds.

It is humiliation in comparison with that glory which He now has with the Father, seated in His throne, and which He had before the world was. But it is exaltation when compared with His past humiliation: exaltation when compared with everything out of God, for of the things out of God He reigns King-Priest.

There is a time coming, when Godhead shall be all in all,

1 Corinthians 15

²⁸ And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

That time is not yet, for at present the God-manhood of Christ is all in all, being the end of the Father's rule and government:

Psalms 110

¹ Sit on my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.

But the time is coming, when, from that throne, Jesus Christ shall descend into that station of subjection to occupy which the person of the Son contracted himself to creature bounds, in which, forever acting, He shall teach and empower a redeemed and blessed universe to worship Godhead, invisible and incomprehensible, standing in the person of the Father; in which God-

head, His own Godhead, and the Holy Ghost's Godhead, and the Father's Godhead, are alike worshiped.

But it is improper language to speak of the Father's Godhead, of the Son's Godhead, or the Godhead of the Holy Ghost: for Godhead is not divided, though in separate subsistences. O glorious mystery of the Trinity, basis of all truth, preservative of all worship, ground of all redemption, stability of all blessedness! Let me live to defend, let me die to confirm, let me live forever to enjoy, the knowledge of Godhead in the Father worshiped apart, of Godhead in the Son living and sustaining me and a redeemed world, apart from the worshiped Father; of Godhead in the Holy Ghost, quickening with all holy and blessed life me and the redeemed world, yet in due subordination, and far distance from the Head, Christ; as distinct from Him as the personality of the Holy Ghost is from the personality of the Son.

For the further unfolding of the three personalities in the Godhead, I must wait till I come to the 21st verse of the 3rd chapter, which will draw on with it a full explanation of the mystery contained in the 15th chapter of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, concerning the eternal subjection of the Son.³⁴ In the meantime, I refer my readers to the last of my sermons on the subject of the Incarnation.³⁵

These subjects are little heeded and little cared for, and much contemned by this self and not God worshiping generation; and nowhere more contemned than among the ministers of my own Church, for whom I chiefly write. I hide it not, that though I write primarily for the glory of God in the exposition of His truth, and secondarily for the good of all His intelligent creatures, I have an especial love to my brethren, the ministers of the Church of Scotland, who, by the intellectualism and base philosophy of our great Northern University, have been much seduced from the faith of

³⁴ This is found in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 10, "Epistle to the Church in Laodicea," Chapter: "The Spirit's Promise."

³⁵ Presumably, Irving is referring to his published treatise, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened*.

the fullness of God's word, into the faith of only those forms of it which can be commended to the natural man, and obtain the approbation of men of sense and talent, with whom our country abounds.

I am striking another chord altogether; it jars in the ear of the rest of my brethren; but it is the chord which alone will recall the deep symphonies of the soul with God. And while I write, I feel the strong assurance that God will give these truths power and efficacy in the heart, and in the ministry, of many of my brethren in the Church of Scotland, who now look upon me as revolting men of sense from the whole subject of religion.

Listen to me, my brethren, and I will tell you a truth: These men of sense, professors, reviewers, scientific men, and so forth, must be repelled from that which they now call religion, before they can be attracted to that which you know to be religion. The clear sky over the head of Scotland's intellect must be beclouded and bedimmed with vapors before the soil of Scotland's intellect will yield you any fruit of that kind, which heretofore it brought forth in all abundance. Teach, O you men of God! to these sciolists,³⁶ what true knowledge and true wisdom are; take these boasters into deeper waters if you would teach them how to swim, and when they find themselves beyond their depth, they may haply betake themselves to the ark of salvation.

I am not boasting of myself over others, but I am boasting in the truth.

- I say Christ is the truth, and all out of Him is a lie.
- I say the man that is in Christ, is in the truth; and all out of Him are in a lie.
- I say Christ is right reason, and true intellect; and that all who know Him not are but bastards, and mockers, and no children of reason, or even of intellect.

Oh, tell, tell them so, you watchmen in the cities, on the walls, and around the bulwarks of our Zion!

³⁶ Sciolists: "people who pretend to be knowledgeable and well informed."

This vision of the glory of the Son of man overwhelmed the seer with astonishment, and absorbed all his faculties of thought and action, and he fell at His feet as dead. Had he not been in the Spirit, and by the Spirit sustained, such a vision, starting into life at one's right hand, and with a trumpet voice uttering such mighty words, in the solitude of a sequestered place of banishment, might have extinguished life altogether. There is an awe of a spiritual appearance which is indescribable:

- Job's friend, who saw such an apparition, says that the hair of his flesh stood up.
- Daniel, who feared not the wrath of a king, nor the lion's den, when he saw such a vision was left without strength remaining in him.
- So also Ezekiel, and indeed all the persons in the Old Testament who were favored with such apparitions from the invisible world.

Whence this dread should arise, is not an inquiry for the divine so much as the philosopher. To say that it arises from its being supernatural, is not altogether to explain the difficulty, for we do not find that the supernatural actings of our Lord and His apostles wrought any such terror upon the by-standers and His apostles.

But these supernatural works were expected and besought, and brought to pass by the instrumentality of one like ourselves, whereas these without any preparation, and without any instrumental cause, came in an instant into being.

I think there is impressed upon our mind, by the hand of God, the awe and dread of a spiritual world, as the basis of the reverence of God as a Spirit. God, who is the Father of spirits, in order to confirm our reverence of himself, has grounded us in the common reverence of a spiritual world.

It may likewise be permitted by Him to pass into slavish dread for a remembrance of that captivity in which we have been, since the Fall, to the prince of fallen spirits; and a warning to the

wicked of the fearful mastery which he shall have over them in the world to come.

However it may be, no one will doubt that this instinctive dread of the spiritual world does betoken in man a deep and mysterious and awful connection therewith, and forms the basis of a religion, either of terror or of consolation, according to the tidings which are brought to us, concerning the spirits and the Father of the spirits who inhabit there.

In all cases of intercourse between demons and men, the effect has been grief, and torture, and death, to the poor mortal whom they get possession of. On the other hand, in all cases of intercourse between God and man, through angelic or divine appearances, the contrary effect has ever been experienced of kindness, comfort, good news, and gracious gifts. By which difference in the actings towards man, of the fallen and the unfallen, of the apostate and the elect spirits, is given to us a foretaste of that society, bitter or sweet, miserable or blessed, which we shall enjoy in the spiritual world, of which we are the denizens, between death and the resurrection.

Those wanderings and distractions of mind, those rendings of natural affections, and tortures of conscience, and other forms of anguish, which the spirits of possessed men and children, mentioned in the gospel, were liable to, and which have their continuance among ourselves in the various forms of madness, are a witness which God has left among men to warn them to flee from the bondage and oppression of Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

While those friendly admonitions, timely interpositions, gracious revelations, and blessed deliverances which God has in all times by spiritual intervention sent unto His saints, are a most exhilarating encouragement for us to put away the slavish dread of spiritual agents, and look upon God as our Father, and all holy angels, as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them which shall be heirs of salvation.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT: “FEAR NOT”

Of these angel visits, none so glorious and so consoling occurs in all the Scriptures, as this which is now before us, exhibiting our Brother in the style, dignity, and vestments of the Lord of glory, who, when the solitary exile to whom He condescended to appear, fell at His feet as dead, did most graciously lay His right hand upon him, saying unto him these wonderful words:

Revelation 1

¹⁷ Fear not; I am the first and the last:

¹⁸ I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

These words which were spoken for his consolation, and to banish his fears, contain great depths of divine doctrine, as well as strong food of spiritual consolation; before entering upon which I would first make a remark upon the word “fear not,” with which Christ first opens His lips.

The sharp and two-edged sword proceeding from his mouth, might well excite fear in the breast of a sinful mortal. As Daniel’s comeliness was turned into corruption when he saw the vision of this same glorious Person; so do I well believe the grace and the loveliness of John the Evangelist, would be turned into an overwhelming sense of vileness and wretchedness when he saw the vision of the Son of man. Oh, it is a fearful thing for flesh and blood to look upon God. Paul said of himself:

Romans 7

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Yet he was but looking on himself with the eye of his own conscience. How much more must our seer have felt, when searched with those eyes like lamps of fire, and standing in that Presence which was like the sun shining in his strength!

Most seasonable, therefore, was the word, “Fear not”. Great comfort, I doubt not, was conveyed by it, to the astonished and overwhelmed man. And oh what tenderness it bespeaks in Jesus Christ, thus to open the apocalypse of His glorious coming with

these words, “fear not”. The man speaks above the God, or to express it truly, the God speaks in and through the man.

It is Jesus, the unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and for ever; the same Jesus upon whose bosom John leaned; the heavens have not changed Him, for even upon earth He was holy as the heavens. And well did these words “fear not” suit the lips of Him who came to deliver men, who through the fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He who had made peace by the blood of His cross, and taken away the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, between both and God; He who had preached that love which casts out fear, might well begin His revelations from glory with the words “fear not.”

And methinks, moreover, they were suitable words for ushering in that series of revelations, which were to contain the fearful judgments, and consummated wrath of God, the strokes of chastisement, the earthquakes of destruction, the throes of death to the present framework of this evil world; which, while we pursue in our meditations, and are not afraid to tell out the terrors thereof, let these words be ever in our ears, in the ears of all who read and who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein.

To all such, the voice which spoke them says, “Fear not”. Fear not for yourself, O my servant; fear not for the Church. And shall we not respond in the words of the Psalmist:

Psalm 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

³ Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Such, O God, let my spirit be, and such be the spirit of those who hear, while together we meditate with awe these dreadful visions of coming judgment.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT: "I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST"

Revelation 1

¹⁷ I am the first and the last.

In reflecting upon these words, since our last lecture, I have been led into somewhat deeper views of this expression, and of those which then passed under our consideration. The expressions, "the first and the last," "the beginning and the ending," we explained as signifying that the Son of God was by the Father, or, more correctly to speak, was by the Godhead, contemplated as the Christ, before time had a beginning, before the world was, and that the end for which things were created, and the laws under which they were created, do arise out of that contemplation and purpose of the Godhead, to bring into outward being the Christ, fullness of God, and blessedness of creation, which He purposed in himself before the world was.

And so Christ is before all things, and the end of all things: before all things, inasmuch as, to bring Him forth in His perfection was the purpose of God from eternity, the end of all things,—inasmuch as, when creation, under God's plastic finger, shall stand exhibited the fullness of Christ, there is its end, not its ending, as a subsistence, but its accomplishment as a structure, its perfection as a work of God, the ending indeed of its growth unto perfection; in which perfection it shall ever stand, bodying forth in the well-pleased sight of God His own complete purpose, and in itself feeling and enjoying the rich harmony, the sufficient provision, the perfect beauty, and the infallible strength which are essential to every idea and purpose of the mind of God.

Now this is an exceeding great and precious truth; a doctrine it is, which, like a key, does unlock the deep things of the word of God; and without which, I defy any divine, either to justify God in creation, or to defend the mystery of the Trinity, or to enjoy its inconceivable wealth of truth. And yet, as I said above, large, yea, and vast as this idea is, to which I gave utterance in my last lecture, and have now given repetition, it still lacks something of the

fullness of that which is expressed by the words, “I am the first and the last.”

It does not satisfy the contradiction which is in these words, “I am the first and the last;” for a contradiction clearly there is: that which is the first cannot be the last, and that which is the last cannot be the first.

So it is with the expression,

Revelation 1

⁸ I am...the beginning and the ending;

–and the expression,

⁸ I am the Alpha and the Omega;

–and, if I mistake not, the same intentional contradiction is contained in the name of the Father, and of Christ also,

⁸ ...which is, and which was, and which is to come;

–for that which is present, cannot at the same time be past, and that which is present and past cannot at the same time be future. Wherein, then, consists the meaning of setting down an idea by contradictory terms? Because in this way, and in this way alone, can any idea be fully expressed, as has been shown by Coleridge, that precious relict of the school of sages, in his *Aids to Reflection*.

It is of the essence of an idea that it should be of the reason, and not of the sense; and what is of the pure reason cannot be expressed in terms of the sense. But time and place are essential forms of the sense, either inward or outward, and therefore when you would express any idea with respect to time and place, the only resource you have is, when you have said one thing to contradict it by another. By so doing, you indicate whereabouts the thing you would express lies, and teach that it is not to be expressed under that category; and there you leave it for your reader to exercise his reason, and see if he can find the idea there.

When the ancient sage was asked to define God, he did it by contradictory conceptions, saying, that he was a circle, all center, without any circumference; thereby expressing the truth, that he

was in all places, and beyond all place, and unlimited by place, (without circumference,) and yet not diffused, nor scattered over space, so as to be in parts, but all in every place (all center).

Such an idea also is the Trinity, and such an idea also is Eternity, and such ideas are contained in the expressions before us. For example, when it is said of God, “which is, and which was, and which is to come,” it is asserted that He is all present in the present time, that He is all present in the past time, and that He is all present in the time to come; or, in other words, that there is no time when He is not all present, and therefore all unchangeable; that time or succession of existence is not an attribute of His; and if not of His, then also not of Christ’s, unto whom the same title, “which is, which was, and which is to come,” is applied.

Men are willing enough to acknowledge this truth of God, but few men apprehend it to be a truth also of Christ—I mean not of Christ as God, but of Christ as Christ. And yet this is a fundamental truth, of which the Scriptures are more anxious to bear testimony than of the other. Now that same truth, in respect to order, is expressed by the words, “I am the first and the last.”

When it has been said, *I am the first*, lest that should be misunderstood to mean, that He was only the first of things existent in the purpose of God, it is instantly added, *and the last*. And lest it should be understood, that He was only the one and the other, or both of these, they are joined together in one attribute, and, so joined, do signify that while His being included the whole series of succession, from first to last, it was not under the law of succession, but that He was the full Christ of God before the world was, before He was brought into the world of the virgin’s seed, when He was of age, when He was a disembodied spirit and a dead body, as He is now, and as He shall be, when He comes again; and as He shall be for ever and ever.

That is to say, that the Son, co-essential, co-eternal, consubstantial with the Father, very God of very God, did before creation assume unto himself that limited form of the Christ, in which the Father saw before time, and independent of time, before change,

and independent of change, His work complete in that beauty and perfectness to which it shall yet attain.

And in this all-containing form of being, image of the invisible God, fullness of the Godhead, the Son did create and order creation to the end of His becoming flesh, did take flesh, did redeem it, did glorify it, and is now bringing all things to be under it, the parts, dependencies, and drapery of His being. All things headed up in Him, both things in heaven and things in earth.

There are apparent changes, as His taking flesh; but this is not a real change of His being as the Christ of God; that is to say, he who takes flesh, is the very same whom God set up, before the world was, by whom God created the world, who spoke by the prophets. No change did His spiritual being undergo, in these acts of creating the world, redeeming flesh and the world.

His spiritual being is that fullness of Godhead, which was the device and the joy of Godhead, in the purpose, and in the enjoyment before the light was created, and before He set His compass on the deep. The rest is but the acting of the Son, thus limiting himself, unto the end of bringing that form of being which He had assumed into outwardness from the Godhead itself; that is, into creation. While yet it was not outward, it was the delight of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all the same as it shall be, when it is outwardly complete.

And creation, therefore, adds nought to the enjoyment of God within himself. It adds not to His own essential glory; it is not for himself, but for the good of the creatures that He creates. Creation, and redemption, and regeneration, are all actions of the goodness of God outwardly, unto the works of His hands.

Reader, whoever you are, call not these things dreams which be the essential truths of Godhead and the bases of a creation.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT: “I AM THE LIVING ONE”

Revelation 1

¹⁸ I am He that lives and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore; Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

It is thus in the original:

“I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I became dead, and behold alive I am unto the ages of ages; Amen; and I have the keys of Hades and of death.”

What then is meant by Christ’s claiming to himself the characteristic of the “living One?” To explain this, we must go to the *Gospel* and *First Epistle of John*; in the former of which it is thus written of the Word:

John 1

³ All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made;

⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of man.

⁵ And the light shined in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

And in the latter:

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and which we have looked upon, and which our hands have handled of the Word of life,

² (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness; and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)

So Christ says of himself:

John 14

⁶ I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

These and such passages contain the same truth which is expressed in the words before us,

“I am the living One.”

Now it is manifest to any one perusing them, that it is not His life in the days of His flesh that is spoken of. That was but “the manifestation of the life,” which had a previous subsistence in Christ, which had an eternal subsistence in Him with the Father before it was shown unto us.

The life here spoken of as appertaining unto Christ, is coeval with the creation of the world and the light of men; yea, and it is before them, being an attribute of that Word which was with God, and which was God, and the source out of which the light of men arose. Creation of the matter of the world was His first act; to give life in its various forms was the next; and in man that life grew into the “light of life,”³⁷ which, as we find it elsewhere used, does signify the clear vision of truth and discernment of God.

John 12

³⁵ Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walks in darkness, knows not where he goes.

³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of the light.

And still more to the present purpose is it written:

John 8

¹² I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The life and the light spoken of in these and other passages, is the eternal life which knows not death; the true light in which God is beheld, and obeyed, and enjoyed. This life which, in its several degrees, was communicated at creation, is declared to have been in Christ contained, before that beginning of events, out of Him to have come, and by Him to have been imparted.

Now it was one of the great ends of the Incarnation, to demonstrate that Christ had life in himself: and that the thing manifested in and by Jesus Christ is not the original, but only the copy of that which was in Him from the beginning, according to the purpose of the Godhead.

Incarnation and creation itself are but showings forth of that primordial and archetypal form of all existences: the Christ, the Beginning of the creation of God. Not the Godhead, which is incomprehensible; but the Godhead brought into the comprehensi-

³⁷ *John* 8:12.

ble form of Christ. This I hold to be the very link which binds God and creation: even Godhead comprehensible in Christ.

Now when it is said that the life was in Christ, or that He is the living One, it is so asserted of that former Being which the Son assumed before the world was, and in which He is to be manifested for ever and ever. But for Godhead, in the person of the Son, to assume a form of being is an act or work unto which all the persons must concur: the Father, as the purposer of it; the Son, as the person in it; the Holy Ghost, as the life of it: for these are the proper offices of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in every work of God.

If, then, the Holy Ghost be the life of that form of being which before the world was (God set up in the person of Christ), we are given to understand by the expression, "I am the living One," that He, even Christ, possessed the Holy Ghost as His life, not in the Godhead subsisting, but in the Christ subsisting. Christ, therefore, has the Holy Ghost as life, all life whatever was in the Word, before it came forth into creation.

These are very deep truths, and being looked at heedlessly, indeed being otherwise looked at than with the greatest caution and consideration might lead some to suppose that we were advocating the heresy of a pre-existing humanity. It is not so. We believe the humanity had no existence until the Word became flesh.

But we, withal, believe that the Christ is before all, not as a man, but as the person of the Son, sustaining that limited form of being. I mean, that the Son was the Christ of God, as a purpose, as a reality, before the world was; in whom, as in the fountain-head of being, God saw all forms of being that were to exist in their unity and harmony.

Revelation 1

¹⁸ I am He that lives, and was dead [*I became dead*]; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen...

He who had life within himself from all eternity, He who was made the depository of all outward life before any creature was

formed, became a dead person, to the intent of its being proved by God that He was the Prince and Author of life. He came into this mortal estate not to die as an end, but as a means of proving Him to be the very life.

If I were wishing to prove that one man alone, of many men, could accomplish some object, I would first exhibit all the rest foiled in attempting it. So God, in order to prove that Christ, and He alone, is the living One, does permit the many living ones to come under the dominion of death. Having thus proved that no man is the living one, He then brings Christ into the same controversy with death, who, by overcoming it, does prove himself the Prince of life, and the Master of death. So that He could say:

John 11

²⁵ I am the resurrection, and the life.

By being the resurrection, He is proved to be the life. He is not the life in consequence of the resurrection, but in antecedence of it. The resurrection proves Him to be that Being in whom it had pleased God that it should reside as in an invincible fortress, which was tried and proved to be death-proof.

By becoming mortal there was another great principle of the subsistence of the Christ established: the principle that the Christ is not self-subsisting; but subsists upon and by the Father. The *Son* is self-subsisting; but upon becoming the *Christ*, He passes out of that divine attribute, into the creature attribute of subsisting by the Father.

Not that His Godhead is changed, or can be changed, without changing Godhead altogether. For Godhead, as has been expressed, is not the property of one person, but the community of all the Persons of Godhead.

This Godhead being fully preserved in the Son, in order to show what it is, unto the comprehension of intelligent creatures, He drops all use and claim of it, condescending to become, and to be known, and to be spoken of, as that noblest form of creature, the Christ.

To show His manner of subsistence, as connected with God, in order to exhibit, and thereby to exhibit the manner of the subsistence of all creatures, which are but the limbs of the same Christ in respect of God, He takes unto himself a body, that He may be seen, and handled, and reported of, and that all men may know the mystery of God, which was hid from the ages past, but is now revealed unto the Church.

Now when Christ appeared within the intelligible and sensible world, under the conditions of mortality, He did put himself out of self-existing life in order to receive it again from the Father, that it might be seen and manifest, that in His form of Christ the Son lives upon the Father, according as it is written:

John 6

⁵⁷ As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father.

Thus bringing himself into the mortal, and denuding himself of the life which was in Him reposed as in the fountain-head, He did exhibit himself receiving life from the Father and using it for the Father, which appearance again is the very reality that had been from eternity.

The Son, as the Christ, is fed with life from the Father by the Holy Ghost, wherefore in the deeper divinity of a better age, Christ was wont to be called the *Pleroma*, or *fullness*, and the Holy Ghost the *Vinculum Trinitatis*, or *bond of the Trinity*. So that when Christ healed a withered hand, He referred it to the Father, saying,

John 5

²⁶ As the Father has life in himself, so has He given the Son to have life in himself.

Did He raise Lazarus? It was through the answer of the Father to His faithful prayers. Is *He* raised from the dead? It is by the working of the mighty power of the Father of glory.

And now that He sits and reigns Lord of life, great Regenerator, second Adam, He does refer the power which He has received wholly to the gift of the Father. In so doing He teaches the God-

head by showing it in action; He gives the basis of all morality, by showing the severity and the goodness of God; He teaches the way of redemption by treading it in His own person.

All this doctrine, with much more of a practical kind, I defer till the same expressions come before us in the Epistle to the Church in Smyrna, where it is taught us by these words, "I was dead, and am alive for evermore."³⁸

THE KEYS OF HELL AND DEATH

It only remains that I explain this:

Revelation 1

¹⁸ ...and have the keys of hell and death.

The word translated *hell* is Hades, which properly signifies the place of the separate souls. It certainly is not the lake that burns, which is never represented as a prison in creation; but as a waste howling misery beyond the bounds of redeemed creation, from which there is no escape, and upon which therefore, no key is placed. But otherwise with the place of the soul in its separate state, which is represented in many parts of Scripture as a place of safe-keeping. The hell here spoken of is truly the place of separate spirits.

Death is not merely the separation of soul and body; but is the falling away of the body into corruption, and the retention of the soul in Hades. That the body should corrupt, is not the whole of death. It is needful to add that the soul goes into Hades to remain there forever, unless a Redeemer shall be found. And the Redeemer, when He shall come, must not only be able to take the body from the grave, but likewise to take the soul from Hades. He must have two keys: one able to unlock the grave, another able to unlock Hades.

Christ, when He would prove himself greater than death, must go into the prison-house of death, which is the grave; and His soul must go into the prison-place of the soul, which is Hades.

³⁸ This is found in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 5, "The Epistle to the Church in Smyrna," Chapter: "Christ's Second Designation."

And having been thus fully certified as dead, He must by strength of hand, like Samson, come forth of Gaza, with the gates upon His shoulders. And this truly He did, for His soul having descended into Hades, did thence come forth amain; aye, and bring a levy out along with Him, showing that He was master of that key.

And then He went and took His body from the grave, and likewise the bodies of many other saints, proving that He was master of that key also; so that His complete death and His complete resurrection do indeed demonstrate that He has the keys of hell and death.

Lord He is of death, the captivity He has led captive; and when the time comes for Him to speak the word, death and hell will tremble and obey. Not a soul, not a body, but at His sovereign command, shall come forth; some to the resurrection of life, some to the resurrection of judgment. And thus stands Christ, gloriously manifested as the living One, of whom it was said of old,

Hosea 13

¹⁴ O death, I will be your plague: O grave, I will be your destruction.

Such are, as they appear to me, the doctrines of this comfortable speech which our Shepherd spoke to the petrified seer. The practical uses of them I postpone, until I meet them again in the course of the Epistles.

II. HIS SEVEN EPISTLES

THE vision of Christ, the High Priest of our profession, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, which occupied our thoughts in the former part, is only the personification or portraiture of the writer of those seven epistles, to which our attention is now to be directed.

It is not intended to be contemplated alone, but to be studied in connection with what follows in the second and third chapters; being, as has been already said, like the vignette with which the chapters of picturesque writings are wont to be introduced, or like the allegorical paintings with which legendary tales were wont to be emblazoned.

I remember, when a youth, to have visited the cathedral church of St. Mary's, in the city of Carlisle, England, and to have seen painted upon the walls of the porch the history of the temptations and triumph of some saint, I forget which, perhaps St. Anthony. In each compartment of the piece, besides the significant personages in their appropriate attitudes and actions, there were words proceeding forth from their mouths for the fuller exposition of the subject.

The revelation of Jesus Christ given in this book, is just such a succession of allegorical paintings. The first in order, is that which we have explained; the second is contained in the 4th and 5th chapters; the third, at the beginning of the 8th chapter; the fourth, at the beginning of the 10th chapter; and so on, unto the end.

In the porch or chapel of St. Mary's, it was left to your own ingenuity, or the ingenuity of your guide, to give language and narrative to the succession of St. Anthony's trials. But in this book of the *Revelation* of the King of saints, the office of interpreting and applying the several parts of the allegorical representations is fulfilled by the same unerring wisdom which delineated them. And these explanations do constitute the chief parts of the prophecy.

These explanations themselves are also generally allegorical, having a dependency upon and subservience to that particular manifestation of Jesus Christ under which they were written. Such an application of the points of these allegorical representations we now have to consider.

But first it will be necessary to make a remark or two upon verses 19 and 20, which form the link of connection between the vision and the application of the vision. When, by the comfortable words of the Son of man, the seer had been awakened from his death-like entrancement of fear, he received this commandment from his Lord and Master:

Revelation 1

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

In these words the whole subject-matter of the writing of this book is divided into three parts. The first is entitled, “the things you have seen” and in the next verse, the things intended by those words is given:

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars *which you saw* in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which you saw, are the seven churches.

THE SEVEN STARS

The first integral division of the book, therefore denominated by these words, “what you saw” is “the mystery of the seven stars, and the seven golden candlesticks.”

That this symbol of the ministers of the Church, and the churches, should have been raised into the importance of an integral division of the book, does better demonstrate than anything else the great consequence which the Lord assigns to it, and does well justify the large consideration which we gave to it in the former lectures.

When I review these considerations in my thoughts, I feel them to be utterly inadequate to the dignity of the subject. And I am

constrained here, where an opportunity is given, to show additional reason why this mystery of the stars and candlesticks should be so exalted into a distinct division, and that, the first division of this book.

The stars are, as is interpreted, the angels of the churches. This signifies that person in each Church unto whom is committed the ministry of the word, the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Of this personage the dignity is so great, and the office so essential, as to stand foremost in this revelation of Jesus Christ.

And well is it entitled, *Christ, the Universal Bishop*. To that pre-eminence, for without the ordinance of preaching, there would be no Church; and without a Church, there would be no Christian kingdom; and without a Christian Church and Christian kingdom, there would be no apostasy, no beast, no false prophet.

The whole substance of this book, the whole drama of God's providence therein laid out towards Christendom, derives itself out of the office of the preacher of the word, the angel, the sent-one of Christ.

If, again, we look at the dignity of this office, not so much in relation to the things contained in this book, as to its own intrinsic excellence and high prerogatives, we shall see it still the more to be admired. For what are the three supreme indefeasible and unchallengeable rights of Christ? These three:

1. First, to be the word of God, through whom the invisible God must be communicated withal;
2. Secondly, to baptize with the Holy Ghost; unto which dignity the Baptist, of whom none born of a woman was greater, having respect did say, "I am not worthy to stoop down and to loose the latchet of His shoes;" in which prerogative of Christ stands the quickening of everlasting life, in the mortal substance of every creature whom the Father has chosen thereto: and
3. The third of Christ's Divine dignities is, to feed the flock of the Father's elected and regenerated ones, with His flesh and His blood: from His seat on high to administer unto the

Church that measure of the Holy Ghost which, in the days of His flesh, did avail to sanctify the body which He took.

These are the three prerogatives of Christ: to be the Word, the Baptist, and the Pastor, between God and His creatures. Who is the man on earth that does, under Christ, administer these offices to the Church? A king? No. A judge? No. Who then? The ordained minister of a Church:

- to whom is committed the word of preaching, constituting us ambassadors for Christ;
- to whom is committed baptism, which is not by water only, but by water and the Spirit: for that man is a sacrilegious spoiler of God's ordinance, who separates the inward act of regeneration, from the outward act of washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to all who receive it by faith:
- to whom is committed the administration of the Lord's Supper, whereof the worthy receiver is made partaker of the body and blood of Christ, to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

If then it be the right of the Christian minister, or angel of the Church, to represent by his office these three highest dignities of Christ, then his place and station upon the earth is the most noble, and the most responsible; the most holy, and the most comprehensive; and is, therefore, well entitled to the precedency which it has in this book.

THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

Next, if this office be considered in relation to the churches, then what less is it, than that out of which the very being of a Church arises? For the preaching of the word is the only ordinance for the conveyance of faith from the Father; and without believers, there can be no Church.

And when there are believers drawn out by the preaching of the word, baptism is the only ordinance for the regeneration of a believer by the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby he becomes a Son of

God. And the Lord's Supper is the only ordinance and means for the nourishment and edification of the faithful.

From the office, therefore, and through the office of the minister of the word and sacraments, does the very being of a Church proceed, in whom accordingly we shall find the Church always regarded by Christ as represented.

High, therefore, very high, and very holy is his office in every respect. Holding from Christ, we hear Christ without any intercession of a middle party; and we speak what we hear to the Church committed to our charge.

Such is the dignity of the ministerial calling, which Church government, in its several courts of presbytery, synod, and general assembly, or bishop, archbishop, and king in convocation, are not intended in the least to infringe. If they do, they usurp it upon Christ, who has a right to speak to the ministers who speak to His members without any intervention of a third party.

These authorities of the Church are the collected authority of the several ministers gathered together into them, and not another power above and besides that of the minister. And this is the great danger of Episcopal superintendence, that it may give rise to the idea, that in a person above the minister of word and sacraments, there is reposed by Christ an authority and power of a higher order; which, be it lodged in king, pope, archbishop, or general assembly, is nothing else than an invasion of, and assumption upon Christ's proper and peculiar dignity as the only Head of the Church.

When the ministry, already in possession of the gift and in the daily exercise of it and therefore able to recognize it in another, have sought for and recognized it in another, they signify the same by setting him over a flock by the laying on of hands. Where placed, he enters upon that dignity for which Christ, not they, did qualify him. They do not give the qualification, but they seek for one into whom Christ has divided it by the Spirit. Nor do they make the office, nor does he hold it under them, but under Christ, for the ends set forth in His holy word.

The less occasion they have to interfere with him the better; and it is only in case of his venting anything to destroy the unity of the truth, or the unity of the body of Christ, or walking contrary to the canons of the Church, that they step in with the exercise of that discipline and government which is reposed in them.

This dignity and prerogative have ministers of the word, not for their own sakes, but for promoting the great ends of God, in calling out from the world His own chosen people, and constituting them into a Church. And when churches have, by the faithful preaching of the word been constituted, the purpose of God, in respect to the present visible condition of the Church is accomplished. And they are expected to hold on until the coming of the Lord.

The seven stars, therefore, and the seven golden candlesticks, signifying all the ministers and all the churches, until Christ shall come again, is the symbol of a complete purpose of God, namely, His purpose by the Church. And as this purpose is the highest of all God's purposes, next to, or rather an integral part of the Christ, it occupies deservedly the first place in this scheme or revelation of the purposes of God.

But the whole Church, both Christ the Head and all His members, are but one great candlestick, for holding up unto a world lying in darkness the light of the knowledge of the living God, for which the world is responsible, and for the neglect of which the world shall be judged.

IN THE WORLD

There hence arises a third object upon our view, which is the world wherein the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks have their abode.

Now, the plantation of churches within any state or kingdom, is for the purpose of giving light to the rulers of that kingdom, that they may know God's method of government, and God's Head Governor; and knowing them, be guided by the one and render homage to the other. To teach kings how to rule under Christ, and

subjects how to obey from conscience towards God: this is the great end of the Church with respect to the kingdom.

And when the king and his estates have offered unto Christ their allegiance, which they do by being baptized in His name, thenceforth that kingdom is regarded by God as a Christian kingdom, whereof Christ is the invisible King; and it begins to be entreated by His Providence accordingly. They have honored Christ and God will honor them.

Unto a Christian kingdom it is not necessary that all the people should be Christians, nor even that they should all have taken upon them the profession of Christ; but it is necessary that the ruling powers, the whole power corporate, should have done so, and when they have done so, theirs is a Christian kingdom. For the kingdom stands not in the subjects, but in the king and the subordinate powers of government.

Power is an essentially distinct thing from subjection, given by God in sacred trust for sacred ends. These ends, no doubt, include the good government and well-being of the people; but the subject people are not looked upon by God as having the power, but as being under the power. And therefore, I have said, that a Christian kingdom consists in this, that the king, if he be absolute, and if not, the king and those with whom he divides the power, should have professed allegiance unto the Lord Jesus Christ, by coming under the sacrament of baptism. This done, that kingdom is regarded as a Christian kingdom.

Moreover, it is not necessary to constitute a Christian kingdom, that all the powers taking on Christ's profession should be Christians at heart. However desirable this were, both in Church and State, it is not to be expected in either; for in every field of wheat the enemy will sow tares. Pure communion in the Church, and pure administration in the State, are continually to be sought after, and much, much to be desired; but that they are never found is no reason to conclude that there is no Christian Church, nor yet Christian State.

Be it so, then, that the end of the Church, in respect to the world, is to bring the kingdoms thereof under Christ's authority, and that a kingdom comes under His authority when the powers that be have taken upon them the profession of Jesus Christ. When such a state of things has come about in any kingdom, a new form of responsibility arises, and a new order of things begins. Christ straightway takes such kingdoms under His guardianship, and entreats them with His special favor, and sets them upon the work of destroying His enemies; which are idolatry, superstition, will-worship and wickedness of every kind.

I say not that He uses the sword of the Christian king first, but rather the preaching of the word. His angels He sends forth unto the nations, to make known unto them and their kings the good and gracious purposes of God, which messengers, rejecting, stoning and slaying, then it is, that He sends fire and sword to devour these wicked people: warning first and execution last.

And when the execution comes sure, though late, He uses to honor therein those who know His name: as, for example, He has done Great Britain against Mohammedans, Brahmins, and Buddhists, in the east; and against infidel France in the west; and as He did heretofore use Constantine and Theodosius against Paganism.

But when a Christian kingdom itself becomes apostate, there is raised up against it a scourge of a more terrible kind; as for example, Infidelity against the Papacy, the Saracens and the Turks against the Greek Church of old.

But without entering particularly in this place, into the condition and treatment of a Christian State, I am satisfied to have thus brought it forward as a distinct object of God's government of the world, whereby He shows by great political examples what blessings political He would confer upon nations, if they would but acknowledge His Son; speaking to them, not by words merely, but by examples, and saying:

Psalm 2

¹⁰ Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son [*kiss, that is, do homage to the Son*], lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

Now this state of things, expressed shortly by the name *a Christian kingdom*, had not yet arisen in the world when John received this vision. It was not among the things which then *were*, but among those which *were to be*. The churches existing apart from the kingdom, were then in being: the seven angels and the seven golden candlesticks.

But the Church, including the kingdom, and not subordinating it, was not yet in being. The Church among its subjects, showing the grand example of subjection, was in being. But the Church among the potentates, showing the grand example of power, was not yet in being. The Church under persecution was nobly showing forth the truth of Christ, patiently suffering for the sin of the world. But as yet the Church had exhibited nothing of Christ's office, as Head of kingdoms.

This was a state of things that came not into being until the baptism of Constantine, the first Christian emperor. Then, indeed, Christ began to act as a King within the bounds of the Roman empire, which this prophecy chiefly or almost entirely respects. And from that time commences, as we shall show at large hereafter, the division of the book, entitled in our text, "the things that are to be," while the epistles to the seven churches describe the things "which are."

God's purpose by the world had obtained such actual accomplishment, as is described in the first three chapters. The ministers and the churches had been revealed, but the Christian kings and kingdoms waited to be revealed, until the time of Constantine the Great. Therefore is the one called "the things that are," and the other "the things that are to be hereafter."

Now, though the things that are to be hereafter begin at the fourth chapter, and therefore the things that be are doubtless contained in the second and third chapters, we are not thence to conclude that the one ceased when the other began. On the other hand, the constitution of the angels and the churches remains unaltered and unalterable, until Christ shall come again. He who would set it aside fights against God and His Christ, and shall be treated with the most exemplary judgment. It is not superseded when an additional constitution is introduced, while at the same time the introduction of Christ into the kingdoms marks an era in the history of God's dealings with the world, and it also marks an era in the history of the Church, which from that time forth labored against the new form of wickedness.

The form of wickedness, against which the Church labored for the first three centuries, was a kingdom wholly under the profession and power of Satan. Paganism, and idolatry, and every form of diabolical error held the throne. There was no profession of Christ, but the most inveterate disavowal of Him. There was no delusion of the saints, nor attempts to delude them. It was absolute violence, raging power, unmitigated persecution of the name of Christ.

Far otherwise when the kingdoms became Christian; for then Satan, having changed his method of attack and adopted new weapons of warfare, the Church was constrained to adopt new methods of defending the truth. Martyrdom now, though the same in principle, and the same in glory, was different in all its outward circumstances; for now they made martyrs with the name of Christ in their lips, affecting His authority and the glory of His God.

Hence it comes to pass that, in various parts of this book we have the martyrs separated into two divisions³⁹: the one class being distinguished by the appellation of those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and the word of God, and the other by the denomination of them who had...

³⁹ *Revelation* 6:2, 12:2, compared with 12:17, and 20:4.

Revelation 20

⁴ ...not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.

Yet have both classes the same honor of the first resurrection, to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This, therefore, is the distinction between the state of things which was in being when the vision was given to John, and the state of things which came into being afterwards; the things that are, and the things that are to be hereafter.

THE SEVEN EPISTLES

Having given the ground of this distinction, I now proceed without further introduction to treat of the things which are, as they are laid out to us in the second and third chapters, understanding thereby a constitution of things not temporary, but enduring until the coming of the Lord.

Each of these epistles, as has been said, consists of three parts:

1. First, the superscription or personal designation which Christ takes to himself;
2. Secondly, Christ's personal charge unto the angel of the Church; and,
3. Thirdly, a word of the Spirit unto the churches, and, indeed, not to the churches only, but to every one who has an ear to hear.

Now, upon this method which the wisdom of God has adopted for ordering the matter, I wish, first of all, to make some observations.

With respect to the personal designation with which each letter is inscribed, I have already observed this general principle, that with the slightest addition, all the seven separate designations are found in the vision itself, united into one. The vestments, circumstances, and words presented in the vision are subdivided into seven parts, which are severally used to designate the person of the Son of man; showing us again the great principle of diversity in unity.

As the Godhead is generally set forth by seven attributes, generally called His essential attributes; which, to name them, are His “being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth,” even so, when the completeness of our great Shepherd and Bishop’s character is set forth, He is represented as clothed upon with a sevenfold investment of attributes, which, after they have been exhibited in the unity of His person, are separated from each other, and exhibited in various exercise for the profit of His Church.

And to the effect that they might in all the churches be well known and understood, and by all the angels of the churches who represent Christ, be well apprehended and borne in mind, seven churches in their circumstances best fitted to exemplify them, are chosen out from the multitude which then were in the world, and in a letter to their angels, He shows himself forth in that peculiar attribute, exercising it for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. This I believe to be the reason of these various personal designations with which Christ inscribes His epistles.

As for the epistle itself, it is addressed to the angel, to the minister of the word and ordinances, the guardian and the watchman, and the representative of Christ in that Church, and not unto the Church itself. This, now, is a great point, establishing beyond a doubt the dignity of Him who ministers the word and the sacraments; that, as a king is looked upon, and spoken to, as the representative and the responsible head of the kingdom, so is the minister looked upon as the representative and responsible head of the Church.

It necessarily follows, that He neither can nor may shrink from this responsibility; that he neither can nor may surrender it to any power on earth, without betraying the trust reposed in him by Jesus Christ; and that no power on earth may dare to take it from him, without insurrection against, and invasion of, the dignity of Jesus Christ.

As a king, however, has counselors to assist him in judgment, and magistrates to assist him in executing judgment, who receive their authority from and execute their commission under him, so has the minister of the Church a power, yea, and he is provided with an ordinance for the appointment of elders and deacons, who may assist him in the discharge of his onerous office.

Yet withal, unto him Christ looks for the right ordering of the whole Church; or else, if He did not, why in these seven instances address himself to him only, censure him only, approve him only, threaten him only? This question cannot be answered otherwise than by saying that he, and he only, is held responsible for all that is said and done.

This is a great point, and I touch it often because it is little apprehended. God knows, it is not vanity; for every additional view which I take of my office overwhelms me, and condemns me only the more. If I durst be unfaithful to my office as an interpreter, the thing from which I would shrink would be to tell out to my own conscience and to the Church, which knows my weakness, the requirements which the great Shepherd expects at my hand. But I must forget myself, and the Church of which I am a minister, and every inferior interest whatever, when I set my face like a flint to interpret God's word.

But in all this, right glad am I that I speak the constitutions of the Church of Scotland, whereof I am a sworn and bounden minister; for while by her constitutions the body of the people are treated as subjects, and not as rulers, whereby she is distinguished from all dissenting churches (wherein the people rule themselves, their minister, and all), and yet treated as free men, without whose call no minister ought to be ordained over them, whereby, again, she is distinguished from the practice, at least, if not from the canons, of the orthodox and true Church established in England. While, I say, the body of the people are represented in the rulers, the minister, elders, and deacons; and these again are represented in the minister, in all the higher acts of the Church, such as prayer, laying on of hands, preaching, and so forth.

Now as God has no artificer in His word, which ever represents the course of His Providence, we certainly conclude that the Church must look up to its minister as the immediate and only channel through which, as a body, they do receive benefits from Christ.

And they ought, therefore, to be in continual acts of faith, hope, and charity; of prayer and thanksgiving, on his account. And he likewise, feeling that the prosperity of so excellent a thing as Christ's Church depends on him, ought also to feel how needful is every grace to him, how perfect he should be in knowledge, in wisdom, in patience, in suffering, wanting nothing, seeing so much depends on him; seeing his sins and shortcomings bring judgment and Divine wrath, not upon himself only, but upon his people.

I confess for myself, that the study of this aspect of Christ as the Universal Bishop, while it has filled me with the most exalted ideas of my calling, and delivered me, upon the one hand, from popular influence, and, on the other, from the slavish bondage of ecclesiastical polity, into the true liberty and largeness of my office; it has, upon the other hand, impressed me with an inexpressible sense of the importance of personal completeness, blamelessness, faithfulness, watchfulness in doctrine, in discipline, in speech, in temper, in everything personal as well as official; because I see that, without such diligent perseverance, my flock must suffer loss, the Church of Christ bear scandal, and my Lord himself underlie reproach in the house of His friends.

Now I am willing to confess, that this doctrine concerning the dignity of the angel, minister, pastor, or bishop, were dangerous doctrine, and ready to pass into abuse, just as the doctrine of kings reigning under Christ has passed into the abuse of brutal power and passive obedience, were it not defended and prevented by the third part of these epistles; which is an address, not from Christ personal, but from the Spirit of Christ, unto the churches.

This is the counterbalancing principle in the constitution of a Church; that while Christ's voice is to be expected through the

minister, and in him Christ's person is to be honored, the Spirit of Christ is equally to be honored as answering in the churches. For with the same constancy with which Christ speaks to the angels and to them only, with the same constancy does the Spirit speak unto the churches. These are coordinate, co-equal, and co-essential principles in every Church: a preacher speaking with the authority of Christ, a Church answering with the witness of the Spirit.

If the water and the blood, the two sacraments, be two of the witnesses upon earth, then is the Spirit also a third witness:

1 John 5

⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The first two of these witnesses dignify the ministerial office, and the last dignifies and consecrates the Church. With what consideration, therefore, the minister asks and demands, yea, and insists upon, the privilege of his office (and he is not worthy of his office who would not die rather than yield its prerogatives to prince or to people), even with that same consideration ought he to respect, and reverence, and wait for, and assure himself of receiving the witness of the Spirit from the body of the Church.

And when there is harmony between these two co-equal and co-essential testimonies, you have the only guarantee of truth which is to be had in this nether world. Happy, happy is the Church that rightly preserves the balance of these two mutually dependent and mutually corrective authorities.

When either preponderates, evil ensues; when either is suppressed, there is no limit to the extent of the evil that will ensue. But when both are suppressed, the Church is gone utterly apostate.

Now I freely admit, that in the first ages of the Church, when the memory of Christ and His apostles, and the apostolical men, and the other first preachers, was fresh and vigorous in the Church, the tendency was to give too much weight to the minis-

ters of the word, and too little to the witness of the Spirit in the people. And so, by degrees, was matured that form of error in Church government which advances one man to a monarchical power over several ministers of the word and sacraments.

This I can bear with, if it be merely for preservation of the Church's union; but if it be for constituting a distinct order of men, essentially above the ministers of the word, to come between them and Christ, I protest against it as a subversion of the foundations.

This invention arose in the allowance, I will say, rather than the establishment of it, in the third and fourth centuries of the Church, anterior to which, no bishop might have within his diocese two communion tables, or altars, as they were called. For it is thus written in the 24th Apostolical Canon:

“If any priest [*which word signifies presbyter or elder*], if any elder, despising his bishop, gather a separate congregation and erect another altar, being not able to convict his bishop of anything contrary to godliness and righteousness, let him be deposed, as one that affects dominion; for he is a usurper: as also all the clergymen that are his accessories [*by clergymen was understood all office-bearers in the Church, of whatever name and degree*], and let the laymen be suspended from communion. Let these censures be passed after a first, second, and third admonition from the bishop.”

Upon this state of things, which exactly represents my standing, and the standing of all ministers of the Church of Scotland, there gradually supervened the method of prelates and metropolitans, which, as I said above, I can bear with being constituted, as in the Church of England I believe it is, for maintaining unity in the Church. But if it is constituted for establishing an order above my own, to control my own, I never will cease to lift up my voice against it.

But it cannot be that it is so regarded by the Church of England, seeing the bishop is ordained by the hands of common ministers; and in right of that ordination preaches, baptizes, and ministers

the sacrament. Moreover he dares not to go beyond the rubric in exercising jurisdiction; and when a bishop lately would have introduced a set of questions of his own, it was regarded as unconstitutional.

It may be thought that I should not meddle with these things; but it is a great comfort to me to see the constitutions of a sister Church not inconsistent with the canons of the word of God. I desire unity, and I seek it diligently where it may be had in practice, without sacrificing the unity of truth; and therefore I meddle with these matters, not to provoke, but to prevent schism; not to divide, but to restore unity where division has too much prevailed. This is indeed the truth, as my conscience bears me witness.

But in process of time, when the bishop of the Roman Church began to assert, first his metropolitan, and then his papal supremacy, the bishops of the Church contended against him, and asserted their co-equal and co-essential dignity. And thus the matter stood in controversy, until at length Justinian, by his *Pan-dects*, put all the bishops of the western Roman empire under the authority of the pope, making his verdict final in all matters ecclesiastical. By this act Justinian consummated the imperial apostasy, in daring to subvert the foundations of the Church, and originated the long career of the pope, which ended in the subjugation of the empire also.

But when monk Augustine, the pope's tool, came to claim this supremacy over the bishops of Britain, they rejected with indignation every such interference with the liberties of the Church in Britain. And so also, at a later date, did the Culdees of Scotland. And from this time forth the churches in these lands, with less or greater strenuousness, maintained a protestation against that usurper.

At the reformation, the Scriptures being interpreted and preached unto the people, the witness of the Spirit arose in the churches: and in the Church of Scotland, with whose constitutions I am best acquainted, after some years of a transition state, all the great principles presented to us in these epistles were re-

constituted. The ministers of the word and sacraments were put upon a level with each other, in equal dignity under Christ; and the unity of the churches and of the doctrine was preserved, in the first instance by means of superintendents, and afterwards by means of Presbyteries.

At the same time, while the super-eminent dignity of the minister of the word and sacraments was thus maintained, the answer of the Spirit in the churches was most diligently preserved; for, although the ministers of the word might have found the gift of preaching in some one, he was not permitted to be set over a Church, until the Spirit had witnessed in that Church to his doctrine. The people must first hear him, and, having heard him, must call him to be their minister, and promise him all duty, obedience, and provision in the Lord, before the Presbytery would take it upon them to set him apart by the laying on of hands.

If I understand anything, this is as essential to the health and prosperity of the Church as is the dignity and prerogative of the ministers. And I do honor much that race of Scottish churchmen, who through the long cold and bleak winter of the last century, more disastrous to the Church of Christ, perhaps, than any century before it, did fight the battles of the Church, contending against those false churchmen and shallow politicians who would impose ministers upon a people without a call, resisting not the rights of the people only, but resisting the right of the Holy Ghost to answer in the churches unto the truth of the doctrine preached by the minister.

In the method, therefore, of these seven epistles, I do discover these great principles:

1. First, a Universal Bishop, Jesus Christ the Great Bishop and Shepherd of our souls, who is head of every Church, who alone has the spiritual supremacy, and in whom the scattered churches reunite and are one; the Representative of God, God's Shepherd, Pastor of His elect people:
2. Secondly, I discern, as necessary to every Church, an angel, messenger, or ambassador of Christ, who, without interfer-

ence of a third party, shall come and go, with all messages, between the Head over all and all the congregation:

3. And, thirdly, I do discern the people to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, in whom, as one, the one Spirit speaks, whose voice, as it cannot be contrary to itself, so ought the people to eschew schism, and strive after unity, which they will best do by consorting much with the word of God, which contains the unity of the Spirit, in the diversity of all times, places, and persons.

Thus by using the word of God as the test, not a part of it, but the whole of it (for to prefer a part of it, is to sanctify schism), the many members of a Church should strive to come into oneness of mind and spirit, and to be delivered from all partiality and hypocrisy, which God surely wills, and which, therefore, they may surely hope for.

And being thus attuned, they shall become like the many-piped organ into which the minister of the word breathes the inspiration of truth, proved to be the inspiration of truth by the melody, the unbroken melody, which ascends from the whole Church, like the incense of the morning and the evening sacrifice.

But, alas! seldom is it the delectable experience of a minister to find such social harmony in the Church over which he is appointed. Nevertheless, though they were as divided as the Corinthian Church, ought he to believe, and hope, and pray, that the Spirit will speak from the midst of them. He ought to reverence the Church as the conscience where the Spirit dwells; and the churches ought to reverence him, as the tongue with which the Lord of the Spirit speaks, and this notwithstanding the incongruities, imperfections, and inconsistencies which they observe in one another.

It is, I say it again, in this mutual reverence, faith, and hope, that the ordinance of a pastor and a people grows into substantial life. Through conscience of the ordinance, as an ordinance of God; and through obedience of it, as a commandment of God, with all reverence, faith, and hope, it comes to pass at length, that the or-

dinance grows into the fruitfulness, and blessedness, for which it was ordained.

Otherwise than as I have described above, I believe that the relation of pastor and people will never prosper. If the people will presume to stand between the pastor and Christ, and reprove him or dictate to him, then they trample him under foot, and step into the throne of Christ. If the pastor will not give good heed to the satisfaction of the people, and be desirous to hear their voice and to reverence their voice, he despises not them, but the Spirit who speaks to them, and in them; and he will be sure to suffer loss at the hand of that Spirit whom he has offended.

Let these principles sink into the hearts of both ministers and people; let them be the grounds of faith, and prayer, and diligent observance; and we may never fear that the fruit will be peace and prosperity, so far as may serve God's glory and our own good.



Ottheinrich Bible (1430-1530) - Library of Congress

APPENDIX A: THE LORD'S DAY

By Frank Zimmerman

I HAVE appended here, a brief analysis of the arguments that Irving used in the section "The Time," or more particularly, about the expression, "the Lord's day" in *Revelation* 1:10.

First, it would be good to recognize that Irving lived in the time of the beginning of the First Angel's message of *Revelation* 14:6-7. He did not have the advantage of seeing the next messages unfold, with their added light, resulting in a people who...

Revelation 14

¹² ...keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

However, since the arguments he uses to establish Sunday as "the Lord's day" are still in use today, and still clung to, even among those who ought to know better, and who live in a time of greater light than that which Irving had, I will go over them briefly.

SOLA SCRIPTURA

First of all, by the principle of "sola scriptura," or "the Bible and the Bible only," there is only one day that can possibly be interpreted as "the Lord's day" and that is the day which God refers to as "my holy day":

Isaiah 58

¹³ If you turn away your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on **my holy day**; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:

¹⁴ Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

That this is not only the holy day of God the Father, but of the Son also, is made clear by Jesus' words:

Matthew 12

⁸ For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

By these words, Jesus linked himself with the Divine One who walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the garden, when the Sabbath day was first instituted at the end of the creation week. This special day was...

Mark 2

²⁷ ...made for man,

—even before sin ever entered. Therefore, the original purpose of the day was for spiritual communion, rest and reflection, a time that God saw that man needed, in order to know the Lord better, and to keep his feet in the right path.

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Revelation 1

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...

Irving: "This expression, the Lord's day, shows us, that derived by the authority of the apostles, it is likely, from the higher authority of Christ himself, and perhaps communicated during those forty days after His passion in which He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, one day had been set apart under the name of the Lord's day: with the peculiar use of which the Christian churches must have been well acquainted, else it would not thus familiarly have been referred to as a note of time."

"Likely," "perhaps," "must have been" are simply assumptions. The preconceived notion is that Sunday was the day set apart, but the evidence is lacking, and so assumptions are made.

"One day had been set apart," which shows that there still was a day regarded as holy, even in apostolic times. The scriptural evidence however, shows this to be the Sabbath, and not Sunday.

Irving: "And in confirmation of this, it appears that it was the custom of the Christians to 'come together upon the first day of the week' (Acts 20:7) for certain holy observances."

This meeting on the first day, “to break bread,” was, according to scriptural reckoning, on what we would call Saturday evening. The Bible method of reckoning days was from evening to morning. Therefore the first day would commence on the evening, and therefore Saturday (or sabbath) evening would be the start of the first day. The apostles gathered with Paul for an evening meal (when the Sabbath was over), and Paul spoke until midnight. The next morning (Sunday morning) he departed and spent the whole day traveling. So there is no evidence for Sunday-sacredness here.

THE CHURCH FATHERS

Irving: “Moreover, Pliny, in his letter to the Emperor Trajan, written not many years after the death of the Apostle John, declares that it was their custom to meet together on a set day.”

The original statement from the letter is as follows:

They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met *on a stated day* before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies.⁴⁰

Since there is no way of telling what day these meetings were on, nor whether they were regular weekly meetings or just special meetings, this letter offers no evidence.

Irving: “And Justin Martyr, who wrote within forty years of the same event, declares that it was the custom in his time for the churches to assemble on the first day of the week for the same holy occupations which we still observe.”

The statement from Justin is as follows:

⁴⁰ Pliny the Younger, *Letter to the Emperor Trajan*.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.⁴¹

Anyone acquainted with church history will know that Justin was indoctrinated in Greek philosophy and after his conversion, combined it with Christianity, as did all the so-called church fathers after him. It was this very combination that led to the apostasy of the early church away from plain Bible teaching. In an effort to convert the pagans, Christians adopted more and more pagan customs, turning them into Christian celebrations.

The apostle Paul had warned that the “mystery of iniquity” was already at work in the church.⁴² Therefore, that there were reli-

⁴¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, chap. 67.

⁴² See *2 Thessalonians 2:7*.

gious observances held on Sunday, about 50-100 years after Paul, is not surprising. But was this part of the “falling away”⁴³ that Paul prophesied of? That there was a gradual introduction of Sunday worship in certain of the Christian churches, especially those under the influence of Rome, is clear from history. I quote just a few statements from historians:

The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to that purpose; who, keeping both that day and the first of the week, gave occasion to the succeeding ages to join them together, and make it one festival, though there was not the same reason for the continuance of the custom as there was to begin it.⁴⁴

While the Jewish Christians of Palestine retained the entire Mosaic law, and consequently the Jewish festivals, the Gentile Christians observed also the Sabbath and the Passover, with reference to the last scenes of Jesus’ life, but without Jewish superstition. In addition to these, Sunday, as the day of Christ’s resurrection, was devoted to religious services.⁴⁵

These statements show that Sunday was not observed as a replacement for the Sabbath. At least as far back as Justin Martyr’s time (early 100’s AD), Sunday was being observed. But the Bible evidence for the establishment of this day as the prescribed day of Christian worship is lacking. At the same time, there is plenty of Bible evidence that the apostles met in religious services on the Sabbath.⁴⁶ There were, of course, also groups that maintained the Sabbath only.

There was another sect which called themselves Hypsistarians, that is, worshipers of the most high God, whom they worshiped as the Jews only in one person. And they observed their Sabbaths and used distinction of meats, clean and unclean, though they did

⁴³ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

⁴⁴ Morer, *Dialogues on the Lord’s Day*, p. 189.

⁴⁵ Giesler, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i, chap. ii. sect. 30.

⁴⁶ Acts 13:42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4.

not regard circumcision, as Gregory Nazianzen, whose father was once one of this sect, gives the account of them.⁴⁷

In this way [that is, by presenting the testimony of the Bible on the subject] arose the ancient Sabbatarians, a body it is well known of very considerable importance in respect both to numbers and influence, during the greater part of the third and the early part of the next century.⁴⁸

Irving: "And as the Scripture has no higher authority than the inspiration of the same apostles, and the continual reception of the same Church, we may fairly place the Christian institution of the Lord's day upon the same high authority."

If Irving here means that church tradition (sometimes based on documents of questionable authenticity) holds the same authority as Bible truth, then I must differ.

SUBSTANCE OR SHADOW?

Irving: "If now anyone inquire why the observation of the Jewish Sabbath has ceased, we answer: it ceased with the other ordinances of the law, when the substance of these shadows was come in Christ. And if it be asked, what the substance of the Sabbath is, I answer, the sabbatism of the millennial rest which remains for the people of God."

"This we hold by faith; into this we are baptized. By our baptism the interval is over-leaped; we are supposed to be already risen, and living a super-resurrection or millennial life. A Christian, therefore, inasmuch as he lives not by sight, but by faith; inasmuch as his fleshly body is put to death, and his spiritual body raised with Christ, is regarded by God as keeping a sabbath."

There are many problems with this paragraph. First, the designation of the Sabbath as "Jewish." The Sabbath predated the Jews as a people; it began at creation. Jesus said it was "made for man." Furthermore, just because the Jews observed or taught certain things does not make them unchristian. Christians are grafted

⁴⁷ Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book xvi, chap. vi. sect. 2.

⁴⁸ Cox, *Sabbath Laws and Sabbath Duties*, p. 280.

into the same vine as the Jews.⁴⁹ They are the seed of Abraham, through Christ.⁵⁰ They are...

Philippians 3

³ ...the [spiritual] circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

And to Christians was the same gospel preached, as was preached in the Old Testament.⁵¹ There are two “Jewish” things to be avoided by Christians:

1. An outward observance of the sacrificial service that accompanied the old covenant. The temple and its sacrifices are no longer required, as our eyes are focused on Christ, the Lamb of God, and His work as High Priest in the heavenly temple.
2. The legalism of the Jews in Jesus’ time. Not having the law written on their hearts by the grace of God, they added many other laws to the law of God, in order to force themselves into what they thought was obedience. Hence, the Sabbath came to be surrounded with many restrictions, which were never in God’s original plan.

That the Sabbath of the moral law of ten commandments is not a “shadow” is shown by its inclusion in that moral law, which was placed inside the ark in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary. The moral law defines what sin is. None of these precepts are shadows of some other reality. A Christian is not freed to commit adultery, neither is he freed to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. The law against coveting is not a “shadow” of some other reality.

Romans 8

⁴ The righteousness of the law [is] fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

True sabbath-keeping is never a shadow or outward ceremony. It is a real experience of rest and refreshment in the grace of Christ. God saw man needed such rest at the beginning of cre-

⁴⁹ *Romans 11:17-24.*

⁵⁰ *Galatians 3:29.*

⁵¹ *Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 4:2.*

ation, before sin ever entered, and made allowance for it. It is a weekly need, and cannot be set aside any more than praying or Bible study can be dispensed with as mere rituals!

Irving: “The distinction in time between holy and unholy, as in meats and everything else, has been done away, and his work and his rest are equally holy, being done in faith. So that for him to keep the Jewish Sabbath were indeed to dishonor the liberty of Christ, and to introduce a distinction of time, which sanctifies a part at the expense of desecrating the other part. The same evil effect will be produced if we connect the Jewish idea of consecration with the Lord’s day: it will desecrate the other six, as if they were not days of the light of faith as well as the first.”

This is a remarkable conclusion! It’s wrong to keep Sabbath because you “sanctify one part at the expense of desecrating the other [days].” But it’s okay to reserve Sunday as a special day, holy above the rest!?

The truth of the matter is that God made a Sabbath, and set it apart, and this did not desecrate the other days. Each day has it’s purpose, and the best use of those days is to use them for what God made them for. Six days are used for work, and one day for rest. The only desecration can come when we try to make a day holy, by using days appointed by God for work as spiritual rest days; or when we use the day appointed by God for spiritual rest as a work day.

HUMAN TRADITION

Irving: “It rests for its authority upon apostolical sanction, and the traditional approbation of the Church; and for its uses, it has the same high sanction. And believing, as I do, in the Holy Catholic Church, I receive its traditions as authoritative, when they do not contradict any declaration of holy Scripture; which we know is inspired by the Holy Ghost. And therefore, whatever is contrary thereto cannot claim for itself the same weight, for the Holy Ghost is nothing contrary to itself.”

As shown, the “apostolical sanction” is lacking. There are a few references to the first day of the week in the New Testament, but none of them are associated with the institution of a weekly Christian festival or ceremony. Certainly there is no command from God to keep a different day, nor is there any other day that God “sanctified” and “blessed” with His presence.

Romans 10

¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Without the command or promise of God, there is no word from God that we can build our faith on. Faith must be exercised in the word of God only, not in the traditions of men.

As for “traditional approbation,” the shaky foundation of the material from the early church fathers can be understood better by reading E. J. Waggoner’s books, *Sunday: The Origin of Its Observance in the Christian Church*, or *Fathers of the Catholic Church*, or J. N. Andrews’ *History of the Sabbath*. I agree with Irving’s last statement:

“...whatever is contrary [to holy Scripture] cannot claim for itself the same weight, for the Holy Ghost is nothing contrary to itself.”

According to holy Scripture there is only one day of the week that God ever sanctified and blessed: the seventh-day Sabbath. To claim any other day, is to contradict the inspired word, which is to contradict the Holy Ghost. Keeping Sunday as a sacred day, therefore, is *not* to be received as authoritative by all Bible-fearing Christians.



