

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## BOOK 6

REVELATION 2:12-17

# EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS

EDWARD IRVING

1831



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**EPISTLE TO THE  
CHURCH IN PERGAMOS**

EDWARD IRVING

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

1831

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# CONTENTS

## FOREWORD

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.....	1
CHRIST WORKS THROUGH HIS CHURCH.....	2
A KEY TO THE REST OF THE BOOK.....	5
PROPHETIC HISTORY.....	7
II. CHRIST'S THIRD DESIGNATION.....	14
OF DISCIPLINE.....	25
SATAN'S SEAT.....	31
HOLDING FAST CHRIST'S NAME AND FAITH.....	39
ANTIPAS, THE FAITHFUL MARTYR.....	50
III. THE REPROOF.....	63
THE BALAAMITES.....	69
THE NICOLAITANES.....	93
THE THREATENING.....	99
IV. THE SPIRIT'S PROMISE.....	110
THE HIDDEN MANNA.....	113
THE WHITE STONE.....	118

## Revelation 2

<sup>12</sup> And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things says he which has the sharp sword with two edges;

<sup>13</sup> I know your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is: and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.

<sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

<sup>15</sup> So have you also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

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

<sup>17</sup> He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.



## 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  
[practicaprophetica.com](http://practicaprophetica.com)

*Gather up the fragments, that none be lost.*



# I. INTRODUCTION

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

THE view which I have given of these epistles, considered in general, is, that in them is exhibited the constitution of true Christian churches under Christ the chief Shepherd invisible, and the visible representatives of Him, called angels, for the ministry of word and of sacrament, held together by the one Spirit of Christ in all love and obedience, and preserved among the nations to hold up, in the midst of darkness and cruelty, and all temptation, the true and faithful name of God, to the end that men may believe thereon, and be saved from the wrath to come.

Wherein, as in so many seed-beds, prepared with all good culture, might be sown the seed of the kingdom, and the children of the kingdom might grow up, and testify to the Father's love to His creatures, though apostate, Christ's power to reclaim and sanctify the chief of sinners; that all men, having a continual and abiding proof of the promise fulfilled, may be left without all manner of excuse, if they do not come unto God, and be in like manner recovered from the misery and bondage of prodigal outcasts, into the adoption and liberty of the sons of God.

These churches are witnesses to the power of Christ in the Spirit, as the Jews are witnesses to His power in the word. We are the proof of His supremacy over spiritual wickedness, they are the proof of His providence over the nations of the earth. Both together are witnesses of His lordship over all things which God has created and made. Though the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places have sought to corrupt us and the rulers of the darkness of this world to destroy them, like the burning bush we are never consumed, and are preserved by Christ's Spirit and providence, by His power and sovereignty over things visible and things invisible.

When Jehovah made a covenant with the people of the former dispensation, it began by setting forth the holy constitution of



law and government, and religion, under which they should live,<sup>1</sup> by which they might be judged, and to which they might reduce themselves, in all after periods of their history.

So judge I, that in this prophetic history of the people of the New Testament, through all their errors and apostasies, there is set forth, in the first place, the nature and constitution, the privileges and obligations, of that society or fellowship which He wishes His Church to hold by, and if they be seduced away, thereto to return with all carefulness, lest He come and visit them with His wrath and indignation.

In no lower a place do I set these seven epistles, than as the constitutional charter of the chosen generation and royal priesthood, and holy nation, and peculiar people of God; by which all canon law, codes of discipline, acts of ecclesiastical judicatories should guide themselves, and according to which they shall all be tried by the Great Head of the Church.

## **CHRIST WORKS THROUGH HIS CHURCH**

As a constituent part of the revelation of Jesus Christ, these epistles are entitled to the most exact consideration. They exhibit Christ as the Head of the Church, the Father of the chosen seed, who, by means of the ordinances, feeds and nourishes up to manhood all those to whom God the Father gives faith in His name. They present Him as the great Vine of life, nourishing fruitful branches in the midst of storms, and perils, and persecutions of many generations.

They show the Church as a substantial and essential part of the divine purpose and decree, against which the gates of hell are not able to prevail; which perseveres, though all the world be set against it. And by this superiority to a world's temptations, by this union with Christ, maintained against a world's distractions, not only is the supernatural character of the Church demonstrated, but likewise the divine character and power of that Holy Spirit who preserves the union between Christ and His people

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<sup>1</sup> *Exodus* ch. 20-23.

against all powers in creation. For that which prevails against all creation, must be the Creator, the very Creator himself.

As the person sustaining our weak and wicked nature in full communion of holiness and will with God, is proved to be one with God; so He, maintaining the union of the Church with Christ, against all diabolical and worldly attempts, is proved likewise to be God.

The incarnation and resurrection of Christ proved Him to be God, the preservation of a Church in the midst of a persecuting world, proves the Holy Ghost to be God: and the manner of the proof in both cases is the same. That which can withstand and overcome the creation, must be no less than the Creator, who is God.

In this divine work of maintaining a Church united to Christ, in despite of a confederate conflicting world of wicked spirits and wicked men, Christ himself is the worker. He it is who from himself, as from the heart and head of power, shoots forth the circulating stream of vital holiness and supernatural strength, which maintains their most wondrous life in the midst of so many deaths. Upon His flesh and blood they are fed, and they live by Him, as He, in the days of His flesh, lived by the Father.

This supernatural, this divine work of gainsaying creation's evil mind, and withstanding creation's utmost violence, as it is acted by Christ, proves Him to be Lord of creation, its Controller, and its Redeemer, and its Saviour; while the express limitation of bodily place and human power, to which by incarnation He has restricted himself, requires that the Holy Ghost, by whose service He thus pervades all place, and resists all evil, and sustains a perpetual Church in the midst of a wicked and rebellious world, must be himself a Divine and Almighty person, one with the Creator.

The same advantage which God took of our mortal, sinful, and corrupt nature, to prove the Divinity of His Son, and His own Almighty grace in endowing it with holiness, and with power, and with life everlasting, has He taken of a rebel world, in order

to prove through the Church, the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the Lordship of the man Christ Jesus, from whom the Holy Ghost proceeds.

Therefore it is, that throughout this book the nations and the kings of the earth are allowed to confederate against the Lord and His Anointed. Satan and the powers of darkness, death and sin, all cruelty and craftiness and delusive power of Paganism, subtle craftiness of Papacy, hard-heartedness, mockery, and ridicule of infidelity, are allowed to combine and work in all ways against the Lord's faithful ones, to the end that the antagonist power of the Spirit, and the Spirit's Director, the man Christ Jesus, may be manifested to be above creation, above all power, whether visible or invisible, which is the same as to manifest that it is altogether creative and divine.

For I hold it as an axiom, that what is above the creation, is the Creator; that what resists and overcomes the world, visible and invisible, is the power of God. And this surely is the way in which God proves His own Godhead by mighty acts, controlling wickedness, and bringing huge confederacies of evil to an untimely and disgraceful end, as when He destroyed Pharaoh and Sennacherib: and when He shall destroy evil, it is that men may know that He is God:

**Psalm 46**

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he has made in the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; he burns the chariot in the fire.

<sup>10</sup> Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

And above all, when Antichrist is destroyed by the coming of Christ, in the day of His wrath, then it is written:

**Revelation 15**

<sup>4</sup> ...all nations shall come and worship before You; for your judgments are made manifest.

## A KEY TO THE REST OF THE BOOK

These epistles ought to be contemplated as together forming a most important part in the structure of this book; whose plan cannot be studied, whose completeness cannot be understood, without them.

We shall find, when we come to study the book of seals,—and indeed any one perusing the fifth seal can at once perceive it,—that the controversy which God has with the earth is for the blood of His martyrs.

The same is manifest with respect to His dealings with Babylon, in whom is found the blood of martyrs and of all that were slain upon the earth: and when the kings of the earth have been set aside from their offices of regiment, those who succeed unto the vacant thrones are these same martyrs. The groundwork and, as it were, mainspring of the whole action is, therefore, the martyrdom of Christ's faithful ones, who are ever and in every place found upon the earth.

Whence the question arises, Where is there any account of these martyrs, or of the provisions of God for their being reared up in continual supply for this fierce and consuming battle which their enemies are continually waging against them?

The answer is given by pointing to these epistles. Here is the provision for rearing up the army of martyrs. These seven churches are the nurseries of those hardy soldiers of God and of Christ. Hence issue those mighty men of war, those soldiers of righteousness, those champions of the cross.

Therefore it is spoken to every one of them by the Spirit in the language of battle and victory, "To him that overcomes;" and by the same Spirit are held out promises which come into accomplishment against the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ; honorable titles and high places in the kingdom of the Son of man.

But the Captain-general of the host is Christ himself, who appears at the head of the vision, with that same sword proceeding

out of His mouth with which He slays all His enemies in the end of the day of wrath.

And His captains subordinate are the angels of the churches, through whom He ministers the food of everlasting life, by which they are able to triumph over all the defiances and deaths of the enemy.

Being seen in this light, these epistles stand out as occupying the most noble place in this glorious structure built for the testimony of Jesus Christ;—as not of any private interpretation; as not of any local or temporary application; as not of numerical limitation to any seven churches, but, according to our doctrine taught from the beginning, as containing a constant and abiding, a uniform and universal, action of Christ in the world, unto the end of producing and reproducing those faithful witnesses, through whom the glory of the Lord may be manifested in the sight of all men, and the battles of the Lord waged with the unbelieving world.

It is the first scene in the great drama, wherein is exhibited that domestic and heavenly condition of peace and holiness, that righteous discipline and administration of pure and blessed truth; whereon the invader comes like a flood to destroy it; into which he insinuates errors and deceptions, to betray and seduce it into all sorts of wickedness.

But though cruelly he rages with much bloodshed, and most cunningly he mimics and mocks the truth; yet he prevails not to mislead or to terrify any one of God's elect, and Christ's flock: who come through the long and laborious conflict of thousands of years with an unbroken line of conflict, until at length they reap the victory in the battle of Armageddon, the battle of the great day of God Almighty, and wear the bright honors of the first resurrection, and rear upon the earth the trophies of blessed and righteous government for ever and ever,—of glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will among men.

## PROPHETIC HISTORY

While these are the views which I have been working with in the interpretation of the two preceding epistles, I have lately begun to suspect that, in order to arrive at the completeness of the idea, there is yet another view necessary to be taken, which is that of a succession.

However, rather in form and condition, than in precise and exact eras of time; such a succession, for example, as in the beast is signified by the seven heads. To this suspicion I have been led by the growing evidence of my own interpretations; and in the principle of it I have been confirmed by a most able paper upon the subject in the sixth number of the *Morning Watch*.

What the details of that most able writer's interpretation are, I know but very imperfectly, or rather, not at all: and I am the better pleased to work out my own conviction, that the truth may be confirmed in the mouth of two witnesses, and that I may not be overswayed by the great force and power of reason which appear in the author of that paper.

The idea which I have got is, that Satan presents himself under seven forms of temptation to the Church, one after the other; which gives occasion to our living Head to offer to the Church a sevenfold form of instruction and warning and hope:

1. The first temptation is, decline of love;
2. The second is, persecution and death;
3. The third is, amalgamation with the world, and chastisement, that they may not be destroyed with the wicked;
4. The fourth is, the license of the mother of harlots;
5. The fifth is, the formality of a name;
6. The sixth is, great weakness, "little strength," together with the opposition of false brethren;
7. The seventh is, self-sufficiency and vain-glory.

Appropriate to these seven forms of Antichrist in the Church are seven forms of Christ the good Shepherd, and of the Holy

Ghost the Comforter, in the knowledge and faith of which the saints may be strengthened to overcome.

Now, that the seven churches were exactly in the conditions set forth in these seven instructions, I nothing doubt. And I believe that these seven, rather than any others, were chosen of very purpose of being patterns to all the churches which then were or thereafter should be, and so as to exhibit in their variety all the possible varieties of condition into which any and every Church of Christ can possibly be brought: to the end that every Church and every angel looking thereunto might see their own temptations, warnings, and means of deliverance.

But, besides this, I am inclined also to believe that in these seven churches are exhibited seven states into which the Church should be brought throughout all the period of its history,—progressive conditions of trials through which it should pass,—together with the seven forms of the Spirit, in the strength of which it should prevail until the day of redemption.

This view of the epistles I have been slow to admit, being possessed with the three important views of them given above. But it has been strongly borne in upon my mind by many coincidences, which were not to be explained as accidental. And perceiving that this additional bearing did in no way subvert those other principles which I have on sure grounds established, but did rather come in as further trial and confirmation of them, I have given a more patient consideration to it, and am now very much disposed to take it in along with the rest.

To explain it as it now appears at present to me, I must cast a glance backward upon the two former epistles. The first is of the Great Bishop's carefulness, containing an invocation of the shepherds not to decline from their first love, and of the flock to be assured of a heavenly pasture. Now, if I err not, this will take in the period during which the various flocks were gathering out of the nations under their various shepherds, overseen and intended by the good Shepherd himself, who gave His life for the sheep,—a period which we must begin from the day of Pentecost, and con-

tinue till the next period sets in, which we shall be in a better case to determine, when we shall have considered what that second period is.

This is evidently the period of persecution unto the death, of the ten days or periods of persecution, that state of the Church to which Christ presents himself as the Resurrection and the Life, and the Spirit as the Preserver from the second death. Now, this period of waste, and tribulation, and poverty, and death, began from Nero's time, and ended with that of Constantine.

This would determine the Ephesian period to be the lifetime of the apostles, the times of Paul and Peter and James, and the other disciples of the Lord, through whom the gospel was preached and the churches planted over the whole Roman empire, as Paul himself declares:

**Romans 10**

<sup>18</sup> Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

This is the period of primitive love and increase of the flock through love and carefulness.

And the next period, which is introduced by reason of the decline of the first love, is the season of persecution and death. These periods may also be realized by the forms of the wickedness or temptation whereof the first, that of the Nicolaitanes, is, as we have seen, sensuality; and the second is Judaising, or falling away to the pomp and circumstance and splendor of the former dispensation.

How much this spirit took hold of the Church during the centuries of persecution, any one conversant with the ecclesiastical history of those times well knows. For though the Ebionites were cast out as heretics, this did not prevent the leaven of ancient formalities from introducing itself.

The third epistle is not of death by martyrdom, but of judgment by the sword, wherein the Head of the Church should be known not as a supporter under the stroke of the executioner, but as the



executioner himself, wherein the churches should not be in general faithful to His name, but, because of their corruptness, should be visited with the judgment of the sword, cutting off the fair and costly shows which they were making in the flesh, that the spirit might be saved, visiting with fierce judgments upon those things in which they gloried, that they might be taught to glory only in the Lord.

This period, joining to the other, must set in with Constantine, and continue till all the churches were laid waste by the sword of the barbarians, which brings us down to the time of Charlemagne, or rather of his father, when the sword of the barbarous nations was sheathed, both in the East and in the West, and a new form of the Church began to come into being and activity.

The Lombards, last of a terrible succession in the West, and the Saracens, last also of the scourges in the East (for the Turk brought death to the Church, whereas this epistle concerns only chastisement), came to their end by the same instrumentality of Charles Martel, the father of Charlemagne.

This period includes five centuries (from 300 to 800), during the last three of which the papacy was changing the form of the Church, and preparing that aspect of it to which the fourth epistle is addressed.

This period also may be recognized in its temptations, which are a priesthood making gain of godliness, as Balaam did, and introducing into the Christian Church the abominations of the heathen, together with the sensuality of the Nicolaitanes.

And the faithful opposer of their errors is called Antipas, whose personality, as one of the Church of Pergamos, we do in nothing question, while at the same time we look at his name, “against all,” as casting light upon the period in question,—during which, in the midst of the weakness brought on by the sword of God, the pope reared his head and stood forth in that greatness of strength in which we find him at the reconstitution of the empire in the person of Charlemagne.

Having opened the succession of these three, it would be premature to follow out the remaining four, which will come in their proper place.

Suffice it to say, that Thyatira, the fourth, is the Church under the seduction of Jezebel, or the whore of Babylon, whose threatening is not chastisement but death.

Sardis, the fifth, is the Church under the temptation of nominal orthodoxy, in which we and our fathers have long been living, "having a name to live."

Philadelphia, the sixth, is a state of the Church just coming into being, which receives fullness of love, and with it completeness of deliverance.

And Laodicea is the last stage of the Church, upon whose deep sleep the Lord shall descend like an armed man.

If this succession can be established, which will appear in the sequel, this advantage will be gained; —namely, that the basis of fact will lie not only in those seven churches, of which almost all memorial is passed away, but in the great outlines of Church history which can never perish; while the vision will come to have a prophetic and historical character, as well as a real and universal one.

Still, however, as a constituent part of the book, it will stand as the record of the things that are; while, as a portion of the divine revelation, it will occupy the chief place as a system of catholic instruction in canonical and ecclesiastical jurisprudence. The things which we have already taught remain the same; and this one thing is added, that the epistles have also a bearing upon, and an application to, seven successive conditions of the Church in her warfare against Antichrist.

Such being our view of this first vision of Christ and section of this book, we go about to explain it as containing the milk of valor, and the seed of martyrdom, the precepts of the Christian warfare, the hopes of the Christian champion, and the rewards of his painful service.

All things else which we touch are but subsidiary, and, as it were, by the way; for example, whether the constitutions of these churches answer better to the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Independent platform reared in this island, is a mere fragment of the subject, on which I would not spend any great attention or labor, and have not.

For all that I have said on this topic is to maintain this great principle: that the angel of any Church, he who is the messenger and *internuncio* between them and Christ, is free to go to Christ without any interference whatever, and to fetch from Him plenty for all his flock: that no presbytery, no bishop, nor pope, nor devil, no, nor angel, may dare to intrude between the man who ministers in word and ordinances and the Head of the Church, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Here is the common ground on which the churches in this land meet, whether they be Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Independent. For I know it to be the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and I understand it to be the constitution of the Church of England, that when a minister has received his ordination over a flock, he is expected to act there with a view to Christ only, to His glory only; and the less occasion they have to meddle with him, the better they account of him, the better soldier they esteem him.

Nay more, they expect it of him to lie open to all truth, to draw largely upon the great source of the supply, and to make known for the whole Church whatever profit he makes beyond his brethren. And the Church expects of her ministers to help on the work of perfecting her in all sound doctrine and holy discipline.

It is a totally incorrect idea of Church creeds and canons, that they are boundaries to the living spirit of the Church, saying evermore,

“Hitherto shall you come, and no further.”

And equally false is it to set them down as a standard of infallibility ever saying,

“This is right, and whatever contravenes this is certainly wrong.”

He who thus uses the creeds and canons of the Church makes an idol of them, and grieves the Spirit of Christ, and of the holy men who framed them for the good use of testifying against the errors that they saw around them, to the best of their ability, without dreaming that they also were not liable to err.

For the purpose of giving every angel of the Church his true standing, as the perpetual passer between Christ and His people, free as the air which he breathes, and full, full of confidence in his Divine Teacher; this standing to make good for myself and for all ministers of truth, that they may not be hand-fastened nor foot-bound by all the necessary or unnecessary creeds and canons of the Church.

This is the reason why I have gone into these questions; —for the common good of ministers, and through them of their flocks, not for the magnifying of any particular form of Church government, or for justifying the ordinance of Established churches, which, though important questions in their place, are beside our present subject, and far beneath our present aim.

Having thus recollected, and a little added to, our general idea of these seven epistles, we now proceed to open, according to our common method, that which was written for the Church of Pergamos; premising merely in this place, that this was the chief city of Mysia, and the residence of the Attalian kings, distant from Smyrna about sixty miles towards the north; being still a town of some consequence, with a population of about 15,000, and having in it two Christian Churches, and nine or ten Mohammedan mosques.

In another part of the epistle, our attention is called to its irreligious character, and that will be the place to introduce any historical notices which remain of it. Meanwhile we proceed, according to our method, to treat, first, of the style which Christ chooses for himself in speaking to them.

## II. CHRIST'S THIRD DESIGNATION

### Revelation 2

<sup>12</sup> And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things says He which has the sharp sword with two edges.

**T**HIS is a very different style from the two preceding, adopted towards the Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna; whereof the former imported pastoral watchfulness and security, the latter omnipresent and omnipotent life, to sustain under persecutions, and to overcome the power of death.

But this now before us brings our tender and merciful Shepherd into view, with weapons of war, sharp and two-edged, with which He threatens some, that if they repent not, He will

<sup>16</sup> ...come...quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

So at times appears the Shepherd among His flock, with the instruments of death to cut off such as are visited with a pestilent disease, that the others be not infected.

So also sometimes comes the vine-dresser, not with his pruning-hook, to clear the branches from encumbrance, but with his ax in hand to lop away such as have from any cause become utterly unfruitful.

And so also into the bosom of the sweetest, happiest family, is the surgeon with his instruments welcomed; and by no one so much as by the poor patient distracted with suffering, which nothing but the knife can cure, haply worn down with the gnawing pain of toothache, or threatened with death by the fast-spreading gangrene of some incurable member.

Yet not His first nor His second approach makes our blessed Lord in this more severe, though not less loving aspect, but the third time, when neither the authority and care of the good Shepherd nor the assurance of death's Conqueror have availed to preserve His Church in purity from the temptations of the wicked.

Then, lest for want of timely correction, He should lose His dear-bought and well-beloved children, He appears among them with the emblems of chastisement, and of destruction, in order to enforce the word which He is about to utter; and wishing now to be listened to as well by the fear as by the affection and trust of the Church, He speaks in the character of the Judge and the Avenger, saying:

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>12</sup> These things says He which has the sharp sword with two edges.

We have already, in our third lecture,<sup>2</sup> ascertained the import of this symbol to be, not conversion, as some, from the circumstance of its going forth from the mouth would fain seduce themselves to believe, but chastisement, even unto cutting off and destruction, as is evidenced in the battle of the Lamb against the beast, where the sword is called into use, to slay all the enemies of the Lord, who had not been taken alive and cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone; and as to the circumstance of its proceeding out of His mouth, it betokens the destruction to proceed from word, from breath of speech, from “saying, and it is done;” as it is written:

### **Hosea 6**

<sup>6</sup> I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth.

### **Isaiah 11**

<sup>4</sup> ...He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Without repeating what has been there set forth concerning the certain meaning of this symbol, we proceed now, according to our method, to gather from the other Scriptures light around this name and style of our great Bishop, and to hold it up in due prominency, right proportions, and proper application, before the

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 3 “Christ the Universal Head and Bishop of the Church”, Chapter: “The Vision”, Section: “The Sharp Sword.”

Church, especially in this our day and generation, the vineyard that we are specially called upon to keep.

It has been one of the sweetest recreations of my soul in the midst of these pious labors, to search the Scripture for the origin of those names, figures, and symbols, which are used in the Apocalypse: and in no case has this been attended with more edification than in the case of the sword proceeding out of Messiah's mouth; which carries our attention at once to the 49<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophecies of *Isaiah*, where is found the original of this symbol in these words:

**Isaiah 49**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name.

<sup>2</sup> 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;

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

Where, by means of the two similitudes of the sword and the polished shaft, a fuller idea is conveyed than in the text itself: the former pointing out the origin of all judgments in the word of Messiah's mouth, the latter pointing out the effect of these words in the hearts of the King's enemies: for as the sword declares the strength of him who uses it, the arrow declares the destruction of him who receives it into his bosom.

This text further declares, that for a season after Messiah's mouth had been thus endowed with all power in heaven and in earth, and all judgment given unto His hand, because he is the Son of man, He was to be hidden in the shadow of Jehovah's hand, and in His quiver laid up in store; until the day of grace and salvation should have run out its appointed term, and He shall come to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, in which the wicked one shall be consumed with the breath of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

And because He would have all men to know how very great and powerful, and how much sharper than a two-edged sword, is that word of His which now speaks from heaven, and will then execute every jot and tittle of all which it has spoken; He begins this, the sublimest strain of prophecy, with the annunciation of himself as such, and in right of this superlative exaltation as God's avenger, He calls upon all to give good ear to His words:

### **Isaiah 49**

<sup>1</sup> Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, you peoples, from far...

And to the effect it might be known that as man, and the Son of man, He had received and would yet execute the judgment, He adds:

<sup>1</sup> ...Jehovah has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name."

And from this place forward to the conclusion of the prophet, that is, throughout seventeen chapters, we have a series of words spoken by the Judge of all the earth, to the Jews and to the Gentiles; to those that fear God, and to those who fear Him not, concluding with these words:

### **Isaiah 66**

<sup>15</sup> For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

<sup>16</sup> For by fire, and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

And so in the *Apocalypse*, Christ appears first with the sword proceeding from His mouth,<sup>3</sup> and declares himself by this name unto His Church in this third epistle, and this done, hides himself for a long season in the quiver of God, until, in the great crisis and consummation, He reappears...

### **Revelation 19**

<sup>11</sup> ...to judge and make war,

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<sup>3</sup> *Revelation* 1:16.



—and to plead with all flesh by fire and sword; by fire against the beast and false prophet, by sword against the remnant who had dared to array themselves against the Lamb, and those that are with Him, who are...

### **Revelation 17**

<sup>14</sup> ...called and faithful and chosen.

Whosoever will turn these things in his mind must be convinced that great light should be cast upon Christ's action as the swordsman, from studying these chapters of our prophet; which might well be denominated the *Revelation of Jesus Christ unto the Jew*. I do not propose to myself in this place such a weighty task as to give a particular account of the substance of that glorious revelation of Jesus Christ; but only to derive from it light upon the style or designation which He assumes to himself in the passage before us.

But it may be said,

“What evidence is there that the last seventeen chapters of *Isaiah* are indeed one strain of prophecy?”

The same evidence as there is that the whole book of *Revelation* concerns that one person who appears in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter in such symbolical raiment, as being taken piecemeal, might afford the means of identifying Him throughout the various scenes and actions of the book. So in the first few verses of the 49<sup>th</sup> chapter, such characteristics are put upon Him as enable us to recognize the same person everywhere in the following chapters.

There are:

1. His being from the womb called and named of God, and fitted for His work (verse 1);
2. the office to which He was called, “to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him,” (verse 5); “His servant Israel in whom He would be glorified,” (verse 3);
3. His failure the first time in this service; “I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is

- with the Lord, and my work with my God,” (verse 4);  
“though Israel be not gathered,” (verse 5);
4. His being hidden for a season with God after He had received His power and glory, and abiding there till the times of the Father be accomplished, (verse 2);
  5. His being in the meantime, while He is despised and abhorred of the nations, given as a light to the Gentiles; for the apostle positively refers the acceptable time and the day of salvation of verse 8 to the present dispensation of the Gentiles;<sup>4</sup> and the last is,
  6. His being preserved safe until the time when Jehovah shall give Him for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, to say to the prisoners, Go forth, &c (verses 8-9), which is the restoration of Israel, and in them the blessedness of the whole earth.

Now, let any one take these six features of Messiah, and, with them in his mind, read the chapters which follow, and he will find how they are bound together and most closely interwoven in all their parts.

The 49<sup>th</sup> chapter is like an epitome of the whole series, which together forms a glorious discourse upon these the purposes of God for revealing His great and holy name, and justifying the goodness of His acts by Israel His servant.

The 50<sup>th</sup> chapter assigns for the reason of their being cast off, that they had rejected Him when He came and spake unto them wisdom, and preached unto them comfort (verse 4), nor would obey the voice of Him whom God had chosen for His servant (verse 10).

This chapter is good against the deniers of Christ’s weak humanity, of His living by faith, and being taught of the Father; and by the Father exalted; who are so full of His Godhead, or affect to be so jealous of it, that they will not look at His manhood, or listen to any one who speaks of it: let them listen to the prophet *Isa-*

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:2.

*iah*, or the Holy Ghost speaking by him in the 50<sup>th</sup> chapter of his prophecy.

The 51<sup>st</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> chapters contain a various discourse from the mouth of Messiah to the people that follow after righteousness, and claim Abraham for their father, and Sarah for their mother, into the fellowship of whose inheritance we are entered by faith;<sup>5</sup> and the 53<sup>rd</sup>, including the last three verses of the 52<sup>nd</sup>, refers the glory of the work accomplished for Zion to Him who is God's servant;<sup>6</sup> and the 54<sup>th</sup> chapter makes His blessedness forever sure.

These four chapters are a song of loves, containing, first, the cause of the temporary separation of Messiah from His beloved Zion;<sup>7</sup> then her lamentable case, yet certain safety, during her alienation;<sup>8</sup> then her adorning as a bride for her bridegroom;<sup>9</sup> and her redemption without price;<sup>10</sup> and safe settlement in her inheritance.<sup>11</sup>

Upon which the strain changes as to its person, but not as to its subject; from the Church to her husband, from Rachel the wife to Israel the servant of many labors; and recounts the consummate wisdom and love with which He had won for himself and His beloved one such glory on the earth.<sup>12</sup>

The love, the devoted love of the bridegroom having thus been sung, behold, in *Isaiah* 54, the blessedness of the marriage, her fruitfulness (verse 1), the rank of her husband (verse 5), His eternal love and faithfulness (verse 6-10), the blessedness of her children (verse 11, 15), the destruction of all who rise up against her for ever and ever (verse 15-17).

No one can doubt that these four chapters are constructed upon the principle of the marriage between Christ and His Church, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Galatians* 3:14.

<sup>6</sup> *Isaiah* 52:13; 53:11.

<sup>7</sup> *Isaiah* 50:1.

<sup>8</sup> *Isaiah* 51:16.

<sup>9</sup> *Isaiah* 52:1.

<sup>10</sup> *Isaiah* 52:3.

<sup>11</sup> *Isaiah* 52:11.

<sup>12</sup> *Isaiah* 52:13; 53:12.

that chapter 53, so much and so deservedly prized, is the account of what lowliness Christ submits to in order to win the beloved of His heart. Indeed, the very outset of the prophecy in chapter 49 shows it to be constructed upon the symbolical history of Jacob or Israel serving for his beloved one, and after a period of service finding himself disappointed of her by the will of the father.

Now behold how leading an idea in the *Revelation* is this same symbol of the marriage which not only is presented as the consummation, from chapter 19 to the end, but is indeed prepared for throughout the whole progress of the story; for example, in the next epistle, by the promise of sitting with Him on His throne, and in the next again by the promise of the white raiment, and in the fifth seal by the gift of that bridal attire; while it is also set out by the contrast of Babylon the harlot, which being removed, straightway the faithful and chaste spouse comes with Christ her husband, to rule the world.

But first<sup>13</sup> she must come along with Him to the battle; and take part in the action of the sword; which is preliminary to the marriage and coronation and government.

This order has no similitude in the world, since chivalry ceased; but of all chivalry it is the foundation. The future husband first acts the soldier, to deliver his captive princess, and the young knight enters into battle with some love-token from the lady of his heart, to animate him to noble deeds; and fair ladies were wont to look on and behold the prowess of their champions, and were oft proposed as the prize of battle;—all this, I say, has its origin in the fruitful idea of Christ the Redeemer of His Church, which comes with Him, yea and calls upon Him to go forth<sup>14</sup> as the champion of her meekness and gentleness and truth.

Some may make light of such allusions to a state of society which is now wont to be very much despised; I would there were something worthy to be compared with it in these sinful days. It is not however the abuses which I have to do with, but the idea,

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<sup>13</sup> *Revelation* 19:11.

<sup>14</sup> *Psalm* 45:3-4.

and how just, how pure, how noble that was, and how congenial to the highest faculties of reason, let the works of poetry and the deeds of valor which it has inspired testify.

But whether the illustration of chivalry be admitted or not, the idea of Christ redeeming His dispossessed and captive Church out of the house of bondage, and then bringing her with Him as His betrothed bride, to witness the destruction of His enemies, and to possess along with Him the inheritance which they had usurped, is the true one.

This much, therefore, we gather from the examination of these chapters of *Isaiah*, drawn into comparison with *Psalms* 45, and the book of *Revelation*, that the sword with two edges belongs to Him as the champion of the Church, of the meek and lowly Church against her proud and cruel oppressors; that it characterizes Him as the man of war, who shall yet by war make war to cease unto the ends of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

The examination of the remaining chapters of *Isaiah* casts still stronger light upon this designation of our Redeemer “as Him who has the sharp sword with two edges.”

There is presented to us in the 57<sup>th</sup> chapter the prophecy of the sorceress or the oppressor of the people of the Lord, out of whose hands they are delivered by the Redeemer,<sup>16</sup> whereupon follows the glory of Israel in having righteous dominion over those Gentiles, by whom they had been oppressed.

The 60<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 62<sup>nd</sup>, and 63<sup>rd</sup> chapters, contain a continual reference to this act of bringing the Gentiles by the edge of the sword, under the supremacy of the Jews: indeed, this idea as the action of the sword is given so far back as the song of Moses;<sup>17</sup> where, after recounting the oppression of his people under the Gentiles, and chiding them for their unbelief as the cause of it all, the Lord gathers wrath against the Gentiles and their false gods, saying thus:

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<sup>15</sup> *Psalms* 46.

<sup>16</sup> *Isaiah* 59:20.

<sup>17</sup> *Deuteronomy* 32:44.

## **Deuteronomy 32**

<sup>41</sup> If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me.

<sup>42</sup> I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

This passage, which contains both the sword and the arrows of the Lord, is the true origin of the symbolical raiment and action of the 45<sup>th</sup> *Psalms*, which represents Christ as coming in the character of His Father's and His people's avenger.

As also it is of the symbols in the 49<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Isaiah*, and likewise of the day of vengeance;<sup>18</sup> as also of...

## **Isaiah 63**

<sup>4</sup> ...the day of vengeance...and the year of my redeemed.

This last passage is remarkably the action of the sword, being the same with the action of the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter, as we know by the use of the selfsame language:

## **Isaiah 34**

<sup>8</sup> For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

Now the action of that chapter is expressly declared to be the action of the sword of the Lord:

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

<sup>6</sup> The sword of the Lord is filled with blood...

And the 63<sup>rd</sup> chapter refers to the Redeemer as coming from this slaughter of Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. And this action being accomplished of smiting the apostasy of Edom, the sword is drawn once more against all flesh:

## **Isaiah 66**

<sup>16</sup> For by fire and by sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

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<sup>18</sup> *Isaiah* 61:2.

From these researches, which might be extended to other parts of Scripture, we derive this most important conclusion, that the symbol of the sword by which Christ would be known to the Church of Pergamos, points Him out not merely as the executioner of the Father's anger in general, but also in particular as the executioner of that judgment which is to be brought upon the nations for their oppression of His people; the judgment I mean upon the quick, which is described at length in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Matthew*, from the thirty-first verse, where all the nations are tried by their treatment of His people, and judged accordingly.

But no attribute of God or of Christ is understood aright by being merely understood historically, because these blessed persons are not in time subsistent, but the same yesterday, today, and forever. Though, therefore, we have been at pains to gather the import of this attribute of Christ, symbolically expressed by the sword, by referring to the historical event of the judgment of the Gentiles in which it will be most remarkably illustrated, we now return with the information thus gathered, and say that our great Shepherd desires the Church of Pergamos, and all other churches, to regard Him continually in the light of the Judge, as well as the Saviour of the Church.

Shepherd as He is, good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, He bears a rod for chastisement, as well as a staff for defense, and a crook for pastoral care. True Vine though He is, and parent Stem of all the branches, and their continual sustenance and nourishment, He would have it to be understood that He also fulfills the part of the vine-dresser, which, though personally it belong to the Father, yet officially is it performed by Christ, into whose hands all judgment has been committed by the Father.

As Head of the Church, He would have it to be known that He executes regal authority as well as parental affection, priestly intercession, and prophetic counsel. That it is as much His prerogative to cut off the wicked from His house as to keep the righteous in safety; in one word, that discipline is as essential an attribute of Christ as is baptizing with the Holy Ghost, or feeding

with His body and blood. And this out of love and unto salvation, destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Of discipline, therefore, we would say that this epistle entreats, and to this as the informing and peculiar principle of it we will have respect in our interpretation.

## **OF DISCIPLINE**

The epistle consists of three parts:

1. Commendation;
2. Censure; and
3. Exhortation to repentance.

I have already observed how constantly throughout these epistles commendation has the lead of every other feeling; although some of the churches had arrived at as low a pass as can well be supposed.

Even in the case before us, things were in so bad a condition that our good Shepherd presents himself armed with His sharp two-edged sword, and departs with the announcement of prompt and speedy execution if they repent not, and yet He opens His mouth with words of commendation.

He sees it needful to bethink himself, and to forewarn them of discipline; but still His love is the same unabated, grateful affection as ever, and expresses itself in cordial acknowledgment of the angel's good services in time past: one would say He almost pleads His apology, by twice over putting forth the peculiar hardships and temptations of His station.

Can any clearer proof be given of the spirit of love in which discipline should be gone about? Can any more forcible command be given to the Church with what kindly and gentle words she should approach this ungenial part of her duty. And in the way in which censure and discipline are gone about, its willingness or unwillingness, we have a sure means of ascertaining whether Christ is present in those actings of His Church, or not.



The Roman apostasy, fortified with hypocrisy at all points, understood this well, and practiced it most dexterously in every case of discipline, however unjust and atrocious. Their feigned forms of the true spirit, we Protestants have been honest enough to set aside: let us beware whether we have not set aside the spirit also.

If, for example, any court of the Church assemble to take cognizance of a brother's real or supposed fault, and approach the subject with rapid haste, break down the venerable forms of justice and charity, and burst out into bitter railings, and inflame themselves with violent speeches, until their assembly have more of the tempestuous sea or boiling whirlpool, than of calm deliberate judgment, or soothing pity and love; then what shall we say, but that this is not moved by the Spirit of Christ to the work of holy discipline, but driven on by the passion of anger and revenge? And what shall we expect to come forth from the boiling cauldron of its rage,—the wisdom which comes from above? I trow not. For that is:

### **James 3**

<sup>17</sup> ...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

What then? That, I fear, which is described by the Apostle James, in these words:

<sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

<sup>15</sup> This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

<sup>16</sup> For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

The discipline of the Church may either become the instrument of the most hideous injustice and cruel oppression, as in the Church of Rome it became from the time of Dominick; or it may remain, what it was intended to be, the parent of union, the preserver against error, the blessed peacemaker among the brethren. Nor is it difficult to trace how it passes over from the one extreme

to the other. The Lord has laid down the golden rule of discipline in these words:

**Matthew 18**

<sup>15</sup> Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.

<sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

<sup>17</sup> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican.

I will be bold to say, that wherever this rule is observed in the Spirit, there will be peace and harmony and love in the bosom of the Church; and discipline will be found, next to doctrine, to be the best gift of Heaven to men. But, on the other hand, when this rule fails to be observed, either in the letter or the spirit of it, discipline will become no better than a deadly weapon in the hands of the strong to oppress the weak, in the hands of the ungodly and hypocritical to put away the hateful reproofs of the godly and sincere, in the hands of those who love to be in darkness to hide and bury in oblivion the light of those whom God has kindled.

A rule it is of the most exquisite beauty and ample blessing, containing, first, an injunction when we feel offended in a brother on account of any of his ways and doings, whether affecting us or not, so that it affect the honor and glory of Him in whom we live, and for whom we ought to live, we should straightway, if we cannot forbear any longer, go to himself, or in some way or other communicate with him, break the matter to his own private ear, and deal with him as brother ought with brother, after a most tender and kindly sort; all with the view of gaining him over to God and goodness, without thought or threatening of further proceeding, in faith and hope of a happy termination, through the common Spirit of truth and love.

But if God be pleased to try still further our faithfulness, and forbear His blessing of peace, we are, as the second step, required

to take one or two along with us, and in their presence to set forth the grounds of the offense,

**Matthew 18**

<sup>16</sup> ...that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

That they may lend their help to convince the conscience of the brother who is thought to have erred: and if he have not erred, that in their hearing he may justify himself, and so in sweet conference the form and measure of the truth may be ascertained.

But if in the face of their judgment the error or offense should be pertinaciously persisted in, we are then commanded to lay the whole matter before the Church, as the ultimate tribunal beyond which there is no higher upon the earth.

To whose sentence, if he likewise prove refractory, then is he to be held as a heathen man and a publican, excommunicated from the fellowship, and put forth from the blessed privileges of the Church; that he may know the misery of the howling wilderness which is without, and come as a humble penitent seeking to be restored to the protection and privileges, the security and salvation of the fold.

Then, to give awful sanction to the Church's voice on earth, He adds these mighty words:

**Matthew 16**

<sup>19</sup> Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

These words have made emperors tremble upon their thrones, and which were intended to make all living men to reverence and stand in awe of the Church, as Christ's voice of truth and witness upon the earth, through whom He pronounces the doom not of kings only, but of kingdoms, and of the earth itself, yea, and to the invisible potentates of heaven makes known the manifold wisdom of God.

So much the more careful ought the Church to be in giving judgment: so much the more reverent ought we to be of the judgments which she gives. And, seeing the issues of her judgment-seat are so awful, so much the more solicitous to prevent the interference of so terrible a tribunal, and to conciliate differences in these earlier stages by secret communion between ourselves, or private conference in the presence of one or two witnesses.

To which also the Lord leads us on by the promise of a wonderful blessing upon concord and concurrence between brother and brother; no less a blessing than that of receiving whatever they shall ask of Heaven:

**Matthew 18**

<sup>19</sup> Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

It is very delightful to study this, the golden rule of discipline, upon which all forms of process against any member of the Church must, and in our Church do, rest. Experience has taught me that there is in the practice of it a very great reward, and that it generally succeeds in restoring those who have erred from the truth.

How painful to see it so trampled under foot in these days of high pretensions, so invariably departed from by those who are loudest in their professions, and holiest in the names which they have appropriated to themselves!

Do they deem a brother to have erred in any point of doctrine, or come short in any point of duty, they give their first notice of it in some of their publications circulating over the whole earth: and to his astonishment he finds himself dilated over all Christendom as a vile and worthless person, without knowing wherefore, without having heard one word of explanation, one counsel of wisdom, one entreaty of love.

Then it becomes the subject of universal conversation, misrepresentation, and accusation; and, after it has been ripened by much busy hatching of others, it becomes the subject of conversation, debate, and inquiry in the courts of the Church, haply without one solitary minister or elder having sought by personal conference either to know the truth of the things asserted, or to recover their brother to the way of godliness, if so be that he has erred.

And thus inflated with windy rumor, thus inflamed with popular heats, they clamor for justice against the offender, who all the while knows not wherein his offense consisted, and is stunned with the hideous errors which are imputed to him, and which most likely exist nowhere but in the malicious bosoms of the anonymous defamer who first raised the hue and cry against an unoffending man, wresting his words, deforming his opinions, and skillfully seeking to overthrow his good name and influence in the Church.

When the discipline of the Church comes thus to be administered, it is as bad as the Inquisition, with which it has many things in common; such as, a hidden accuser, torture of the most exquisite kind which words can inflict before judgment, loss of everything which is dear to the innocent before trial is begun. Ah me! what a thing this is!

But there is a thing more evil and portentous still; which is, the sympathy felt with the secret and malicious accuser. It has stung me almost beyond endurance, to find the willingness with which an evil report is entertained, and the part that is taken with the publishers of it: though they present neither name, nor argument, nor evidence of any sort: though in the doing of it there may be the grossest calumny, the most malicious spirit, the most wanton cruelty, and the most indecent levity. Woe is me! what a pass discipline is come to! It makes me tremble!

I count it an especial privilege that in this state of things, and especially after what I have witnessed in the Church these last few months, I should be called upon, in the course of Providence,

to open that epistle of our great Bishop which treats of discipline. God give me the words of the wise, and the spirit of the faithful witnesses of God.

## **SATAN'S SEAT**

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>13</sup> I know your works and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is.

The city of Pergamos arose into metropolitan dignity more than three centuries before the Christian era, by the treachery of the treasurer of Lysimachus, who, carrying hither great wealth, founded the dynasty of the Attalian kings, which continued to subsist for nearly two centuries, when the last of them made over his treasure and his kingdom to the Romans. Besides its celebrity for great wealth it also bore the palm among the cities of Asia for its magnificent library, second only to that of the Ptolemies in Alexandria. Its situation is in the midst of a most fertile valley, whose very fertility inclines the people to indolence and ease.

These causes together, wealth, luxury, and learning, had, it is likely, acquired for it the bad pre-eminence which it has given to it in the text, as Satan's Seat. I have not been able to find any more distinct ground in history for this characteristic twice over given to it in the epistle.

The wealth of the Attalian kings was proverbial among the Romans; and the fullness and indolence of the people, from the exceeding richness of the country round, is observed by travelers. Sir Paul Recault's description brought forcibly to my mind the prophet's description of Samaria:

### **Isaiah 28**

<sup>1</sup> Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine.

They were so devoted to their library that when the Ptolemies, out of envy, introduced the exportation of papyrus to write upon, they invented parchment; which to this day in the Latin language

bears the name of their city. Now we know on which side the learning of those days arrayed itself, the philosophy, the fables, and the vain janglings.

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

A proof of the greater intensity of their hatred to the gospel is given in the next topic of the epistle, where honorable mention is made of one who had already suffered martyrdom there; a state of things not realized in any other of the epistles. But whether there were any traces in history or not, we may not doubt, having the word of God for it, that Pergamos was well entitled to the characteristic of the text, “where Satan’s seat is,” “where Satan dwells.”

If again we take up the notion laid down above of a reality in succession, as well as a reality in place, being proper to these epistles, and upon the principles there given assign to Pergamos the period from the “ten days of persecution” proper to Sardis, onward till Jezebel, the mother of harlots, obtained the sway, we have indeed a most appropriate and significant interpretation of this word; because then in very truth was the Church taken into the bosom of Rome, and exalted on high beside the imperial throne, which were the city and seat of Satan.

This is accurately determined in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of this book, which contains the vision of the Papal Roman Empire, where it is said:

### **Revelation 13**

<sup>2</sup> And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Now “the dragon” is identified with “the devil”:

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan.

Moreover the seat of the whore, who is confederate in place and action with the beast, riding upon him and doing miracles before him, is declared to be:

**Revelation 17**

<sup>18</sup> ...that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

<sup>9</sup> The seven heads are seven mountains, where the woman sits.

Rome, therefore, beyond a question, is the “seat of Satan” and the time during which it was his seat is the time before he gave it up to the beast, the time antecedent to the Papal supremacy, when the symbol of *Revelation* 13 began to come into being,—that is, from the age of Constantine, when Christianity became the religion of imperial Rome, until the time of Justinian, when the Papacy was hatched, and from which its life is reckoned; or rather until the time of Charlemagne, when it came into full development of its power and energy.

How great a temptation her establishment by the civil power became to the Church has been so obvious to all men, that not a few, led away by the manifest corruptions which followed, have gone astray into the error that these were owing to that imperial act, and that every establishment is a wicked thing. If these men would a little more diligently go into the examination of the Church’s corruptions, they would find them to be all of an older date than the time of Constantine; kept under, indeed, by the oppressive hand of power, “prevented from revealing themselves by Him who lets,” but ready to burst forth whenever occasion should be presented.

This we shall have ample occasion to show when we come to treat of the seals. Meanwhile, as there exists such a fearful error upon the duties of kings to establish the Christian religion within their dominions, we think it not amiss in this place to make a brief extract, containing the argument upon this subject which we have exhibited in our work *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, and to One Another*:

I do not mean by this to impugn the act of Constantine in establishing the Church, which I believe to have been the begin-



ning of God's actings against the enemies of Christ, whereof the first was paganism; and therefore I do the rather devoutly contemplate it, as the first great achievement of our King. A hard thing indeed it were, and most unbeseeming royal dignity and power, if a king might not in his estate do that which any nobleman or master does in his, when he says, that all his servants shall fear the Lord, observe the ordinances of His worship, keep holy the Sabbath, and walk according to His precepts and commandments.

And a very foolish and wicked thing were it, for me, or any preacher of God's verity, to say unto the heads of families, that they might not so enforce obedience to the gospel law within their house, because it will place temptations to hypocrisy in the way of their servants. The answer to all such quibbles is, I must save my own soul; I must discharge myself of my own responsibility unto the Lord, whose steward I am.

And so must every king; he must save his own soul, by ordering that estate which God has given him in charge, according to the ordinances of the kingdom of Christ, who is Prince of the kings of the earth. Therefore do I deem that Constantine performed a right dutiful and a right godly act, when he established Christianity as the religion of the empire; whereby, no doubt, the Church of Christ was led into temptation; just as the Church of Scotland and Church of England are led into temptation by being established in their several estates.

But is it a new doctrine, that God leads His people into, temptation, that His mighty power may be glorified in them over all His enemies? or is it not the old doctrine, contained in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation"? And here it may be said: "Well, then; and ought not the Church to pray against the temptation of being established by secular princes?"

To that I answer, that, if it has proved a temptation to the Church to be established, or to have the power upon its side, it has proved the destruction of the Reformed Churches of Spain, Italy, France, and the Netherlands, to have the power set in array against them; while it has proved the salvation of the Protestant faith in this island to have had the power on its side, although, doubtless, not without a temptation.

But, ah me! how shall we escape temptation in this wicked world! And though, in acknowledgment of our weakness, we pray to be preserved from that to which we so often yield, and to have from God as mild a measure of trial as may be consistent with His own purpose; yet we do never look to be out of the fire of temptation, until we are delivered from the militant state of the Church.

Nay, but the Church is not her own mistress in this matter, so as to refuse to receive into her communion a man because he is a king; and if that man, who is a king, take on the profession of Christ, he cannot withhold, he must not withhold, from ordering his household according to the ordinances of Christ; and if he do withhold, the preacher of the gospel must tell him out his duty, as did Knox and Latimer in the days of old.

When Constantine, therefore, established Christianity in his house, and ordered the estate of his kingdom according to the discipline of Christ, he did a most noble and praiseworthy act of sovereign power, which ought to have been a pattern unto all kings which should come after.

Yet it is not to be doubted, that from this time forth began, or rather advanced with more rapid strides, that spirit of courtly flattery, and episcopal ambition of avarice and worldly dignity, which in the course of two centuries vexed the Lord to that degree that, weary of resisting, He gave them up to the lust of their own minds; constituting over them a king of that mongrel kind, half prince half priest, which they strove after in the wickedness of their hearts.<sup>19</sup>

While I agree therefore that the establishment of the Christian religion by the emperor gave a new impulse to that spirit of Antichrist which was latent in the apostle's days, and is ever present in the Church, I hold as firmly as did all our reformers, that it is the first duty of the magistrate to declare his subordination to Christ, by establishing His law of love and liberty, as the law of his kingdom, and requiring all office-bearers and persons to conform thereto. And it is the part of the Church to receive this dignity as a great boon from her Head, and to occupy with all dili-

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<sup>19</sup> *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, and to One Another* (1829), Chapter VII "Rome, and the Pope Her Little Horn."

gence and constancy the new position which she has received as the authorized guardian of the realm in all which respects things spiritual.

New temptations, no doubt, arise from this new station; temptations to hypocrisy and dissimulation; temptations to wealth, and glory, and power; in one word, temptations to worldliness; against which she must be on her guard, and of which she is well warned in this very epistle: but she is not, through the fierceness of temptation, to shrink from serving her King and Lord, though it were in the fiery furnace and in the lion's den, and in the place of dragons.

And, if I err not, the presence of an Established Church is necessary to the production and growth of liberty in a monarchy, and if the Church be faithful, liberty upon true and lasting principles will never fail of arising upon the land. This is a thing so little understood, that I make no apology for quoting another passage from that work in which I have argued all these questions at large.

The king, so long as he cannot intermeddle in the Church, has a distinct limit put to his power, and is most effectually prevented from arrogating to himself tyranny over the persons of his subjects, and divine honors unto his own person. For, consider what the Church is; not a silent thing, but full of all manner of voices, concerning God, concerning Christ, concerning grace and righteousness, and mercy and peace, and every other holy and heavenly thing. Nor is the Church an inactive thing, but, all the day long, all the year round, employed in holy offices, not only teaching their duties unto all men, but likewise, with pastoral care, seeing that these duties be righteously discharged, not only teaching doctrine, but exercising discipline within the bounds of the kingdom.

And what is discipline, but law under the form of love? In this discipline of the Church, the king may as little interfere as in its doctrine. It belongs to the Church to regulate it, and likewise to enforce it; and it is of the free will of every member of the Church to submit to it or not, according to his fear of God, ac-

ording to his love of Christ, and his fellowship with the Holy Ghost.

While the king therefore interposes not within the pale of the Church, there is not only a bound set within which he cannot go, a limit to his will but there is also the constant operation of such holy principles and holy practices, in the bosom of the kingdom, as tend, yea and never fail to produce, the amelioration of every evil thing, the sweetening of every relation, the comforting of every infirmity, the prosperity and the honor of every individual in his proper estate.

And not only so, but this barrier presented to the will of the king, this operation beyond and above his power, does ever remind him of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever Satan, by all the temptations of high estate, by all the prerogatives of sovereign power, would whisper in his ear that he is independent and irresponsible of all; the continual presence and testimony of the inviolate Church does ever recall to his mind that there is one, even Christ, who is over him, and with whose Church he may not intermeddle.

But, if this barrier be broken down, if the king may enter into the sanctuary of the Church; to do any of the offices thereof, to alter or to abrogate, to add or to limit; then, behold, there is nothing left to represent the supremacy of Christ over the king. That true check, that only effectual check to arbitrary and tyrannical power, which God has set and constituted, in the separateness and inviolateness of Christ's Church, is removed; and nothing is left of a constitutional and permanent kind, to recall unto the mind of the sovereign that truth, necessary to his own preservation, most wholesome for the well-being of his kingdom,—the truth, that Jesus Christ is over him, and has within his dominions a visible, active institution, with which the king may not intermeddle, before which the king is only as a sinful person, needing the common redemption of all, and to the ordinances of which he is all submissive and obedient as one of the common people.

I have heard it said, that our present king, whom may God long preserve the great head of the protestation against the union of royalty and priesthood in one person, did say unto the minister who was to preach before him, "Forget that your king is before you, and preach to me as to another man." This was wisdom, this

was the wisdom of a king; this was piety, this was the piety of a king.

Now, consider with yourselves what a salutary effect the continual presence of such a feeling to the mind of a sovereign, the open expression of it every Sabbath in the presence of the people; its solemn recognition every time he takes the sacrament, every time he kneels with his family before the Lord in domestic devotion; consider, I say, what a most wholesome and salutary effect upon his mind, to incline it to the fear of God and the obedience of Christ, must be wrought by the perpetual presence of the sentiment of his inferiority and responsibility to Christ.

But if this be broken down, by giving him any ecclesiastical power whatever, then behold there is nothing to remind him of God, and of Christ, as his superior; of his dignity to stand and rule under Him alone; of the spirit in which he should govern, and of the laws and righteousness and equity which he should execute. He therefore does necessarily become arbitrary, tyrannical, blasphemous, satanic, or else checks are introduced of a violent and of an evil kind, which tend to bring up another error, That the king has his authority from the people, and is responsible for the exercise of it to the people.”<sup>20</sup>

So much have I thought it necessary to say upon the expression, “where Satan’s seat is,” as connected with the order in succession which this epistle occupies, lest anyone should be betrayed by a word into the baneful and ruinous notion now circulated upon every wind, that a Church establishment is in itself an essentially unchristian thing, and pernicious to the liberties of mankind.

It is true that “the kingdoms of the earth and the power of them are Satan’s;” but are they not also capable of being wrested and redeemed out of his hand? Is he there the supreme one? Is Christ there not his Lord also, whose name is Prince of the kings of the earth? idle name, if so be they cannot escape as kings from Satan’s dominion, but must, however they serve Christ personally,

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<sup>20</sup> *The Church and State Responsible to Christ, and to One Another* (1829), Discourse XI “General Conclusion.”

serve Satan royally. Away with such doctrine, alike derogatory to Christ, and to the king and to the people.

## **HOLDING FAST CHRIST'S NAME AND FAITH**

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>13</sup> ...and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith...

To hold fast the name of Christ, is:

- to hold fast the power to save: “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”<sup>21</sup>
- the power to heal, and work all signs and wonders: “And that signs and wonders may be done by the name of your holy child Jesus.”<sup>22</sup>
- to assert its supremacy: “above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth,”<sup>23</sup> and, in one word,
- to speak only in that name, and not to be perverted by the commandments of the wicked, given forth that “we should not speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”<sup>24</sup>

In Scripture, the name of Jehovah in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New, signify the same with His power; which the Sanhedrin well understood, when they questioned Peter and John:

### **Acts 4**

<sup>7</sup> By what name, or by what power have you done this?

And Peter in his reply identifies the name with the very person:

<sup>10</sup> Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole.

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<sup>21</sup> Acts 4:12.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 4:30.

<sup>23</sup> Philippians 2:9-10.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 4:18.

Now, be it observed, that “holding fast the name” is a different thing from “abiding steadfast in the faith of Jesus;” for both of which the angel of this Church is commended. And what is this distinction? The distinction, I think, stands in this, that while the faith has respect to the inward work of the Spirit, in uniting the believing soul to Christ, and preserving the reality and the assuredness thereof ever present for our sanctification, the name has respect to the outward signs of that indwelling Spirit of Christ, such as are enumerated in the conclusion of the Gospel according to *Mark*.

First comes the work of faith:

**Mark 16**

<sup>16</sup> He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be damned.

After which immediately come the signs, which are connected with the name as clearly as the faith is connected with the gospel:

<sup>17</sup> And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

<sup>18</sup> They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

I regard it therefore to be as much of the substance of a complete testimony to maintain that the power of the name of Christ prevails to work signs and wonders in the earth, and in the body of man, as it is to maintain the power of faith to sanctify the soul; and herein the Protestant Churches have been very faithless. If the Papists have assumed another name, we have not confessed to the name of Christ.

And what has been the consequence? Just in proportion as the true doctrine of signs, that they are the evidence of Christ the Redeemer present by the Spirit, in the Church, and the manifestation of the same Spirit, went out, the false doctrine came in, that they were helps to establish the doctrine, as if the doctrine were not essential truth, which needs no help but an honest conscience; a conscience made honest by the Holy Ghost.

By this false notion more skeptics have been made than by all the skeptical writers, turning the attention of men from the ever-present and only adequate evidence of Christianity in their own created and fallen being, away to remote questions of Christian antiquities, very difficult even for the learned, to the unlearned wholly inaccessible: the very soil of skepticism; necessarily so, whether the question were of Christianity or of anything else.

And in proportion as the true doctrine of signs, that they are the manifestation of the name and power of Christ is again revived in the Church, and the spell is even now broken, just in that proportion will Christianity be placed upon its own basis; which is, that Christ has redeemed us from all evil, and, though departed out of the world, has a presence and a power still in every believer through the Holy Ghost, mighty enough to overcome the devil, and disease, and death itself.

The signs are really signs; signs of this thing, that Jesus, the Redeemer, is in the person who uses them: their evidence is not in their being miraculous, but in their being of that kind of working which Jesus alone was competent to work. He cast the devils out, He healed the diseases of the body, He subjected the elements of nature so that they should not hurt man; He testified to the truth of God's being come in the flesh to save man: and when a poor weak worm of a man is made to do these same things, it is the proof positive, that not his own spirit but the Almighty Spirit of Christ is in him.

If, for example, his tongue is taken hold of, and without his understanding made to utter holy and heavenly truths, mysteries in the spirit, then is it proved that another intelligent Spirit than his own has possession of him: which Spirit, if it confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that Christ is come in the flesh, can be no other than the Spirit of God.

And so by these signs, and especially the sign of tongues, and this through the ignorance of the person as to what he utters, is the great doctrine of Christ's dwelling in many human persons in the world, at the same time that He is out of the world, the doc-



trine of the Church's oneness with Him, and with each other, and the doctrine of a personal and Divine Spirit to maintain this union, and be the worker of this power, and consequently the Divinity of Christ himself, of the man Christ Jesus,—all these doctrines become realities, observable truths, truths of sense, truths to be seen and heard; which, without the signs, would not have been credible.

For how could we believe that the spirit of a dead man, risen from the dead and departed to the Father, should at once occupy me and all the Church living in the world? It is one thing to hand down a doctrine by tradition, and quite another thing to get for it a first establishment among men.

The doctrine of our oneness of Spirit—not likeness but oneness, identity, very sameness—could never, I dare to say, have obtained credence among men, by other means than the signs; and now that it is never discoursed of at all, or only as a figure and metaphor, and is hardly believed by any, I think God will have recourse to the same method of reviving it, by reviving the signs of the Holy Ghost. And if so be, then I perceive, by the way in which all parties, Moderate and Evangelical, have entertained the question of the possibility of such things, that if the Holy Ghost again reappear, He will be blasphemed, and thus the Protestant Churches will fall for ever.

God prevent it. O rash men, reflect, and think not that all wisdom is contained in Paley's *Evidences*, or Campbell's *Answer to Hume on Miracles*. I challenge any man to set forth an argument to show that God intended these signs to abide only for a season in the Church. It is not possible to find in all the Scriptures the shadow of evidence or argument for such an opinion.

While thus I maintain that "to hold fast the name of Christ" is to assert the power of that name, to beat back the empire of Satan everywhere, and at all times, to the end of giving the demonstration so often as it is needed, that the same Jesus of Nazareth is both Christ and Lord, and that the Son of God is come in the flesh, by exhibiting His power in flesh—that is, in the living mem-

bers of the Church—over all the power of the enemy, I am very far from placing this as the whole or the chief matter of a Christian minister’s testimony; for though it be a most important matter, placed as it is first in the commendation of the angel of the Church of Pergamos, we are told by the Lord himself, that:

**Matthew 7**

<sup>22</sup> Many shall say on that day, Lord, have we not cast out devils in your name, and in your name done many wonderful works?

To whom Christ shall profess:

<sup>23</sup> I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

This second and still more important part of a Christian’s testimony consists in not denying the faith of Jesus, which, as distinguished from the former, I consider as having respect to the gospel, or good news of salvation, the proper objects of faith, the thing believed in to the saving of the soul.

The faith of Christ has respect to things invisible and yet to come: the name of Christ has respect to a present putting forth of power. From holding fast the power of Christ’s name, we are continually tempted by the apparent and ordinary course of nature, saying, “All things continue as they were from the beginning:” from adhering to the faith of Christ, we are tempted by the enjoyment of things seen, and the terrors of the wicked.

The law of nature, which is a law of sin and death, holds its steady and apparently irreversible course, and that a word should be able to overweigh it passes almost the possibility of belief. Yet this is what a Christian bears testimony to, when in the name of Jesus he makes prayer of faith unto the Father.

What are such utterances but declarations of the powerful name of Jesus to bring the thing besought to pass, be it to cast out a devil or to heal disease, or to obtain any gift, or to be delivered from any impending trial. Faith in the name of Christ is the basis of all prayer, and no prayer of faith offered in that name shall remain unfulfilled.

The Church on earth inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and by Him inspired with thoughts and desires, and knowledge agreeable to the will of God, breathes these forth to the Father in the name of Christ; and the Father by granting the things besought both testifies to His own being and gives glory to Christ, and proves the course of events to be wholly under Christ's control and government.

If the Church did offer ineffectual prayer to the Father in the name of Christ, then would the Father and the Son lack a testimony on the earth; which testimony stands not in things past alone, but in things continually occurring,—not in words written, but in works doing.

The Church is a body of living men, who have power to foreknow and supplicate for future things through the Spirit, and those prayers publicly made unto the Father in the name of Christ, and as publicly granted and done, do demonstrate the Father and the Son to be no barren names or ideas, but very powers and persons, in whose hand are all future events, and who rule the world in righteousness, and dwell in men's hearts, and admonish them of the future, and enable them to admonish the world.

Prayer and the answer of prayer are therefore a continual demonstration of the power of Christ's name; and the man who offers faithful prayers, and observes the answer of the same with thankfulness, is the man who holds fast the name of Christ.

These two methods which we have opened of holding fast Christ's name, by outward workings of the Spirit, and continual offering of prayer, are beautifully combined in that "promise of the Father" which our Lord gave the Church in His last discourse with the apostles.<sup>25</sup> After declaring that the Father was in Him, both speaking the words and doing the works, He adds, in His most solemn and sacred manner:

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<sup>25</sup> *John* 14.

**John 14**

<sup>12</sup> Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

This promise is made to every believer whatsoever without restriction, without condition of any sort. You might as well say that these words,

**John 6**

<sup>47</sup> Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believes on me has everlasting life,

—was only for the Christians of the first two or three centuries, as say that this promise of doing His works, and greater works than His, were only for such a time. And be it observed, they are works for witness—of which He had just said:

**John 14**

<sup>11</sup> Believe me for the very work's sake.

It is the gift, moreover, which they receive in consequence of His going to the Father, and therefore briefly denominated...

**Acts 1**

<sup>4</sup> ...the promise of the Father,

—and,

**Acts 3**

<sup>32</sup> ...the promise of the Holy Ghost received of the Father.

This was given on the day of Pentecost to the believing Church, and wherefore it is not possessed by her still, is to me not a mysterious and unaccountable thing, but a plain matter-of-fact demonstration of her lack of faith; for to every one who believes is it promised. Upon this bequest of the inheritance of power, follows the ample privilege of petitioning in the name of Christ, whatever is agreeable to the Father's will:

**John 14**

<sup>13</sup> And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

<sup>14</sup> If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it,

Now, let no one make void this great dowry by alleging that, because we know not the Father's will, we can present no prayer with any confidence. Then, present none at all—live prayerless, and die prayerless; for it is written:

**James 1**

<sup>6</sup> But ask in faith, nothing doubting...

<sup>7</sup> Let not him that doubts think he shall receive anything of the Lord.

It is true, as the apostle says:

**Romans 8**

<sup>26</sup> ...we know not what things we should pray for as we ought...

But it is likewise true, as in the same place he also says, that:

<sup>26</sup> ...the Spirit helps our infirmities...with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And in that very discourse, where these two most precious legacies are bequeathed to the Church by her dying Lord, over and over again He drives the evil heart of unbelief away from this subterfuge, by assuring her of the presence of the Holy Ghost to teach her all things, to manifest unto her the Father and the Son, to lead her into all truth, and to teach her things to come.

I know not whether I am more grieved or enkindled against the weak and wicked arguments of men, by which they would turn our prayers into random words and venturesome intrusions, from being Spirit-suggested desires, utterances of the needful members to the sympathizing and all-supplying Head.

Prayer of faith, and preaching in faith, and any other work done in faith, are as much supernatural works of the Spirit within us as the gift of tongues, or the gift of healing, or the working of miracles. That division of the gifts of the Spirit into extraordinary and ordinary, into miraculous and not miraculous, is utterly futile; they are all alike supernatural, all alike extraordinary, and when enumerated by the apostle,<sup>26</sup> all combined together as parts and subdivisions of one operating Spirit.

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7-12.

These are indeed inward and outward; the one, the Spirit working with our spirit; the other, the Spirit using the tongue, or the hand, or some other member of the body, for the demonstration unto others of His inward operation. Prayer is inward in the conception, or inspiration of it; it is outward in the wording and the answer of it.

O God, inspire my prayers! teach me to ask only what You will grant, and suffer me not to ask anything besides that You and your Son may be glorified in me! Oh, that I might hold fast the name of Christ.

This is a great point of faithfulness; but it is not all, as has been set forth above. To the present and current demonstration of the name of Christ, must be added the not denying His faith; the not yielding it to the temptations of the world, nor to the artifices of the enemy of all truth and righteousness; the contending for it earnestly, as it was once delivered unto the saints.

Very early did Satan introduce errors of every kind into the Christian faith, and wrought most subtly to corrupt the fountain-head of Christian truth. And what he could abide the least of all was, that Christ is come in the flesh; both out of diabolical spite against Him who drove him out of this his palace and domain, but also out of a subtle craft to keep men from the knowledge of that which can alone emancipate them out of his thralldom.

For as no one could redeem flesh but Christ only by coming in it, so there is no redemption to us but by the honor of this His work in the faith of it. Misgive in the faith of this, that He dwelt during the days of His flesh in this mortal, corruptible, passive, and temptable flesh, and you entirely miss the mark. Believe it to have been changed from ours in order to His taking of it, to have been differenced in any one atom from ours, and you believe a lie, a soul-destroying lie.

This was the great point of faith contended for in the primitive Church, and it is beginning to be the great point contended for again. And he denies the faith, who does not stand stiffly up to all gainsayers, and denounce it as a lie of Satan, that Christ's flesh

was in anything different from ours. Holy it was, yea most holy, but only through the information of the soul of Christ by the Holy Ghost, not from any difference in itself.

It was flesh ever presented holy, by the power of the Son of God, acting in a human will. In itself sinful, but as under His will, most holy. As taken by Him, sinful; as made by Him, always holy. Holy, not from any will of its own, but from the will of the Spirit Redeemed to be holy, not created holy. A holy thing, by generation of the Son into it, and by the life of the Son in it, not without Him.

I insist the more on this great truth, because I perceive it is the truth by which the sons of Levi are to be separated and purified. Blessed is he that endures the fiery trial. And here I cannot help offering publicly my thanksgivings to God, that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland were lately prevented from uttering anything but orthodoxy on this great head. So may it always be.

While this was the point chiefly or always assailed of Satan by heresies within the Church, the point of doctrine commonly attacked from without was, that Jesus is the Lord, to whom every knee must bow of things in heaven and things on earth, and to whom every tongue must confess. This strikes at the root of all idolatry and tyranny, as the other does at the root of all unholiness: this, the crucifixion of the world,—that, the crucifixion of the flesh.

That He is a King was the noble confession which Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate; that He is the King of kings, who only may receive worship, is the doctrine, for the testimony of which the martyrs of the primitive Church wore their crown; and in contending against the usurper of His name and dignity, the Roman pontiff, the martyrs of the second band, were also slain; and the martyrs of Scotland likewise died for the testimony of “Christ’s royal office in his house.”

So very important is this doctrine held by the Apostle Paul, that he gives it as one of the tests of spirits:

## **1 Corinthians 12**

<sup>3</sup> No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

And John's test is this:

### **1 John 4**

<sup>2</sup> Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in (the) flesh is of God;

<sup>3</sup> And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

I regard these two points of doctrine as the chief things worth contending for; the one respecting the work of Christ done in the flesh, the other respecting the work which He is now doing in the Spirit, and which He is to do when He comes again into the world. These are those three works of Christ:

1. His work in mortal and corruptible and sinful flesh, to do God's will therein, in conforming it to all righteousness, and in raising it from the grave to honor and immortality;
2. His work in the Spirit, whereby He works in the elect the same power of restraining the law of the flesh, and presenting its members holiness unto the Lord, whereby also He unites them into oneness with himself, and through the Church express the manifold wisdom, put forth the power, and communicate the holiness of God, in spite of the adverse fallen creature;
3. The work of His glorious advent, when He shall put forth His power in the body also, raising from the dead His saints, and purifying the material heavens and earth from all uncleanness, separating the goats from the sheep, and sending through the elements that liquid stream of fire which shall sweep away into the pit of hell everything which will not abide the fiery proof; and after this over a purified world He shall reign and worship—worship the Father, and reign over the Father's work forever and ever.

These three progressive parts of Christ's work He does in His characters of Prophet, Priest, and King; showing God, purifying



the earthly and the heavenly things, and ruling over the visible and invisible creation.

His work in flesh is as much a work of power as His work in the spirit, or His work in the body of glory, and as much needing all the might of God: but it is not manifestly so, though inwardly it is the most so, just as to defeat an enemy with his own weapons, wrested out of his own hand, is a work of greater prowess than to come upon him, armed head to foot from the armory of God.

But into these great heads of faith we may not enter at large: only we will say this further that on these two doctrines,—a holy work in weak and mortal, sinful and corruptible flesh, and a work of power in raising it from the grave, and with it all the elect, and delivering the creation from the bondage of corruption,—on these two points hang all the Law and the Prophets, all the creeds and confessions of the orthodox Church.

Give me them, and I will demonstrate a Trinity, a redemption, a restitution of all things. Take them from me, and I can prove nothing. How important then these two points, which are now before the Church in the form of controversy! which Satan has the hardihood to controvert anew, and which I fear he will find force enough to resist and withstand, and perhaps to cast out of the Church.

Let us ministers beware. It is a time of sifting trial, when very few seem able to stand. The storms are loosened from their resting-places; the winds are no longer restrained: judgment is about to begin at the house of God; and if the righteous hardly escape, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?

## **ANTIPAS, THE FAITHFUL MARTYR**

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>13</sup> ...even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.

Concerning this person whose eulogy is thus gloriously pronounced by the Son of God, we have no authentic records, and

that which is related in the menology of the Greeks, that he was put into a brazen bull and burned to death, is generally regarded as fabulous. But be this as it may, his record is on high; and his name alone among all the martyrs of Christ has been written in the book of Jesus Christ the faithful Martyr. It is very noble to be equaled in style with the Son of God himself: such nobility has Antipas received.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, where the style of the Trinity is given in names appropriate to this vision, that of Jesus Christ is “the faithful Martyr;”<sup>27</sup> and here that of Antipas is the same, “my faithful martyr.” The only difference is, that whereas Christ was the faithful Witness to God, we are the faithful witnesses to Christ. He died to testify of the Father: we die for the witness of Jesus; setting to our seal that His testimony to the Father was true.

This is our calling, our highest calling, to hold fast the name and not to deny the faith of Jesus; to assert Him, to proclaim Him, to serve Him in the sight and hearing of all kings, and of all men, as the only Christ and the only Lord; and to uphold the testimony which He gave concerning the invisible God as the only truth, and entirely to be depended on.

Witnesses we are not to anything new, not to anything of our own, but to the word of Christ, which He reveals to us by the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit does not speak of himself, but only what He hears from Christ, who speaks what He hears from the Father; whereby from the Father unto the world there is a stream of faithful and loving witness, good news of salvation flowing through the way of Christ by the Spirit into the Church, and out of the Church unto the world; calling thence as many as have received the like precious faith, and condemning the rest because they have not believed upon the only-begotten Son of the Father.

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<sup>27</sup> Editor’s note: In the KJV, *Revelation* 1:5 is expressed, “the faithful Witness.” However, as Irving goes on to explain on the next page, the same Greek word is used to express both a “witness” and a “martyr.”

Now it is ever to be borne in mind that though it be the minister's province to give the example hereof unto the Church, it is the Church's part to follow the example which he sets of faithful witness-bearing.

And in the prosecution of this sacred calling, it will needs come to pass, that he must reject and resist, and seek to put down the errors which are ever afloat among men of natural understanding without spiritual regeneration: and it will as certainly follow that the natural man who cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God will resist as:

- dreams,
- dotings,
- and ravings of madness,
- as mopings of melancholy,
- signs of an antisocial and evil temper,
- malignant aspersions,
- and unjust judgments,
- and blasphemous expressions and innovations,
- and familiarities with God,
- and deceivings of the people,
- and resistances of authority,
- and perhaps suggestions of the devil,

—those true and faithful witness-bearings of the Spirit, which the man of God cannot choose but declare in the hearing of all men.

And straightway there arises between the children of the Spirit and the children of this world a strong controversy and unceasing contention, which, beginning in words, most frequently ends in imprisonment and death; for the world cannot change itself from being the persecutor of the Church to become her favorer and friend. If she love the world or the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in her.

### **1 John 3**

<sup>13</sup> Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

## John 15

<sup>18</sup> If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

<sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Thus by the natural contradiction between the devil-possessed world, and the Spirit-possessed Church, he who began with witness-bearing commonly ends with martyrdom: insomuch that the same word in the Greek is used to express both a witness and a martyr. A martyr is no more than a witness concluding and sealing his testimony: a witness is no less than a martyr entering upon his course of imprisonment and death.

Many, yea most, witnesses are deterred before they come to that extremity. They are seduced by the smooth flatteries of men, they yield to the fond and easy suggestions of the flesh, they are deterred by the fear of the world's frown; they dread singularity, and they are astounded by the terrors of heresy and blasphemy charged upon them from the worldling ministers, the hireling shepherds around: they have not confidence in the teaching of Christ; their soul mistrusts the admonitions of the Spirit; they lose themselves in arguments and speculations of the natural understanding, and seek not to the Spirit to find themselves again; and so one drops off, and another from the royal course; and few, few there be of those who were called with the heavenly calling who win the heavenly goal and are crowned with the martyr's crown.

Not so with Antipas the faithful: in days when death came stalking into the house of God, and with grim voice commanded him to renounce the name and forgo the faith of Christ, he would not obey the king of terrors, but abode constant and true to Him who has the keys of hell and death.

Methinks it is even more perilous now-a-days to contend for truth than it was then. There were pastors over the churches faithful and true, who, like Timothy of Ephesus, and Polycarp of

Smyrna, and the angel of the Church of Pergamos, stood true to the great Shepherd, and gave the example of constancy to the people.

But now behold the ministers of the gospel are for the most part devoted to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life; and those who have a little strength are jealous of those who have more, are content to remain babes in Christ, and war in the foremost ranks against those who strive steadily towards perfection. So that the most fervent and feverish opposition to the doctrines of:

- Christ's being come in very flesh, in that which is common to the Church; and
- His being Lord over the spiritualities to resist Satan's evil supremacy over the body and over the world by overcoming disease and deadly things; and
- His coming as Lord to cast out the principalities and powers of darkness from the creation of God,

—are abhorred by those who are called of themselves evangelical, but who seem to me to be exactly in the state in which Paul describes the Corinthian Church to have been:

### **1 Corinthians 3**

<sup>1</sup> ...carnal, even...babes in Christ.

Hence the trial, hence the peril to the faithful witnesses, when they find those they were wont to call brethren and fellow-laborers, whom the constant voice of the churches calls faithful and true, who have been found wrestling against the worldliness and wickedness of their cold and lukewarm brethren, who are consecrated from missionary and Bible purposes, and carry a full sail of popular applause,—when those men, idolized by religious magazines, and trumpeted forth in religious newspapers, the saints of Protestantism, who stand to us for apostles and prophets, though they have made void the bulk of the apostolic and prophetic writings by their glosses, and interpretations, and traditions,—when these the cardinals of the Evangelical Church, some witness for

the truth as the Spirit has taught it to him, and the Scriptures confirmed it, finds arrayed against him, mad against him, stirred up with a fierceness of zeal unexampled, he yields, partly by terror, mostly by doubting of the Spirit's witness within him, the point, or smooths it away with art of words, and suffers the enemy of the truth to ride over his head.

Oh! You man, whosoever you are, that thus find yourself, hear the Lord pronounce from heaven the name of Antipas, and call him His faithful witness: let this one voice outweigh the tumult of a thousand men. Oh! You ministers of the truth, let Christ's commendation of the angel of Pergamos for not surrendering the banner in such a fearful time of controversy as now rages, encourage you. The time is near at hand when trials of as stern a kind will need to be proved, battles of a fiercer edge have to be endured: make ready your armor.

### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness,

<sup>15</sup> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace:

<sup>16</sup> Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

<sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

<sup>18</sup> Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints;

<sup>19</sup> And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

If now from the literal Pergamos, one of the seven places chosen to substantiate these prophecies, and realize these truths of ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline, we turn to that period of the Church which authenticates it in time, and presents to us who look back afar off, and have not the very condition of those places present to us, and know of them only through tradition, the same

advantage of a distinct object in treating which the early churches had in the place itself; we will find a very wonderful correspondence indeed between the language of this verse, and the period in question, which is the period from the time that the Church was established by Constantine, until the Papacy got the upper hand; that is, the period between the termination of the ten days' persecution of the Church of Smyrna, and the authority of the woman Jezebel in the Church of Thyatira.

The ten days' persecution is the subject of *Revelation* 12, which also contains the woman in her beauty, in her persecution, and in her flight into the wilderness; nor does she reappear as the Jezebel mother of harlotry and patroness of idolatry, till the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter, when in this fearful disguise, drunk with the blood of martyrs, she is seen ascending out of the wilderness.

The intervening time between her going into the wilderness, and her coming up, must then be the period of the martyrdoms historically set forth by the reality of the martyrdom of Antipas.

This intervening period is contained in *Revelation* 13, which, however, contains not only the period of Pergamos, but also of Thyatira, because it contains the whole period of the woman's supremacy; for in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter she is brought up to her ignominious execution.

The historical period proper to the Church of Pergamos, comes so far into the period of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, as brings us down to the time of the papal supremacy, when the woman came into the condition of riding upon the beast.

The period again of the Church of Thyatira, beginning from that point, occupies the time during which the woman is permitted to rule in the Church:

- the one, presenting us with the opposition of Satan, through the means of the state; the other, with the same opposition through the means of the Church of Rome;
- the one, the period of the beast; the other, the period of the image of the beast;

- the one, the period during which the beast from the sea, that is, the emperor, had the ascendancy: the other, the period during which the beast from the earth, that is, the pope, had the ascendancy.

And these two periods compose the forty-and-two months, or 1260 years, of the papal Roman Empire; being but one period of the actings of the beast, namely, the papal period as distinguished from the pagan which went before, and the infidel which follows after.

Observe, now, the name Antipas, the martyr of this period, signifies, in the Greek, “against every one, against all;” and when we examine the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, we find:

**Revelation 13**

<sup>3</sup> ...all the world wondered after the beast.

<sup>7</sup> ...power was given to him over all kindreds and tongues and nations.

<sup>8</sup> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

This language, in a very remarkable manner, draws our attention to the universality of His dominion, and constitutes a ground for the name of Antipas, “against all,” being given to the witnesses who witnessed against Him.

Again, the angel of the Church of Pergamos is commended for his faithfulness, in that he held fast the name of Christ. Now, the same chapter of this prophecy informs us that another name than the name of Jesus was introduced into the Church, whose number is six hundred threescore and six, which, according to the earliest, and, I think, the best interpretation, signifies, in the Greek, the Latin kingdom, and in the Hebrew, Rome.

But, be this as it may, it is certain that one form of the mystery of iniquity, constituted during that period, is the mystery of another name than the name of Christ—namely, the name of the



beast, which is mentioned more than once in this book of the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, as we shall see in the sequel of this lecture, the promise of the new name is especially made to the faithful ones of this Church, indicating that their peculiar province in the mystery of godliness was to resist the false name introduced by the mystery of iniquity.

The martyrs, signified by the name Antipas, I should therefore regard as those who stood forth in all parts of the Church to resist the pretensions of the papal see, advocated and supported by all the power of the emperors—as, for example, the Waldenses and the Albigenses.

Moreover, the angel is commended for not denying the faith of Jesus; and we observe, from all the language of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, that there was a steady purpose of introducing a worship altogether new and different from the worship of the Father and the Son, even the worship of the beast and his image.

But this is so very remarkable a work of evil, that we deem it worthy of a little more careful study. Let us address ourselves therefore for a few moments to the consideration of the mystery of iniquity contained in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, and we shall see how perfect a design it was for overthrowing the name and faith of our Lord Jesus.

The first effort of Satan against the Church, as detailed in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, and briefly set forth in the trials of the former Church, the Church of Smyrna, was a rude attempt of cruelty and violence, to subvert the faith of the disciples by pains and penalties, by imprisonment and death. It went on without art or artifice,—it was straightforward work, designed to terrify men out of their faith.

But, in process of time, when Satan found that he labored in vain by these methods, and did but promote what he would destroy, he addressed himself to his wiles, and did compass the most

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<sup>28</sup> *Revelation* 13:17; 15:2.

refined artifice and consummate deception which the world ever saw; and which in Scripture is denominated the mystery of Iniquity, in contradistinction to the mystery of Godliness. This consists, like that which it so cunningly counterfeits, of two powers, persons, or agents:

- The one, the beast with seven heads and ten horns, to whom Satan gave his seat and his power and great authority, and for whom he exacts and obtains the worship of all the world;
- The other, the beast out of the earth, with two horns like a lamb, whose first work it is to win from the other the wicked ascendancy over mankind, which he does by devilish power of craft and wonder-working.

And this done, he makes an image to the other beast, and procures that these should share the worship of mankind. And both together so prevail against God and His Church, and so perplex and captivate men, that no one is preserved from their delusion whom God has not written in the Lamb's book of life; and together, these two deceivers make to themselves a name above every name upon the earth.

This is the machinery of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, expressive of the perfect counterfeit of the Father and the Son,—the former beast impersonating the Father, the latter beast impersonating the Son.

As the Son proceeds from the substance of the Father, so the second beast proceeds out of the earth, which is the substance of the former, coming out of the earth, and being substantially the same, having the same territory, and the same subjects, and the same dominion.

The one dwells before or in the presence of the other, and works all His works for the sake of the other, to obtain for Him worship and service; and in consideration thereof becomes the image of the former which Christ by the resurrection became in flesh, as before He had been in Spirit (holy likewise before in flesh, though not in the glory and strength of God), to which im-

age He procures worship coordinate and commensurate with the worship bestowed upon the former.

It may be a question, and I know is with many a question, whether the papal (called holy) Roman empire with its two powers, imperial and papal, well answers as a fair interpretation of this complex symbol; and this is one of those questions upon which men will ever remain much divided, for it requires no small store of historical knowledge, and very great judgment, to take in the several subjects according to their proper size and value.

But I think no doubt can remain that this chapter exhibits in principle the full-length portraiture and completed form of that Antichrist whose special character the Apostle John declares to be this, that he denies the Father and the Son:

### **1 John 2**

<sup>22</sup> He is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son.

This 13<sup>th</sup> chapter is the embodiment of that Antichrist, is the triumph of His power, find it historically where and when you please. I hold, for reasons which fall to be stated hereafter, that the whole had symbolical accomplishment in the papal, or as they term it, the holy Roman empire: but it is too great and grand a demonstration to end there.

It will embody itself really, as every symbol, if it have not done so in time past, must do in time to come. This has not in time past been embodied, and therefore, like the changing of the sun, moon, and stars, under the sixth seal, I believe its reality outstands still, and waits accomplishment: for nothing but a thing real can become a symbol.

Now in the time when this symbol was fulfilling itself, the period of the Pergamos Church doubtless falls: Satan's seat, the name, the faith, and other things as we shall see, are common to this Church with that vision. Which are not coincidences accidental, but such as have along with others forced me to adopt the

view of the epistles, as being in succession of time, as well as reality of place, and universality of application.

In power imperial, and in power ecclesiastical, in the State and in the Church, combining for the casting out of both Father and Son, and endeavoring to set themselves up in their stead; in the energy, power, and authority of churches established by the civil power, and by it sustained, I believe that the great work of Antichrist has been and will be accomplished.

It may end in the raising up of a person at the head of the State, who, with the person at the head of the Church, will give personal accomplishment to this mystery of iniquity: it may be accomplished in many places, and by many by-plots, but the principle will be the same for ever; the Church and the State combining their several powers to cast out the true worshipers of God and of the Lamb, and calling upon us to deny their name.

How far it has ripened itself in these lands, how near it is to come, I believe that no man is so fully apprised as to say: but I perceive it to be very near in that land which is nearest my heart, and in that Church to which my duty is most due; and I commend it to the prayers of all who can discern in these my words, something more than the dotings of folly, or the ravings of madness, to give themselves night and day to prayer and intercession, that none of those things may come to pass.

Is it so strange that a Church constituted of God should cast out Jesus and His disciples? Did not the Jewish Church so? And what says the apostle to the Gentiles?

**Romans 11**

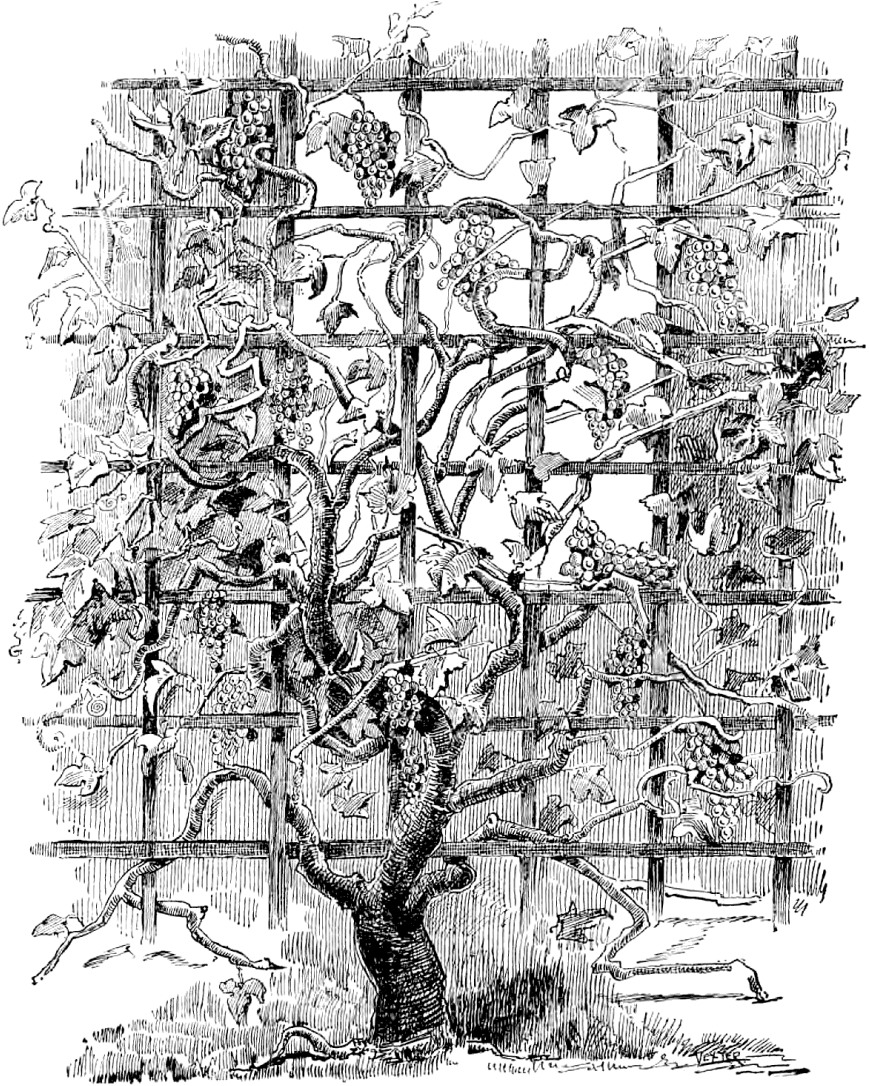
<sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches be broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakes of the root and fatness of the olive-tree;

<sup>18</sup> Boast not against the branches. But if you boast, you bear not the root, but the root you.

<sup>19</sup> You will say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

<sup>20</sup> Well: because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.

<sup>21</sup> For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not you.



### III. THE REPROOF

**A**FTER this commendation of the angel of Pergamos, and enumeration of His faithful workers, the Watchman and Shepherd of Israel proceeds to the work of reproof, which is introduced with as much courtesy, and worded with as much gentleness, as the subject would admit of:

#### **Revelation 2**

<sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

The angel is reproofed for the neglect of wholesome discipline, and for permitting to remain in the Church of Pergamos certain who held erroneous and evil doctrines; whereof two are mentioned, the one that of Balaam, the other that of the Nicolaitanes.

The Lord does not say what the minister of the Church ought to have done with such, but simply charges it against him as an offense, that such persons should be found within the bounds of his jurisdiction:

“You have there [that is, in Pergamos], them that hold the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes.”

This bears out the idea of a local bounds or diocese, of which the several ministers of the churches were regarded by Christ as having the responsibility.

Of these Balaamites and Nicolaitanes, because they are resident in his city, he is to bear the blame; just as the vicegerent and ambassador of any king would have to bear the blame if he were not stirred up to wrath, and moved to proceed against any who should take upon them in the name of his king to promulgate falsehood, with the stamp of the king to issue base coin, as the subjects of the king to carry on contraband traffic, or in any other way whatever to offend the laws and prostitute the name of him whose person he represents.

Even so, the angel of a Church being planted in any town, or city, or district of the world, is not only called upon to testify against the various violations and false religions which there prevail; but also to keep a vigilant eye upon the professors of the true religion, lest they set forth anything in the name of the Lord Jesus, which is not of the truth, and therefore dishonorable to, and contradictory of, Him who is the Truth.

Not only does Christ expect it of every angel of the Church to do a pastor's part in feeding the flock and preventing roots of bitterness from springing up, but also to do an ambassador, or messenger, or angel's part in taking observation that no one in all these parts do utter anything to the injury of His high and holy prerogatives.

He expects that His angel or *nuncio* to those regions should not only proclaim Him King over all the earth, and call upon the people, and especially the magistrates, to come in with their allegiance to Him, as Christ and Lord; but also to take heed lest any coming in the same name should put forth erroneous views on those things which concern His person, His office, or the holy laws of His kingdom.

Many ministers of Christ think they have fulfilled their part in feeding their own flock, and preserving light and love and purity there; and that they ought to bear themselves indifferently or in-offensively to others, of whatever sect or denomination they be. It is not so: and he that thinks thus snugly to keep his house and home in security, shall not long have either house or home to hold. For enemies are all abroad, and ever active to overthrow the dominion, and cast out the name of our King; against whom if we will not arm in loyal zeal, and march to the borders of the kingdom, and go round the bulwarks of Zion, and do the duty of the tented field, there shall soon be neither light, nor peace, nor love, nor purity in any house or habitation of the people.

I am called upon here in London, where God in His providence has cast my lot, to do my diligence to denounce everyone what-

ever who promulgates in Christ's name what Christ would blush to acknowledge.

For example:

- If any man say He came not in tempted and tempting flesh, I must withstand him to the uttermost, as, God helping me, I most surely will;
- Or, that coming so, He made not that flesh holy and sinless at all times and in all estates of this mortal life, I must challenge and fight him;
- Or, that He came not in love to all, and to make atonement for all, then down must my gauntlet go again;
- Or that He was not very man;
- Or that He was not very God;
- Or that He was not the Messiah promised to the Jews;
- Or that He is not the only Sovereign of kings;
- Or that any other person, as the pope, may have the supremacy;
- Or if anything be advanced contrary to the laws of His kingdom, as that we should not be holy and perfect, but may content ourselves with some shortcoming;
- Or that we may not take confidence to ourselves in His name, but must seek for some evidence or sign super-added thereto:

If any of these, or the other multitudinous errors which are afloat, be broached in the hearing, or promulgated in the neighborhood, of any minister of Christ, he is bound by his honor and loyalty to take arms against it, and contend unto the death like a valiant soldier, good and true, for the integrity of the Name, and the observance of the commandment of his great King and Lord.

Is it enough that I purge my own flock of such abominations? It is not enough. I am not a pastor only, but an angel, minister, or ambassador of Christ, to represent His person, and stand for His honor in all those parts, and put down with the spiritual weapons of our warfare all who would deceive redeemed men as to the work and worth of their Redeemer.



I insist upon this point the more because it seems to me to present a fuller and more perfect view of the name “angel of the Church” than I have been able to give before. He is Christ’s commissioner, His plenipotentiary, His representative, in all those parts; not merely His delegate to feed one particular flock.

And in what way, at what times, and by what means, is he to bear this testimony against every form of error, which men, under the banner of Christ, may broach? In all ways, in all times, and by all means; but chiefly in his preaching, prayers, and public ministry; in his writings, and in his daily disputations with the enemies of the truth; always remembering to do nothing by strife or vain glory, for the man of God must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, meekly instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

Seeing then that it is the office of the “angels of the churches,” not only to bear the banner of the truth, but also to fight under it, against every banner hostile to the truth, or hypocritically pretending to be for the truth, and we, the “angels of the churches,” like the captains of an army, do only set the example of valor, and show the manner of the fight, and give the command to the fighting men, who are dishonored when they follow not their leader’s footsteps, it is manifest that this work of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, is as much the duty of the private Christian, as of the official minister, as much of the members of the Church, as of her pastors.

There is no more fatal error than that any man, in his Christian liberty, may not set his hand to any work which Christ has commanded. He must, he cannot be free from the obligation of a perfect and complete faith, of a perfect and complete witness, of a perfect and complete obedience.

We ministers are the stewards over Christ’s house to feed it, but we are not the house; we are the commissariat of the army, to find it in provisions and arms, but not the army: in one word, the

Church is not made for the ministry, but the ministry for the Church.

I cannot but think, that there exists a most unwarrantable usurpation on the part of the ministry, when they think that with them lies the whole privilege of refuting error and propagating truth: which, joined with the rigorous custom of requiring so many years of regular education in a university, truly leaves the laity in a condition of indifference and indisposition to truth and error, which is now beginning to be felt with fatal influence by every one engaged in working the mighty vessel of the Church out of the narrow creeks, where she has been long laid up, into the broad and deep seas, where she may serve her office.

We find the people in a lethargy, and what is worse, in a paralysis of all their powers of discerning truth from error, arising from no other cause than this, that they have of a long time left these things to their ministers, to whom, being attached by the ties of natural love and esteem, they are become lamentably subservient, and are driven at their pleasure.

It is not clear to me, but that the base subjection to authorities, may lead again to the persecution of those who dare to stand up and say to these authorities, You are abusing, you are neglecting your trust, you are rocking the people in false security, or leading them to perdition.

If a layman were to set aside the use of the ministry, he sets Christ aside in his ordinance. If, having used the ordinance of a ministry, he does not maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, against all error as it is in Satan, he has used it to little purpose indeed, or rather he has not used it at all; for as an ordinance in the Church, the very use of the ministry is to testify unto the truth, and show out the full truth unto the Spirit witnessing in the people.

Was it to the ministry, or to the people, that Jude wrote:

**Jude 1**

<sup>3</sup> Beloved...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Or that John wrote:

**1 John 2**

<sup>20</sup> You have an unction from the holy one, and you know all things.

Or that Jesus promised of the Comforter:

**John 16**

<sup>13</sup> Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...and he will show you things to come.

The angels are the messengers of the truth, the churches are those who have set to their seal that their message is true; and, this done, are bound by word and deed, by life and death, to maintain the truth in all ways which are proper to a spiritual man.

The very ground of the reproof to the angel of the Church of Pergamos, is, not that he himself had failed in holding fast Christ's name, or in affirming his truth; but that he had been unmindful of the errors in which others were snared, and in which they were seeking to snare unstable souls. Says He, who has the stars in His right hand:

“Wherefore, you are to be blamed because you have not felt grieved and wounded for the truth, and for my sake, neither afflicted for your brother's sake, but have suffered such an error quietly to root and grow up beside you, for the destruction of many.

“I endure not such sloth in you, such indifference, such saving of yourself. You should have offered yourself to the combat, you ought to have put on your armor, and gone forth to battle; you have been too fearful of yourself, too little devoted unto me.

“Go forth quickly, and root out that nest of evil, go quickly and enlighten that dark region of my Church, go quickly and summon these disobedient people to surrender to the truth, or else I will come quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Here I must pause and confess my sin unto God: of nothing does my conscience more loudly rebuke me, than of not having

contended enough for the faith. Lord, you know my repentance, and you know my purpose. Be my helper, O God!

## THE BALAAMITES

Having thus ascertained the general ground of the rebuke, and applied it to the purpose of doctrine, we now proceed to examine the nature of those two errors, for the allowance of which the angel of the Church of Pergamos was reproved. The first is denominated thus:

### Revelation 2

<sup>14</sup> ...those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

This avaricious and obstinate prophet is in other places of the New Testament used as a warning to the Christian ministry, as in the *Second Epistle of Peter* and the *Epistle of Jude*; to which I would carry your attention, that we may have before us the whole of the commentary of the Holy Ghost on that Old Testament history.

In the former of the places referred to,<sup>29</sup> it occurs in the midst of a very various discourse concerning the apostasy in the Church, which is to draw on the judgment of the quick and the perdition of the ungodly, at the coming of the Lord. That epistle, in which this full length portraiture of the last apostasy occurs, has more of the manner of the ancient prophets about it than any other book of the New Testament, except the *Apocalypse*. Behold how it is constructed:

- There is first the delineation of our standing in grace, through faith;<sup>30</sup>
- Then of the certain continuance therein through active holiness,<sup>31</sup> until the time when the entrance shall be ministered

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<sup>29</sup> 2 *Peter* 2:15.

<sup>30</sup> 2 *Peter* 1:1-5.

<sup>31</sup> 2 *Peter* 1:5-11.

to us abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is the introductory part, containing the Gospel of our assured salvation. Then follows the express object and purpose of the epistle, to keep them in remembrance of what he had taught them concerning...

## **2 Peter 1**

<sup>16</sup> ...the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Of the certainty of which they might not doubt after what had been seen on the mount of transfiguration, which was the seal of all the prophets whom God had set for the testimony of His coming in glory and majesty.<sup>32</sup>

Thus having announced his subject, and the dignity of it, he proceeds in the next place to lay out the sad and miserable character of the false teachers who should come into the Church, and the havoc which they should work in the vineyard of the Lord. This is the view which Peter had of the times between his day and the coming of the Lord; and he was anxious to give them to the Church, because he felt his end approaching.

Without staying upon this awful forewarning, so awfully fulfilled in the Papacy, and, if I err not, more awfully to be fulfilled yet in the downright infidelity which is taking possession of the whole Church, Protestant and Papal, and of none so hastily, I think, as in the Church of Scotland itself, I go on to conclude the digest of this prophetic epistle.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter being wholly taken up with this exhibition of the Church, as Peter foresaw it was to be, the third opens with a reiteration of his entreaty to the faithful in the midst of this apostasy, to cleave unto the words of the prophets and the commandments of the apostles concerning the coming of the Lord, because there would arrive a general oblivion and scoffing of that blessed hope, as beyond and beside the course of nature; whereupon when, though the Lord might long delay, He would come at

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<sup>32</sup> 2 Peter 1:16-21.

length, to the perdition of the ungodly and the purgation of the elements of creation, after which, in the new heavens and the new earth, the righteous shall reign in righteousness.

Such is the bird's-eye view which Peter had of the future fate of the Church; so very much in keeping with the old prophets, that by the very style of it I could have known it to be inspired by the same Spirit.

He foretold an apostasy, embodying all forms of wickedness, introducing a contempt for and profanation of the hope of the Lord's coming, which should draw on that very judgment upon the world, from which His people should be drawn out, as Lot was from Sodom.

What fatal blindness holds the eyes of this generation, that they should not see this now to be in existence; it is that they have agreed to deceive themselves with a false view of the future times, in every respect contradictory of the truth: namely, that there neither is nor is to be an apostasy, but a glorious growing of truth and righteousness upon the earth for one thousand years before that the Lord shall come: and having this preached to them from a thousand smooth tongues, and in a thousand dulcet strains, they are cajoled into that fatal security, which nothing will break but the trump of God. They will grow blinder and blinder, more and more fierce against the truth, more and more infected with the madness of Balaam the Prophet.

This notice of Balaam stands in the very heart of that fearful description of the apostates, which we now return to study more carefully as it is laid down in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

It begins with predicting false teachers in the Church, who should deny the lordship, the ownership of Christ, and bring in other damnable heresies; such as, that He came not in our flesh: that His flesh had not in it the law of the flesh for the Spirit to overcome, lay asleep, and lap up in death.

With respect to the heresy which is named, it is remarkable that the martyrs' souls, who cry from under the altar, address

Christ as their Lord [despot, owner, master of slaves], signifying that they had died for the testimony of that very truth. Now we know for what the first army of martyrs died, even for the testimony of Christ's right of sovereignty over men and the sovereigns of men.

If this be any key to the heresy named, it will prove to be that rejection of Christ's right of dominion and government which is now possessing the world, and has now prevailed even in the constitution of this kingdom; and given way to the infidel maxim, that every man is his own lord, and save as he resigns up to another of his own consent and covenant, that other can have no authority over him. French republicanism has supplanted Christian polity.

And if the cause of this falling away be looked into a little more deeply, it will be found where this passage places it, namely, in denying that Christ by His death bought the world with His blood, that mankind are His, and that magistrates placed over them are the shepherds of His people. This truth Evangelicalism has supplanted, to make way for the error that Christ has only purchased the elect: and therefore, say they:

“What have we, what has religion, what has Christ, to do with worldly kings, worldly governments, and worldly people?”

Insatiate men! when will you be contented with self-applause and contempt of others? I believe, as I have said, that these two truths, the flesh of Christ and the lordship of Christ, the one the demonstration of His Humanity, the other of His Divinity, are the two pillars, the Jachin and the Boaz, of the spiritual temple.

By these errors, with others which enter in their train, it is said that these false prophets will so mightily prevail in the Church as to make it a shame and a disgrace to hold the truth, which is even now the case. To this they should add covetousness, self-seeking, worldly reputation, creature comfort, riches, and respectability, and deal in the merchandise of souls, getting good livings by their

prostitution of the truth. For all which, the judgment of old decree and written, should certainly and speedily come to pass.

And a proof that God could and would judge His Church which had apostatized from her proper standing of grace, holiness, and self-denial, the apostle refers to the evil angels, and to the antediluvian world, and to the cities of the plain. Yet though He was most certainly to bring the judgment written of old against this apostasy, He would as certainly deliver the few faithful ones, as He had delivered Lot out of Sodom. This is, in brief, the substance of the matter.

But not content with this historical sketch, he addresses himself most patiently to describe the character of those apostates, that the Church might not, without the fullest warning, be led astray. This portrait of an apostate churchman begins at verse 10th, and consists of the following traits:

1. They walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness;
2. They despise government; upon which is given the following commentary: "Presumptuous self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."<sup>33</sup>
3. Their covetousness, "beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices, children of curse; which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."<sup>34</sup>

These their features, sensuality, liberalism, or licentiousness, and making gain of godliness, are illustrated with wonderful variety of similitudes: and the certain and miserable destruction of the apostates is foretold in fearful expressions:

- They are likened to the savage animals of the wood, made to be taken and destroyed;
- The mist of darkness is reserved for them for ever;
- They shall perish in their own corruption;

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<sup>33</sup> 2 Peter 2:10.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Peter 2:14-15.



- The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

The corresponding passage in *Jude*<sup>35</sup> (for the correspondence is most remarkable) gives also three features:

1. The way of Cain;
2. The error of Balaam for reward;
3. The gainsaying of Core [Korah].

Of which the two latter are certainly covetousness and insurgency, and the first is the preference of the lower and earthy and sensual man after which Cain's posterity followed in preference to the spiritual man, to which the line of Seth were more disposed. The same three temptations and wanderings of the wicked seem to be described by John under another form:

### 1 John 2

<sup>16</sup> ...the lust of the flesh [sensuality], and the lust of the eyes [covetousness], and the pride of life [ambition, leading on to in-subordination].

And I think they are still the same with the three temptations of our Lord:

1. The temptation of the sense,
2. The temptation of the sight, and
3. The pride of confidence or self-exaltation.

And perhaps they are the same with the three forms of the beast in the *Apocalypse*:

1. The Pagan form of brutal violence;
2. The Papal form of making merchandise of souls through cunning craftiness;
3. The infidel form of misrule and independence of all authority.

However this may be, one thing clearly results from this examination,—namely, that the history of Balaam is not slightly to be passed over, but ought diligently to be studied as containing in it a remarkable type of one form of the triple wickedness which was

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<sup>35</sup> *Jude* 1:11.

in time to be revealed in the Christian Church. To the study of this history let us now proceed, with the feeling of those who have been directed thither by the finger of the Holy Ghost.

The passage in the epistle to the Church of Pergamos directs our attention especially to that part of Balaam's conduct wherein he acted as an evil counselor of the king of Moab, and advised him to tempt the people whom he could not curse, and to lead astray the people whom he could not destroy.

It was not for lack of will that Balaam cursed them not, but for lack of power: his covetousness prompted him in all possible ways to compass the desire of Balak the king of Moab, but God withheld him; and when he utterly failed, and three several times blessed the people, and foretold how they should smite the four corners of Moab, he gave counsel to the king to tempt them by the women unto the sacrifice of Peor:

### **Numbers 31**

<sup>15</sup> And Moses said unto them, Have you saved all the women alive?

<sup>16</sup> Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

The particulars of this trespass are detailed in:

### **Numbers 25**

<sup>1</sup> And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

<sup>2</sup> And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

<sup>3</sup> And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

This part of Balaam's conduct, being different from that which is referred to by Peter and Jude, only the more confirms the conclusion that, from first to last, the history of this prophet is typical of the Christian Church. Behold, then, how it stands in the history. The children of Israel being come to the very edge of the

promised land, pitched on the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho; and the king of Moab, terrified by their approach and by the rumor of their mighty deeds, sent to Balaam, a prophet of the true God, and brought him from afar to curse the people.

He sought none of the prophets of Peor whom his people served, but sent for Balaam the son of Zippor, a true prophet, in whose mouth was the word of God, but in his heart all covetous practices; out of whose mouth he heard only the truth of God, but out of his guileful heart he learned the way of leading them astray by women and winning them over to the worship of his gods. For which the Lord's anger was kindled against the people, and He thus commanded Moses:

### **Numbers 25**

<sup>4</sup> Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord, against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.

<sup>5</sup> And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

This purification by a sacrifice being accomplished, the people are numbered, the law of the conditions of the inheritance of the land is reappointed; after which Moses is commanded to...

### **Numbers 31**

<sup>2</sup> Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, [or Moabites]:

—and this done he is...

<sup>2</sup> ...gathered unto his people.

The man of God accordingly addresses himself to this the last of his works, and slew the kings of Midian, and Balaam along with them, all the males also, and all the women, save those who were virgins. And of the plunder everything which could pass through the fire was with fire purified, and the rest with the water of separation, and all the people who had a hand in the war, washed their clothes and abode without the camp seven days. And thus ended the actions of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

Now, even though this remarkable history had not in these three several places of the New Testament been applied to the Christian Church, I could, from its very structure, have pronounced it to be a typical history of the actings of the powers that be, against the Church, to prevent her from coming to her inheritance of the earth.

The powers that be, though ordained of God, are, wherever the Gospel has not redeemed them, the servants of Satan, who is therefore styled by our Lord the prince of this world; and the kingdoms which they govern are expressly promised and predetermined for the meek and the poor in spirit, and all who are faithful to Christ unto the death.

No wonder then that Satan, the present holder, and, since Christ's victory over him, the usurper of the inheritance, should eye with dread and with malice, that Church which is destined to supplant him; the true heirs and children of the kingdom, who are ever standing on the edge of their inheritance, and waiting the day of His coming to take possession, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

To forewarn the gods, or kings, or magistrates, concerning this temptation of Satan, has been one of the chief objects of God's revelation from the beginning; and in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, the first king of kings, God showed forth in many ways, both prophetic and emblematical, the nature and history of the apostasy of His chief servants upon the earth, the kings and magistrates of the people.

Of this kind also is the transaction between Balak and the Church of God. It signifies that the powers of the world, desirous to hinder and destroy the Church, would find a prophet of God, who having the truth in his mouth, but covetousness in his heart, should teach how to seduce them by harlotry from the worship of the living and true God. Which accordingly was effected in the primitive churches, as that of Corinth and others, wherein Paul writes against this corruption; and in this Church of Pergamos also.

And, no doubt, it was one great form of seduction over the whole primitive Church, to amalgamate, as far as they could, both with the Jews and with the heathen. While the apostles lived, their devoted and uncompromising spirit stayed this evil disposition; which yet drew in Peter and James, and Barnabas also, but was nobly and successfully resisted by Paul. Yet even during this, the Ephesian state of the Church, the great Shepherd had to complain of the Nicolaitanes, who followed after sensual indulgences.

The persecutions which arose after the decease of the apostles, and continued throughout the Smyrna period of the Church, were the means of preventing the same evil; for the sword and the stake are not the instruments of seduction.

When, however, this period concluded, and made way for the Pergamos condition of the Church, that is, from the time of Constantine forward, we are astonished chiefly at two things:

1. The orthodoxy of word pronounced by the Church in all her councils, to a noble succession of which we owe all our creeds;
2. The covetousness of worldly grandeur, and worldly possessions, and worldly power, which at the same time burst forth in all parts of Christendom.

Now this is exactly the state of things of which Balaam is the type; a true prophet, but a most wicked and unprincipled man. By the operation of this covetous disposition, it came to pass that various forms of idolatry, or spiritual fornication, were introduced, which Rome, gathering and cementing into one, is on that account called the mother of harlots; and, with this spiritual adultery, entered in the innumerable heathen superstitions which now deface and entirely hide the primitive forms of the Church in that apostasy.

This triumph of Jezebel, the patroness of fornication, is properly the period of the Thyatira Church; but for which it is the special property of this Church to prepare the way, being the time of counsel-giving, anterior to the time of carrying into effect,—the period during which Balak, the head of temporal power, is receiv-

ing from Balaam, the true but covetous prophet, instructions how to proceed in bringing the Church low, even to the ground. It is, in one word, the action of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Apocalypse*, set forth by a historical type; and behold how the hundred-forty-and-four thousand are described<sup>36</sup> as...

#### **Revelation 14**

<sup>4</sup> ...they which were not defiled with women,

–to signify that all the action of the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter is equal to, and parallel with, the action of the children of Israel, in defiling themselves with the daughters of Moab.

Behold also how every one of those worshipers and followers of the beast, and false prophet, who had given way to their seductions, are destroyed in the action of the seventh vial,<sup>37</sup> after having been variously tormented by the plagues of the preceding six, in order, if possible, to lead them to repentance. And all those of the children of Israel who had sinned with the daughters of Moab, were in like manner destroyed.

And thus it is that the language of the text, and the historical type of Balaam, are to be interpreted. But, besides these real and exact coincidences, there arise many other things of consequence, as to the future, which may be laid down as conjecture, if not as positive certainty.

For example, it is the last act of the wilderness state of the Church, to overthrow Balak and Balaam; and so to destroy the apostate powers of the earth, is the last act of the Church, before she is brought into the kingdom. It is the last act of Moses, the conductor of the Church through the wilderness, who then gives up his office to Joshua, the man of war; and so thereafter I believe the Church will come, under the guidance of Christ as the man of war.

Thus unfolding the mystery of Balaam and Balak's dealings, we have been forced a little out of our method, which is to explain

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<sup>36</sup> *Revelation 14:4.*

<sup>37</sup> *Revelation 19:20-21.*

the literal application to the times then being, before entering either upon the historical application to the period set out by the Church of Pergamos, or upon the general application of it to all states and times of the Church. We return therefore to explain the nature of this seduction to which the Church of Pergamos stood exposed.

It lay in eating things offered in sacrifice to idols, and in committing fornication. There being no records whatever concerning this Church, beyond what are contained in this epistle, we are fain to gather our information from the records of other contemporary churches, in which the same offense occurred.

Peculiarly in point is the Corinthian Church, to which the apostle, in his first letter, is at great pains to give instruction upon this very temptation; and because no doubt the same circumstances produced nearly the same effects in all the Churches, let us address ourselves to these instructions, both for information concerning the particular seduction, and likewise for apostolical canons of discipline in respect of it.

The subject is introduced at the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the First Epistle, and he enters upon it with a severe rebuke of the pride of knowledge in which it originated. The Christians, knowing the vanity and falsehood of all idolatry, had said:

“These meats are not altered by being offered to that which is not A nonentity, like the Jupiter, and the Venus, and the Apollo, can have no effect upon meats and drinks; why, then, should we scruple to eat whatever is set before us?”

The apostle, agreeing in their reasoning, rejects their conclusion; for, says he, I have others to think of beside myself, who, not having the same knowledge, may, by my example, be led to act in like manner without the same clearness of conscience, and so doing that which the conscience does not approve they may contract guilt; and rather than thus make a weak brother to offend, I will not eat bread while the world lasts.

This is the argument of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, and also of the 10<sup>th</sup>, where the same subject is introduced, but treated a little differently. For now he speaks of the idols, not as to what they profess to be, but as to what they are; and he asserts that the whole system is a system of demon-worship, and that to mingle in their rites and to partake of their sacrifices, is to countenance and help on the idolatry against which we ought steadfastly to protest. Therefore he utterly discourages, and, I think, interdicts, all participation in the idol-feasts which went on in the idol-temples.

But with respect to those parts of the victims offered there, which came to be sold in the shambles, and might find their way to the feasts of their unbelieving friends and neighbors, he gives them liberty to eat of them, if no brother remark upon it or be offended by it; but if so, not to eat, out of a regard to his conscience and their own edification.

Now it would seem that, contrary to this sound advice of the apostle, there were other teachers who followed the way of Balaam, and out of a vain conceit of knowledge, or a licentious use of liberty, went about to encourage in the people this participation with the idolatries of the world around, to the puffing up of their own minds and the casting of a stumbling-block in the way of the Church.

This, however insignificant it may appear to us to be, and determined by the apostle rather upon principles of expediency than of positive law, was, in fact, a very great question in those times, as will appear from considering the condition in which the Christian churches then stood.

The Pagan was a very tolerant religion. Among the Romans it was so by the law and custom of the state, which, with an ample toleration and an ambitious policy, took all gods and goddesses under the wing of the Roman senate and people. To the Christian religion they would have had little or no objection, as one among many more, provided it would have entered into fraternal union with the rest, and not held aloof in the attitude of severe and uncompromising enmity.



If the Christians would have gone up to their Pagan temples, and eaten of their feasts, and not rudely repelled the whole ceremony as false and foolish, they would have been content that the Christians should also have their own proper feasts, to which the Pagans in their turn might have been willing to lend their countenance. But this might never be, because it would have been to encourage the Pagans in that easy-hearted confidence in a delusion from which it was the very object of the Christian religion to deliver them.

The Christian religion is essentially uncompromising, because it alone is true, and all others are false and wicked. For believers, to do anything but frown upon their superstitions, would have been to contradict their own belief by their practice; even as if I, believing that any one who trusts in Catholic masses for his salvation will be damned, would be a most inconsistent and cruel-hearted man if I were to go and countenance the mass, or that superstition of which the mass is a chief part.

Even as if I, believing that a man who gives himself up to disbelief of the Lord Jesus Christ, and blasphemes God's name and His ordinances, shall surely perish, would grievously err against him and against my own soul if I were to permit him in his evil course without challenge, or join him therein.

All such questions, as our attendance upon stage-plays, upon horse-races, dancing assemblies, card parties, gaming tables, and the like forms of worldly profligacy, have to be determined upon the same principles as those given by the apostle concerning idol-sacrifices and fornication. And for the same reasons those who countenance such things do err as these Balaamites did.

And, if I mistake not, those who introduce into the service of the Church customs which savor of Popery, commit the same offense. On this account it was that almost all the reformers of the Church of England would have had her stripped of many of those dresses and forms and names and offices which came down from the corruption of the Latin Church. But this brings us to the general bearing of the subject.

Such being the history and mystery of Balaam's dealings with Balak against the people of God, and such the verification of it in the primitive Church, and in that period of the Church history which, according to our view, answers to the Church of Pergamos, we come next to consider wherein lies the evil of the thing itself, and in how far we are liable to, or guilty of, it in these our days.

The evil consists in the accommodation of the Christian verity to the wisdom of this world, and of the Christian discipline to the prudence of this world; in the presentation unto the believers of such natural enticements and inducements as may beguile them from the simplicity and purity of their spiritual faith and conversation.

The first principle of the school of Christ is, that, in order to learn any of its lessons, in order to become His disciples, we must first have forsaken father and mother and brother and sister, and our own life also; and thus sitting at His feet, denuded of nature's chief delights, denied to nature's daily affections, we may surely expect to make progress in the house of Christ, and to become vessels unto honor, and meet for the Master's use.

This, which is the first principle of the Christian Church, is also the vital principle of it—in which it must live and move and breathe and have its being. The natural man must continue to be denied, mortified, crucified, buried under the power and mastery of the spiritual man: they are deadly enemies, and can live only in the suppression and destruction of one another.

Therefore it is that baptism, the initiatory act, done, as it were, upon the threshold of the Church, is the off-stripping and down-laying of the natural man, that we may enter into the temple and do its offices in the spiritual man, by whom spiritual things are discerned, spiritual duties performed, and spiritual enjoyments partaken.

It is like the Rabbinical notion that Enoch and Elijah left their bodies outside the wall of heaven: the baptized leave their bodies outside of the Church; and no longer having the organ for natural

ideas and occupations, to all such they are concluded dead, and ought ever so to be.

But, because this is a work of the believing soul, of the spirit-possessed will, ever willing to put down and keep down the natural man with his corruptions and lusts, and not the very annihilation of his being, nor his change into another state where he has no offensive inclinations—its completeness at any time, and its continuance at all times, depends upon the entireness of our heart towards God, and the complete subjection of our mind to the Holy Ghost; and this, as being an act of our will, depends upon the co-operation therein of our willingness with the willingness of God, or, as the Scripture better expresses it, upon our “being fellow-workers with God”—which being relaxed, straightway the enemy is upon us, and riding over our heads.

Whosoever therefore anyone for himself, or for another, dresses up an affection or an object of the natural man in such fascinating attire as to darken and blind the perception, or deceive the judgment of the spiritual man, he is chargeable with the wickedness reproved in our text, of casting a stumbling-block before the people of God, of causing them to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

The natural man is the origin of idolatry, and affords the sacrifices which are meet to idolatry; and for a spiritual man to turn from the love of God with the whole heart and soul and strength and mind to the love of any natural object, is to commit adultery: for every member of his body had been married unto Christ, and cannot but by adultery be joined to the world, which is the enemy of Christ.

There is a love indeed—toward everything which has a being,—such love as that wherewith the Creator loves all His creatures, a purely spiritual love, a truly catholic love, of which the Church is the blessed possessor, and with which her every word and work should be inspired. This, however, is not a devotedness of heart unto them, for the spiritual heart is devoted only unto God and godliness—it is a love of them as creatures of the Almighty’s

hand, and a burning desire that they should be reclaimed to the Almighty's service, and so attain their own blessedness.

But when, instead of this holy love, this godlike love of all His creatures, there enters into the heart an affection for the creature itself, a love of it unmingled with pity for it, a love of its enjoyment unmingled with hatred of its sin, a wedded espoused love; it is rank fornication, it is adultery of the heart, it is worshipping the creature instead of the Creator, it is idolatry, and very evil in the sight of God, for which wrath comes upon the children of disobedience.

Now, if I do not greatly err, there is much, very much of this evil intermixture of the unholy with the holy; much, very much of this prostration of the Spirit before the beautiful and goodly forms of nature, in this our generation of the Church:

- Beauty of discourse is very much affected by the preachers, and sought after by the people;
- Strength of natural reasoning very much depended upon for the establishment of the truth, for the confutation of the error;
- Views intelligible to the natural man are craved, and views only intelligible to the spiritual man are nauseated;
- Power of argumentation to put down error, controversial weapons for humbling an adversary, knowledge in every kind rather than charity;
- Talents rather than graces;
- Gifts of nature more than gifts of the Holy Ghost, are everywhere in request.

I am set for the speaking of truth, and woe is unto me if I speak not the truth: therefore I take up my burden and proceed.

- Satire and wit and scorn and ridicule are brought into the Church's temple, and made to do the service thereof.
- A great name, a numerous following, much wealth, and great respectability are the very sinews of the professing Church.

- Political partisans are enlisted into the service; and the organs of political parties, newspapers are used to blaspheme the truth, and their service is hailed as an auspicious omen of the renovated age.

By which means the Church is become a miserable receptacle of all odious passions and prejudices; a whited sepulchre, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of dead men's bones. The men who are thus with a high hand introducing carnal weapons of warfare, and erecting beautiful forms of natural reason and imagination in the house of God, are guilty of the sin of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of iniquity.

Above all other bodies in the Church those are liable to this evil, who adopt the false doctrine, the most pernicious and abominable doctrine, that God loves only the elect, and loves not the rest of mankind; and that when giving the manifestation of His love, in sending His Son to be the propitiation of our sins, He did contemplate the elect only, for whom Christ died, and not for all the world.

This doctrine which seems to be so severely holy, like all errors on the side of sanctimoniousness, ends in the destruction of sanctity. For man having in him bowels of mercies and yearnings of love to all men, and strong sympathies with all natural objects, and being under this doctrine forcibly deprived thereof by the duty which he owes to God, finds out secret channels of self-deception by which he may indulge it.

The lie, the very great lie, that God has not loved all, and died for all in Christ Jesus, but only for a part of men, necessarily forces the believer of it, into the same form of spirit, to love and sacrifice himself only for a part of men. It becomes the sanctification of schism the great generator of division upon the face of the earth; as may be seen at this day in my own poor country and Church, where they can agree about nothing, but fight about everything, save the persecution of the truth, to which they are wondrously accordant.

Instead of obtaining from God a license to love all His creatures without partaking of their unholiness, this most pernicious doctrine obtains a license only to love a part, and a positive prohibition from loving the rest.

But as I said, man's heart cannot do this and be happy. There is a craving in him for the catholic; there is an inclination in him towards all. Religion, true religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, shows him such love in God, and enables him to attain to the fellowship of it, whereby his soul is exceedingly comforted; and needs no secret subterfuges for gratifying itself; but walks in love and liberty, and holiness, over the wide and waste world; blessing all with the presence of a godlike person.

But that schismatic principle tolerating no such generous and universal benevolence, leaves the heart without its object, and sends it into every devious path to seek it. And so you find, among the falsely called spiritual party who thus believe, the greatest appetite for natural talents, for natural beauty of sentiment, for metaphysical subtleties, for men of rank, title, and influence, together with all sorts of expedients to carry their ends into execution. What they aim at, numbers, is a great show in the flesh, a majority in the courts of the Church; which being obtained, then woe, woe to the faith; they will not leave a man who dares avow it standing in his place.

These are all fruits of the flesh; stumbling-blocks which they are casting in the way of the faithful in Christ Jesus; and if they repent not, Christ will come and fight against them with the sword of His mouth.

Such is the radical principle and general form of the evil re-proved under the figure of Balaam; but it has yet a more specific form and application which it would be wrong to omit, and unkindness not to specify to this our own generation of the Church, with whom especially we living men have to do.

The special form of the wickedness in the text is, that the prophet should teach the king how to lead God's people astray, that the Church should teach the State how to destroy God's peo-

ple in the land. This evil office, being fulfilled, as we have seen, by the Christian Church, after the era of persecution, brought in the supremacy of Babylon, the mother of harlots. It has been always the way which the hypocritical and false church has taken to put out of sight the faithful and true.

For example, when the Chaldeans, who were the religionists of Babylon, wrought with Nebuchadnezzar to set up the golden image upon the plain of Dura, and to require all to worship it; they gave a historical emblem of what the worldly part of the Church have ever and will ever do, while Satan has any hold of this earth. And every one in the Church who is unregenerate, is as ready for the devil's service in this matter as these Chaldeans were.

How diligent, for example, during the last century, were what is called the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, to misrepresent the faithful and true ministers as not so well disposed to the powers that be, as fomenters of resistance among the people; by which false teaching of the counselors of the king, they almost overwhelmed the faithful in the Church.

How steadily again did the bishops in the Church of England, during the same period, prevent by all means the introduction of ministers holding higher doctrine than their own vile Arminianism, or rather Pelagianism. In both these instances, they did the part of Balaam, the son of Bosor, and though some of them might do it without any covetous motive, I believe that the generality will be found to have their eye upon the good things which Balak the king has to bestow; the good livings, the places and preferences in the Church.

These last forty years, which have changed all things, have wrought a very great change here also. The opposition and antagonism of those two parties is fast dying away: they are far nearer to each other, than old prejudices will allow them to believe; and they only want a common cause far enough removed from the old battle-ground, to rush into each other's arms, and unite their forces against the truth.

There is nearly as much worldliness in the spirit of the one party as of the other, though in the one it be less cunningly disguised; and wherever the prophets are natural men, or being spiritual, are but babes in Christ, and at the same time strong in carnality, they are ever ready to serve Satan in stirring up the State against the prophets who minister the word of the Lord to the wants of the spiritual people of the Lord.

Now, I do see such a bright and clear shining out of truth upon these three great and all-inclusive heads, the unchangeable love of the Father, the work of the Son in the flesh, to reconcile all flesh unto God, the work of Christ in the Spirit to redeem the Church from the power of all evil, and to present her holy and victorious in the day of His coming, as must stir up the jealousy of those who are contented with the present condition of their several sects and parties, and must lead them to combine with one accord to extinguish the light.

It is manifest to me at this moment in our Church, that the coalition is formed of religionists and worldlings, of Evangelical and Moderate, of Churchmen and Seceders of Presbyterians and Episcopalians and Independents, of infidels and believers, against those who hold fast these great heads of truth:

- the universal love of God,
- the fallen flesh of Christ,
- the mighty work in the Spirit, and
- the glorious advent.

And that it will labor most diligently to awaken the hostility of public opinion, to excite the odium and horror of the people, to alienate the possessors of power and government, from those who hold the truth, to prevent them from places and stations of authority in the Church and kingdom, to cast them out from those which they possess, and otherwise to impede the work of God by all the means in their power.

I believe this condition of things to be already in existence, and no one knows how rapid its progress will be. For my own part, I



should not be surprised to see the Church using all her authority to deprive the State of the services of every faithful minister who holds these great points of truth; and if so, they shall then have consummated in Protestant Britain that profane union between Church and State, for the suppression of the faithful, and for the misguidance of all men, which heretofore was accomplished in Papal Europe, and we shall come into the condition of being included in and mixed up with the rest of the Apostasy.

At this moment I perceive the prophets of all denominations most diligently traducing the preachers of the truth, casting stumbling-blocks before the people of God, and leading them away from the true spiritual doctrines, to those intermixtures and intermarriages between the carnal and the spiritual which God abominates.

I perceive in the Church of Scotland and the Church of England a distinct and a common form of this evil practice, which it would be very unfaithful and unkind in me not to open and reprove. The evil in the former is her systematic theology and legal jurisprudence, as distinguished from the multiplicity of sensible forms in the latter, such as priests' dresses, pictures, organs, kneeling, crossing, bowing, and the like; the one addressing the natural reason, the other the natural sense of man.

Our systematic theology, so much countenanced by and embodied in the Westminster Confession, I regard as a very great stumbling-block both to ministers and people, leading them to fancy that they know the truth when they are familiar with its signs, and apt at the use of them in theological argument or discourse from the pulpit. And our very exact legal jurisprudence has introduced into our courts of discipline the rigor of law instead of the mildness of charity, and the zealotry of party instead of the protection of catholic love.

I have no hesitation in saying, that the spirit of party, in which for a long time almost every presbytery, synod, and general assembly of the Church have met, and in which almost every member of them has deliberated and spoken has done more to banish

the Spirit of God from the meetings of the elders, than all the false doctrines, erroneous principles, and unworthy characters, which have found access there.

In the pulpit, systematic theology, abstract terms, the algebra of religion, and in the courts, the spirit of law and of party, have done most awful injury to the Church, from which I fear there is no hope of her recovering herself. These are the cunning seductions with which so many ministers are continually snared and ensnaring others.

Mine it is not to meddle so much with the Church of England, although in what I write, I write out of charity alone: but this I do most certainly perceive that the pomp and state of bishops, the secular offices of the parish clergy as magistrates, their pluralities and non-residences, the numerous ceremonies, and the rigid adherence to printed forms, are a stumbling-block to the people.

No one that has not reflected on it, or made the experiment, can believe how the one nation is locked up in the understanding, and the other in the sense, and hindered from entering into the things of the Spirit.

A religion is presented to them, to which they think that they themselves can bring no small share of the materials. Their following of the argument, their perceiving of the proper word in its proper place, their recognizing of the orthodox sentences, their amens and answers and genuflections, and other exercises of the natural man, work sad effects in beguiling them from that simple reliance upon God and Jesus Christ, which is the sum and substance of religion.

And the common evil which under this head I have to lament is, their giving false instruction to the State. By their continual courting of the powers that be, they do more than all others besides to make the powers that be look upon religion merely as a State engine, which they can work for the ends of worldly policy.

However much in the canons of the Church it be maintained that the State has no power to interfere in the ordering of the

Church, and how many soever martyrs may have died for that testimony, it is no less true, that the bare adulation of the authorities for the patronage which they possess completely throws the Church into their arms, to do with her whatsoever they please.

The see of Rome had as good canons to show, and as full a martyrology, yet did this not prevent her from becoming the base paramour of the empire: no more will the canons and constitutions of the churches of Britain prevent the same catastrophe from coming to pass. See in a late instance what wretched and abominable counsel was given to the State by both churches in the matter of the Papacy, when they either advised, or did not, as churchmen, oppose that apostasy, from being laid like an incubus upon the breast of this over-burdened country. Their ignorance and their slavishness sold the kingdom into the hands of its enemies. And worse things are preparing. And you will find that the State will act in concert with her right-trusty and well-beloved churchmen, to resist and suppress the voice of truth and the true worshipers within the land.

God grant that my fears may not be realized! Not many years will determine. Even now a reformed liturgy begins to be talked of. It will be done beyond question by the advice and with the consent of the lords spiritual.

In all this I am not reasoning against an establishment of religion, but pointing out the way in which the regularly-ordained ministers of the Word are fulfilling the evil part towards the State, which Balaam did to Balak; whereby many are offended. Heretofore, out of this, more than out of all other things put together, arose the disputes and secessions which now destroy the unity of this kingdom, and tear up the very vitals of its peace.

Out of imposed ceremonies, made into a term of communion, they arose in England; out of the patronage of the State, ill-gotten and used to oppress the inalienable rights of the people, the secession arose in Scotland. And both of these have now come to imbibe the spirit of direct enemies and antagonists of the

churches, which, notwithstanding all their faults, I uphold as true churches of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

### THE NICOLAITANES

Besides these doctors of Balaam's school, there were also others of the school of the Nicolaitanes, whom the angel permitted to be at ease and to propagate their sensual doctrines in the city of his habitation; against whom he was not stirred up like the angel of the Ephesian Church with a hatred congenial with that in which they were held by the Universal Bishop of Christendom, the Head of all the Churches. Twice over Christ says,

**Revelation 2** [also vs. 15]

<sup>6</sup> ...which thing I hate.

And He commends well His minister in Ephesus because he likewise hated their deeds. But the over-gentle angel of Pergamos permitted them even to hold their doctrine unmolested; for which, and for the other evil doctrine which he allowed, his Master is so indignant that He commands him to repent, or else He will come unto him quickly and fight against them with the breath of His mouth.

I have nothing to add to what was set forth in the fourth Lecture<sup>38</sup> concerning the doctrine and deeds of the Nicolaitanes, everything being said there which is surely known. All that can be affirmed is, that it was of that sensual character which grew up alongside of the doctrine of grace and forgiveness, and nourished itself by physical pictures and representations of the paradise which is prepared for the people of God in the millennial kingdom of His saints.

Several who are engaged in the evil work of resisting the hope of Christ's coming and kingdom now set forth to the Church by many of His servants, attempt to fasten those gross sensualities which in the time of John prevailed, and have been handed down to us by the name of Cerinthianism, upon the doctrine of a real

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<sup>38</sup> See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 4 "Epistle to the Church in Ephesus", Chapter: "His First Charge", Section: "The Deeds of the Nicolaitanes."

bodily presence of Christ and His saints at the beginning of the thousand years, and a real substantial kingdom by them established upon the earth.

But though beyond question this, like every other doctrine of the truth, is capable of being wrested, and, because of its being of the truth, is diligently wrested by Satan and wicked men to their own destruction; yet can it with no justice be alleged that the gross sensualities into which the first heretics fell had their origin in this cause; but for the most part, as those skilled in ecclesiastical history know, from fundamental errors concerning the nature of good and evil, and concerning the true flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deriving from the Greek schools of philosophy, and from the still older fountain of the eastern magi, false and fantastical notions concerning the body and the soul; they greatly undervalued the former, vilified it, and could not bring themselves to believe that Christ's body was really composed of the bare elements of flesh and blood, but of some spiritual, celestial, or sidereal substance which assumed the shows and appearances of suffering and death, but was totally incapable of being troubled by ought which man could inflict.

This being once admitted, the flesh came to be looked upon as a thing incapable of redemption or obedience to any Divine law of holiness; inasmuch as Christ avoided it, and would have no fellowship with it. It must be left to work on in its own wickedness, and religion must be placed in knowledge (Gnosticism), in community of goods, of wives, and everything else whatever.

The basis of all flesh-mortification and body-sacrifice is in this, that the Godhead did take it as we have it, and make it to be holy as He would have us to make it. He subjected and subordinated it by incarnation to the holy will of God; and thereby subjected and subordinated all nature, visible and invisible, whereof man is the created lord. Thus believing, I am armed against the flesh with power of faith to bring it under, to present my whole body a liv-

ing sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God, and to prove in myself what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This great point of doctrine being now denied by the great body of the evangelicals,—at least so far as appears, and there was made of late a fearful demonstration against it,—they can no longer preach man capable of a real holiness, the holiness which is by faith. They do not believe that the Son of God ever dwelt in flesh under the law of flesh, or that He did prevail over that law, and then how can they believe that He will do it in their case? At the best it can only be a conventional or Pharisaical holiness, that which may be produced by the fear of man, and by the dread of hell, not that which can be produced by the reality of an indwelling God.

If this sect which denies that Christ took very flesh under the law of flesh and brought it into obedience to the law of the Spirit,—for it is only a sect and not the Church which can deny that truth,—if this schismatic faction in the Church prevail through general ignorance and apathy by their noise and numbers to establish their false doctrine, then I prognosticate such a deluge of Pharisaical cruelty, scorn, and wickedness in the Church as these lands has never yet seen.

The denial of Christ's work in the flesh, the doctrine that it was not our flesh which He took and sanctified, amounts to the affirmation that our flesh admits not of sanctification; and has little or nothing to do with true holiness, seeing that Christ the holy One would have nothing to do with it, and conditioned that it should be transubstantiated before He would take it into the fellowship of His divinity. This falsehood was the chief root of those Nicolaitane sensualities to which the heretics of the primitive Church were addicted.

It is true that this concurring with the heresy of Hymeneus and Philetus (for no heresy can stand alone), namely, that the resurrection was past already—not the general resurrection, for to believe so of this before death passes the extravagance even of heresy, but the first resurrection proper to the people of God,

with which chiefly or entirely the primitive Church was exercised either in the way of orthodoxy or heterodoxy—I say the heresy that the first resurrection is past, that it is but a figure, as our moderns preach, for the regeneration of the soul, being introduced into the primitive Church, full of the faith, hope, and desire of the millennium, did necessarily bring with it these Cerinthian or Nicolaitane crudities and sensualities in which the early heretics indulged themselves.

For the joys of that estate being described in Scripture by every natural appetite, as of eating and drinking, and ruling and enjoying, so soon as they got themselves persuaded that the first resurrection was past in the act of the regeneration, they immediately concluded that to them the thousand years of abundant enjoyment was begun, and so they plunged into it with their flesh all around them, and were taken in the devil's snare.

Our modern evangelicals make no scruple to hold, with Hymeneus and Philetus, that the resurrection is past already in our regeneration; but they are preserved from the banquets and indulgences by having no faith of any kind whatever in the millennium, except that it is an improved state of society during which their bodies are in the unconsciousness of death, and their souls in heaven. Thus the two errors most fortunately neutralize one another; because, in truth, there is no faith either upon the first resurrection or the millennium, and therefore it is of no consequence to them whether they believe one way or another.

But the origin of these Nicolaitane errors was still deeper, in that abuse of the doctrines of grace which is known by the name of Antinomianism, but were better designated by the name of Antichristianism (for it is not the law, but Christ, it opposes), and which by the apostle is thus stated:

**Romans 3**

<sup>8</sup> Let us do evil, that good may come.

Men, not understanding the nature of their own being, nor realizing their theological system in the conscience, are astonished how the doctrine of no law, and no imputation of sin, and con-

stant, continual forgiveness, should be compatible with repentance, holiness, and the habitual obedience of all God's commandments.

And many there be at this day some who, in their ignorance and error, have impugned the doctrine of universal atonement and pardon, as being full of all licentiousness. Now conceive men with such inadequate views of gospel truth to be, by some means or other, brought to receive the doctrine of God's continual forgiveness and non-imputation of sin; and the result would be to open all the flood-gates of wickedness, and to make God the patron of all iniquity.

You have only to suppose that the doctors, who in this day are vainly striving against universal atonement, to receive from Scripture, or demonstration of the preacher, or by some other means, the true doctrine, while they are in their present carnal state, and the result would be, what they themselves so cogently and eloquently have set forth, a thorough confusion of the good with the evil, the removal of all incentives to holiness, and, in one word, the subversion of all morality.

Such was the state of Simon Magus and the early heretics, who, being still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, yet, perceiving the demonstration of the Spirit and power which accompanied certain preachers of certain doctrines, were fain to receive them into their unsanctified intellect, not as spiritual truths, but as abstract conceptions; and the consequence was the revelation of them in the sense by all manner of excesses,—the more violent the better, because, according to their excessive violence, the firmness and the strength of their faith was demonstrated.

It is only the total absence of faith as a principle, and the substitution of theological terms instead of spiritual truths, which prevent the intellectualism of the Church in this day from revealing itself in the same sensual indulgences. It is not our religion, but our social habits, good police, and oversight of public opinion, which keeps our manners in that punctual condition in which they are found, from which when we escape by removing to other



lands, behold into what fearful irreligion and wickedness even the children of our Church, privileged above all others, fall! It is punctuality and not principle, the dread of consequences here or hereafter, not the righteousness of faith, which keeps us decent as we are.

In the primitive age, when there existed no such restraints as Christianity has produced in the world, no standard of morals, no sense of decorum, no force of public opinion, everything depended upon the principles which a man held concerning God and duty. And when the natural man adopted, for he cannot receive, the doctrines of God's forgiveness of all sins and non-imputation of any sin, of the flesh being put to death and buried, and the spiritual man quickened, who cannot sin, of God's calling upon His people to rejoice in the community of the saints, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, he became, as it were, intoxicated with his liberty, sin became sanctified, wickedness commanded, and all his inclinations gratified to the uttermost.

And so were produced those hideous practices in the worship of God, of which the very narrative splits a modern ear with horror. How much or how little of these sensualities the Nicolaitanes adopted we have no further means of ascertaining than from the *Stromata* of Clement, which we have quoted in our Fourth Lecture;<sup>39</sup> but doubtless it was to this type of heresy that they belonged.

Of these there are traces in all the churches to which the apostolic epistles are addressed; and therefore it is they are so particular in enumerating the open breaches of morality, and condemning them, such as fornication, theft, uncleanness, and so forth, which now are topics seldom adverted to but in the police report.

In truth, Christianity had to form a police, a law, a sentiment, a feeling, and everything else which now are wardens around the

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<sup>39</sup> See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 4 "Epistle to the Church in Ephesus", Chapter: "His First Charge", Section: "The Deeds of the Nicolaitanes."

common weal, and those writings which feed the Church have therefore continual reference to such excesses and enormities.

There was the breaking in of mankind; the rough work of reclaiming men from the most abominable wickedness to the most delicate saintliness. No wonder that some should prove refractory—that all in whom the natural man ruled should prove so—and set up a head against the holy Jesus and His holy apostles, against the Holy Ghost, and the doctrine and discipline of the Church.

To preserve the flock of Christ from such roots of bitterness was the very intention of His placing delegates in those cities, and this office He expected them faithfully and diligently to fulfill.

### **THE THREATENING**

In this function the angel of the Church of Pergamos had notably failed, and therefore the Lord enjoins him:

#### **Revelation 2**

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

The Lord regards His sufferance of such sensual and worldly doctrines as a high offense not to be passed over, but to be re-proved, and, if not repented of, to be chastened and punished. He therefore calls upon His messenger:

- to change His mind, and seek a holier and severer spirit,
- to think less of his own ease and more of his Master's glory,
- to think less of pleasing men, and more of pleasing God,
- to awaken from his sluggish rest, and go forth as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, against the enemies of His cross.

What a lesson to the multitude of pastors who are content to sit still in their towns and villages, cities, and kingdoms, and permit the rankest heresy and most abominable wickedness to be propagated beside and around them.

If I understand anything concerning the nature of an Established Church, it is constituted as well for the guardianship of sound doctrine, as for the exercise of ministerial and pastoral offices, within the king's dominions, whereby an obligation rests upon every one of the ministers to stir up his gifts against every form of error which may arise, and by every spiritual weapon to root it out.

The members of the Church are as much the king's soldiers for the defense of truth, as the army and navy are for the defense of the person and honor of the king, and for the safety of the kingdom. There is a large and wide field of valiant enterprise in the service of the kingdom upon which every young minister is called upon to win for himself a high degree in the Church of Christ.

In thus speaking of the obligations of Christians, considered as established by the State, our object is merely to show the extent to which this duty of superintending the true faith, lies upon everyone, and not to interpose any third party between us and the Master whom we serve.

Nevertheless, though we stand directly bound as angels or messengers unto Him who sent us to represent himself, He so orders it in His providence, as that we should in our obedience both honor the magistrate's dignity, and also the communion and fellowship of the catholic Church; the one by the reverence and observance of the power which has established the Church for great ends of the nation's well-being, the other by our reverence and obedience of the ecclesiastical government of which we are a part.

I judge, therefore, that Christ, in calling upon this angel of Pergamos to repent, calls upon almost every minister of His within our land, to repent of the like tolerance of erroneous doctrine, the same obsequiousness to the various sects which exist in the country as heads of error.

In these last days the weapons of controversy for the truth have been dropped, and a spurious amalgamation of all parties with

one another has been introduced under the pretense of charity, which rejoices not in iniquity, and has sympathy of joy only with the truth.

The cold and frowning aspect in which, before these times, the Church stood towards all sects, who, by separating, had signified that there were some very important errors in the Church for which she was not to be endured, though it savored of uncharitableness and pride, and might often favor those fruits of the flesh, did yet arise from the most excellent desire of maintaining the unity of the truth, and the unity of the Church, and was intended as a testimony against the false doctrine, or schismatical spirit in which these separations arose, and by which they were maintained.

I have already blamed the Church for casting stumbling-blocks in the way of God's people, by introducing as terms of communion, what ought never to have been advanced to such a degree; but when Satan, taking advantage of this error, did drive others into the greater error of separating from a Church which held the true doctrine and discipline, and of forming another, and yet not another, for no other can there be than one Church, she was called upon to reprove this transgression, and to show her high dissatisfaction with all who followed such divisive courses.

And thus she did, and continued to do until the days arrived for building walls with untempered mortar, when all at once a general cry arose for amalgamating into one, without any regard to the great points of truth, for the testimony of which each party conceived itself to be set. And into one they rushed, even not to the exclusion of the Socinian or the Infidel, or the notorious evil-liver, provided they were willing to lend a hand in the holy alliance, as they deemed it; for converting the world. Ah me! what a rushing into the battle without counting the cost.

This straightway introduced a devout and pious hatred of all controversy, an avoidance of all doubtful ground, a voluntary silence upon all disputed questions, a spirit of accommodation and toleration which admitted Roman Catholics on the one hand, and

Socinians on the other; and otherwise to proceed, became quite intolerable, and was treated as savoring of an evil spirit. This habit of the times has brought almost every minister in the Church, especially of those who are called Evangelical, under the charge of the angel of Pergamos, unto all whom, as unto him, Christ says:

### **Revelation 2**

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

For my own part I have taken my Lord's admonition to heart, and am resolved from henceforth to gird on my armor of war, and go forth to the combat. The enemies are very many and strong, and of our own household; but He that is with us is greater than all who can be against us. I call upon every one to do the same. I urge it upon them by the commands of their Lord and Master, and I enforce it upon the consideration presented to the angel of Pergamos; that if they do not, Christ will come quickly, and fight against the enemies of the truth with the sword of His mouth.

It is very instructive to observe how the threatening is addressed not against the angel directly, who held the truth himself, but against the members of his charge, who were abiding in the error. Through them, through his affection for them, the angel is wounded, as a father is stricken by the affliction and death of his children. Though he had forgotten his love and duty to them, so far as to allow them to remain in soul-destroying error, the Lord will not indulge him in this distance and estrangement, but treats with him and threatens to deal with him all the same as if his heart was entire before Him, and perfect in its love to his children.

There is something, to my mind, very beautiful in this, and most remarkably illustrative of the perseverance of God in the way of His ordinances. Let the minister neglect the people, and the people neglect their minister, God will still deal with both according to the relation of minister and people; threatening him

with the wounding of that love which, whether he feel it or not, he ought ever to feel.

This adhesiveness of God to His appointed ordinances, civil or ecclesiastical, domestic or public, is the stability of the world. Generation is thereby enabled to learn, from the experience of generations past, age from the experience of youth; and the world is preserved from utter dissolution.

There is an inflexibility in the laws of the Divine government, which permits them to be calculated upon, and to become the subjects of hope and fear, of pursuit and of avoidance. There is also a continual opening for repentance, and returning to the ways of righteousness.

How long soever you may have neglected or contravened the ordained laws of your office and station in the Church and State, they remain unaltered by your transgression, they are as generous and as gracious as ever; and if at any time, through the evils incident upon neglect or transgression, you are brought to feel your error, and to desire the better way of righteousness, you have but to return, like the prodigal son, and, lo! your Father's heart and your Father's home are the same as when you left them, to go astray after the imaginations of your own heart.

We ministers, therefore, who have permitted roots of bitterness to spring up in the midst of the flock, and sects of various names and errors to rise up beside us, to whom we have given the right hand of fellowship, without considering the false and schismatical doctrines for which they have erected a banner, if we will now take these people into more loving consideration, and do our endeavor to root out the errors by which they are destroyed, and expose the corruptions of which they are taken captive, shall find our great Shepherd as ready to help and to approve us as heretofore, so wondrous is His grace and forgiveness, so ever open is the door of repentance, with pardon written over it in letters of blood.

But if we will allow our people to be carried away by the licentiousness of the world, by conformity to its covetous and ungodly

customs on the one hand, and on the other by the spirit of liberalism to all parties and professions, saying, "Let us be, and we will let you be," it will come to pass, that, upon these our poor indulged people, God will bring His sword, and that speedily, to do the work of chastisement and discipline which we had not heart enough to do.

It is painful to look on sores, but they must both be looked upon and dressed before they can be healed. I know who have seen affliction, what a trial of courage and affection it is, to look into the grievous sores either of the body or of the soul, and patiently to treat them with the oft painful remedies which are required; and how much easier and pleasanter it is to smooth the matter up, and to suppose that all is well. But, alas! soon nature takes upon herself the physician's neglected place, and by one of her mighty and strong efforts, which end either in cure or death, she labors to throw off the accumulation of evil with which she is distressed.

And so also does nature's kind and wise Redeemer. When the pastoral care, and the discipline of the Church, have not prevented the growth of evil and gangrenous matters in the members of His body, He himself, rather than they should perish, comes with His sword, and executes the office of the Judge, that they may not be condemned with the world. This coming with the sword to fight against the holders and practicers of error, I therefore regard as a last effort of the great Shepherd to prevent the sad consummation of apostasy.

It is in the heart of epistles to the churches, that this is written; and the sword is a part of His attire who is their Bishop, and it is used against His own people. I conclude, therefore, that it is not for destruction as yet, but for loving chastisement that it is used. Of this there are many instances in the Scriptures, and particularly two in the *1st Epistle to the Corinthians*; the one an individual, the other a general instance. The particular instance is that recorded, in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, of a person who was living in incestu-

ous fornication with his father's wife, concerning whom the apostle delivers sentence in these words:

### **1 Corinthians 5**

<sup>5</sup> Deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Again, referring to the same person, he says:

<sup>12</sup> What have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not you judge them that are within?

<sup>13</sup> But them that are without God judges. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

And in reference to this same person I think it is written in the Second Epistle,<sup>40</sup> in language of consolation and forgiveness to him personally, and of instruction to the Church concerning his readmission to their communion. From this instance it is manifest that, even in the extremest case of discipline, the power of the sword is used not for destruction of the soul, but for destruction of the flesh, to the saving of the soul.

And accordingly the excommunication service of the Church proceeds upon this principle. They are cut off in the flesh, but still united in the spirit; they are the subject of continual prayer in the churches, and of studious avoidance by the people, to the end that they may taste the bitterness of their condition, and earnestly crave peace and restoration to the bosom of the faithful. This is the true meaning of excommunication, an outward and visible separation, for the chastisement and destruction of that fleshly nature which has offended, to the end that the spiritual communion may be restored and preserved unimpaired.

This is the individual case; and for the general one it is to be found in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, which treats of the communion of the Lord's Supper, in the observance of which the Corinthian Church had greatly erred by introducing both pride and sensuality into that most humbling and spiritual ordinance.

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<sup>40</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:6-11.



Whereupon he commands that every one should examine or prove himself, and be satisfied in his own conscience that he is not profaning that blessed service with unholy ideas and practices; for if so, he is profaning the body and blood of Christ, which were present therein under the symbols of bread and wine.

Then he adds, that the person who eats and drinks in an unworthy or unsuitable manner did eat and drink judgment to himself; and straightway he proceeds to explain what this judgment is, and how executed:

**1 Corinthians 11**

<sup>30</sup> Because of this among you many are weak, and sickly, and many sleep.

These are all judgments in the flesh to weaken and destroy it, because it had led the spirit astray from the right use of that holy ordinance. The flesh had offended; it should have been kept under; it should never have arisen after baptism into life or action; and because faith had not prevailed to put it down, Christ would take discipline in His own hand, and use it for the purposes of grace and mercy to the spirits of His people.

That it was in grace and mercy these sicknesses and weaknesses and deaths were sent over the Corinthian Church, is manifest from what follows:

<sup>31</sup> For if we judged [discerned] ourselves, we would not be judged [excused, or singled out for judgment].

<sup>32</sup> When judged, however, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

And then he proceeds to tell them how to go about the Lord's Supper, in a becoming and inoffensive manner. Now nothing can be more clearly demonstrative of this:

- judgments in the flesh are inflicted by Christ, as discipline to prevent the soul from perishing under the load of carnality.
- they are not necessary to a Christian's prosperity, but resorted to by the good Lord in extremity, that His people may not perish; and

- doubtless we are to believe that by such weaknesses, sicknesses, and deaths, the souls of His people are saved.

The exercise proves profitable, the flesh is weakened, the spirit is strengthened, the victory is won—won, perhaps, in death, to be enjoyed through eternity. This whole declaration casts a clear light to me upon the passage of the Epistle to the Church of Pergamos:

**Revelation 2**

<sup>16</sup> I will come and fight against you with the sword of my mouth.

As much as to say:

“If you, the angel of the Church, will not see after these offenses and offenders, I will be fain to come myself, and fight against them with my sword, sending among them diseases and weaknesses and death, to the end of curing them of their sensualities, and saving their souls alive, that they may not be condemned with the wicked.”

Being thus explained, the threatening teaches us some most important lessons; the first of which is the advantage of ecclesiastical discipline, as the great means of preventing adversities of various kinds, infirmities, diseases, and premature deaths, losses, crosses, and calamities of every kind, which are Christ’s method of supplying the lack of it.

He will not let His Church, or any member of His Church, perish for lack of discipline; and if the angels of the churches shrink from their duty herein, He will not. He will take His sword and apply it wisely, though severely, to the eradication out of the flesh of those remaining roots by which it continues to hold on in life, and nourish evil fruits.

I do not say that a Christian ought invariably thus to judge of his trials in his flesh, or in his family, or in his estate; but he would do well on all such occasions to consider, whether by that thing which he is denied the use and enjoyment of, he has not been sowing to the flesh, and choking the good seed of the Spirit.

Certainly a Church which is neglectful of discipline may surely expect great reverses and trials of this kind, so long as there is any life of God in it.

The second lesson is Christ's redemption of all disease, affliction, and bereavement, so as to make them instruments of good to the spirits of His people. So that a believer may say always of such trials:

“They are sent to me for my spiritual advancement and growth in grace.”

Christ is in them, and the devil is out of them. In which sense all things are ours, whether life or death. It is very beautiful to witness how these stings and forerunners of death, which the flesh is liable to by reason of Adam's sin, Christ has caught hold of, in order to weaken and destroy that flesh, that the spiritual man may be more and more strengthened day by day.

The third lesson is, that if we would escape sufferings in our persons, and in our family, and in our estate, we should guard against all the fruits of the flesh of whatever kind; for fruits can only spring from roots, and roots cannot be extracted without suffering and pain.

Baptism puts the flesh to death. It should never again lift its head; if it do, it does so only through defect of our faith in Christ Jesus, with whom we are united as living members by the unity of the Spirit. And being so united, He who in His own flesh made sin to cease can make it to cease also in us, yet not without the exercise of faith, or the use of the Holy Ghost.

Those, indeed, who say He did not put fleshly temptations to a spiritual death, but had them put to a physical death already to His hand, cannot conclude or believe that He will do so in them; and must flounder on between good and evil, and remain in the slough of despondency all their life.

Not so with the believer of Christ's work in the flesh. He has assurance of his flesh already deadened in Christ; he believes upon this as a thing already done for all flesh; and, thus believing,

he feels that verily it has been done, by proving liberty in his own person from its bondage.

Let him then be careful to perfect his faith, or rather to keep in perfect faith, for it is as natural for faith to be perfect in the first as in the after stages of it; and he shall be in the way of escaping many sore amputations and eradications, outward bereavements and adversities, which otherwise he must needs undergo.

For Christ will not leave His people in the indulgence of any fleshly sins; He will both discover and dig out the roots of bitterness, and, cost what it may, He will deliver His people from them. And the last lesson is to bless Him for being at such pains with us, as to act the part of the surgeon and physician as well as of the pastor: that He will fulfill every duty which is proper to the Saviour; that He will not lose any of the people whom the Father has numbered into Him, but will by all means perfect them.



Zechariah rebukes Idolatry

## IV. THE SPIRIT'S PROMISE

**W**E COME now to the third part of the epistle, which is spoken by the Spirit unto all the churches, and to every one who has an ear to hear; setting before us a glorious promise, which shall become the property of every one who overcomes.

This is the truly catholic part of each epistle, written not according to the circumstances of any particular church, or to foreshow the condition of any period of the catholic Church, but in the language of all times and places and conditions, being the language of the Holy Ghost to every one who is born again of water and the Spirit, and to those who are not regenerate, setting out the sevenfold form of blessedness into which they may enter through the avenue of faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Their being addressed to all the churches, shows them to be of no partial interpretation; their soliciting the ear of every creature under heaven, shows the Spirit to be the preacher of Christ unto all the world, while the investiture of the blessing in those only who overcome, declares that not every man whom God loves and invites, nor yet every one whom He admits into His Church, but those only who accept the invitation, and persevere in the fierce and fiery conflict, shall inherit the blessing. As it is written:

### **Matthew 7**

<sup>21</sup> Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

<sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

From this threefold address of the seven promissory words of the Holy Ghost—to all men, to all the churches, and to all who overcome—we may well expect to find them containing at once the most free, full, and encouraging forms of divine truth; being,

as it were, the body of future blessedness, the substance of all hope expressed in seven promises.

We ought by these considerations to be moved to examine them carefully as the seven spiritual chambers in which the whole treasury of God is contained. That spoken to the Church of Pergamos is in these words:

**Revelation 2**

<sup>17</sup> He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches: to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows, saving he that receives it.

Though, as has been said above, these promises be of the largest and freest character, not restricted by time, place, or circumstances, but essentially spiritual, each has nevertheless a relation to that form of Christ's office as the universal Shepherd, to that form of the Church's temptation, and of the Church's condition with which it is connected: so that there is a propriety in the promise, as connected with its own epistle.

For though spiritual truths consist not of parts, so as to be treated by the rules of number, they have various aspects in which they may be represented according to the various conditions of those whom you would work upon. And the Spirit of Christ being minded to present the one reward of eternal blessedness to those seven conditions of the Church to which Christ addresses himself under seven different styles, presents it to each under that aspect, and in that form of words, which is best fitted to produce the desired effect of encouraging them to combat stoutly against the powerful and wily enemies of the Lord.

Now, of the Church of Pergamos behold what were the peculiar conditions. First, they were tempted by these Balaamite and Nicolaitane teachers, who presented seductions to the sense, and misled the brethren to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to be guilty of spiritual, and perhaps also of carnal, fornication. Therefore the Spirit words His exhortation so as to present the true object which the sense should desire:

## **Revelation 2**

<sup>17</sup> ...I will give to eat of the hidden manna.

As we shall show, this contains the promise of our being made partakers of Christ's glorified flesh, and being joined to him in one body for ever.

And because that Church had become confused with base and counterfeit intermixtures of these disciples of evil doctrines, whereby the glory of the true members of Christ was stolen away from Him; the wheat being hidden in the midst of the chaff, the Holy Spirit promises to give "a white stone," the custom among the ancients for acquitting a person put upon his trial, whereas those who were condemned had a black stone given to them: so that if an indiscriminate company were brought up to trial, in which some innocent ones are grieving over false and wrongful accusations, the giving of a white stone to such would prove the deliverance of their souls from the sorest trial to an innocent man, the disgrace of being confounded with the guilty.

Moreover, because Christ presents himself to this Church as He who has the sharp sword with two edges, a severe and somewhat fearful aspect, the Spirit comforts the faithful, that in that stone should be written a new name, which no one should be able to counterfeit; or, in other words, that Christ would deliver them from all such vile intermixtures and base companions, and set their souls free from the grievance of false brethren, by giving them their portion where no wicked one could enter, by putting upon them a character and clothing which no one could counterfeit.

This is the end of His discipline; not to root out any, but to deliver His people from the neighborhood and contamination of false and wicked professors, as it is written:

### **Matthew 12**

<sup>10</sup> And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

<sup>12</sup> Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner: but He will bum up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

## THE HIDDEN MANNA

The first part of this large and abundant promise of the Holy Ghost to the valiant and the victorious is in these words:

### Revelation 2

<sup>17</sup> I will give [him] to eat of the hidden manna.

Of which, to understand the consolation and the blessedness, it will be necessary first to enter into the consideration of the manna on which the Church lived in the wilderness; and, secondly, of that portion of it which was commanded to be taken and put in a golden pot, and laid up before the Lord, within the ark of the covenant, in the most holy place.<sup>41</sup> For to this, I think, the word “hidden” directs us, “the manna that was concealed or hidden.”

Now as to the first point, our Lord gives us the most ample satisfaction in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel by John; from which by an easy inference, we shall attain to the knowledge of the second point. He there teaches us that the manna on which the children of Israel fed, from the time of their entering into the wilderness until the time of their entering into Canaan, the land of promise, is the type of his flesh, the true bread of life, with which His people are fed during their pilgrimage, until they reach the land of their rest.<sup>42</sup>

The bread which we partake of in the communion, is the symbol of that same flesh of Christ’s body, without which we have no life in us.<sup>43</sup> And the mystery, both of the manna and of the Lord’s Supper, is one and the same; namely, that the life which the believer receives in regeneration has need of a continual aliment, is

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<sup>41</sup> *Exodus 16:33-34; Hebrews 9:4.*

<sup>42</sup> *John 6:30-36.*

<sup>43</sup> *John 6:51-59.*



not self-subsistent, as it is not self-generated, but derives its sustenance from the body of Christ, whence also it had its origin.

This we receive by the appropriating act of faith, which, as it makes another that is Christ to become ours, and brings two things that were separate to be one, is properly represented, and could only be represented by the act of eating; which is the only bodily act that has this uniting, appropriating, and assimilating character.

The manna that fell around the camp did therefore signify Christ sent down from heaven for us; becoming flesh made of a woman for us: and their being nourished by this without anything besides, signifies that the whole Church of the firstborn has nothing whatever to live upon, besides the body of Christ, which is all-sufficient to sustain them.

Being taken out of symbolical and figurative language, and expressed in simple and spiritual language, the same great truth stands thus: that when the Father gives faith to His chosen ones, and they are regenerated into a new life by the second Adam, the quickening Spirit, their faith continually supported by the Father, continually directs itself to the risen Christ, and receive from Him that work of the Spirit which is necessary to the sanctification of mortal flesh, and not only to its sanctification, but to empower it to do greater works than He did, even to show forth that fullness of power which He has received from the Father.

The thing communicated in the Lord's Supper, is called His body for this very reason, that the Holy Ghost puts into the believer not this grace and that grace, but the whole power and presence of Christ's body risen and glorified at the right hand of God. Not flesh, as the Papists say; for we have that already, and had it before He took part of it with us; but power in flesh to do the will of God, and put forth the power of the risen Christ.

We do not receive of the substance of His body risen, but power from it in the Spirit to manifest His redemption and sovereignty over all fallen creatures, and over our own flesh, the head of them all. This power we now have, but something more is promised to

us if we overcome, even the participation not of the common, but of the hidden manna. This expression, the hidden manna, refers, as I said, to that potful of the heavenly food which was laid up in the most secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High:

### **Exodus 16**

<sup>33</sup> Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.

And being there deposited in a pot of gold, it continued incorrupt; whereas that which fell around the camp corrupted in a day, save on the Sabbath, when it might be kept for two days. Now, if the manna on which the people fed, signifies, as our Lord teaches, the substance of His flesh, given for the life of the world, then that manna incorruptible, which was laid up before the Lord must surely signify the same substance, Christ's flesh, in that condition of immortality and incorruption wherein it now subsists at the right hand of God.

And the promise in our text made to the valiant and victorious soldiers of Christ, that they shall eat the hidden manna, conveys this glorious truth, that in the age to come, which is the time of our reward, we shall be fashioned after the likeness of His glorious body, and partake of that spiritual substance which from the tomb He made to come forth of corruptible flesh.

The intention of God in secreting a portion of the manna within the veil, and conferring upon it the properties of incorruption, was to teach the Church, that of her heavenly food there are two forms in one substance; the one the form of the corruptible, the other the form of the incorruptible. Whereof the former is proper to nourish into holiness and strength this mortal body, the latter to fill with honor and with glory that body immortal in which the saints of God shall arise.

There is a measure of Christ's meat and drink which this mortal tabernacle can endure; there is a greater measure of the same which the immortal only can endure. And to this food of eternal and immortal strength, the hope of the Church of Pergamos is

carried forward against that day when God shall reward the faithful followers of the Lamb.

These Balaamite doctors taught them to partake of the idol feast which the heavenly teacher forbade: and now, says the Spirit, if you will refrain, behold there is laid up for you before the Lord, the incorruptible food of an incorruptible life.

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>17</sup> I will give you to eat of the hidden manna;

—which being expressed in the language of the pure reason, apart from the symbols of sense, amounts to this, that in the kingdom of heaven about to be revealed the faithful shall receive from Christ the full communion of His Spirit, which in its fullness they shall likewise be able to receive, whereas now they have but a first-fruits thereof.

- That measure of knowledge, and of prophecy, and of gift which we now enjoy, is in part only; that which we shall hereafter enjoy, is in perfection.
- Here we have so much of the Spirit as is necessary for the revelation of Christ, to the sight and capacity of a fallen world; there so much as is necessary for the government of a world redeemed.
- Here we have so much of the Spirit of Christ as may enable us to share the sufferings of Christ, and like Him through suffering to be perfected; there, being perfected, we shall receive so much of the Spirit as may fit us for sharing the counsels and bearing the glory of our Husband and King.

While this promise carries in its bosom so much contentment and blessing, it does, in the manner of its expression, bring another testimony to the wonderful wisdom in the structure of this book, and likewise to the truth of our method of unfolding the same.

The “hidden manna,” as has been said, was laid up in the ark of the testimony within the veil, and therefore could not be obtained for nourishment until the secret things should be revealed. Now,

this opening of the heavenly temple has not place till the blast of the seventh trumpet; whereupon the time being come “to give reward unto his servants,” it is said:

**Revelation 11**

<sup>19</sup> And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.

So also, at the time of the pouring out of the seven vials, it is said:

**Revelation 15**

<sup>5</sup> ...the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

But observe:

<sup>8</sup> No man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

From which we certainly gather, that not until the pouring out of the last vials of wrath, and the blast of the seventh trumpet, shall the victorious saints receive these promises of the Holy Ghost.

Till then the Church is a wayfaring pilgrim, an unwearied soldier waging warfare for the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and when she has overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh, she has yet another victory to achieve; which is, the victory over death and the grave. And she couches low to win that palm: into the tomb, into corruption, into dust, the Church willingly descends, tracking the footsteps of the destroyer through his wasteful region; and having gone into his inmost recesses of destruction, she comes forth thence an unsoiled, eternal, and glorious conqueror of death and the grave, singing:

**1 Corinthians 15**

<sup>55</sup> O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?

And now she has the immortal food of an immortal life, the hidden manna, which is incorruptible: the body of Christ which is immortal, and by Him ever sustained, shall with Him ever possess and ever govern...

## **1 Peter 1**

<sup>4</sup> ...an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you,

<sup>5</sup> Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

## **THE WHITE STONE**

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>17</sup> ...I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

As the former part of the promise has reference to the temptation of idol meats, with which the Church of Pergamos was tried, and carries with it the assurance of a trial which the world knows not of, so this latter part has reference to the indiscriminate and confused communion and mixture of good and evil persons which the easy-minded angel of that Church permitted to subsist.

In remedy of this, Christ does not advise the purer members to separate and secede from the Church, but holds out to them the promise of a time when the tares should be separated from the wheat, and the goats from the sheep, and the righteous should enjoy pure and holy communion with one another in the kingdom of his Father.

For from the custom of the ancients to acquit by a white stone, I interpret the language of the text. When the judges gave their votes as to the innocence or guilt of any person, those who judged him innocent cast in a white stone; those who judged him guilty cast in a black one; and even unto this day the same custom is observed in admitting or rejecting candidates for the privilege of being enrolled members of honorable societies. So common was this among the ancients that the expression,

“I gave my vote or voice,”

—being rendered into Greek is,

“I threw in my stone.”

And the word translated by us, to vote, is literally to stone; as, in our language, to reject a candidate is denominated black-balling, from the custom of casting in white and black balls. Of this there occurs one instance in Scripture:

**Acts 26**

<sup>16</sup> And when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them [literally, "I brought my stone"].

Now, the promise of a white stone I regard as equivalent to acquittal in the day of judgment. Christ speaks in His character of Judge, having the law, whose symbol is a sharp two-edged sword, proceeding out of His mouth; and He says unto the Church of Pergamos:

"Fear not, though I thus appear to you; for in the day of judgment I will give to every one the white stone of acquittal. It is only the wicked who shall not stand in the judgment, nor come into the congregation of the righteous. With the pure I will show myself pure, and with the froward I will show myself froward."

So far the interpretation is simple and direct. But now there occurs an expression harder to be understood:

**Revelation 2**

<sup>17</sup> ...and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

The connection of this with the preceding part of the promise, and the necessity of it to the completeness thereof, and its appropriateness to the condition of the Church of Pergamos, I well discern.

It adds to the acquittal of the Judge a sure token which no one can counterfeit, and promises to the saint separation from all hypocrites and dissemblers, from everything which defiles and makes a lie. This, to a Church defiled and vexed with the intermixture of the wicked, as was the Church of Pergamos, is a great consolation; for nothing so grieves a righteous and loving spirit as to be prevented by captious and opposing people from making mention of the goodness of the Lord.

If you utter what you feel, it is either to stir up contradiction or wrath; and so, for the sake of quietness, and to prevent the stumbling of a brother, you are fain to hold your peace. This is so great a trial to a loving and thankful heart, that our Lord speaks of it several times as one of His sore trials:

**Psalm 38**

<sup>13</sup> But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth.

<sup>14</sup> Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

How painful it is to be thus continually surrounded with the wicked, and hindered from that communion of the body of Christ which is its life and joy! Edification so blessed will it be to dwell together in that holy society of the New Jerusalem, into which...

**Revelation 21**

<sup>27</sup> ...shall in no wise enter anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Into that city and tabernacle of God every one who receives this white stone shall surely enter; while those who receive it not shall dwell in the outer darkness. And to this answer the two concluding verses of this revelation:

**Revelation 22**

<sup>14</sup> Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

<sup>15</sup> For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

While thus we interpret the general scope and bearing of the last part of the promise, we feel that this is not enough, and must be confirmed and enlarged by a minute examination of the very words themselves.

The name in Scripture signifies and declares the powers and properties of that to which it is appropriated. To be called by the name of the Lord, or to have the name of the Lord called upon us,

is a dignity and honor oftentimes referred to in the Old Testament, and promised, in the next chapter of this book, to the Church of Philadelphia, after a manner or in a fullness yet unexampled in the history of the Church.

### **Revelation 3**

<sup>12</sup> I will write upon him my new name.

This I consider as equivalent to the promise that they should share the dignity and honor of Christ in the day of His appearing.

There is likewise mention made in chapter 7 of a company who were sealed with the seal of God in their foreheads; which seems to carry a reference to the high priest, who wore upon his forehead a golden plate or coronet, whereon was inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord."

But in the passage before us there is, I think, a shade of difference from both these, inasmuch as the new name is not written upon the person, but upon the white stone which is given to the person. This peculiarity some derive from the manner of the ancients in casting lots with stones on which were written the names of the persons among whom the lot lay.

But to this I object, that the whole tenor of the passage has no reference whatever to the casting of lots. Others incline to interpret it by the custom among the ancients of appointing persons to offices of trust by the same method of inscribing their names upon a stone or tile.

To this also I object, that the name written is not the name of the person, but a new name, descriptive in some way or other of that dignity to which he was to be promoted. Upon the whole, instead of looking for the interpretation of this from ancient customs, I prefer seeking for it in the Scriptures themselves, where this form of speech not infrequently occurs.

For example: in this very book it is said of the New Jerusalem, that it has...



## Revelation 21

<sup>14</sup> ...twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Now these twelve foundations were twelve stones, and were the same with the twelve stones in the breast-plate of judgment, upon which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. What now of mystic virtue was added to these stones by being thus engraven with a name!

In the former instance it is signified, that the twelve apostles are the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, the city of God: in the latter case, that the twelve patriarchs or tribes, or the complete house of Israel, are the Urim and Thummim, the lights and perfections, the breast-plate of judgment to our great High Priest, by whom He shall make His counsels known, and His judgment felt upon the earth in the world to come.

Taking the light of these instances of the like kind, where a name is engraven on a stone, to which we might have added others, and particularly the foundation-stone of Zechariah,<sup>44</sup> we come to interpret the expression before us.

The white stone, we have said, is the stone of acquittal, the test of innocency.—This is its virtue. Now the new name written upon it must be that which gives and preserves to it such a virtue. Whose, then, is it to acquit and justify in such a manner as no one shall ever gainsay? It is Christ, the Judge, who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens; who justifies and no man condemns, who condemns and no man justifies.

The name I should therefore judge to be the name of Christ's hidden ones; that name which no man can counterfeit, because no one knows it but He himself, and those to whom He gives the knowledge of it. If I err not, we have the first fruits of it in:

- that cleanness of the conscience which we receive from Christ by the Holy Ghost;

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<sup>44</sup> *Zechariah* 3:9; 4:8-9.

- that washing of regeneration, and purifying of the Holy Ghost, which is shed on us abundantly through our Lord Jesus Christ;
- that baptism which saves us, not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God;
- that renewal in knowledge after the image of Him that created us.

The faithful in Christ Jesus have now no conscience of sin, have now a conscience void of offense towards God and towards man. This is bestowed on us, as Peter declares,<sup>45</sup> in our baptism, when we receive our Christian name.

But in this life it extends only to the spirit: and the time is yet to come, the blessing is yet future, when the flesh also shall receive this purification; and in that day a new name, answering to this new condition, shall be put upon us. We have now the name of Christ in the spirit; we are the mystical Christ: then we shall have the name of Christ also in the flesh; we shall be the manifest Christ, shining forth for ever with His glory, and forever exercising His power, and making His goodness to be known and felt.

The point, however, of most importance in this part of the Spirit's promise is, that no one knows that name but those who receive it; by which I understand that it is a state of being whereof those only are conscious who are exalted thereto: just as in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter, where Christ reappears on the stage of this world's affairs it is said:

**Revelation 19**

<sup>12</sup> ...He had a name written, that no man knew but He himself.

This signifies His peerless dignity of place, and undivided excellency of being; so here, His faithful people are promised a dignity of place and being in the world to come which no one is conscious of save themselves.

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<sup>45</sup> 1 Peter 3:21.

Christ being God, no less than Spirit-filled man, is above all creatures, and has a name known to himself alone: we, as sharing with Him spiritual union, are the heads of all creatures, and have a name which none of them can know. As no creature intermeddles with His divine subsistence, so, I think, no creature intermeddles with our subsistence as His children by regeneration, who, through great tribulation, have come unto the inheritance of His creature glory. The word of the text is positive, that no one knows that name but he that receives it; and the promise is made only to those who overcome in this day of fierce trial.

These are New Testament promises to the Church under sore tribulations, set for the testimony of Jesus unto the death. The Old Testament promises are, if I err not, of another kind; holding forth natural perfection in flesh, immortal and eternal honor and glory on the earth; but to us, to whom the mystery hidden from ages is revealed, the mystery that we should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body with Christ,—the promises are all of a character peculiar and appropriate to the children of Christ, who are born unto Him by regeneration of the Holy Ghost.

The Church, whose right these promises are, is completed, I believe, at the coming of the Lord; and, as Christ's bride, we have a nearness of place to Him and a co-equality of creature-dignity which belongs only to the New Jerusalem, and belongs not to the kings of the earth, or to any creatures of God besides.

We have given to us a white stone, and in it a new name written, which no one knows, saving he that receives it.



