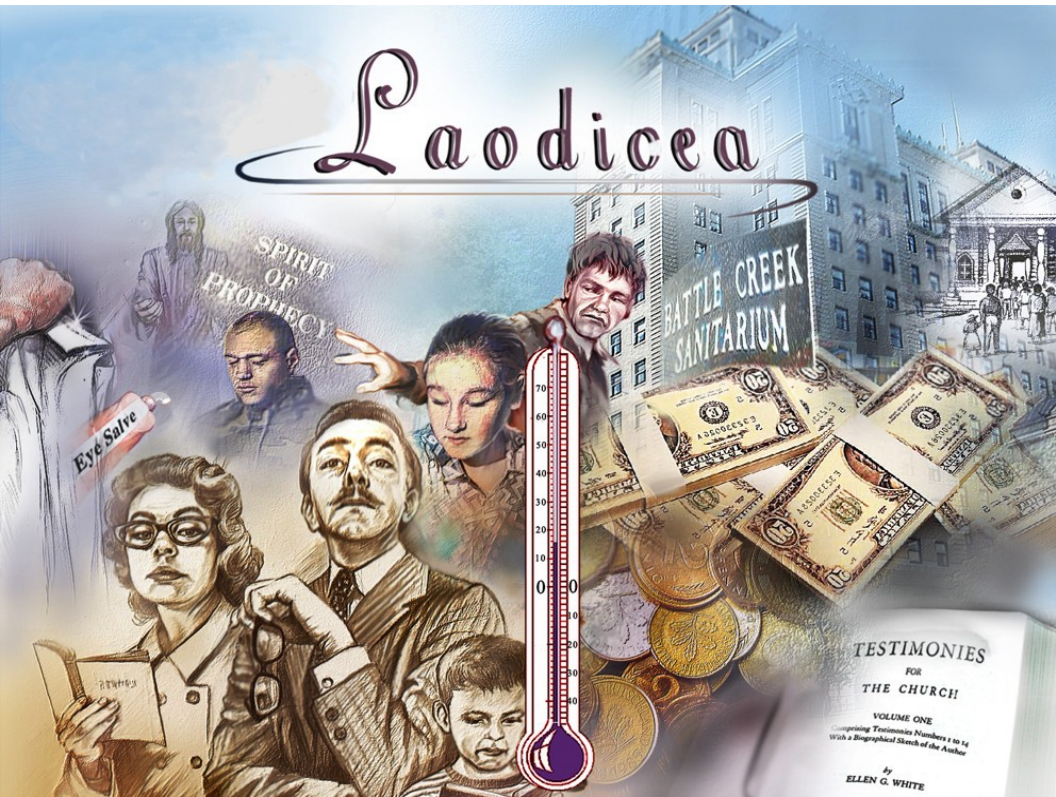


THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST
BOOK 10
REVELATION 3:14-22

EPISTLE TO THE
CHURCH OF LAODICEA

EDWARD IRVING
1831



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BOOK 10
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**EPISTLE TO THE
CHURCH IN LAODICEA**

EDWARD IRVING

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

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

WHY THIS WORK?

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 republication, 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."

Gather up the fragments, that none be lost.

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Revelation 3

¹⁴ And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

¹⁵ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot.

¹⁶ So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

¹⁷ Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

²² He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

IT IS with a great feeling of pain that I now enter upon the last of the Apocalyptic Churches, both because my sweet labor is coming to a close, and also because it is to close with a heavy burden to Christendom. Historical aspects, as well as examples, are presented to us in these Churches.

Little did I deem, when I undertook this task, that I was to be so long, and so delightfully engaged upon the Churches. The Lord has led me by a way that I knew not, for some good end, which in His times He will show. It has been my endeavor to open my ear morning by morning, and to set down what the Lord taught me. And now being come to the last of the Churches, let me endeavor to look back and consider, and recapitulate in a regular progression, the dealings of the Lord by His Church from the first to the last.

1. EPHESUS

The Church of Ephesus, according to its name, shows the good Husband of the Church entreating her with ardent and unbounded affection as the wife of His choice, “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh” (*Genesis 2:23*); because it is His nature to love, and love is the best means for producing love in return.

1 John 4

¹⁶ God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him.

Christ’s husbandry, like everything which has its original in heaven, is pure love, from the beginning to the ending of it; love expressing itself in form of goodness, and directed to the production of blessedness. As yet He served not Himself with any sort of discipline for the enforcement of that which He would rather cherish into life by the warmth of heavenly love.

But when His much care and solicitude, His taking of the stars into His right hand, the place of safety and of strength, and His walking up and down with unwearied foot among the candlesticks, avail not to the preservation of her first love, and her affection is falling away towards the things and persons of this world, from her Lord and Husband in the heavens; discipline becomes necessary, and proceeds in the first place in the way of warning and threatening.

In this we behold the working of true love, longing after its object, and fearing to lose it: taking first the gentlest methods of:

- speaking into her ear, and
- appealing to her own conscience,
- instructing her of her evil,
- entreating her to repent, and
- acquainting her with what will certainly follow upon the neglect of His lenient and mild admonitions.

And if this be the beginning of discipline on the part of Him who is God, towards her whom He purchased with his own blood, and waits upon with heavenly ministry, how much more so ought it to be the beginning of all discipline in the Church, from the rulers toward the people, or of the rulers and the people towards one another?

And thus accordingly we find it instituted, commended, and with all solemn charges, and weighty promises bound by the Lord upon every member of his Church:

Matthew 18

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ But if he will not hear you, then take with yourself one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every

word may be established.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

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

The same lesson, nature itself teaches; and all law of Christian nations ought to enforce. It is humanity so to proceed, and wherever the conscience lives, it will approve this as the true form of mercy; which, in human affairs, should walk in advance both of equity and of justice; though never without them in her train.

2. SMYRNA

This Ephesian state of longing and complaining desire, being passed through, we enter upon another, the state of correction for that offense which mild and merciful measures availed not to remove.

At first sight it might appear a severe and somewhat hasty step, to cast the Church at once out of the arms of cherishing love, into the iron fetters of persecution, and the cold embrace of death. And so it would, were these arms of love to cease to compass her around; were she left to the will of her merciless foes.

But if these persecutors with whose fierce countenances and stern hearts she is brought acquainted, should be the very persons towards whom her affections were beginning to fall away, then is it the greatest mercy thus early, before the spell has had time to work infatuation over her heart, to unmask

them, and reveal the life which she may expect from such an unworthy yoke-fellow.

As if a good husband, perceiving his wife's affections to be falling away towards a very wicked and worthless man, should, forgetful of his own injured love, and mindful only of her well-being, permit her to see his true character, though at the expense of some suffering, in order to save her from dishonor and divorce, thereby, if it might be, to preserve his chaste spouse unto himself. That were both sound wisdom and true love though it might be attended with temporary suffering both to him and her.

So Christ, perceiving that His Church was tempted by the love of the power, rank, riches, and earthly aggrandizement which were in the hands of the Roman emperor, permitted her, once for all, to prove the hideous character, and unmeasured cruelty of that she madly doted on, and the eternal contradiction there is between the principalities of this world and the Prince of heaven, by whom she is beloved, and betrothed unto Himself.

This I believe to be the true secret of the early persecutions of the Church during the period of the dispensation of the Smyrnians, who were the temporary sufferers, well repaid with an eternal crown, set forth to show the Church from the beginning what she might expect from that paramour after whom her heart so early went astray, and in whose embrace she is now irretrievably and forever lost.

Methinks she might have learned of what stuff the kings of the earth were made by these three centuries of contempt, and ignominy, and death, during which she lost at their hands all but her honor; being worse entreated than ever Israel was in the land of Egypt.

But all the while her Husband was with her, and never suffered her to be put to shame. He gave her fortitude and

strength, and life, in the midst of the fiery furnace seven times heated. What a power and presence of Christ then filled the hearts of His people! They loved Him in the prison, where He comforted them; at the judgment-seat, where He spoke by them; and in the jaws of wild beasts, where He strengthened them, impervious to fear, and it is believed to the sense of suffering itself.

She knew Him and He knew her in afflictions; and by that early scene of adversity not only was she taught of what cruelty are the powers of this earth, but also of what constancy and consolation is her Husband, the Lord of heaven. Oh, it was a rich lesson the Church and the world then together proved, if they would but have taken it to heart; and it is as much for our use now as for theirs.

We have as much need of it as they. For the powers of this our kingdom have strangely inveighed the wedded wife of Christ; and will strive hard to win her wholly to themselves, as Rome did in the days of Constantine and his successors, until the time of Charlemagne, when the pope began the conflict for the supremacy, which in the days of Henry and Barbarossa he brought to a triumphant issue.

This teaches us the second point in the progress of discipline, that, when by loving kindness we cannot prevent the growth of any peccant humor in the breast of them we love, we should make use of all our wisdom to prevent its out-breaking; and though at the expense of much temporal and bodily suffering, to be at all pains to reveal, without the commission of the act, what will be the fearful consequence of committing it.

Now it is that the Lord begins to serve Himself with earthly medicine instead of heavenly food, because His spouse is beginning to contract diseases from looking after the things of the earth.

If we would be obedient to goodness, by goodness alone would we be entreated, and all our sufferings would be sufferings for righteousness sake, which have in them the very joy and health of God.

But when from heavenly-mindedness we begin to set our affections on the things of the earth, we contract an earthly pollution which cannot be purged out save by earthly medicines, chastisements and bereavements, and hidings of the Lord's countenance, which, through the bitterness of godly sorrow, do work humility, repentance, and renewal of love.

3. PERGAMOS

When the Church would neither by the possession of the fullness of love and goodness which is in Christ, the King of heaven, nor yet by the experience of the fullness of malice and cruelty which is in the kings of the earth, be prevented from forgetting her duty to Him, and yielding herself to them, her all-provident Head takes His measures in the next place so as to preserve her pure in that high and dangerous elevation to which she will at all risks be lifted up.

His wisdom to prevent, is now changed into solicitude to protect, her from unfaithfulness. He has given her full proof of the companions by the side of which she is about to sit on high; and now He would teach her how to sit in Satan's seat without yielding to Satan's lures.

He has no desire to limit or confine His Church to the lower valleys of the earth, but would have her also to sanctify the heights and beautify them with salvation. But first He gives her a proof of the unhealthy atmospheres of the region, and the dizzy humors which it breeds in the heads of men. He would show her the anti-Christian character of the potentates of the earth before He would suffer her to venture among

them.

He would avert her heart from them by three centuries of cruelty on their parts, while, by the same period of compassion and help upon His, He would rivet her heart unto Himself, before setting her forth upon the perilous undertaking of subduing them also to the obedience of Christ Jesus.

Whole volumes of events rush into my mind while I write this sketch of Christ's dealings by the Church; but I must put away the details as foreign to my purpose.

The Lord grows displeased with His spouse, and presents Himself with a weapon in his hand, that she may keep in mind the severity of His holiness in the midst of the seductions of a court and kingdom; and He warns her of the sin of Balaam, who prostituted the gift of God to royal rewards, and the sin of Nicolas, who, if ecclesiastical tradition, or perhaps mythological wisdom, is to be believed, would have prostituted His chaste and beautiful spouse.

Against covetousness and luxury He sharply admonishes her to beware, while, by the example of Antipas, He exhorts her to resist and to withstand unto the death, every one who would impose upon her other institutions or commandments besides His own.

This is generally reported the age of learning, argument, and eloquence—of councils and canons for the suppression of heresy and preservation of order. It was, indeed, the age of learned doctors and fathers in the Church; but, woe is me! what an intermarriage of secular and profane with the sacred and celestial wisdom of the Spirit! What a mixture of the dross of the flesh with the fine gold of the Spirit is to be found in these renowned champions of the faith!

It was, indeed, the age of doctors; but they were Balaamite and Nicolaitane doctors, who ministered the truth in the un-

holy vessels of nature, and sold the heavenly gift for earthly ornaments. No wonder that the Lord should be all on edge towards His Church in such a condition.

What joy to my soul it has been to trace the bold denial which, among the relics of the British Church, was presented to the splendid increase of their wit and wisdom, their doctrines and canons, during that palmy period of the Church! They withstood the doctors, adhering steadfastly to the canons, prophetic, evangelical, and apostolical, which they had received from the disciples of the Lord. May she recover (and I think she will) that ancient testimony, now so many centuries yielded up, for the forms and formularies of man.

If the most splendid monuments of human genius could repay the loss of one atom of spiritual truth, I would not have spoken so of this the Augustan age of the Fathers, which has impressed its character too deeply upon the Church of England, in the bosom of which I live, and whose prosperity I dearly love, for me to pass it slightly by.

It is, moreover, very instructive concerning the third stage of love and duty, teaching us that when we are constrained to draw forth the glittering sword, and have it unsheathed at our hand, we ought not the less to exhort, and entreat, and guard, and, if possible, return it unstained with blood into its scabbard again.

It is the part of a good pilot to stand by the ship so long as she will hold together, and to bring to land as many souls and as much of the lading as ever he can. Surely such a pilot is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose ship during this season is sore harassed in her courses by rocks, and shoals, and shifting sands. But He does His part well by all on board, laboring as diligently as if He Himself, and not a mutinous and disobedient crew, had brought her into such narrow seas, and among such fearful breakers.

4. THYATIRA

While thus Christ loves not putting away, and will not, while hope is left, divorce her whom His soul loves, behold, in the next age of the Church, how there has arisen a woman, by name the same with that queen who suppressed the worship of God in the Ten Tribes of Israel, and drove Elijah to the wilderness and other hiding-places, to be fed there by God for three years and a half. By character she is a false prophetess, who now distresses the Church, and brings Christ's servants into sore travail, labor, and oppression.

The Balaamite and Nicolaitane doctors have at length attained the object, of bringing into being the antitype of that idolatrous and cruel queen, who drew her overruled husband into all excesses against the people of God. The horrid evil is consummated, a false Church is constituted, the kings of the earth have adopted her for their queen; and from henceforth Christ's faithful people are at the ban both of Church and state.

Yet He yields not the struggle, but commands them to offer the incense of oppression; like the aromatic spices, to expand their sweet odor under the grinding and bruising oppression of the powers that be; and He cheers them with the hope of oppressing the oppressors, and destroying the destroyers of the earth.

Like Samson, the Church has suffered herself to be deceived and brought to hard grinding at the mill. It is no longer the time of love, nor of faithful suffering, nor of controversy with wickedness in high places, but of sore bondage and hard labor, in a land of darkness and the shadow of death.

Yet their God forgets not His prisoners, nor deserts the people who think upon His name. He assures them of this woman's speedy destruction, with all her children, if they repent not; while to them He makes faithful promise of that glo-

rious resurrection and queenly dignity which they shall enjoy with Him in the day of His appearing.

This is the state into which the Church was fully brought in the eleventh century, and has continued over the Papal part of Christendom to this day, and will continue “unto the end.” *Revelation 2:26.*

It is most interesting to observe the form which Christ’s love assumes towards His Church in this state. Of Jezebel He said, that He had given...

Revelation 2

²¹ ...her space to repent, but she repented not.

When she had committed that adultery with the kings of the earth from which He had labored so much to preserve her, He does not instantly repudiate or desert her, but gives her space to repent, fulfilling the spirit of His own discourse concerning marriage, contained in *Matthew 19*, and rebuking, as I judge, that sensitive honor, holding more of pride than of charity, which makes men, on the first act of unfaithfulness, put away their wives; which, though it be permitted, is nowhere commanded.

Forgiveness is surely permitted for this as for other offenses; else were not Christ’s example a good one, in giving to His adulterous spouse a season of repentance. This opportunity not embracing, He concludes her for destruction, and charges all His faithful pastors to endure and suffer her no longer; and those who will commit adultery with her, if they repent not, He dooms to the fellowship of her judgment, which should be of such a sort as to be an example unto all the Churches.

Then she is suffered to live on for a while after her doom is written, as an abandoned woman, a living abomination, an incarnation of evil, which all men are charged to shun and to

avoid as the pestilence. As she had excommunicated kings and kingdoms, she lives excommunicated of Christ; and those who shall do else than curse her shall be in danger of sharing her doom.

Who are those that call her “sister Church”, and “our erring sister”? Therein they speak her not well, for none can bless whom God has cursed, but they speak themselves ill. Church of England, be on your guard against this snare! And so also be you, O kingdom of Britain!

I believe that this space for repentance came to a close in the Council of Trent, during the session of which certain of the Churches and kingdoms separated themselves from their adulterous connection with this mother of harlots. With those Protestant Churches who separated, the remaining three epistles have to do.

The first four Churches constitute a complete history of Christ’s love towards His Church, until she bring herself into the state of a confirmed and abandoned adulteress. It is a great lesson, and fitted for every man’s relation to every other man, seeing we are commanded to love one another as Christ loved us.

The history, therefore, of His dealings with His Church through these four stages of her declension, is the history of our duty as Christians to one another through all the stages of our union, until it become necessary to dissolve it, and to give up the nearest and the dearest friend to utter destruction—to separate from him and let him alone. I must, however, leave the application of the subject to the reflection of my readers.

5. SARDIS

Of the three Churches that remain we have given a connected view at the beginning of the last Lecture, showing them to contain the three forms of spirit which exist at

present in the Reformed Churches and are manifested together in this our land; which is surely as much the head of Protestant, as Rome is of Papal Christendom.

The Church of Sardis having obeyed the voice of Christ and separated from the doomed and abandoned Papacy, becomes obnoxious to a new class of temptations arising from the body of the people; the quarter from which the last form of apostasy is destined to arise.

The former temptation was the apostasy of the rulers of the Church aspiring to the co-equality of Christ's supremacy. The latter temptation is the apostasy of the people claiming to have that supremacy in their own hands.

This blasphemous assumption begins by the formation of a new tribunal in the Church; namely, the voice of the people, which by degrees may gather unto itself those Divine attributes of infallibility and omnipotence, which heretofore were claimed by the pope, pope and cardinals, general council, or other head of the Antichristian confederacy.

Against yielding to this invasion of Christ's prerogative, and sacrificing at the shrine of popular idolatry, the Church is first guarded by being reminded of His spiritual supremacy and headship both of powers heavenly and earthly, and of her own destination to the heavenly inheritance of eternal life and glory. He speaks to her as sore decayed from that vigorous health, and plenary endowment with which she had been invested in the day of her espousals.

Now anyone comparing the spirit of the Reformers, contentious, turbulent, and warlike, with the spirit of the Apostles, meek, suffering, and peaceable,—the character of their writings, systematical, argumentative, ambitious, and human, with the character of the Apostolical writings, pure, loving, spiritual, and divine,—and, above all, their works, whether as to holiness or power, with the works of the Apostolical men,

will at once discover how far inferior the era of the Reformation is to the era of the institution of our faith: how dark, mixed, and impure the spirit is in the bosom of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox, when compared with the same spirit in the bosom of Paul, Peter, John, and James. Why this difference? Because of the carnal and worldly medium through which it shone.

My own conviction, gathered as faithfully as ever I can from the acts and monuments of the Church transmitted to us, is, that the faith of the age before the Reformation and its piety, wherever these existed (and there ever has been a Church against which the gates of hell could not prevail), were greater, were much greater, than after the Reformation, which extended, indeed, the bounds of knowledge, but by no means deepened the faith and piety of the age which went before.

The proof whereof is obvious in the vast inferiority of the immediate successors of the Reformers, bred in their own school, to the Reformers themselves, who were bred in the school which immediately preceded that era, an era much more splendid for literature and political liberty than for godliness and religion.

The number of believers was greatly increased, the quality of faith was greatly diminished:

- by that controversial and systematic attitude which religion then assumed;
- by the appeal which then began to be made to the public voice, instead of the voice of Christ speaking by the Spirit;
- by the patronage which the faithful began to receive from kings and nobles of the earth, of whom they had for a long time suffered only persecution;
- but, above all, by great and grievous shortcomings of

doctrine among the Reformers, in all that concerns the coming and glory of Christ, the gifts and prerogatives of the Church.

These things are not spoken to the prejudice of the Reformers, but to the shame of the Reformed Churches, who went not on in their footsteps, but fixed the flowing tide at the low-water mark where the Reformers left it, and said:

Job 38

¹¹ Hitherto shall you come, and no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed.

And, as is always the case with the Church when she advances not, she has miserably declined, and is fast declining, into that Laodicean state of indifference which Christ can by no means endure.

6. PHILADELPHIA

Now it is beautiful to see how our great and good Husband abides faithful and true in His love, warning His spouse against this new form of evil which began to lay siege to her faithfulness. And, the better to instruct her in His power to preserve her against the seductions of the popular voice, He gives her a proof of the faithfulness with which He can endow the Philadelphian Church, tossed by the same tempestuous seas.

The Philadelphian Church stands among the last three laboring under the popular seduction, in the same place as the Smyrnian among the former four Churches, laboring against the seductions of the royal estate. After Christ had warned the Church in the Ephesian time of her declining love, He rekindles it in the fires of persecution in the Smyrnian age, and makes her without excuse for passing over to the embrace of her persecutors in the two succeeding states of Pergamos and Thyatira.

So now, after warning her in Sardis of the novelty of name-worship, which had succeeded to the former idolatry of power, He proceeds, in the Philadelphian time, to exhibit a body of faithful disciples suffering under all the persecutions of the popular voice, setting it at defiance, and nobly triumphing over its scorn;—to whom He offers Himself as the Holy and the True (real), not the professional and nominal one, who has power to open and shut all doors in heaven and on earth and under the earth; so that they need not despair because of their little strength, or tremble at the numerous hosts of people arrayed against them.

There is no Church towards which Christ assumes so much of the attitude of power and protection on earth, no doubt because He well foresaw how much it would be called for in her peculiar circumstances. And He assures her of a door which He had opened for her, and which no man should be able to shut.

Her temptations are from her feebleness (“you have a little strength” *Revelation 3:8*), from having no support in any quarter under heaven, princes or people, rulers or doctors of the Church, yet enabled to enter into her place and perform her part, through the supernatural power of the great Chamberlain of David’s house, who is the possessor of all power on earth, has set the door wide open and defied the world to shut it.

Thus supported, these Philadelphians make way, and do their work of withstanding this new form of usurpation proceeding from the people. They keep His word, and suffer it not to be made void by the traditions of men, but bring it forth from the repositories of Bible Societies, and print it in letters of the Spirit in the word and work of living saints.

They have not denied His name, but upheld Him Supreme Head of Church and state, Lord paramount of the earth stead-

fastly resisting and withstanding the claim of the people to be Christ's vicegerents upon the earth.

And now again the Jews come into the vision, who had dropped out of sight and out of mind since the days of the Smyrnian Church, corresponding in office to this which we are now considering;—giving us to wit, that they shall again become the solicitude of the Church, and, as is the case with all her cares, become in the hands of Satan a temptation and a snare to her; bringing some of her people into Judaizing practices, but not prevailing to disturb her at all from the tenor of her course.

For the love of Christ shall so shine upon her, as that they also shall be brought to acknowledge and worship with loving heart, in her brotherly society; indicating, I think, a great ingathering of Jews, loath at first to leave off their legal formalities, and proud, stiff-necked dignity; but at length bowed down before the shrine of these faithful and hearty worshippers of God and the Lamb.

Besides this, Christ greatly commends their patience in keeping His word when all the earth was forsaking it, and promises them immunity from that hour of tribulation which is coming to try all the people upon the face of the whole earth.

This is, as we have shown¹, the hour of the judgment of the quick, in the day of Christ's appearing, from the evils of which, these wise virgins and faithful Servants shall be preserved by being taken into that New Jerusalem, of which He possesses the key, crowned with His crown, dwelling in His temple, and inscribed with His new name.

1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 9, "Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia", Chapter: "The Universal Bishop's Instruction, Approbation, and Encouragement", Sub-chapter: "Preservation in Time of Trouble", p. 79-113.

So gloriously at the last does His love to his Church on earth shine forth, notwithstanding all the vexation of spirit and weariness which she had been to Him, and so mightily does He show his power to quicken celestial life in her, even in the last age of her earthly existence, and just before her utter rejection. It is a goodly theme this Philadelphian Church, over which I still love to linger.

7. LAODICEA

But I must close this *coup d'oeil*² of the whole vision, by sketching out the last and dying form of the well-beloved Church, her degradation from the queenly spouse of Christ to become pander and slave of the popular voice.

As the Church of Thyatira exhibited the apostasy of ecclesiastical rulers in the seat to which as the queen of the earth she had attained, and the unholy use which she made of her dignity to seduce the servants of the Lord; so the Church of the Laodiceans exhibits the apostasy of the people triumphant over all, and bringing the Church into the captivity and bondage of selfishness, lukewarmness, and indifference.

Revelation 3

¹⁷ I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;

Riches and goods are her all in all; in the abundance of which she perceives not her lack:

¹⁷ ...and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

She is completely occupied and engrossed with visible things: she is filled with her own sufficiency; she makes her boast before God and man of what should be her shame: her

2 From French, meaning "glance of the eye" whereby a wise military commander knows at once, upon viewing the landscape, where to place the most strategic posts.

spiritual senses are taken from her; she walks by sight, and not by faith.

At the time she is nauseous to Christ, she is satisfied with herself; and, being on the eve of rejection, she is sunk in the lap of security. The Church has at length utterly lost the love and desire of Christ. All His doings and sufferings for her sake have come at length to this issue, that she can do as well without Him as with Him. She thinks no more of Him at all.

This is the state of things which is hastening to be perfected in what is called the religious world. At the Reformation nothing was heard of but the Church, the purity and the unity of the Church; now nothing is heard of but the religious world, the subscriptions and the works of the religious world.

This name “religious world,” which they have chosen to appropriate and use, is the complete revelation of the mystery of iniquity which it contains. *Substantively*, it is the world; *adjectivally* it is the religious world. It is the world with a qualification of religion. And, being the world as to its substance, it has no fellowship with Christ, and seeks not to him for any of His gifts.

- It is all over natural; He is all over Supernatural:
- Its law is the course of the world; His law is the antagonist thereof.

The common sense, the sense of the community, has won the victory over the Holy Spirit; and all things are molded down into a well-working condition. The machine goes well, and the people are satisfied. The circle of expediency is completed, the doctrine of utility rules, and the reign of toleration and liberality is come in.

It is no longer a Jezebel laboring to seduce Christ’s servants with her fornications; it is the servants come to a regular settled purpose of casting Him out of His house, and reigning

without Him over His purchased world. Not a conspiracy against the King, but a republic without a King.

Clearly it is the lowest, basest, worst estate of the Church, when there exists no longer any pulse of affection or desire towards her loving Husband. She is without Him, and she is content to be and to do without Him.

And yet behold how even now the heart of her Husband warms towards her. He entreats her to come unto Him for the supply of all her wants, for that He is as free and as large as ever in His bounty; and though grieved at His heart, and utterly disgusted with her behavior, He will still make her meet to be His bride, and admit her to the honors of His throne and kingdom.

Seeing her love to be set upon created things, He takes to Himself the character of the Creator of all, Himself the Essence of all things created:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ ...the Amen, the Beginning of the creation of God.

And moreover perceiving her whole soul to be engrossed with money and goods, and that she is accustomed to no ideas but of barter and exchange, of profit and loss, He condescends to address her in her own stock-jobbing language, and to put Himself forth as the merchantman who alone has the precious commodities whereof she is in such urgent need. Yea more, He deals with her by loving chastisement, in the hope of bringing her to a right mind, and doubtless thereby saves some.

And, most wonderful of all, He represents Himself as a humble petitioner for admission into His own house. The King from the far country comes back to His household; and finding them using and occupying all His goods as their own, does not at once arm Himself with vengeance, but tries what

parley and entreaty will do; for He greatly loves them: He stands at the door and knocks; and if any will open, He will not only forgive all past transgressions and present indifference, but will make common cause with them still, and advance them to be joint-heirs of His throne and His kingdom.

Was there ever such a thing put upon record, as that He who had thus bought the Church with His precious blood, and watched over her with the sevenfold care and wisdom of God, and been requited through all the ingenious methods of His love, with decline of affection, insolence, deception, and total indifference, should conclude all His labors with these words:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

²¹ To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

When I review these things in my mind, and seek to track out this maze of love, I lose myself in wonder and astonishment. The corruption and coldness of mankind rise up before me: and I say within myself:

“Can man be so ungrateful, and lost to every sense of love and obligation, of honor, and glory, and blessedness? Can the Church indeed come to such a pass? Can this indeed be the end of such a wonderful work of love?”

I grow almost incredulous of my own thoughts, and if they were my own, I would be the first to anathematize them as a libel upon mankind. I look again if it be so written in the word of God, and, being confirmed by His truth and faithfulness, I exclaim:

“Oh, what a thing is sin! oh what a dark womb of wicked-

ness is the heart of man! Surely it is capable of much evil: surely it must be capable of much suffering. How awful must that retribution be which is thus purchased, which is thus postponed, and sought to be averted! My soul, come not into their assembly.”

There is the character of a last, and one would say a desperate, effort about this epistle to the Church of Laodicea, wherein the good Shepherd casts Himself with loving earnestness upon His Church, now well nigh unto destruction, as He wept in the times of old over Jerusalem, saying:

Matthew 23

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!

He beholds all things tottering to their fall, and He presents Himself to their faith as the most sure and steadfast still:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

As if He had said:

“Though the last great earthquake that is to shake both earth and the heavens be now mustering its thunders, look to me, the Amen, the Maker, steadfast; hear me, the faithful and true Witness of the new heavens and the new earth about to be revealed; take hold on me, the Beginning of the creation, and the Upholder of its pillars.”

Then He perceives their sealed darkness, their ignorance and infatuation, their self-sufficiency and self-applause, yet utter unprovidedness for the fearful account which is just about to be taken of their stewardship; and He counsels them to come and be supplied but of His inexhaustible fullness with those stores which will stand them in good stead against that

day of consuming fire about to be revealed upon all hay, and wood, and stubble which have been built into the fireproof building of God.

And finally, discovering their lukewarmness and indifference, He presents Himself in the cold night at the door, His locks full of the dew, and His limbs benumbed with the cold, entreating and entreating to be admitted into the house, that He might sup with them, and in return bring them into his Father's banqueting house, whose banner over them should be love. From thenceforth blessed are they who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Such is the urgency, such the instancy of salvation with which the Son of God presents Himself in a last effort to the Church of the Laodiceans. This epistle I now proceed to examine and enlarge upon.

It is the last. I am grieved that it is the last; and I still linger over it with a fond affection, and endeavor to draw out of it excellent instructions for that evangelical or religious world, whose case it contains, and whose remedy it reveals. So, O my God! be my helper, for in You I do put my trust.

THE CHIEF SHEPHERD'S LAST AND FULLEST STYLE

THE words by which our good Shepherd is pleased to address His last epistle to the Church, is the fullest and most weighty of them all; containing three designations of the most wonderful kind:

1. The Amen;
2. The faithful and true Witness;
3. The Beginning of the creation of God,

which we shall now examine in order.

THE AMEN

The exact power of the sublime title is, I think, expressed by our great poet in these words:

The be all, and the end all.

Christ is the Be all, and the End all of the whole purpose of God; the Amen, which, for its meaning, is, "So let it be," and for its place in any prayer or discourse, is the final ending.

The Amen is likewise the certainty of things according to that which is written:

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ All the promises of God are in Him yea and in Him amen.

This remarkable expression is used by the Apostle, in a connection which casts light upon the title before us. There had been false teachers among the Corinthians, shuffling men, worldly men, whose purposes were according to the flesh, and therefore changeable. In contradistinction he affirms of himself thus:

2 Corinthians 1

¹⁷ ...the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

¹⁸ But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

²¹ Now He which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God;

²² Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

From this passage, so explanatory of the title before us, it appears that the *amen* is put in opposition to the *nay*; *yea and amen* being a style opposed to another style, *yea and nay*. The style *yea and nay*, bespeaks instability of purpose in him who uses it; signifying that he has changed his mind, and altered his purpose, and therefore is not altogether to be relied upon.

The contrary style therefore, *yea and amen*, must signify stability of purpose, an unalterable, unchangeable stability; *yea* being the purpose, *amen* being its stability; *yea* being the promise, *amen* being its confirmation.

And this style is not unusual, in the Scripture. In the first chapter, at the 7th verse, where the great object of the prophecy of this book is mentioned:

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him, yea amen.

And in the 22nd chapter, at the 20th verse, the same style occurs concerning the same event:

Revelation 22

²⁰ He which testifies these things, says, I come quickly:
Amen; yea, come Lord Jesus.

My idea, therefore, of the title Amen, is, that it expresses the steadfastness of all the purposes and promises of God, as if Christ had said:

“I am the maker fast; in me all is secured. I am the nail fastened in a sure place, which shall never be cut down, and upon which hangs all the glory of my Father’s house.”

This leads to an aspect of Christ, as the covenant confirmer, as the promise certifier, which we shall a little open out.

Christ has this glorious distinction, from the nature of the Divine revelation; which has this peculiarity, that it consists of promises abiding their fulfillment against a future time, and upon certain conditions. Of these conditions, Christ is the fulfiller, and so becomes the Amen, of the promise.

The promise itself displays the goodness, and grace, and love of the Father. The condition attached to it of perfect holiness and obedience, displays the sinfulness of the creature, shows that the creature is not the Amen; that he is not the confirmer; and that, had it rested with him, God’s purpose of grace and mercy must for ever have failed.

And accordingly the history of God’s dealings with mankind is only a succession of failures, through the impotency of man, to present the full obedience which God requires. There wanted an Amen to every promise of God: that Amen came in the person of His own Son. He, as a creature, presented the condition of perfect obedience, necessary to the lordship, and headship, and perpetual governance of all His creatures.

For to this end of supreme majesty, man was created at the first, and in this dignity would have stood till now and for

ever, had he not broken the commandment of God; after which, promise succeeded promise, in token of unwearied grace towards the fallen; but evermore was the promise defeated by the disobedience of man, until He came, who is the Amen, and fulfilled every condition, kept the law, and made it honorable.

The word of God was established; the great, the long delayed Amen, was sounded; and God's word being finished and confirmed, the Holy Spirit might come forth to execute, to realize, and to substantiate all. This is the true reason why the Holy Ghost was not yet, because the great Amen to God's promise had not yet been pronounced, which was pronounced when He said:

John 19

³⁰ It is finished.

From this time forth, Christ who had been hitherto the Revealer, the Word, revealing the Father's will, through the inter-communing Spirit, was honored to become the communicator of the same Spirit, for the completion of the same will into work.

The whole of revelation to and by the human race, is but as it were the manifestation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their several offices. The Father's office to originate, Christ holds in supreme estimation, and teaches with continual pre-eminence. From the beginning, until He said, "It is finished," what is it all, whether by Prophet, or by Patriarch, or by Priest, or by Forerunner, or by Messiah Himself spoken; what is it all but the testimony of the Father, as the great originating will, and the declaration of that will, of what kind it is?

And this succession of utterances gives the glory to one Utterer: while they are utterances from the Father, they are uttered in the name, and on the behalf of one, who is the only Utterer. Loose words they were, like the sibyl's leaves, floating

on the winds and tides, till He came, who should gather them all together, bind and clasp them up, and stamp them forever steadfast with His own Amen.

Thus, revelation is the testimony of the Father, who is uttered, and of the Son who utters, until the work of utterance being complete, from that time forth the Spirit proceeds to execute the things which had been uttered.

And since the day of Pentecost we have been living in the age of things, and not of words. The thing which has been accomplished by the Spirit as yet is the Church, the regeneration of the sons of God. All the rest which has been written remains to be done and effected by the same Spirit.

The Church therefore, not the word, is now the mighty work of God; the Church is so much of the word effected by the Spirit; the Church is a complete work of God. But into this we enter not further at present, because it belongs not to our present subject, and we have sufficiently explained how Christ is the Amen.

Observe now how appropriate to our great Bishop is this Divine title of the Amen, which makes every promise sealed and confirmed, steadfast and sure. There are no longer any conditions to the accomplishment of any promise.

It is offered to our faith in Christ, without an if, without a maybe, or a might be: and without any exception, freely promulgated unto all. And he who hears it by preaching promulgated, does, if he receive it not, take upon him to reject it. He rejects the confirmed Word of God, the only ground of being; and, if he taste the bitterness of the second death, he has no reason to complain, having rejected Him who is the Amen.

THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS

We come next to His title, the faithful and true Witness, which is the same that He takes in the inscription of the book:

Revelation 1

⁵ And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness...

With this name He also comes forth to judgment:

Revelation 19

¹¹ ...He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True...

A witness is one who bears testimony to that which he has seen, as it is written:

Acts 1

²¹ Wherefore of these men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out from us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.

And again:

John 15

²⁷ And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Of a witness, therefore, according to the Scriptures this is the special character, that he should have seen the things which he testifies; and this Christ expressly claims for Himself:

John 3

¹¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness.

¹² If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

¹³ And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

And to the same effect does the Baptist testify concerning Him in the same chapter:

John 3

³¹ He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: He that comes from heaven is above all.

³² And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no man receives His testimony.

³³ He that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true.

³⁴ For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him.

³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

³⁶ He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

These two passages prove to us, that the substance of this title “the Witness,” consists in his having seen the Father, and his having come forth to reveal the Father, according as it is written in another place:

John 1

¹⁸ No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

And again, in another place:

Matthew 11

²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

This character of the witness therefore puts a difference between our Lord and all others, who have been sent out from God, but who saw not God, and therefore cannot be called witnesses of God, though they be witnesses for God.

All those who came before Jesus, came to testify concerning Him that was to come; according as He Himself declared to the Jews, concerning John the Baptist:

John 5

¹ If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true: there is another that bears witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true: you sent unto John, and he bore witness unto the truth.

And not only is it true that all the Old Testament Prophets and Jews testified of Him that was to come, but likewise the Holy Ghost that was given unto Him by the Father, was the Father's witness unto Him:

John 5

³⁶ But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me.

³⁷ And the Father Himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape.

³⁸ And you have not His word abiding in you: for whom He has sent, him you believe not.

And what are all the Apostles but witnesses unto Christ? and what are all we ministers but proclaimers of that witness which they bore?

Seeing then that the witness of all Prophets, and Apostles, and preachers, has its object and termination in Christ, to point him out unto the world, as the Witness, the Prophet, the Sent and Sanctified of God, wherein stands His own unrivaled dignity, for which He should be the object of such continual holding up, unto the world? It stands in this, that He has seen the Father; that He has been in the bosom of the Father; that in the beginning He was with God, and was God.

He is not the Father, but He is sent from the Father, to bear witness of the Father. His distinct personality from the Father is excellently expressed by this name, "the Witness," which passes beyond the Word and the Light; for the name Word, or the Reason, does not evidently and at once declare His distinct personality from Him whose word He is; nor is the light which discloses the hidden object, itself a distinct object from that which it discloses.

But contrariwise both these high designations do merely signify the necessity of Christ unto any knowledge or vision of God, without bearing so clearly upon His distinctness as a person; signifying that as the mind and purpose of man lies hidden from all research, until with word He open the same to another; and as the forms and colors, yea, and existence of objects not immediately in contact with our person, lie hidden from our knowledge until the light shines upon them, even so God is dark and undiscovered, and not discoverable, until Christ the true Light shines forth from Him, and reveals Him unto men.

But in this name, "the Witness," we have a higher mystery couched; which is, the mystery of His distinct personality. For no man can be a witness in His own cause; the witness must needs be distinct from the person witnessed of. He must have heard the word spoken, or seen the deed committed by another person, in order to be a witness.

Distinct personality from the party witnessed of is the essential character of a witness. A man can never be a witness in his own cause; a witness can never be the same person with the party witnessed of. This strong position is well brought out by the question of the Pharisees, and our Lord's answer to them in these words:

John 8

¹³ The Pharisees therefore said unto him, You bear record of

yourself; your record is not true.

¹⁴ Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but you cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

¹⁵ You judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

¹⁶ And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

¹⁷ It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

¹⁸ I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.

Can any thing be more explicit, that the Father and Christ are two, though they be also one: one in substance, two in person. He quotes from the Law, "The witness of two men is true;" and having done so, He puts forth His Father and Himself as the two persons whose witness should be accepted as true.

This then we lay down as the preliminary to His being a witness, that He should be a distinct person from the Father; not only be so when He came in flesh, but have been so during His pre-existent state, when He gathered that knowledge of the Father which He took flesh in order to communicate.

But this His distinctness in person from the Father is only the preliminary qualification to the receiving of his word; and the great question is:

"What is it that He witnesses?"

And the answer is:

"He witnesses all that is known, all that can be known, of God."

All that ever has been revealed concerning God, whether in the form of creation, in the form of word, or in the form of inward light, comes only through Christ. As Creator, Christ the

Witness put forth, in the things that are made, certain clear indications and demonstrations of the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead.

In the creation of a living soul, He witnessed a higher manifestation of God than the irrational creatures contain. For man was formed in God's image, after His likeness. Man has in him a conformation of moral nature answerable to the moral nature of God; I mean, that we have an idea of goodness, of love, of grace, of truth, of justice, of holiness, &c. which answer to the original of these in the being of God. Thus Christ, as the Creator, witnessed concerning God; and man and the visible creation is, I believe, the great book in which the powers and principalities above study the mystery of God.

Christ has witnessed of God by word; for all the Prophets received of His fullness, as it is written in the first chapter of John:

John 1

¹⁶ Of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace.

He was the Word, and everyone who revealed God by word received that revelation from Him, the Word. He was not only testified of by the Prophets, but He it was that testified in the Prophets. It was the Spirit of Christ which testified in them; as it is written:

1 Peter 1

¹⁰ ...the prophets...searched diligently

¹¹ ...what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them signified, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow.

In all that the Prophets spoke, Christ was witnessed of, God under His character of the Word. The creation is His witness as the great Creator, by the Spirit. Prophecy is His witness as His Word, by the same Spirit. And when He took unto Him-

self a body, He began to witness in another character, which is flesh. Therefore it is said:

John 1

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh...

That is, He that had been known from the creation, as the Word, now began to be known as flesh; of which this is the peculiar distinction, that He now witnessed of God by Himself, without any intermediate thing or intermediate person. The person of the eternal Son then stood manifested, and all the secret Father stood confessed; so that He could say:

John 14

⁹ ...he that has seen me, has seen the Father...

And unto the Jews:

John 10

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

Now, observe what I have to say further. When He redeemed His body from the power of the grave, He received from the Father the Holy Ghost; that to them who believed, to them who now believe, to them who shall believe, until He come again, He might give power to become the sons of God; and through these sons of God He continues the testimony in flesh.

Give good heed to what I mean, for it is a mystery little discoursed of. I mean, that the Church of the baptized, regenerate ones, is Christ's witness in flesh, continued until now, and to continue until He comes again.

That testimony which He bore to the Father, by finishing the work which His Father gave Him to do, the Church now continues, and shall continue until He come again; so that we have a threefold witness:

1. The witness by Creation;

2. The witness by Word; and
3. The witness by the Church.

The witness by Creation is in the things which are made. The witness by Word is in the preaching of the Gospel. And the witness in the flesh is by the baptized Church.

John 1

¹² But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

They must receive Him; and how can they receive Him without a preacher; and having received Him preached, they are baptized, and regenerate, and made sons of God.

I do not say that the act of believing the preacher is an act done otherwise than by the Holy Ghost. But it is not the complete act of regeneration, or creating anew in the image of God. It is not the act of the Holy Ghost which the Son puts forth as the risen man entrusted with the Holy Ghost, to beget sons unto God. It is not the act of Christ as Head of the Church, which dignity He has attained to by His resurrection.

But it is the act of the Father through Christ as His word; the same as was done in the Prophets, and through the Prophets, on those who believed on their word. The act of believing the preached word before baptism, is that part in a sinner's redemption which properly appertains to the Father, and which our Lord continually speaks of in all his discourses, saying:

John 6

³⁷ All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

And again:

⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent

me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard and has learned of the Father, comes unto me.

And again:

⁶⁵ Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given him of my Father.

Into this point of doctrine I do not enter further at present, save to observe, that it is a most important one; forasmuch as I believe it is embodied in that sentence in the creed:

“The Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son.”

His procession from the Father being, through the Word, to draw men unto Christ the Head of the Church, and then from Christ the Head of the Church to make them of His flesh and of His bones; in order to continue the great mystery of the Word made flesh, to continue the witness of the incarnate Son, in the adopted sons of God:

Colossians 1

¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.

¹⁹ For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

Ephesians 1

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

And besides these three, His witness in creation, His witness in the Word, and His witness by regeneration, I know not any other form of witness concerning God which Christ makes unto the creatures.

To His character of the Witness is added these two epithets: Faithful and True, whereof it seems to me that the former refers to Him which sent Him to bear witness of Himself; the

latter, unto those to whom He brings the testimony.

The word Faithful is used in Scripture, both to denote him who well believes, and him who may be well believed; either the veracity of him who speaks, or the trust of him who hears. In both these senses perhaps the word is to be understood in the designation before us. Together they signify Christ's faithfulness in believing the Father, and His consequent worthiness to be believed of those who heard Him.

To the ears of many, ignorant as we are grown in these times of Divine theology, it sounds somewhat strange to say that Christ was the greatest and best of all believers. But judge how true it is from Christ's own language:

John 8

²⁶ He that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I heard of Him.

And again:

²⁸ As my Father has taught me, I speak these things;

And again:

³⁸ I speak that which I have seen with my Father;

And again:

John 12

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

⁵⁰ And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

And again in another place:

John 5

³⁰ I can of my own self do nothing; as I hear I judge.

Of these and of such like sayings, what is the meaning but this, that the intercourse and intercommunion between Christ and the Father, is maintained by a reciprocal action of giving and receiving, of speaking and of hearing, of communicating and of reporting; that their unity is a unity in distinctness, to maintain which is the office of the Holy Ghost.

Faithful, therefore, Christ declared Himself to be; a faithful and true Witness to what He had seen, to what He had heard, to what He had known of the Father, whose bosom He inhabited from eternity, but yet in distinctness of subsistence. Blessed mystery of the three persons in one God! how it opens the Scriptures! how it interprets the secret things of God!

In like manner is the Holy Ghost faithful unto Christ, hearing and repeating truly what He hears. As it is written:

John 16

¹³ ...He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.

In one and the same discourse Christ says of Himself:

John 15

¹⁵ ...all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

And of the Holy Ghost He says:

John 16

¹³ ...He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak...

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

¹⁵ All things that the Father has are mine: therefore I said, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The faithfulness and the truth therefore of Christ's witness

consists as much and more in His being an exact, full, and complete reporter of the Father's hidden mind, as in His being all worthy of the trust and confidence of men. Yea, I may say, His worthiness of trust and confidence on the part of the creatures, arises wholly from His capacity and His willingness in all things to report faithfully and fully the mystery of God.

In a sense, therefore, in which it pertains to no other man, is Christ called the Truth, the True One, and the Bringer of Truth. "And how," do you ask, "is this?" I answer, "Because He was the Word made flesh." Other men had revelations of particular things, for particular ends, made unto them by the Word: and they had also inspirations of the Holy Ghost made unto them for particular ends; which being served, they fell back into the condition of other men;—true, only in as far as they observed God's word; and false, in as far as they observed it not.

But when the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, He brought with Him his complete personality and eternal verity as the Word; and through lamp of human reason, and through veils of human flesh, He put forth by the Spirit the very truth of God, the fullness of the truth of God, which dwells within Him. So that He could say:

John 10

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

John 14

⁹ ...he that has seen me has seen the Father...

¹⁰ ...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works.

As Word of God, the person of the Son has privilege and power to speak the mind of God, which is the truth; and when He became man, the Spirit of truth, working in His reasonable soul and real flesh, did so harmonize the creature to the Creator, that even then, in the human nature, He could say:

“I am the Truth, I am the True One.”

There is no duplicity, there is no shortcoming, there is no ambiguity, there is no error, there is no contrariety, there is no contradiction in the words which Christ spoke by Himself, or which He spoke by the holy Prophets and the holy Apostles. He, and He only, is the True One that cannot lie; He cannot deny Himself. All that is in Him is true; all that is not in Him is a lie.

Most fit prerogative of the Witness, to be not only faithful, but also true. For how otherwise should He be the Head of the messengers unless He Himself were a true messenger? how otherwise should He be the Head of the preachers, unless He Himself were a true preacher? The devil is the liar, and the father of the lie; Christ is the Truth, and the Father of the truth.

There is an intimate connection between the two attributes of holiness and truth.

1 John 2

²⁰ But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.

²⁷ But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him.

Truth is holiness in the mind, and holiness is truth in the members; and the combination of the two amounts unto goodness.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD

Thus also is He denominated in the prelude:

Revelation 1

⁸ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...

And again:

Revelation 21

⁶ ...I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

And here it is:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ ...the beginning of the creation of God;

Upon this deep subject some light is cast by the language used in the beginning of the Gospel of John:

John 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

³ All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

Here the Son, in the character of the Word, is said not only to have been before all creation, but to have created all things, and therefore to have been the Beginning of the creation of God. The same thing is asserted of him in the *Epistle to the Colossians*:

Colossians 1

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

¹⁶ For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

The same truth, whatsoever it be, is taught in the beginning of the *Hebrews*, in the beginning of the *First Epistle of John*, and in divers other parts of Holy Scripture.

Now the question is, What is the mystery, so important, which is in so many sublime and profound passages declared unto us? Is it merely the mystery of His eternal generation of, and co-essential Divinity with the Father?

Surely it is not this which is spoken of; for the language leads directly not to His uncreated but to His created essence. There were no meaning, in speaking of Him as God, to say that He was the First-begotten of every creature, or that He was the Beginning of the creation of God; nor yet to say, as I conceive, that He was the Word. Besides, in all these places it is of his Christhead that it is spoken; that is, the person of the Son in creature form.

Can it then, in the next place, be of some pre-existent humanity that it is here spoken? Certainly not. For though He assumed divers forms or apparitions of manhood before He became flesh, as to Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua, and Manoah, and others, it is certain that flesh He did not become until He took substance from the Virgin.

What, then, is the meaning of the expression in the text, "the Beginning of the creation of God?"

From all those passages which I have quoted and referred to, my idea of this great mystery is this, that Christ was the great archetype of creation, out of which every thing that has a being was evolved; in which it existed in the sight of the Father, before it had an outward being by creation; that the first act of Godhead unto creation was, that the Son should take unto Himself such a form, such a limited form, as might contain within itself the fullness and completeness of all things which were to be for ever. In Him, the Father, as in a glass, might behold the beginning and the consummation of all, ere yet any creature had a beginning.

This form of creature, comprehensive of all creatures, this the fullness of being that is to be, the Son adopted unto Himself, being willing to enter therein out of the infinitude and incomprehensibility of Godhead. He condescended to act under the conditions of a creature, and to evolve by successive acts all those creatures whom the Father pleased to produce.

In this sense I conceive him to be the Beginning of the creation of God, the First-born of every creature. Unless the Father contemplated all things in Christ from the beginning, unless all things were seen in Christ from the beginning, then had they no existence in the purpose of God anterior to their existence in time.

Now all Scripture declares this: and the doctrines of predestination and of election,—the one the only foundation of Providence, the other the only foundation of a Church,—do themselves rest upon no other ground than this truth of the Christ set up before all worlds. God saw all His works in harmonious order ere yet they had a being.

In the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, we have it declared first of the elect in these words:

Ephesians 1

¹⁴ According as He has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love.

And immediately after the predestinated place in the order of the Divine economy:

Ephesians 1

⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

And again, the purpose of God by all things whatsoever, whether in heaven or earth, assigning them their places in the Christ against the dispensation of the fullness of the times, is thus set forth:

⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He has purposed in Himself:

¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might

gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

All things are to be exhibited, and forever to stand summed up in Christ, gathered into Him, according to the order of that economy which was seen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Then is the predestinate form of the Christ accomplished in outward reality.

The following passage of the same Epistle casts a still greater light upon this subject:

Ephesians 3

⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

¹⁰ To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God,

¹¹ According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And not only so, but the Lamb is said to have been slain, and His book of life to have been written from the foundation of the world, as we showed in Lecture 8³. And still more remarkable is the language of these two passages:

Titus 1

² In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began;

³ But has in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Savior.

2 Timothy 1

⁹ Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and

3 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 8, "Epistle to the Church in Sardis", Chapter: "The Spirit's Exhortation and Promise", Sub-chapter: "The Book of Life", p. 184-220.

grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began;

¹⁰ But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Any one considering all these passages together, will perceive that the mystery of the Christ and of the purpose of God, in the Christ, is one of the greatest depth and importance which it was the great object of the Apostle Paul to unfold.

CHRIST THE ALL IN ALL OF CREATION, MAN'S PROTOTYPE AND GOD'S TRUE WITNESS

I HAVE written much upon this subject in these Lectures; and I would now wish, before dismissing these the seven styles or denominations of Christ to sum it all up in connection with the subject of creation, as it stands in the text:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ ...the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.

GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

Though the incarnation of the Son of God by the power of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, be the act wherein God at length attained His purpose of becoming manifest in flesh to the sight of all His creatures, the announcement of the purpose, and the measures for its accomplishment, are coeval with creation itself; and are openly declared as the very end which God had in view in the origination, continuance, and history of mankind.

These words, "Let us make man in our own image, and let them have dominion" (*Genesis 1:26*) which are at once the charter and the law, and the frame of our being, reveal it as the purpose of God to have a visible image of his own invisible and incomprehensible essence, and to give to this likeness of Himself, the primacy and lordship of all creation.

This fiat of God for humankind is that, which still abides unalterable; is that to secure which from failure, and to fix it immovable forever, He sent His Son in the likeness of man, in the likeness of flesh of sin, to redeem us from sin and death, and make us to stand up again, and for ever abide the image

of the invisible God and the lords of all His handiwork.

When man lost the image of God through the deformation of sin in his inward, of death in his outward parts, and, from being creation's lord, fell so low as to become the devil's slave, and the bondman of the niggard earth, God in nothing changed His original purpose, or abated of His demands, but continues still to require of every living man, that he should, in all his ways, represent God, occupy the stewardship of the world, and give an account of both in the day of judgment.

And at the day of judgment every man shall be tried by this and no other criterion, whether his soul is renewed in the image of God, his works godlike, and whether he has occupied his place as the representative and vicegerent of God upon the earth.

And to the end that man might not be discouraged by the evil which he had brought upon himself by transgression, God, after He had sealed the curse of sin, and manifested forth His holiness, and protected Himself from the imputation of being a sin-indulger, immediately proceeded to lead out in beautiful order the free purpose of His grace in man through the mediation of the woman's Seed, to strive against, and effectually to vanquish and put down the serpent who had won the supremacy.

Genesis 3

¹⁵ The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

That word does not in the least alter the original fiat; it does but open the way by which eventually it should be brought to pass. Were God to make any change in His original project of creation, in consequence of His creatures miscarriages, He would show Himself deficient in wisdom, or foresight, or power, and prove Himself to have some co-equal or superior, to whom He is fain to accommodate His purposes.

This is the Manichean doctrine of two principles, a good and an evil, co-existent and co-operative in the production and government of the world; which was so much abhorred in the primitive Church, and is now practically held by those who maintain that out of flesh no action can be brought which is perfectly good.

It is still to have His image revealed, and His lordship manifested in man, that God preserves man after pronouncing upon him the direful sentence of death; and the manner of it yet coming to pass, He declares to be through the instrumentality of man even of the woman's seed.

THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

But before man could be in a condition to draw upon this new source of being, opened in the word of God, he must first seal to his own desert of death, and die morally, die by act of his own will; which he does by the ordinance or sacrament of sacrifice, afterward included in circumcision, and now in baptism.

These rites which are one and the same in this respect, do contain a free-will acknowledgment on man's part, that he deserves death, and is prepared at any time to die for that one transgression which he committed in Adam; and that he will thenceforth consider himself as a dead man to any, and to all of those natural claims, rights, and prerogatives, which he held in Adam, and in Adam forfeited forever.

They bind us over to the continual renunciation of our creation-standing before God, as having been forfeited to His holy and righteous indignation against sin, and in faithfulness to our sacramental vow, we are beholden to prosecute a continual mortification of the natural man, until the time that we shall pour out his life-blood in a holy oblation unto God, for the sin committed in and by the fountain-head of our natural

being.

This is a noble and divine method of managing the matter, of glorifying God's holiness, dignifying man's moral being, defeating the devil, sin, and death, and introducing the way of grace with great honor to the justice and severity of God. Man confesses all his life long to the heinousness of sin; and all his life long executes the sentence of death upon himself. He is God's witness against himself; he is God's judge and avenger upon himself.

Day passes after day, year after year, and generation after generation, and man is found equally resentful against his own natural life, and crucifying himself for that one transgression, equally jealous of God's faithful word and holy anger against transgression. And thus man first of all fulfills God's image, and shows conformity to His mind, even when he himself is the sufferer, telling out the perpetuity of sin's dark spot, and of death's abiding sting.

If man had died instantly upon transgression, sin's everlasting guilt, death's everlasting pain, and God's everlasting willingness to continue both, would not have been shown forth in and by man; and so the first man would not have been His image as a free-will actor of the wrath, but only a monument of the wrath consummated, of God's purpose defeated and destroyed by the intervention of a third party, who is thereby proved to be at least equal if not superior to God.

All these Atheistic conclusions are prevented and the full adequacy of man to be God's image, and to do God's work, is gloriously declared, when by God's institution of sacrifice with blood, and our ready adoption of the same, we declared ourselves to be God's debtors for a life, in acknowledgment of which, we brought Him the life of one of our animals, assuring Him thereby that we accounted ourselves dead, and would prosecute with all our heart the mortification of our natural

dignity and glory, and be abased before Him unto the very estate of man morally dead, claiming nothing upon right, appropriating nothing as our own, but by free will surrendering up to God life and life's commodities, which He in His goodness had bestowed upon us, which we by our wickedness had forfeited for ever.

This is to me the sublimest thing in man's being, that he should be capable in the freedom of his will to manifest upon the earth all his life-long for a thousand generations the undying worm, and the unquenchable fires of the second death; sin's proper retribution and full penalty. This all of us since Adam have been set for to do, and by sacrifice, circumcision or baptism—which sacramental rites are in use over the whole world—have pledged ourselves to do.

Abraham, in the sacrifice of his son, was prepared to do this. God, in the sacrifice of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, showed us the example of doing it. Christ, taking our accursed mortal life, perfectly did it, putting it to death always and suffering it to stir never; actuating His members always by the life of the Holy Ghost, which He received in His generation—a spiritual life from God His Father, a natural life from Mary His mother,—the former, ever subverting and subduing the latter, keeping it in the stillness of death.

At length upon the cross He poured it forth never to be received again, an offering of a sweet-smelling savor to God's holiness, and rose in the power of that spiritual life which He received at His birth, discovered at His baptism, in virtue of which He is called the Son of God, and in the power of which He begets sons unto God from His Father's throne, and by the seven Spirits of God wields the scepter of the celestial and terrestrial worlds.

While man's willingness to sacrifice by blood, to circum-

cise, and to baptize, thus:

- seals the righteousness of God's word;
- confesses that death is the proper wages of our transgressions; and
- acknowledges that he is morally dead as a creature, and will present the work of self-sacrifice of daily dying, and ceasing from the life of nature;

God's acceptance of the sacrifice by fire from heaven, and His clothing of man with the skins thereof, signifies and seals unto him:

- a new life from above, together with
- a new covering or body for it, arising from the substance of that body which had been offered up.

His sending fire to consume the victim which we offer:

- expresses His satisfaction with the sinner's continual willingness to die, and
- promises a supply of heavenly power to enable him to die daily unto sin.

While the change from the fleshly to the aerial form which the members of the creature undergo, signifies:

- the present conversion of one member from the service of the natural life, to the service of the life which is spiritual from above, and
- their final transformation from the corruptible into the incorruptible, from the mortal into the immortal, by the resurrection of the dead, and the transfiguration of the living saints.

Finally, the sweet savor of the burning victim, which God is said to smell, and in complacency with which He forgives sin and makes covenants of mercy, signifies that He is well-

pleased and that it is acceptable in His sight. Every man who lives in the continual work of sacrificing the natural life, through the power of the baptism of fire, which he receives from the Lord in the heavens, may have this.

All these precious truths, or rather the one idea embracing the old and the new standing of man, are contained in the sacrifice, and more fully in circumcision, more fully still in baptism, and perfected in the resurrection. Man is still continued to be set for the same one end of glorifying God by exhibiting His perfect image, for which he is now in a fuller, if not in a better case, than before he transgressed. Then, he could only exhibit God's goodness, but now also His holiness in hating and punishing sin, His mercy, and grace, and love, in raising up the sinner.

GREATER POSSIBILITIES AFTER THE FALL

We are even in a better case for exhibiting His creating goodness also; which stands not so much in what is exhibited as done in the creation, as in the voidness, and wasteness, and nothingness, of the materials out of which so goodly a fabric was built up. Now a man living in a world of decay and death, of rebellion and alienation from God, a waste in such a natural chaos, has the very field for exhibiting that infinity of the eternal Word, goodness of the eternal Will, and creativity of the eternal Spirit, which built up and beautified creation.

And when man, setting himself down in the thorny wilderness, the den of wild beasts, the abode of serpents, and the haunts of savage men, does by his humanity and goodness, bring all under subjection and produce exuberant plenty and smiling beauty, how excellent an image is he of the creation's God!

Now rise higher, and look at this thing, not in the scattered parts but the revealed effects of man. When Christ the man-

redeemer of man, together with all before and behind Him, who compose His Church of self-sacrificers and live upon an anointed life, shall have, through all generations to all beholders:

- presented the moral image of God, in all their ways and works;
- put the sinful life of nature to death with their own hands;
- and by their patient suffering, testified to, and glorified God's hatred of sin;
- and by their acceptance and use of the Holy Ghost, triumphed over temptation and over death;
- and by the same Spirit spoiled the grave;
- and, being arrayed under their Head, have done battle against the powers of darkness, both spiritual and embodied;
- and in the power of the same new life have cast them forth from the world; and recovered it to be the seat of their lordship, wherein with Christ they sit and reign multiplied and increased;
- and presenting God's living image forever, and forever doing His work;

When all these shall have been accomplished, will anyone dare to say that God has altered His purpose, or man failed in his end, or that the first ground which God took up He has any way shifted at all? Will they not rather say:

“This is the most stupendous work of wisdom, the most amazing triumph of goodness, the most glorious destiny of a creature which has ever been devised. What storms it has braved! And behold it is all come gloriously out, without failing one jot or tittle of the original design.”

To be “God's image and likeness, and to have the domin-

ion,” continue to be the fiat and the end of man’s creation, are the calling of every man in this life, and the demand which shall be made upon him in the judgment. Nothing changed when flesh came to be under the law of sin and death, the soul under the dominion of the prince of darkness, and the world under the bondage of corruption. God says:

“In all that I had no hand, and with you who received a soul and a body fit for expressing My perfect image, and a world to keep and rule for Me, remains the trust and the responsibility of them. I have fixed a day when I will call you to account, and then you must show Me My own living image, My own subdued and well-governed world.”

THE LAMB SLAIN

Then it is that Christ, as man speaking and acting, as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, to take away our sin; that is, reduced from His infinite dimensions into the very condition of mortality to which man has by transgression reduced himself, takes upon Him our responsibility, making common cause with us, and enters upon that long series of gracious actings, which are to end in the deliverance of every soul that rests upon Him.

The Father’s grace desires to give His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and the Son is glad to undertake the work of standing in man’s perilous room, and acquitting Himself of the responsibility of presenting God’s perfect image, and fulfilling the part of God’s Sovereign Lord; and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, undertakes to carry the work into effect.

The very name “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” reveals that this not only existed as a purpose in the mind of God anterior to all creation, but that it had been carried into effect, in so far forth as the Second Person of the blessed Trinity had been by the Father’s will, His own dutiful-

ness, and the Spirit's harmonious operation, brought into the form or condition of the "Lamb slain,"—that is, of the self-denying and self-slaying One.

And if it be asked how He could at that early date, before the birth of time and the coming in of death, deny and slay His natural or inherent life, the answer is, by recollecting what His inherent or natural life is even the life of God, a co-eternal, co-essential subsistence in the Divine Essence. This He could in the exercise of His free will give up, continually suspending with all its infinite powers and faculties, and coming into the condition of receiving a bounded and limited life, an anointed life, at the pleasure of the Father, and from the gracious supply of the Holy Ghost.

Thus is He in very deed, the Christ, or the Anointed One, "the Lamb slain," and slain to the very intent that He might ever live again as the Christ, the prototype of the self-sacrificer, the beginning of that wonderful way of grace, through which God is accomplishing the manifestation of glory.

And that this truly was the form of His being, even as the Christ or the Anointed One, resigning self-power, and receiving it in the way of anointing, when He created all things as well as when He redeemed all things, is expressly declared in all the Scriptures, and especially in the first chapters of the Epistles to the *Colossians* and the *Hebrews*, as it is also in that word:

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

And in all those wondrous names scattered over the first three chapters of the *Apocalypse*: "the First and the Last," "the First-born of every creature," "the Beginning of the creation of God," &c.

Christ was subsisting, therefore, as the living sacrifice be-

fore the foundation of the world: and when He came forth to create, it was acted in that form of being; as the Christ, the Anointed Person—not as the self-existent Son of God, but as the Son of God suspending, and denying, and sacrificing His native way of self-existence, in order to receive the way of existence by the grace of the Father, through the supply of the Eternal Spirit.

And this He did, in order that from the very outset of His way and beginning of His work, He might manifest God in three persons, as well as in one substance, subsisting. The unity of the substance being seen in His ever coming into dependence upon the Father's will, in the Father's ever sustaining Him with all His power, and the Holy Ghost serving Him with all His materials of creation; while the diversity of the persons, as well as their subordinate and official functions, is seen in this mutual dependence.

And so that perfection of God-manifestation, which we have shown to stand in the method of self-sacrifice, is a truth originated where all ideas as well as powers of goodness dwelt in the Godhead itself, before creation, and before man, God's image, had a beginning.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

These may be accounted very vast, and therefore very uncertain thoughts: they are vast, but not uncertain. There is not one of the names of Christ which has a meaning without them, and the doctrine of the Trinity, without them, is an unfruitful dogma of the schools. The idea which I have expressed in this paragraph of Christ the self-sacrificer, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, is an idea which I received in answer to prayer, and for which I now render to the Lord devout thanksgiving; perceiving that it is the origin of all human holiness exhibited in the Fountain-head of being, which

is God.⁴

This act of the Godhead, that one of the persons should adopt the form of a self-sacrificer, and be fed and nourished into a new form of being through His indivisible oneness with the other two—this act of the Son of God becoming the Christ of God, anterior, and in order to God’s coming forth into outward action,—is the master and as it were the mother act of Godhead within itself, which all outward action does but manifest, and of which every creature in his place has a certain portion to represent and maintain. If so, we should see it embodied in the original constitution of man, as well as in his estate after sin had entered into the world. This it may be good to unfold a little.

Man was not left alone in the garden of Eden, but did company and commune with God his Creator, who brought to him the creatures to be named, and was wont to come and talk with him in the cool of the day. This being his Creator, was doubtless Christ, “by whom all things were created” (*Colossians* 1:16), who appeared not then in weeds of mortality, but as the “brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person” (*Hebrews* 1:3), in order that Adam might recognize in His person the image according to which he was created, and realize in his discourse the perfect conformity of his reason to the Logos, or Word of God.

His bringing in the creatures to be named by Adam, sealed Adam’s lordship over all; His requiring of him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sealed him accountable to God for his stewardship.

4 Editor’s note: Irving here refers to his understanding of the “mystery of God” as it is termed in the New Testament; that Christ took the nature and form of a creature before any of the rest of creation began. All things were then created by and through Christ, and so He is the great Original and Pattern for the created beings to follow, and by which they can understand God and enjoy fellowship and communion with Him.

But it was the creation of his wife that exhibited the great mystery of the Godhead, the type of that prototypal act of the Son becoming Christ, which is above creation, in God.

- The union of substance which Eve has to Adam, is the uniting of the substance of the Son with the Father.
- Adam's passing into a deep sleep while she is taken out of him and built into woman, signifies the Son of God becoming the Lamb slain, in order to receive the Christ-life, or the anointing with the Holy Ghost.
- Her formation out of his substance, but without any addition or diminution of the substance, is the exhibition of the separate standing into which the Son comes forth, out of the bosom of the Father, on becoming the Christ.
- Eve's moral and spiritual union to her husband still, standing in love and obedience, a union manifested in spite of father, mother, and country, and all things existent, expresses the indivisible union still subsisting between the Father and Christ, in spite of death and hell, and an opposing creation.
- Her continual looking to her husband for love and support of every kind, while she is as nothing before him, most submissively obedient, does signify Christ dependent entirely upon His Father's will, and yearning after His Father's love.
- The whole well-being and population of the world springing out of this relation of man and wife, testifies to the whole of creation, growing out of that one act of the Son's becoming the Christ, the object of all the Father's love, and the Father's glory, as "the woman is the glory of the man."

But there would be no end if I were to enter into this subject. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, to live as the Christ for ever, was an act of God in the view of cre-

ation, though not a part of the creation itself: it was the origin and type of man's being; the bulwark of man; God's glory in man secured; God's purpose already made good: wherefore it is called:

Ephesians 3

¹¹The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ.

It was the form of grace realized, but not to be manifested, until by sin, man had deserved to die, and became capable of a life out of death; of a life in Christ, an anointed life, through unction of the Holy Ghost. The transgression being consummated, the first man had as full privilege in that life as the last man will have.

The privilege was to find in the word of God's grace spoken in paradise, and set forth in the ordinance of sacrifice, not only forgiveness of the transgression, and redemption out of death, but everything necessary for life and godliness. In the enjoyment of these gifts, through faith in the word of God's grace, Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous," and Enoch "had this testimony that he pleased God," and Noah "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (*Hebrews* 11:4, 5, 7).

And so doubtless might every other man have, through faith, sealed his community with Him that was to come, and walked in righteousness with God, and waited to be perfected when the Second Adam should have wrought out a perfect righteousness for one and all, whereby they that believe shall be presented blameless in the sight of God, full of His beauty, and perfect in His image.

After Adam's transgression, mankind therefore continued to be answerable for the same image and likeness of God as before, for the same innocent and good inheritance of this earth, without sin in themselves, without sin in the earth, without death, without suffering. And God will never dwell

among us, until we be altogether in that condition in which He planted us: a chosen vine, and wholly a right seed.

And the Son of God has for this very purpose been manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil, sanctify and cleanse men for a dwelling-place of their God over the earth, to put down all rule and authority and power, and to present the kingdom wholly subdued to righteousness, into the hand of His Father. Therefore we are said to be renewed in righteousness...

Colossians 3

¹⁰ ...after the image of Him who created us.

The work of the Holy Ghost is to renew in the conscience the image of God, and to sacrifice the members of the natural man, as an offering to His offended holiness and justice, to make man a continual witness, that not the prince of darkness, but the Prince of Light is supreme; that there are not two sovereign rulers of the world, the one evil and the other good, but one only, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of Man Himself had no higher name than...

Colossians 1

¹⁵ ...the image of the invisible God...

Hebrews 1

³ ...the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person...

In one word, God cannot be defeated of His intention; and, if He work, it is only to make His purpose good. That purpose was declared to be, that in man He would create the image of Himself, and the lordship of his creatures, and in man He will and must have this image, or else He is not supreme, but hindered and effectually counteracted by some other behind the scenes.

Furthermore, the purpose of God to have in man an image

of Himself, and a lord of His creatures, who should express both His abhorrence of sin, and His love of holiness, in His destruction of the one in death, and His glorification of the other in life and blessedness, is to be ever seen, and ever present in all time upon the earth, which is given to the sons of men, and in whatever other part of creation may be put under man's administration.

For if man be God's witness of the hidden secrets, which are in Himself undiscovered and undiscoverable, then must man always yield this witness and testimony, otherwise God's end is frustrated, and evil prevails against Him.

The mystery of godliness is not God manifested in Jesus only, but:

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ God manifest in the flesh.

And that not in the age to come, but now in the present age; and then also and forever. The law of continuity must be preserved; there must never be a link lacking in the chain of holiness; the gates of hell must never prevail against the Church; there must be a succession of men from Adam downwards, who prevail over sin by holiness; who prevail over death by a life well-pleasing to God; who present an image of God; who practice goodness, and are the pillar and the ground of the truth.

And this must be done by man in the exercise of those powers, which were originally bestowed upon man for this end, and which were altogether adequate thereto; and by man accordingly it is done, by that Son of God who, in order to create, had, before creation, taken for Himself the form of that creature, whom He would create for His Father's desired abode.

He the Christ, set up before the ages as the Christ, and slain

as the Lamb before the foundation of the world, and as Wisdom possessed by God in the beginning of His way before His works of old, undertook to bring the holy will of God out of man; undertook to give unto that form of being in which God was well-pleased, as being Godhead's fullness, an outward existence in the form of creature as creation's Lord; and to this end He ever acts among us and upon us.

When man by his transgression had brought himself into a condition of sin and death, man must not be given up; he must not lose heart because the battle has gone against him at the first; but he must show forth new features of godliness, new resources of his wonderful being, by standing up against the evil, and putting it down by the valiancy of his right hand.

Man does this in the person of the Lamb slain, who is the Anointed man, who as Christ was before Abraham, "before Abraham was I am," He at once takes His stand in the breach, and proceeds to order His creatures according to His wisdom, so as to secure the great end and design which He had undertaken for, in the creation of man. And He succeeds in it if He prevail to preserve in man a triumph over sin, and a voluntary renunciation of all its allurements for the pleasure of being holy as God is holy.

Christ acts from the beginning as man; and all the glory of His action is the glory of manhood, is the proof that this form of creature is fit for its end, and equal to its undertaking.

If Christ were ever to bring Godhead's substance into His actings as the Christ, that instant Godhead would declare itself defeated in its great purpose: the creation of man. God is glorified in Himself; the end of creation is to manifest that glory in the creature man, and in the subordinate creation ordained to be in subjection to him.

Therefore whatever Christ does, man does. The Son of God first becomes man, in order to begin the doing of all His work:

for the word *Christ* means the Son of God living by the Spirit a human life. It is with man's innate created powers and faculties that he preserves the light of God and a life of holiness above the rolling wreck of a thousand generations.

Man and his lordship, the creation, were never without its Head the Christ of God; in whom, by whom, and for whom all things were created; though He was not manifested until the fullness of the times. The undertaking of the Son of God was not to make a creation which should manifest God without any help or upholding of the Head Christ; but to make a creation which should please God by being upheld in, and dependent upon, the Head Christ; to bring out into work that which God had seen in personal subsistence in the Christ constituted and realized as a form of being before the world was.

THE WAY OF SACRIFICE

Man was created in dependence upon the Person who visited him and communed with him in the garden of Eden. And when he had fallen into sin, this same Upholder, who in his innocent state had presented Himself in the radiance and purity of innocence, is now willing to lie beside him as a slaughtered sacrifice, as the dead Christ, as the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. And this He does to the end He may teach men, that now their calling and ministry before God, is to die daily unto the natural way of life; and out of that death to receive from Christ another way of life which shall please God.

Romans 12

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The sacrifice taught men that the way of pleasing God now was through a self-inflicted death upon all the natural glories of our life, and the receiving of a new life through faith upon that same Christ who had created and sustained us hitherto, and would strengthen us for this more arduous yet more excellent way of self-sacrifice.

As the sacrifice, Christ lay beside men from the day of the transgression until the morning of the resurrection, and in heaven still He wears the form of the Lamb slain, but being still strengthened with seven horns, which is the omnipotence of God, enlightened with seven eyes, which is the omniscience of God; and possessed with the seven Spirits, which is the whole spiritual fullness of God.

And in this very character, to which He has attained in the heavens, He was from the beginning, and thus also He was shown in the sacrifices after the manner explained above.

The meaning of the sacrifice was not merely natural death, but a moral or spiritual death; a continual doing unto death of the natural or carnal life, and a continual rising out thereof into the spiritual and heavenly life, ministered by Him who baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And the fire which descended upon the victim as it lay upon the altar was to the sacrificer the assurance that his sacrifice was accepted, and that he had with God a store of grace and strength, upon which he might draw for the supplying of all his wants, and be enabled perfectly to do His will, and to bring out the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.

The store of this supply was in Christ then as it is now: it was His agency then which produced the holiness as it is now; it was His Spirit which wrought faith in Abel, and in Enoch, and in Noah, and in us; that is, the Spirit of the Son of man, the Spirit of Him who is very man in the manner of His actings before the incarnation, as He is after it.

He is in truth going on with the work which He began in the creation of man, even the work of revealing God in that form of creature which He had assumed in the beginning, and is now, by various arrangements of His power and wisdom, bringing to perfection. He produces holiness, and goodness, and grace, and abhorrence of sin, and the other attributes of God in manhood,—that form of creature which for this end He constituted at the first.

Those who will have Christ's sacrifice to stand wholly in His death, do bring themselves into the bondage of a mere physical and numerical theology, and are prevented from finding their way to a moral and spiritual work of dying daily, and bearing about with them continually the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that His life may be made manifest in their mortal flesh.

The Spirit of Christ repudiates it in the Psalms and the Prophets, when He declares that the sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart (*Psalms* 51:17); thanksgivings and the paying of our vows to the Most High (*Psalms* 50:14); the doing of His will: which also the Apostle confirmed when, quoting *Psalms* 40, he says:

Hebrews 10

¹⁰ ...by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.

The death of Christ, and the voluntary death of Christ, the pouring out of His life unto death, the giving of His life for the sheep, is the consummation of the living sacrifice which He offered all his life long by presenting the members of His flesh as instruments of holiness unto righteousness. He denied the law of the flesh; never suffering the natural life, which is enmity to God to live, taking all His members from under this dominion, all His life-long inflicting a voluntary death upon that flesh which once in Adam had risen against God. At

length He offered upon the cross that life of nature which is symbolized in the blood, and so satisfied the demands of God's two words spoken to flesh: the first, "Be you my image,"—and the second, "Die."

He was God's image in flesh; He presented His body blameless upon the cross, and He made it to die. And this He did, not by mixing up Godhead with it; but through the eternal Spirit, through that life of the Spirit which was coeval with the life of the flesh in Him, and always prevailed over its life; so that He was ever well-pleasing unto God, being never in the flesh but in the Spirit.

Romans 8

⁸ So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

It is a mere matter of count and reckoning, unprofitable to holiness, to see the death of Christ other than the conclusion of a life of voluntary sacrifice and crucifixion of Himself, to all the natural life which He had in Him, in as full strength as it is in any other man, which He crucified entirely, as every other man is required to crucify it.

Christ in thus putting all power and liberty of sin, which was open to Him, down, altogether down, putting it out of all life by death, is the great example of God's holy hatred of sin, interminable war against it, and final prevailing over it forever. If Christ did not, in His own personal acting, make a continual sacrifice of the flesh of sin, and make it flesh of holiness, He gave no proof, as a person, of God's innate abhorrence of all sin, earnest contention against it, and final triumph over it.

In the days of His flesh, Christ shows what as a Creator He ever was, and what He would have all men to be: a sacrifice, of one form of being, in order to receive another form of be-

ing from God, and thus to show that God is the fountain-head and the supplier of all being.

Creation is but an act of God; existence is a continuance of that acting of God; and an intelligent creature is made on very purpose to discover by its own word and work, the principles upon which creation is continued into existence. This man does, when he continues by his own will to bring down his natural life, and to receive in the way of supply from God the supply of another and an eternal life. And so living, this being is capable of teaching to all creation the origin and the end of all creature-being.

Christ is to be the Head of creation, and we are to be the members of His royal priestly administration: He attains His fitness by becoming the Lamb slain, and living still; that is, by dying unto His primeval glory, by condescending out of Godhead into death; by ever doing this, and ever, for doing it, receiving from His Father the fullness of Godhead poured into, anointed over, His bodily form. In virtue of which continual anointing from above, He has and He wears the name of Christ.

Now this being the form of His subsistence before the foundation of the world, when He comes into flesh, it must be the manner of His subsistence there also: He must have a life unto which He can die continually, and dying continually receive continually from God the supply of another life, in the strength of which He lives continually the life of God, the word of God, the mind of God.

And this which He morally does, by an act of His will all His life long, He does at length historically and physically, by an act of the same will upon the cross. That Christ offered Himself on the cross by the eternal Spirit, of His own free will, is as true as that He offered Himself all His life long by the same Spirit. And by the same Spirit He had the beginning

of His life and power, as a sacrificer of Himself, and ever sacrificed Himself, speaking not His own word, doing not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

He Himself ever makes the avowal of another will which He might have done, of another word which He might have spoken, but which He continually suppressed and made void; by the power of the ever blessed and holy Spirit which He received from the Father in answer to His faith, as the Son of Man, upon His Father. This is perfectly to represent the image of God; and to this we are called, from Adam until the consummation of mankind.

Christ gave us the word of it first, and the sign of it in sacrifice, then He gave us the moral reality of it in His life and death, showing God hating sin, bringing holiness out of an unholy creature, triumphing over sin, and making it to cease its trouble forever in the second death. And to follow His footsteps herein, we are called, from the days of Adam till now; and there is no other way of pleasing God, but by this way of sacrificing the life of nature, and receiving the life of faith, which is right and well-pleasing in the sight of God.

Sacrifice, therefore, is a more ancient thing than the world, a more ancient thing than sin, and is first evinced in the Godhead itself, of one of whose persons the name is, "the Lamb slain" *Revelation* 13:8. And "the purpose and grace" (*2 Timothy* 1:9), and all the interest which we have therein is "before the world began" (*Titus* 1:2); and the life which comes to us thence, is of the same ancient date and high original:

Ephesians 1

⁴ According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Its true idea is not to be had from the introduction of sin, which is but an event in time, but from considerations proper

to God Himself; of which the first is, that He is in the essence of His being the Holy One, who cannot be controverted or contradicted, and has no indulgence of sin whatever, but is a consuming fire upon all the workers of iniquity.

This declaration of Himself is anterior, and with a view, to the creation of a creature with a will, who should have power to obey, or to transgress; and out of it came that word:

Genesis 2

¹⁷ In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die.

Man therefore sinned against a constitution of God, which had been already realized and declared in the Godhead, by the Son's taking to Himself the form of the Lamb slain. In taking this form, He testified that God would die, rather than indulge sin; and that if man sinned, he struck at the life of God, and would bring God to die.

Acts 20

²⁸ ...the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

Abhorrence of sin, and destruction to it by way of death, is an indefeasible constitution in the Godhead ratified and made sure before creation, in order to be creation's beacon against sin. Atonement for sin committed, is a secondary view of the matter, and defense against it is the primary.

Now this abhorrence of sin signified in the Godhead by the Son's becoming the Lamb slain, is not fixed in an act, but in an acting life; for from that act forward, and forever, the Son lives and has His being thus, and does His work of creation in no other character than as the Lamb slain, or the Christ; that is, the Anointed One, which has no other meaning than of one who receives His life by a continual pouring out of His own, and receiving of another life.

SLAYING THE NATURAL LIFE

Therefore, the second consideration, from which we acquire the rudimentary idea of sacrifice, is that of a continual mode of life, which has indeed its origin in the hatred and abhorrence of sin, and its continuance in a continual warfare against, and triumph over, the life of sin.

I do not say there was either sin, or sin conceived, or temptation to sin in the Godhead; but that this name, “Christ,” or “Lamb slain,” in the power of which, and for the demonstration of which, God created the worlds, does declare to us, that there is a life which comes out of death, in which the Son glorifies the Father in all His works; in which way therefore the Father is pleased to be glorified.

The transgression being come by one man’s one act, placed all men in the condition of gratifying God, as Christ gratifies Him, by uttering and doing everything out of the dust of the ground, into which they come by the continual free-will act of abhorring all iniquity. God would have mankind to look up to the one sin of mankind in the person of Adam, and to say:

“What a horrid thing it is! let me doom to death that life which committed it; let me die with Christ, and with Him live a life out of death proceeding by the power of the Son of God, who died and rose again.”

The proper measure of sin’s delinquency, as stated by God Himself, is death; as it is written:

Romans 6

²³ ...the wages of sin is death.

These words:

Genesis 2

¹⁷ ...in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,

...having been spoken to mankind summed up in their fa-

ther, to the creature man, as the law of his responsibility forever, whether in a single person existent, or in an innumerable seed, have and can have no limits of time, place, or person, but appertain to the one common substance of the creature man. And the commandment having been transgressed, brings death upon that form of being as its condition and law, so long and wheresoever it shall exist.

And if it had been executed upon Adam on the instant of the transgression, we should all have slept in death, and never seen the light. But if this had been, then one word of God would have frustrated another word of God. The other, and former word of God was:

Genesis 1

²⁶ Let us make man in our own image, and after our likeness; and let them have dominion.

But how would man, laid flat in the grave, and dissolved into corruption, have either embodied God's image, or held God's scepter? The word, "you shall surely die" (or, "dying you shall die") must consist with the word, "Be my image, and lord over all my handiworks."

And how are these words made to consist with one another? If one life is out, how comes another life in, without offense to God's truth and holiness? If men are morally dead, and by God's word interdicted from life, action, and enjoyment, how shall they live, act, or enjoy; and, still more, how shall they set forth in their life the very image and dignity of God?

The answer is, Because there is more manhood in existence than is seen in Adam: there is Another in the likeness of the sons of men, the Original of that likeness, who has before man was made, with man made common cause; in whom is life, and that life from the dead; the very sort of life which man

now stands in need of. He, the Lamb slain, the Christ, in virtue of His gracious act of condescending out of Godhead into death, has become the treasurer of a life out of death, which He may bestow and bequeath.

And, strange to tell, in virtue of that act before the world's foundation, we receive promises in Him, the promise of eternal life, as it is written by the Apostle Paul:

Titus 1

² In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.

This first-begotten Son of Man, this Christ, first Anointed with life out of death, this First-born of every creature, Beginning of the creation of God, comes in His grace to Adam, and all Adam's seed, to make known the life of the Lamb slain as their new life, in the strength of which they may still live out of death, and glorify God with an anointed or Christ life.

And in token that this new life proceeds from the Lamb slain, and not from creation, Adam is commanded to sacrifice lambs, and clothe himself with their skins; being no longer covered with creation's goodliness, but with redemption's fleece,—with a covering which is won from death, which the dead lamb yields from itself, to clothe the nakedness of him who caused it to be numbered with the dead. New life being thus obtained from the Lamb slain, what use are we to make of it, but that for which human life was given,—to set forth the image of God, and hold dominion over His creatures?

But now another creature, the devil, has entered into creation, and obtained the headship over its regions by the forfeiture of man. Over all natural life, its beauty and its strength, has he won the ascendancy. Man must overthrow Him also, and his forces of invisible spirits, and destroy all his works. For God will take no apology, having had no hand directly or indirectly in the transgression.

“I gave you a sinless soul, a deathless body, a free and happy world: where are they? give me an account of your stewardship. You have forfeited them, have you? Then dying you must die.”

If Christ, the Prototype and Surety of man, is to redeem us out of this very evil case, it must be by giving us such a life as will grow out of death, and destroy the works of the devil, and bring the whole creation up out of death, and present the soul godlike, the body deathless, and the creation free and spotless. Then God’s demands are satisfied, and all things proceed in harmony with His word, and to the honor of His unchangeable name.

The natural way of life, and the natural state of creation, is doomed because it once rose up against its Maker, and Christ who gives it a new life, gives it to honor, and not to dishonor the Creator, whose Word He is. Therefore that life, when received, will reveal itself in the putting to death of the natural way of life, and overcoming the course of the devil-possessed world.

The natural life it will hate, because it once rose against God; and for that transgression it will put it to death daily, and dying make it to die a continual death. Long-minded, it will preserve its deadly hatred of that life which once sinned against God, regard it as worthless, and persecute it for ever and ever. The course of the world it will deny, and contradict, and labor effectually to destroy.

It will be active to bring all things created into a state of death, to the glory of God’s holiness, that out of death to life it may arise again to the glory of the Lamb slain, from whom this new form of life issues forth. Every man possessed of the life of the Lamb slain, or, as the Scripture expresses it, written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, hates the natural life continued in us by the com-

munity of Adam's flesh with a perfect hatred, not so much for anything evil which it has done in itself, as for that it once arose, in rebellion against God.

The child who is this hour born and the same hour baptized, though it has not in its own person consciously realized the evilness of the natural life, is by its baptism sworn against it, to destroy and exterminate it forever. And wherefore? because in Adam it once sinned against God.

The Lord in whom the natural life never attained to the power of sinning, by reason of the perfection in Him of the spiritual life, yet bated the natural life with a perfect hatred, and did it ever unto death, nor would be satisfied until He had exhausted its life-fountain on the cross.

And so every man by him quickened, does not think of his own sin or of his generation's sin, but of the fountainhead of all sin, the transgression of Adam; and needing no other cause of hatred, as God needed no more, he abhors it and persecutes it forever.

This is the true idea of original sin: that man, like God, hates all natural life, and loves to make it die because it once, and but once, sinned against God. God sought no second instance, and man in God's image renewed seeks no second instance. Sympathizing with God, of one mind with God, he treats it as God's righteous word treated it, when He said:

Genesis 3

¹⁹ ...dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

In very truth, there ought never to have been a second offense, if men had rightly used the word and ordinance of sacrifice, for the communication of the new life of the Lamb slain. As a baptized man should never sin more, so mankind clothed with the skins of sacrifice should never have sinned more, but been God's righteous avenger of sin, and hated it

with a perfect hatred.

And if this had been the case, then behold what a spectacle the human race would have exhibited, the sublime spectacle of man extending the limbs of his own life upon a cross from the moment of his first transgression until now; the spiritual life, the life of Christ, visiting with a perpetuity of undying death, the natural life because it but once offended.

And thus should man have been God's witness of holiness, no less than of goodness and power, revealing and declaring the perpetual duration of sin's guilt, and exhibiting its desert of an unceasing death, yea and inflicting that death upon himself, upon his own life.

Who after this would have doubted of God's perpetual hatred of sin, and punishment of the sinner, however He loved him, when they saw God's image, man, inflicting through a thousand generations, death upon a thing so dear to him as his own life, because once upon a time that life did rise up against the law of its God?

Man had the gift to do this given to him after the transgression, and because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, he has it still; all men have it, and all men are accountable for it. To this end of slaying the natural life, it is, that they have a being continued at all.

God would have them to judge themselves, that they may not be judged. And if man had used this gift:

- he would have been raised higher by the Fall, out of his sin would have come his holiness, out of his fall his security;
- he would have been a more efficient witness of all God's being,
- he would have been the perfect revealer of the glories of the Lamb slain,

- he would have been upon the earth the shower forth of every person in the Godhead, God's holiness to hate and destroy sin; God's grace to save the sinner; God's power to regenerate out of death, the Spirit's power to sustain the dead in a continual life, to the glory of God.

God would have made man man's judge; by man He would have founded hell for devils, while man meanwhile escaped to inhabit heaven.

CHRIST, THE ONLY WAY

This, then, is the sum of the whole doctrine set forth in these Lectures under the seven titles of Christ. Because it seemed good...

Colossians 1

¹⁹ ...that in Christ Jesus all fullness should dwell,

...even the whole fullness of the Godhead in a body:

Colossians 2

⁹ For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Whatever had been revealed of God by the Prophets, or seen of Him in the things that are made or taught in the ordinances of the Law, or felt in the workings of the natural conscience, is gathered up from every quarter into the person of Christ, and there set forth in the most beautiful, harmonious, and complete image of the invisible God.

Colossians 1

¹⁵ Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Whoever in these days of His flesh had seen Christ, had seen the Father also:

John 14

⁹ ...he that has seen me has seen the Father.

And every one now who has Christ formed in him by the Spirit, has both the Father and the Son abiding in his mortal body, and is ever...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ ...filled with all the fullness of God.

This is what makes “God manifest in the flesh” to be the “great mystery of godliness”:

1 Timothy 3

¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Above all other subjects, yea and for all other subjects, to be studied with the utmost attention and delight; for...

John 17

¹ ...this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Matthew 11

²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

John 3

³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

All that the Father has are His; wherefore the Holy Ghost cannot reveal God to anyone but by revealing Christ. The only knowledge of the Lord our God is that which is learned from the perusal of Jesus Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” (*John 14:6*) and without whom no man can come to the Father, either to know Him or to be known of Him.

In Christ, God is knowable; out of Christ there is no God,

either known or knowable. The creation is but scattered leaves of this book, blown into confusion, dispersed about, and rendered almost illegible by Satan, and sin, and death. The written Word of God is but the description of His person. The persons and events that went before in Holy Scripture are but the types with which His name is spelled and His wonderful character deciphered. We all have received of His fullness, and are but His forerunners or true disciples.

Revelation 19

¹⁰ The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,
...who is...

Revelation 1

⁸ ...the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending...
¹¹ ...the First and the Last...

Revelation 1 [see also Revelation 1:8; 4:8]

⁴ ...which was, and is, and is to come...

Hebrews 13

⁸ ...the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In one word:

Colossians 2

⁹ ...the fullness of Godhead in a body.

All, therefore, which is called natural religion, so far as it is religion at all, is merely the discerning and using of those lights which glimmer everywhere throughout creation during this night of sin and death, for a prophecy of Him that was to come, a witness to Him after He is come, and a prophecy of Him coming again. And so far forth this is the true evidence of Christianity, which stands not in miracles or Church history merely, but in nature, in the visible creation, and, above all, in the constitution of the human soul, the laws and properties of reason.

That natural religion which pretends to declare something concerning God directly and immediately, without reference to Christ, in whom all things consist; and still more which pretends to derive conclusions from reason and nature adverse to the doctrine of the true God, embodied in and derived from Christ, whether by the Word or the Holy Ghost, is falsehood and a lie, is Antichrist and Atheism, is the contradiction of reason and the misinterpretation of the natural world; which being all made by Christ and upheld by Him, can testify of no God but that God whose fullness dwells in Christ from everlasting, and by incarnation was manifested in time.

Before it had been imaged and bodied forth in Adam, who for this highest end was created, but, forsaking his original goodness, fell away into his present confusion and intermixture of good and evil; it needed to be bodied forth again in another person: and that person is Christ, who, the instant He was born, was contemplated and celebrated by the heavenly host as God's glory in the highest regions of heaven; His peace upon the earth, His approbation or good-pleasure in men; that is the completeness of His glory, His grace, and His good-pleasure or seemliness.

The Babe of Bethlehem is God; all other creatures and persons are but semblances of God; the operation of *His* mind, the word of *His* mouth, the action of *His* body, are the completeness of the intelligible God. All other things and persons have but a consanguinity, conformity, and connection with this *His* creature-being, in whom they see their own head, and discover their own dignity and use.

The end of all knowledge, whether of man or of the visible world, is to discover Christ in all things. Mankind is but the womb of His conception, nature His cradle and His swaddling-band; and as the conceptive womb tells of the birth of the child, and all preparations are but the welcome of it into

the world, so human nature, and the created world, all prognosticated the Christ that was to come into the world, to be the world's Redeemer.

Such being the true doctrine concerning natural religion and natural knowledge, (for knowledge is but the handmaiden of religion, and if not ministering to her, is rebelling against God, and serving the devil,) how much more is it the true doctrine concerning revealed religion. Theology, or Divinity, has no other aim than to make known to the reason of man, the one living and true God; who is nowhere seen, but in the face of Jesus Christ.

If the word of God itself be only the Spirit taking of the fullness of Christ, and showing it in all possible forms and varieties to the mind and heart of man, what else ought the system of theology to be than an endeavor of the Church to give the same subject, the only subject, even Christ, such a form and representation as may be profitable to every day and generation of men.

If they pretend to teach anything besides Christ, they pretend to teach what is beside and beyond the comprehension of man: for in Christ all that can be comprehended of God is summed up.

If they think that anything is taught of God, without teaching Christ, or anything apprehended of God, otherwise than by apprehending it in Christ, they err grievously, subverting the foundation of truth, and building up a fabric of speculation which has no reality; of falsehood, which has no being.

For example, the words: *election, effectual calling, redemption, justification, sanctification, adoption, &c.* have no religious meaning, nor power of truth in them, till they are referred to Christ, and understood as revealing certain features of His character, certain parts of His fullness, which is the fullness and character of God. They are mere verbiage, idle, and un-

meaning words, worthless, and worse than worthless terms, until they have been expounded in the person of Christ, and seen alive in Him, and felt as revealing something of the living and true God. And they will profit no man's soul, in the way of morality and religion, until they have been so recollected into the person of Christ, and seen in living vital action in His glorious work.

Religion is the commerce and intercourse of an intelligent creature, with an intelligible God, of an accountable creature, with a holy, governing, and judging God; it is the transaction of a person with a person, not of a person with words, nor yet with things, but with God, who gives Himself forth in word first of all, that afterwards that word may become flesh, living flesh; so that in learning words we have learned nothing, unless we make them flesh, living flesh.

The Scripture is all alive with personality: systems of theology are altogether, or almost emptied of it. Let it not be so, O my tongue, O my pen, with anything which you utter or indite.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S CHARGES

HE WHO had taken to Himself so wondrous a name, wherein is concentrated the fullness both of the moral and the natural world, next proceeds to the work of counseling, rebuking, and exhorting His servant the angel of the Laodicean Church, with whose works He was altogether and thoroughly acquainted.

1. And first, He states in few words, the evil condition of him and his Church:

Revelation 3

¹⁵ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would that you were cold or hot.

2. Then He threatens the punishment proper to such an offense:

¹⁶ So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

3. Then He presents the cause of this miserable state of the Church:

¹⁷ You say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

4. Fourthly, the counsel:

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

5. Fifthly, the discipline:

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

6. And, lastly, the abiding of His love:

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

The merest glance at these, the six heads of this charge, will at once reveal, that the temptation of this bishop and his flock arose from worldliness; from “riches and the increase of goods.” Fullness of bread had fattened his heart.

- Like Jeshurun, he was waxed fat, and kicked against the Lord. *Deuteronomy* 32:15.
- Like the rich man in the parable, he had said to his soul, “Soul, take your ease.” *Luke* 12:19.

He looked round about him, upon his fullness, and said, “I have need of nothing.” His light was quenched, or all but quenched, by the damp and heavy atmosphere which exhaled from the earth. It shone very dim, and was near to be utterly extinguished.

This is a new temptation among the seven, and precisely that which the Church now underlies. It prevailed mostly in what is called the religious world; a name wonderfully descriptive of the truth, and includes all those who are called the orthodox Dissenters, together with as many of the established Churches as cleave to the Evangelical party.

It is the spirit gradually arising to the ascendant, gaining fast upon the Reformation principles, which are fast breaking down, and disappearing, and successfully opposed only by the despised few who, in all quarters of the Church, are standing for the name of Jesus, and living upon the hope of His appearing.

The two seeds of the Philadelphian and the Laodicean Church are, as it were, struggling together in Rebecca’s womb: the one is the child of promise, the other the child

born after the flesh; the one is looking for the inheritance to come, the other making the best of the inheritance which is present.

Seeing then, according to our scheme of succession, and looking also to appearances, this Laodicean charge has chiefly to do with that sin which most easily besets us in this day, in the arms of which, most part of the reputable pastors in this land are lying asleep, indulging themselves with the dreams of security and well-being, it is the more necessary that we be faithful and plain-spoken in opening this part of our subject.

We must be on our guard both from the temptation to extenuate, because it may hit our friends, and to set down aught in malice, with the view of hitting our enemies. And we are the more stirred up to be very simple and sincere, because we know how many of the people of God are drawn into the snare, and suffering great loss themselves from the atmosphere of worldliness and self-sufficiency wherein they dwell.

I pray you, O God, for whose glory I undertook this work, that you would enable me to be very clear-sighted and charitably minded in opening this last of the charges of our great and good Bishop. And now, taking up the whole subject, according to the order of the six heads laid down above, we have first to treat of...

THE GROUND OF COMPLAINT

Which is expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

¹⁵ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot.

¹⁶ So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

The exact force of this figurative mode of speech, is contained in the exhortation:

¹⁹ ...be zealous therefore, and repent.

The thing of which they are called to repent, is lack of zeal; for which I believe the words “lukewarm,” and “neither cold nor hot,” are equivalent expressions.

They are taken from a fact universally known, that meats or drinks in the middle state between hot and cold, are not palatable, and even in some cases nauseous. So that when physicians wish to increase nausea, and produce vomiting, they make use of lukewarm water. And no good housewife ever yet produced meat in this state of being neither cold nor hot, without apologizing to her guest, and giving some sufficient reason for such a trespass against the rules of hospitality.

This well-known fact, Christ takes advantage of, in order to represent a corresponding state in the moral world; the state of indifference to truth and falsehood, to God and mammon, to Christ and Belial. And He keeps up the figure by threatening to “spew them out of His mouth;” in which manner we are inclined to reject such ill-prepared meats. And as a man would naturally say over such victuals, He says over these lukewarm Laodiceans:

Revelation 3

¹⁵ ...I would you were cold or hot.

This is the origin of the figurative language, and now what is the religious state which He would express by it? This will be best discovered by explaining the two opposites, between which it lies as the point of indifference.

To Be Hot

To be hot, is “to be zealously affected” in the good cause of Christ, to receive Him with all our heart, to make our boast in Him, to take up arms for Him, and in His strength to overcome all the power of the enemy. This is what He so much commands and requires in the Gospel, in words like these:

Luke 9

⁶² No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

²³ If a man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Matthew 10

³⁷ He that loves Father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me.

These, and the kindred expressions of the Gospels, call for the surrender of the whole heart and soul and strength and mind to the service of the Lord; indicating, as I understand it, the state expressed in the text, by the word “hot.” It is not zealotry, which is expressly forbidden in these words:

1 Corinthians 13

⁵ Charity is not rash [Greek: *zeals not, or is no zealot*].

But to be “hot” means entire devotedness, warm love, steady attachment to Christ. It answers nearly to the state of mind recommended in these words:

Romans 12

¹¹ Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

And in these other words:

Ecclesiastes 9

¹⁰ Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.

As heat in the natural world is that influence through means of which all things grow, and increase, and bear fruit; in the absence of which the earth returns to its barrenness, and all nature is unclothed of its beauty; so in the spiritual world, it expresses that condition of the soul when it becomes prolific of generous thoughts, strong impulses, and noble undertakings for the glory of God and the good of man.

Therefore they speak of the fire of patriotism, fervid piety, warm devotion, and burning love; the heat of action, the

thoughts that melt, the words that burn. And yet this condition is as far removed from the fever of passion and zeal, as is the genial heat of summer and autumn to the scorching wind of the desert.

The body is not fit for any of its functions, save when it glows with natural warmth, and pours out a continual stream of heat; which departing, behold what paleness, what livid hues, what morbid symptoms, what inactivity, what torpor, what death comes over it.

And so it is with the soul, when it ceases to be kindled and lighted up with the holy flames of love, its beauty, its enjoyment, its utterance, its energy, and its action, all depart away. And not till it is fostered, and cherished, and warmed, by the love of God, does it begin to fulfill its proper function and office again.

Of the state signified by being hot I take the Ephesian Church, or the Church in the state of its first love, to be the example among the seven. And by being exemplified in it rather than any of the rest, I do perceive this great lesson to be taught, that it is the first estate of a converted soul; as it were the love and the longings with which Christ is conceived in us, the hope of glory.

And because that which is the first in time, becomes ever afterwards the fountain-head of action, and the nourishment of all succeeding graces, it is to be believed that love in the soul is the mother-affection of the Christian; love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ; love to all the creatures of God, and to all the members of Christ. When this love is present in the soul, there is great warmth of devotion, zeal of obedience, glowing of desire; such as are expressed in divers parts of the *Song of Songs which is Solomon's*:

Song of Solomon 1

⁷ Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where

you make your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of your companions?

It seems to me as if I were told by that Ephesian epistle standing at the head of all the seven, what is in these words so divinely expressed:

Song of Solomon 2

³ As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.

⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.

⁵ Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

⁶ His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me.

⁷ I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please.

And now when He is cast out of His own house, and suing and entreating to be readmitted again, He comes at length to the Laodiceans, and speaks to them on this wise:

Song of Solomon 5

² I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocks, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

And wherefore is it that this love declines in the heart of His well-beloved and betrothed spouse? Let the Lord Himself declare:

Matthew 24

¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

It is our iniquity, our departure from the ways of godliness which makes us to fall out with our dear and precious Hus-

band; whom thereafter we seek and cannot find; and, then, behold what sadness and desolation ensues:

Song of Solomon 5

⁶ I opened to my Beloved; but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spoke: I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.

And now we prove what it is to be a widow indeed, by meeting with a widow's painful trial:

⁷ The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

I seem to have the kindlings of God awakened within me towards the desolate Church. I see her desolation, I pity her forlornness. If she open not now to her Bridegroom knocking at the gate, what will become of her?

It pains and grieves me at the heart to think upon Christ at this moment, in His faithful members, crying aloud for love, put forth from His own house, and knocking for readmission. Everywhere the faithful are separated, and put out from the pale even of nature, not to speak of the Church. Let them, like Christ, stand at the door and knock.

It is our calling, our high calling, to suffer patiently: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. *1 Peter 2:21.*

To Be Cold

With respect to the estate of coldness, it is the opposite of the former, and appears, as I take it, in the angel of the Church of Sardis, of whom it is said that he was dead:

Revelation 3

¹ ...you have a name that you live, and are dead.

This is exemplified in the condition in which the Church lay till the founders of the religious world arose; and in which those shall remain who have kept aloof from the religious world; namely, the High Church with its prelates in England, the Moderate party with their ecclesiastical courts in Scotland, and the Dissenters with their cold and dry orthodoxy, ever verging towards Socinianism; until, I say, this new spirit of Laodiceanism breathed, and the religious world arose.

To know what coldness means I need only refer to the state of the orthodox preachers and their flocks in England, of the Moderate party in Scotland. What coldness, pure formality, rigid order, heartless service, lifeless obedience. Oh but it is dull work, and the clergy retire from it with such zest to their snug fire-sides, and comfortable dinners, when the weary work is done.

The prayers are, to the letter and word of a form; the sermon written out and spelled, with every jot and tittle in its proper place; and every office of baptism, of marriage, and the supper of the Lord, the old tale oft told again. What a dead letter it is all! The heart is so glad when it is all over.

Such joyful salutations as the Church dismisses; such extra comforts of the Sunday meal, to make up for that self-denying ordinance of public worship. What a bondage, to be sure, that high-churchmanship and religious formality is! Surely there is no more taste in it than that in the white of an egg.

This is not the state of the Laodiceans, but of the Sardians; being that which the Lord would rather have had the Laodiceans to be in, bad as it was, than in that state of lukewarmness in which they rested, neither cold nor hot:

Revelation 3

¹⁵ I would that you were either cold or hot.

And is it possible that anything can be worse than the state

of coldness just described, as existing in the bulk and body of the Church, the mass of the population of England and of Scotland? I answer, yes. And what is that? The Laodicean state of the religious world.

This will require some exposition at large; and, after all the exposition, will be hard to believe. But mine is to tread out the corn, eat it who may: and to labor in hope, that I also may be partaker of the fruits of the harvest.

The state of coldness is brought about by the power of the flesh, and is indeed the manifestation of the flesh in religious matters. Now the carnal mind, though it be enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, is yet not devoid of honorable and noble qualities, which it retains from its creation; particularly the conscience of good, which it has no less than the consciousness of evil. For the true definition of a fallen man is this:

Genesis 3

²² The Lord God said, The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.

The natural man, cold though he be, and incapable of pleasing God, has in him the sense of truth, and honor, and virtue, and benevolence, and self-denial, together with all other forms of the Divine mind, in whose image he was created. Whereby it comes to pass that God is able to express Himself in terms of natural speech, and needs no artificial terms, such as the theologians have coined, to express Himself.

They have coined their language to meet and gainsay the perverseness and ingenuity of error; and being so used, it is used well. But when any ambassador from God would use it for telling out his message to God's creatures, he betrays his faithfulness to the word of God, who needs no assessors of the schools to help him out, but has chosen a language intelligible to every true heart, when it beats in tune with nature,

and has not been practiced in the deceptions of the world, and of the schools.

Jesus looked upon the young rich man and loved him, though he shrunk from following Him into the kingdom; and I think there is one of the Apostles who speaks of loving a certain one both in the flesh and in the spirit. And Paul earnestly exhorts the Philippians to practice those things which were well reported, and reported of in the world:

Philippians 4

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Now it often, yea, and most generally happens, that the cold and formal religion which I have stated above as still lingering in parts of this land where the religious world has not reached, co-exists with all the natural principles of honesty and charity, and chastity and kindness; and is indeed nothing else than the bringing of them under the restraint of the law of God, so far as the natural will can go.

It is in truth an earnest, and commonly well-meant, endeavor to do our utmost to please God, and serve Him; and though it belong not to the kingdom of heaven, is clearly the best thing upon the earth. What it lacks is the life of God, the information of the mind of Christ, to make it into Christianity; which does not make a new system of the creation, but informs the old system of creation with the life of God by the Holy Ghost.

For as it is the same body which shall arise in the resurrection, with the same, and the same number of members, so it is the same soul which exists after regeneration, with the same and the same number of affections and faculties. It is God's

creature informed with God's life, after it has made shipwreck of its own. The organ is not added to in any of its pipes or stops; but the breath of heaven comes over it, and the harmony is all of love.

Those who are following nature, are not following God, it is most true; neither are they following the devil, but have the law written on their hearts, and are not without a witness of God. It was because the heathen did not choose to retain God in their remembrance, that God gave them up to their wicked courses. No man wants a witness of God in his heart; nor yet in the providence of his outward life.

And from this it comes to pass, that the religion of natural conscience, though cold, is not without a certain truth and loveliness, honesty, and honor about it, which are not so displeasing unto God, as that other state of the Laodiceans, which is neither natural nor supernatural, neither of the conscience nor of Christ, but half-way between the two, and an attempt to mingle them both. The Pharisees were much worse than the Publicans and the Harlots, not to speak of the good Samaritan.

And if we look at this thing a little more nearly, and attempt, like a minister of truth, to do even-handed justice among men, we will find that this Sardian state of coldness, into which the Reformed Churches had fallen, when what is called the Evangelical style of it arose, was the dying out of an excellent and comparatively complete state both of doctrine and practice.

Take, for example, the *Prayer-book* for devotion, the *Homilies* for doctrine, and the *Whole Duty of Man* for the details of life (I speak not here of its Arminian spirit); and you have an exemplification of that form of doctrine and discipline which belonged to the Reformed Church.

And look now upon the respectable religious people of the

old school, in both lands, and you have the cold outline, and, as it were, the lifeless skeleton of that noble form of life; which is more acceptable in its old age unto God, than this Laodicean state is in its prime. Because, with all its coldness, it is the form of a temple stately and beautiful, unto which kings and queens, and martyrs, and saints of God, once revered.

For my own part, I feel nowise offended in the midst of that magnificent form of religion, whereby everything, and every person, had his proper place and office appointed of God under the Lord Jesus Christ. All that I have to do is, to seek the Spirit of God to incline my heart to fulfill all their holy appointments. It is in the state of coldness, but still it contains a picture, a statuary representation of the true thing. It is still-life; but still though it be, it is the true and faithful representation of the very life.

And better have this than a false representation, better have this than a base substitute for religion. How long this may live, and what service it may do the world, let the Church of England testify by her excellent ordinances, and the Church of Scotland by her excellent persons; the one filling the world with her works of beneficence, the other, with her men of perseverance and understanding.

Therefore God can see, in this state of coldness, something on account of which to recommend it to these Laodiceans, rather than that which they were in:

Revelation 3

¹⁵ I would that you were either cold or hot.

The Laodicean State

And now, to come to particulars, let us a little explain this Laodicean state, continually halting between two: hypocritical, and not following the light; not zealous for God, nor yet zealous for nature; neither in the condition of hotness nor of coldness.

The root of it is false doctrine concerning the flesh and the Spirit; as if they both lived, and might and ought both to live in the saints, and keep fighting against one another to the end. Whereas the true doctrine is, that he who is born of the Spirit does not sin, neither can sin; and that his flesh is buried with Christ, his old man crucified in Christ's crucifixion, and the body of the sin of the flesh laid in Christ's tomb, thence never to arise again.

Yet it is most true, that a certain Manichean notion has ever lived in the Church, and now lives in its strength, as if the flesh of the regeneration were not to be utterly impotent, but only to be opposed by the faith and hope of the Spirit within him. How many there be, who think they are in a good way, when they are in a state of warfare between flesh and Spirit. Whereas the truth is, they are in a very bad way, which if they will not know and repent of, they must speedily perish.

It is not true that religion consists in having the faith and hope of holiness after the resurrection in the world to come, but in having it now, in being now delivered from the law of sin and death, in being now made free from sin, and fulfilling the righteousness of the law; by walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And yet it is a thing of verity, that among the heads of the religious world, the state of doubt in the conscience, and of conflict in the members, is upheld as the most common experience of the child of God; and that though holiness be a thing to set before him, it is a thing to be believed as unattainable.

And to save all comes in their panacea of atonement, which they present as the evidence that God never expected anything like perfect holiness in His people:

“Therefore be of good courage, go on as you are going, sigh and lament over your sins, and confess them, and be ever comforted in the atonement.”

How many souls through eternity will have to damn this system of sin-indulgences! Oh! for some Luther to expose those modern vendors of indulgences.

Now the truth of atonement is, that thereby we have liberty of access into God’s presence at all times (*Ephesians* 2:18), through the blood of Christ (*Colossians* 1:20), and boldness at His throne (*Hebrews* 4:16), and faith to ask what we please, and it shall be done unto us (*John* 15:7).

- And shall we not ask for grace to help us (*Hebrews* 4:16), and for strength to be perfected in our weakness? *2 Corinthians* 12:9.
- And asking through the merits of Christ, shall we not receive? *John* 16:24.
- And receiving, shall we not use the Holy Ghost, which every one that asks receives? *Romans* 5:5.
- And Him receiving, shall we not be able to conquer the flesh and be righteous, even as Christ is righteous? *Romans* 8:37; *1 John* 3:7.

The atonement opens the door, and keeps open the door into the chamber of Omnipotency; the atonement is the floor upon which the petitioner stands, and does the work of the

temple of God; which is holiness, and not a mixture of the holy and the unholy. But behold how otherwise it is used as the encouragement of indolence, the pillow of contentment, the maker-up of deficiencies, the general indulgence, into which all who will cleave unto the Laodiceans have ready admission.

And what is the consequence, but universal confession of sins, and universal abiding in them; words for works, penances for performances. But the conscience of man is not so pliable as his social principle. The spirit of the religious world soon teaches him to prate as they do, and to speak as they do; but the conscience will not acquit him, and he has no assurance, and will hear of none. He will not take to himself the guilt of believing that he has done a good work, or can do one, but will plentifully expatiate over his evil deeds and shortcomings, and contentedly continue in them; because of what other use is the doctrine of atonement, but to make all scores clean, and all obligations straight?

I know what horror these words will awaken. Oh! that I could make them tenfold stronger, in order to reach this root of all bitterness in the religious world: their false views of atonement supporting and supported by their false views of the flesh and of the Spirit—in which indulging, through the natural desires of the flesh and of the mind, behold what a confusion of truth and falsehood, of holiness and unholiness, they have produced by it.

I am advocating the doctrine, that the Holy Ghost, in the soul of a regenerate man, can and ever ought to:

- overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil combined against him;
- take the members of our being out of their hands, and make them to serve God;
- love with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and

mind, and serve with all the members the living and true God.

This is a life of godliness, is the life of God in us, is holy and acceptable to God, is our reasonable service, is the proving of the good, and the perfect will of God. *Romans* 12:2. No sin, original or actual, defiles such a work as that it should need atonement; though such a work will never be done otherwise than in the faith of Christ, as our atonement both for original and actual sin.

And I further declare that until the soul wills and truly believes, until the Holy Ghost works such good, holy, and acceptable works in us, and makes us to bear such fruits as glorify the Father, that soul will be full of vileness and doubtfulness, and wickedness, cram it with evangelical doctrines as you may.

Yet, true it is, and of verity, as every honest man, who is conversant with this subject, will bear me witness, that in the religious world, it is the daily doctrine that no good works can we do by any power of Christ; and that original and actual sin cleaves to the best of them, and makes them to be exceeding vile. It is not true, it is a lie.

1 John 3

⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

Now, this state of uncertainty, of ungodliness, of error; this mixed state between the words of holiness and the works of holiness; this feeling of a demand for what it is impossible to perform, has brought the Church into the Laodicean state in which they are, out of which there is but one way of bringing them: which is to show them that holiness is really attainable in flesh, and ought never to be absent from the flesh of the regenerate man, and is the very condition of his being.

And this cannot be taught from any other instance but that of Christ Jesus, who alone did holiness in flesh; and who has received power over all flesh to do the same in every one whom the Father bestows upon him; who has set us an example that we should follow His steps.

When the enemy is pressed with the instance of Christ as the proof positive, that righteousness can be brought out of our flesh, his schismatical spirit immediately divides his manhood from us, saying:

“But His flesh was not such as ours in its properties and propensities; otherwise He were a sinner, both original and actual, as we are.”

By this declaration:

- the glory of God in bringing His will out of His creation, the glory of Christ in becoming our brother, to do this, and the glory of the Holy Ghost to serve him in the doing of it, are all subverted;
- pure Manicheism is introduced, the doctrine of a good and an evil principle flowing side by side in the Church—the one incapable of putting the other down, and therefore both having equal origin and authority;
- holiness in our flesh is declared to be impossible, because Christ’s flesh had to be changed in order to work it; and unholiness is sanctified;
- to overcome the flesh is declared to be impracticable;
- God is dethroned, and Christ is unmanned, and the Holy Ghost is set at nought;
- the devil is enthroned, and sin has an omnipotency, and poor mortals must sin on to the end.

Such are the principles that produce the Laodiceanism, and keep it up. The Lord is striking a blow at the root of it, by maintaining the true flesh of Christ: whether the Church will

give heed to him, or to the fables of the doctors, God only knows.

This state of indecision and intermixture between the flesh and the spirit, arising out of the Manichean doctrine, that the Spirit of Christ is able only to make a debate with but not to suppress the flesh, produces a shortcoming in every article of faith, and in every act of religion; and makes men to be neither natural nor spiritual, but a strange compound of both.

They know enough to believe that without Divine help they can do nothing; but they are doubtful whether there be help for them in God; and so with their mouth they speak one thing, and with their life they speak another.

They pray for recovery in sickness: if it be granted them in answer to their prayers, they give not glory unto God, but unto the means which have been effectual; and if it have been effected without means, they ascribe it to the influence of nervous sensibility, and think it a very daring thing to ascribe it unto God.

They pray for faith in the word of the Gospel, which says:

Acts 16

³¹ Believe...and you shall be saved.

And if God grant to any poor sinner faith therein, and he rejoices for the consolation, behold they are offended that he should be so ready to rejoice, or that he should rejoice at all till he have received evidences in himself upon which to rest his faith.

They send out missionaries to preach to the heathen; and they pray that God would guide them on their way; but if they presume to follow the guidance of God in anything, without submitting it to a company of men residing here at home, they are blamed and turned out of the service.

They profess to believe in the ordinances and sacraments of the Church: but if a minister speak to them in Christ's name and authority, they are offended; or if they be addressed as the saints and holy ones, the redeemed and regenerate of the Lord, they are sore offended.

They profess to believe in a Trinity; but if the offices of the Divine Persons, and the Unity of the Substance be set forth, they loathe it as mysterious and unprofitable speculation, yea daring intrusion into things above and beyond the knowledge of man.

The same of:

- the Incarnation, and the two natures of our blessed Lord;
- the work of the Holy Ghost in His human nature; of the nature of His holiness in the flesh, as the form and manner and source of our holiness;
- His work in the Spirit to endow the members of His body with supernatural powers in earnest of their inheritance; and
- His coming in judgment, and the establishment of His kingdom.

These, and all the other doctrines of our faith, if they be entreated with any largeness, or exhibited with any distinctness, or insisted upon as necessary to salvation, do beget such offense and vexation in the hearts of men as make it really a very great undertaking to open them, and a very great temptation to have them in the state of dry and unmeaning names.

This lukewarmness to the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, arises from the heed which is given to the expedient and the sensible. Common sense and usefulness have supplanted the teaching of the Spirit, and the glorifying of God.

“He goes too far; he mystifies the truth; he is not simple;

there is no making out his meaning.”

These, and such other expressions betray in the Church, the strong resolution, not to understand more than what is necessary, for the world’s daily transactions.

I wonder really if they can lay their hand upon their heart, and say we understand the Gospel of John, or the Epistles of Paul, or any other part of Scripture which has to do with God, and with Christ, and with the principles of the faith. And if they say, we do not: I would ask again:

“How can you think your condition a good and a safe one? Did God set all this forth in order that it might be unknown, or remain unknown? And is it more seemly in the sight of God that you should labor to enter into the truth, or labor to keep it from you?”

If you think there can be progress in sanctification, without progress in the knowledge of the truth, you utterly deceive yourselves, and contradict the method of the Lord, which is thus expressed:

John 17

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth: Your word is truth.

Such was the evil condition of the Laodicean Church, and such is the evil condition in which I believe that part of the Protestant Church, called Evangelical, is now found; not cold, not hot, but lukewarm; a confusion between faith and sight, an intermixture of duty with expediency, a submitting of God’s word to the tribunal of man’s judgment,—in one word, an accommodation of eternal truth to present advantage.

In spiritual things, it is exactly what in natural things brought about the destruction of the nations of Canaan, after Sodom had been given for an example; and what is remarkable, it is judged in the very same language. After enumerating the mixture and confusion which they had wrought, and

exhorting the Israelites to beware of the like, it is added:

Leviticus 18

²⁸ That the land spew you not out also, when you defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.

So in the case of the Laodicean, or last state of the Church, towards which I think we are now verging, it is as threatened by the good Shepherd:

Revelation 3

¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

This brings us to the consideration of the second part of the charge, which is:

THE PUNISHMENT PROPER TO THE OFFENSE

I can look upon this threatening as signifying nothing less than utter rejection, even as we find Laodicea at this time subsisting in a state of wretchedness, far from God and any earthly consolation, ever vexed with earthquakes, in the midst of barrenness and misery; in somewhat such a state as the region of Sodom is described to be.

It is very remarkable how, both in the Epistles of Peter and Jude, where the character of the Christian apostasy is described, as it was then showing itself, and should be exhibited to full view before the coming of the Lord, both these inspired Apostles do refer to the sin of Sodom, and of the angels which kept not their first estate, as the counterpart and warning of the sin and judgment which should be consummated in the Church:

2 Peter 2

⁴ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth

person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

⁶ And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Jude

⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Of this I have been led to think a good deal at various times and, if I err not, God has given me to understand the matter.

If, as was thought both by certain of the Jewish and Christian fathers, and as I feel disposed to think, the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men, which produced the Deluge, really consisted in an act of seduction by the angels of the daughters of men: for which purpose they left their proper habitation, and came down to the earth, and tempted woman through the flesh with angelic beauty, as heretofore Satan had tempted woman through the desire of divinity; then am I able to understand how it should be the exact counterpart of apostasy in the Christian Church.

For we who are baptized into Christ do thereupon become the sons of God, being regenerate of the Holy Ghost, which is the inward grace, whereof the washing with water is the outward sign. Thenceforth we are called with the high calling of Christ, risen with Him, seated in His dignity, and honored with His name.

We are not carnal but spiritual; not of this world, but chosen out of this world, to be the heirs and inhabitants of the world to come. There is as wide a difference between us and

the children of the world as between incorruption and corruption, between life and death, between heaven and hell.

1 John 3

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God...

For us therefore to return unto the flesh which we buried with Christ in baptism, and to the world which we then renounced as a sinful doomed thing, and to the devil against whom we undertook as the enemy of God and man, for us to despise this the hope of Christ's calling, these the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and to return again to the enjoyments of the flesh and of the world, is truly to realize and exemplify the thing which is written aforetime for our leaving of the sons of God intermarrying with the daughters of men.

It is to leave the spiritual and celestial estate of holiness and glory whereto we have attained, and to sink back into the fearful pit and the miry clay, from which we have been taken. It is only to be likened to the most disgusting of all things in the bestial world, as says Peter:

2 Peter 2

²² It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is returned to his own vomit again; and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

The same confusion of things which God has separated, brought Sodom to its end, and the nations of Canaan.

The Christian Church He has separated, from this world lying in wickedness, by uniting it to the risen body of Christ, and baptizing it into the hope of the eternal kingdom; choosing us in Christ as a substantial part of him from the beginning of the world, and preparing for us a kingdom, and constituting us His kings and priests, and heirs.

All which boundless grace setting at naught, and with-

standing the Holy Spirit, we sink and degrade ourselves into that world which is separated unto hell, and prefer unto the fellowship of God and Christ, the fellowship of those men, for whom is reserved the fire of hell prepared for the devil and his angels.

And therefore it is that these two instances:

- the sin of the angels, bringing on the destruction of the heavens and the earth, which then were, by water;
- the sin of Sodom, bringing in its destruction by fire,

are presented as the two types of the sin of the Christian apostasy, bringing on the judgment of the world at the coming of the Lord.

And as the land is said to have spewed out the nations of Canaan, Christ threatens here to spew the Laodicean Church out of His mouth. While the deliverance of Noah by the ark, and of Sodom by the visit of the angel of judgment, are represented as the assurance to Christ's faithful spouse, that He will deliver her, in that fearful day of the fiery judgment of the heavens and the earth which now are.

The evil case of the Laodicean Church stands in the attempt, to bring the Church and the world into alliance with one another. When God shall have sufficiently striven against this profane and monstrous union, He will doubtless reject the Church with horrible loathing, and return to it no more forever.

It proceeds from losing sight of the true doctrine of the Church, her separateness unto Christ by election of God, for the end of being His witness to the world, and saving as many as will believe on Him whom He has sent.

The true idea and doctrine of the Church is lost, and a system of society-ship is instituted in its stead, which, giving heed to no ordinance, not even that of prayer, and to no disci-

pline save that of subscribing so much, or so much more, is, under the pretense of well-doing, breaking down all bounds and limits, and introducing every evil under the disguise of good.

This is the reason why the doctrine of election is no longer brooked, and the doctrine of union unto Christ, and of the assurance of the Holy Ghost, of the Church, and the sacraments of the Church, and everything else which has in it the principle of distinctness and separation from the world.

And, in room of this, the true spiritual circumcision and separateness from the world, there has been introduced an outward and formal one, which is defined by abstinence from this and that fashionable amusement, from this and that worldly indulgence, whereby a schism is effected in the world, instead of a separateness of the Church.

The world is separated into two divisions, a religious and an irreligious world, but both alike the world. The one being the Pharisaical, the other the sensual form of the natural man; of which the former is supposed to be the Church, and so named; and the end is, that there is no Church visible at all.

According as this transition from the cold state of high churchmanship to the lukewarm state of the religious world, is effected, the true saints of God will become more and more visible, by the persecutions and sufferings which they will be called upon to endure. They will stand at the door of their mother's house and knock; but there will be no one to open and let them in.

I perceive that this state of things is fast realizing, is in spirit indeed now realizing, and laboring to exhibit itself in action. I do not think that any power on earth can resist the combined forces which are crushing the Church into this worldly form. But I believe that the doctrines which are now preaching in all quarters, will separate a holy people for a wit-

ness, and for a sacrifice, until the Lord come and fulfill His threatening of casting into the lake of fire, the beast and the false prophet.

And I perceive by the way in which things are now working, it is to be, not a reformation of the Church, but a separation from the Church, which God is effecting. For, from all quarters, I hear of little companies who upon being awakened, meet together for prayer and communion, and are immediately separated from the fellowship and even from the society of the brethren; spoken against, openly reviled, and in all ways contemned.

It is of no consequence how much service they may have done for the Church, or for the societies. They are, without remorse, set aside and treated as the off-scourings of the earth, as the blasphemers of God, and of His Christ, and of His Church.

This is not the way in which the Reformation proceeded; but it is the way in which the Church was drawn out from Jewry and from Paganism, before the destruction of those systems by the Lord.

When I speak of separation from the world, as the true condition of the Church, I do not mean the spirit of schism; but the very contrary of it, the Spirit of love. The world is lying in the evil one, who is a murderer and a liar. It is in a state of infinite schism, from which it cannot be delivered by any means but destruction. Persons may be drawn out of it through the Spirit of love, which can alone dissolve the uncharitableness of the natural man, and those who by the Spirit of love are drawn out, do necessarily unite and form one body, of whose perfectness the bond is love.

But as love is necessarily not divisive but unitive, the Church stands with open arms to receive every one, who by the same Spirit is moved to forsake the world's divisive cour-

ses. And so it is the hatefulness which the world has to love, that prevents the whole world from being included in the Church.

But when it arrives, that the Church itself becomes divisive in its spirit, as the Protestant Churches are all become, each looking upon another as a rival, it is then necessary to destroy them utterly. And this is done by the Spirit of love, making for itself a home in certain hearts who know the truth, against whose sweet concord and inoffensive ways, the ecclesiastical body arming, do declare themselves thereby to be of those who are doomed to hell fire, because they would not favor and entertain the little ones of Christ.

I do believe, therefore, that Christ's threatening to spew these Laodiceans out of His mouth, is the same judgment with the casting of the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire. Christ will have no more dealings with the Church. He loathes it and rejects it, and returns not to it anymore. To the earth He returns, but not to her. She sinks out of sight, like a millstone cast into the sea.

I consider the spewing out of His mouth to be equivalent with the casting out, and the casting into outer darkness, so often spoken of in the Gospels. It is different from all the other threatenings; it is the consummation of the evil.

I have oft put the question to myself:

“And can you really believe such things of the Protestant Churches, consociated into the religious world, which every one admires so much, and hails as the world's regeneration?”

It is very difficult to believe, but I can and do believe it. And I partly perceive its operation, as I have explained above. It is not for nothing that the Lord has placed me upon this pinnacle of observation, where for these eight years I have stood observing the face of the Church. I have had opportunities of

being fully convinced that the spirit of the religious world is the same as the spirit of radicalism, infidelity, and liberalism: is the same as the Neological spirit which first appeared in Germany, the birth-place of the Reformation.

There it attacked the creed, because the Germans are a very thoughtful people, and their polemical spirit expresses itself in forms of thought. Here it attacks the establishment and organization of the Church, because we are a judicious and active people, who express one spirit in institutions; also a benevolent people, who like to be promoting things useful and advantageous to man.

But it is the same visitation of God upon the cold Sardinian Church of the Reformation, which has begotten the various Neological schools of Germany, and religious societies of England. They are both of the nature of consumptions and judgments; the one directed against a systematic theology, which had hidden the truth of the Gospel; the other against a well-organized Church, which had ceased to be the teacher and the mother of the people.

The religious world is the antagonist of the Church, as the radical politicians are of the state, and both are of the nature of judgments upon them for their iniquity. The Presbyteries of Scotland, and the Bishops of England, are fast hastening to send in their adherence unto the religious world.

The Sardinian remnant, and the Laodicean populace are combining, and they will speedily work with one accord against the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth. If the gifts of the Spirit be now restored to the faithful, it will drive the cold and the lukewarm into the fury and fever of passion and persecution. Even now time moves too slowly for the speed of their wrath, and good ancient forms are too reluctant. Like the whirlwind pent up, it will burst forth with the more awful violence when the time comes; and then it

will be seen whether I be a fool, or God has given me wisdom to discern the sign of the times.

If these things be true, and the state of the Church, even of the most reputable part of it, is so desperate and near unto judgment, it is high time that we should betake ourselves to point out what is the clear and manifest cause of the disease, and what is the safe and certain remedy.

These follow in succession, delivered by Him who loves His Church, and gave Himself a ransom for her, who is the chief Physician, and possesses the balm that is in Gilead, and has borne our sins and carried our diseases. To him therefore presenting the cause and remedy of our estate, let us give the more earnest heed.

THE CAUSE OF THE EVIL

The cause of the evil condition of the Laodicean Church is expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

This full and fine delineation of the soul embedded in the world, and satisfied with itself, does at the same time reveal the cause, that resting in half measures of truth, and desire of making contraries meet, to which the angel of this Church, and with him, his people, were addicted:

Matthew 6

²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

He strives to reconcile these contraries, which is impossible; and not seeking first the kingdom of heaven and its right-

eousness, he is in danger of losing it altogether. His devotedness to the world, and his satisfaction to be in such good standing with it, produce incapacity to receive the truth of God, by darkening the eye of the mind, and working insensibility to holiness, by hardening the heart and bribing the conscience with the approbation and flatteries of mortal men, as it was spoken by the same Divine Preacher:

Matthew 6

²² The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.

²³ But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The same effect is gradually produced in the Christian Church by the love of the world, which had been produced in the nations in the time of Paul, which stood not much further from the primitive times of the patriarchal, than we do from the primitive times of the Christian faith; and before the end the same words will describe our state, which in Paul's mouth described theirs:

Ephesians 4

¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

It is true that in this land of ours, where a Christian code of laws and manner of worship are established, and corresponding customs and feelings have arisen to defend them, the blindness of the mind does not exhibit itself in the same form of lasciviousness and lust which Paul describes the heathens to have been overspread withal. But it produces the same incapacity of the mind for the discernment, and the admiration of moral and spiritual truth.

The soul of man, through much business with this world,

has come to be disabled for any heavenly communion. Their daily work is so heavy upon men, to maintain life is so expensive, the mind is so harassed and occupied with almost necessary cares, that there hardly lives either the desire, or the capacity of higher thoughts. This is so much the case that I know not whether to weep or to be angry at the incapacity which I find in men to enter into any idea, or to entertain any discourse of an ideal or spiritual kind.

Controversy where persons are concerned, eloquence which presents a succession of figures to the fancy, discourse which concerns customs religious or irreligious; or expounds systems of doctrine which can be referred to a book, as the Confession, or the Catechism, are all which the people hear, and almost all which they are capable of hearing. And why so? Because their minds from their youth have been, and now are taken up all the day long with worldly business, and worldly cares; and has neither spare time, nor energy for meditation, contemplation, or prayer.

And this is not the case with the laboring and trading people, but with the ministers of religion, and the instructors of every name. They who ought to make debates with the spirit of the times, have given in to it, and hewn out for themselves a system of working, a mechanical occupation, a machinery of societies, management of periodical works, newspapers, and benevolent institutions, which as effectually engross them, as the exchange, and the counting-house, and the workshop engross the others. "The working clergy" has become a name for distinguishing those busy laborers in schools, societies, and other parochial institutions, from the rest, and giving them that mead of approbation which a mechanical and moneyed generation counted the highest and the best.

How much the love of money and the desire to be rich prevails in these times of ours, above any other age of the world,

is to be seen in every thing around us.

- What is reformation in the state? To save money.
- And what in the Church? To share the money equally.
- And what among the people? To administer pauperism aright.
- What is the object of every man in setting out in life? To make a fortune, and retire when he is rich and increased in goods.
- What are the combinations of the people? To raise the wages.

In one word, look in every direction, and you will find that money is the polar-star around which every star revolves.

- But what is the religious world, save a great institution for raising and expending money; a new method of raising the ways and means?
- What else is looked at in order to find admission to these societies but an annual donation; to be directors, but a large donation?
- What is the eloquence of the Church bent to do? To raise collections by charitable sermons. For this bishops come forth from their retirements; and for this famous doctors go forth on peregrinations and missions among the Churches.

No one can deny that the Bible, Missionary, Tract, and School Societies are constituted, not upon any selection of men made according to principle or practice, but according to his subscription of money. Such a thing I believe was never before heard of in the Church, that, for the membership and management of her chief works, no qualification should be regarded, save the amount of money subscriptions.

In all time past this was least in esteem, yea, jealously looked at as a source of continual temptations; but in this last

and worst age it is made indispensable to a voice in the administration of those great works which are counted upon as the pride and glory of the times we live in.

This is indeed a very remarkable feature in ecclesiastical history, a singularity of which there is no example; and, therefore, we need not wonder that it should be so prominently brought forward as a characteristic in the sevenfold view of the Church's temptations.

If I could estimate how much of the thought, zeal, and labor of the religious public, as they call it, goes to the matter of subscriptions and donations, of collections and disbursements, of religious societies, I would be able to justify in a remarkable degree the application of this epistle to these times.

Perhaps, since the Reformation, the Church, at least in this land, has never been united in one feeling, till this feeling of raising money to propagate the Gospel, which is without money and without price, arose among us. It has beaten down the distinctions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy; it has united Calvinism and Arminianism, Churchman and Dissenter, the worshiper of Christ and the denier of His name. Like a spirit it spreads abroad, and subdues unto itself all sorts of persons.

While I lay out these truths I am far from objecting to the appropriation of the mammon of unrighteousness to such benevolent and religious purposes, believing that it can hardly be so well bestowed. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to bless the needy, is to use our bounty, as our heavenly Father uses His; who makes His sun to arise upon the evil and the good, and His rain to descend upon the just and the unjust.

And if the Gospel of salvation, through the sending of His dear Son, be clearly the greatest and the best of His infinite gifts to this needy world; so, likewise, most surely must it be our best gift to an ignorant and unbelieving man to make

known unto him that Gospel of his salvation, without which no possessions of this life will bless him, and no true hopes of the life to come will ever visit him. Surely the Lord Jesus spoke a wise word, and recommended a bountiful course to the rich man, when He commanded him to sell all his possessions, and to follow Him in the preaching of the Gospel; and what He says to one, He says to all.

A very noble and excellent sight it were to see the exchange sending forth its missionaries, and the camp its soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and whosoever feels within his soul, the voice of Christ by the Spirit, saying, "Sell all that you have, and go and preach the Gospel," would do well to obey that most honorable commission. While those who are called to abide in their places, and their homes, can do nothing better with the superfluity of goods which God sends them, than to furnish forth the brother, who, though rich, has become poor, that the heathen through His poverty may become rich.

This, indeed, is one of the great uses which ministers of the Gospel are of to men; to teach them by their example, the proper place which the unrighteous mammon ought to have in their eyes, and likewise the right use to which it should be applied. It was intended of God that no man should take upon him the office of a missionary, or a preacher of the Gospel, until he should, in spirit at least, have laid aside and deprived himself of temporal possessions, and come into the estate of poverty into which Christ the great Apostle of our profession brought Himself, in order to fulfill His Divine commission.

An order of men in the world, who should thus set worldly things at naught for the honor of preaching the Gospel, is most needful for teaching men the great lesson, that they cannot serve both God and mammon. And if they would obtain the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, that they must seek it first, and leave all other things to be added by their

heavenly Father.

And what is the duty of the Church to those faithful men, who, in order to become their servants, or ministers, do forsake all dignities, preferments, and enjoyments, of this present life? Their duty is to feed the mouth that feeds them with heavenly food, to lodge and further the man who forsook home and kindred for love of their souls.

And so has it ever been, where the Spirit of Christ reigned in the Church. They have ever abounded unto the ministers of the Gospel, yea, and super-abounded. They have enriched the Church, they have replenished it with wealth, until its splendid preferments have become too much for the self-denial of its ministers.

And all this influx of gifts upon the office-bearers of the Church, proceeding without any covetousness on their part, is a fruit of that lesson which their self-denial has taught unto the people of God, that the best use of riches is, to make friends of those who are able to receive us into everlasting habitations.

At the same time, this free-will offering unto God, this gift unto the poor of His house, has been a continual odor of thankfulness unto God, for which He greatly increases the store from which it has proceeded.

We are far, therefore, from objecting to such contributions as are made for sending missionaries and Bibles into dark and heathen lands; but do regard it as one of the best channels into which to direct our charities.

It is the eternal ordinance of God, that the person who devotes himself to the preaching of the Gospel, should, by the believers of the Gospel, be sustained with whatever is needful for the present life. And when thus bestowed, our gifts reproduce to us a hundred fold, whereof a splendid proof is given

in this land, whose Church is the most liberally endowed, both with houses and lands, and with the tenth of all the produce of the earth: and yet behold it is the richest of all lands, and the most charitable also.

And so long as the ministry sought not their own, or their families' aggrandizement, but received the Church's bounty as from the Lord, and to the Lord's work devoted it, so long as the people gave, without a grudge, their appointed portion unto the house of God, there was no cry of want in our streets, no oppression of landlords over tenants, or of tenants over laborers. The Lord's ordinance was honestly and heartily observed, and the Lord's blessing followed thereon.

So, in like manner, with respect to the rich and the poor, two orders which the Lord has appointed to continue in the world, saying, "The poor you have always." These two orders have for their heads, the Father and the Son.

The rich are entrusted with the Father's plentiful creation, and are required to imitate their Father in dispensing it graciously and freely, without grudging, and without upbraiding.

The poor have Christ for their Head, who is always entitled the Poor One; and as Christ was contented, yea chose to become poor, that He might show His confidence in His Father's wealth, and His Father's bountiful heart, so we who are poor should walk in His humble footsteps, and exercise His admirable faith in God, who sends by the hands of His rich almoners, that which we need. And thus it is, that not equality, nor levelness of rank and riches, but inequality, and mutual dependence, is the ordinance of Divine providence, confirming the doctrine of the Church concerning the relations of the Father and the Son.

Entertaining these views of the use of riches and poverty, and from our youth having ever acted upon them it will not be thought that what we have said concerning the evil spirit

pervading the religious world proceeds from any niggardly or churlish spirit. In all errors into which the Church has been betrayed, there is a truth of which the error is the distortion. Pure and unmixed evil can never be the temptation of man in his present state, which is conscious of good and evil both. It is a good ordinance, which in these times has been perverted to an evil use.

The missionary abroad, and the minister of religion at home, are not suffered by us to come into voluntary privation, to follow the great Teacher's example, and become poor, that they may live by faith. But, on the other hand, all teachers of the Gospel are provided for, by stipulated contracts, before they undertake their ministry. The spirit of the times is, neither to send a missionary to preach to the heathen, nor to ordain a minister over a flock, without a bond for his maintenance, or some security of one kind or another, and so the ordinance is made void.

True it is, that he who ministers at the altar should live by the altar; but no one who calculates upon this beforehand, is worthy to minister there. He ought to go in faith, thinking only of the Gospel of Christ which he bears; and for him to be thinking of a living, is to degrade his high calling, and to deprive the world of that example of self-devotedness, which they so much need.

Now, into this estate of the Laodicean angel, the Christian ministry at home and the missionaries to foreign parts are brought. It is maintained as a principle, and argued as a thing both equitable and just, that they also should have a fair remuneration for their time and talents, and so they are articulated to it like an attorney's clerk; a copartnery is struck between them and their congregations, between them and the societies, as if it were some company concern in trade.

This system has been growing more and more upon the

Church, since the Reformation, and it seems now upon the eve of being perfected. The outcry for the equalizing of the livings in the Church proceeds from no other than this same commercial feeling, which is the enemy of faith, of self-denial and self-devotion for the sake of God, and Christ, and men, bringing every thing under the conditions of barter and exchange—so much time and labor for so much money.

There is always too much of this in the world. It is the devil's grand substitute for a belief in Divine providence, and the exercise of mutual charity. God did not intend this world to be a system of barter, wherein man should sell himself to man for a money price; but a system of grace and benevolence, man helping man, and laboring diligently in his calling, that he might have wherewith to help his brethren. And this, Paul teaches, in all his Epistles; as for example:

Ephesians 4

²⁸ Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.

Titus 3

¹⁴ And let ours also learn to maintain good works [margin: *profess honest trades*], for necessary uses that they be not unfruitful.

But in spite of the apostolic canons, and of the very root of the Gospel, which is grace and not barter, the commercial principle has, through various means, but especially through means of the compensation-system of theology, so established itself, as to have triumphed over the liberal professions, liberal arts, literature and science, to have brought every professor thereof almost into the condition of a person hired with money.

And it is now seeking to storm the citadel of society which is the ministry of the Church; to bring us, who should be the examples of disinterestedness and grace, under the bondage of

hire, of servitude for money, of obligation, measured by the stipend we receive.

The time is not far gone by, when a professional man, whether in the sciences or the arts, would have felt his character dishonored, if his labor or service had been valued by a piece of money.

- It is a poor, low, and miserable idea of man's nature, out of which all this proceeds.
- It is the subjugation of his high and heavenly faculties, to his animal and sensual enjoyment, in which it ends; and instead of a world full of faith, and of faithfulness, it produces a world full of sense and low-minded delights.
- So far from cultivating the principle of duty, it does continually insult it, by saying, "You can't be trusted further than the letter of the bond."
- It attempts to make conscience also a thing of weight and measure; and conscience under these conditions is not conscience at all.
- It is mere man-pleasing; whereas conscience has respect to God, to that which is pleasing in his eyes, not to that which is pleasing in the eyes of fellow-mortals.

And so far from religion being capable of such culture, it is the treatment which will surely prove its destruction; for religion is essentially the triumph of faith over sight, the triumph of God's word in the soul, over all visible and delightful things in the sense of man.

Now this, though to a certain extent it has existed as a temptation to the Christian ministry, has never till these latter days become the predominant principle. Never till now was it plainly enunciated and enforced, that the minister of the Gospel should have so much or so much for his labor. Jesus indeed said:

Luke 10

⁷ The laborer is worthy of his hire.

But He never said that his labor is worthy of this or of that hire. Poverty has ceased to be honorable in the Church.

- The first aspect of the Christian ministry was love to Christ;
- The second, faithfulness under persecution;
- The third, declining faithfulness, through the permission of false, covetous, and sensual teachers;
- The fourth, patient labor, but unholy endurance of the mother of abominations;
- The fifth, the love of a name;
- The sixth, constancy in the midst of poverty and rejection; and now,
- The seventh, and last, is satisfaction in, and fullness of, worldly goods.

And, because the character of the Christian ministry will always produce itself in the Church, we have now that same spirit of commerce and political economy extended everywhere throughout the community, to the almost utter extinction of the principle of faith, grace, and charity; which will continue until the angels of the Churches cease from feeling what the angel of the Laodicean Church expresses:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.

In interpreting these wonderful predictions of the successive states of the Church, we should be guided not so much by numerical details, as by the discernment of the spirit which is embodied.

For example, the spirit expressed in these words may be as

fully embodied in the Church of Scotland, whose livings are comparatively small, as in the Church of England, or the Church of Ireland, where many of them are upon a far higher scale. There may be the same sense of worldly comfort and devotedness to worldly objects, and the same resting upon the mere secularities of the office, and hungry request after preferment.

In one word, there may be as much of a worldly spirit in the one with its hundred, as in the other with its thousands a year: and so may it likewise be among the ministers of the Dissenting communion, where, the emolument is on a still lower scale.

To my observation, the spirit universally prevails; and if I were called upon to say where it prevails least, where the noblest and most frequent instances of self-denial were to be found, I would say in the Church of England; though there also, among its dignitaries are to be found the most notorious examples of self-seeking and worldly mindedness.

My office, however, is not to make comparisons, but to show that the character in our text is evidently impressed upon the whole face of the Christian ministry. And how utterly inconsistent and incompatible with our high calling is the thought of worldly gain, is well set forth in Paul's charges to Timothy, a pastor of the Church:

1 Timothy 6

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.

It is not a pleasant task to identify what almost all men are agreed to call the best, with that which God calls the worst state of the Church; and nothing but the imperious sense of truth, together with the earnest desire to convince my brethren of so fatal an error, would support me under so painful and grievous a task.

My judgment I exercise for the sake of God, and of my brethren, and I am content to bear the obloquy which it brings upon me to utter the truth. And having sufficiently identified the present religious world with the Laodicean Church, in this feature as well as the rest, I now proceed to show how such devotedness to income, and resting upon emolument, produces a low, mean, and miserable condition in respect of Divine doctrine and of morality.

The reason is, that no one can be a disciple of Christ, unless he shall have first in heart forsaken all other objects whatever.

1 John 2

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

And without the love of the Father there can be no progress in the knowledge of Christ, nor in obedience of God's holy commandments. How much less with one who says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," which I have shown to be the predominant feeling both of the minister and the people in these times.

When worldly wealth, outward appearance, a comfortable house, good society, influential friends, and such like accommodations and ornaments of the present time, are accounted as the one thing needful, there is no time for thought and

meditation, which are all swallowed up in work and enjoyment; there is no capacity for long and lofty flights, for deep and patient researches into the arcana of our being.

And when some heaven-directed person dares the seldom-trodden course, and returns with his treasures, he is treated as a mystic and enthusiast, a speculative and imaginative person, who follows his own dreams, and works not for the common good of men, nor seeks the glory of God.

- How can a man, whose thoughts are occupied upon self, and upon his goods, rise into any communion with God, or faith of the world unseen?
- How can a man, who is minding his own interest, and seeking to secure his own comfort, attain unto the level of Christian morality, which is self-denial and disinterestedness?
- How can a man, whose heart is in the present life, be ready to devote all that he has for the sake of God and godliness? Least of all a Christian minister who is set for this one end of continually trampling under foot the visible world, and rising upon the wings of faith and hope, unto the glories of a world unseen?

It is not possible that while the soul of a minister is thus bound down to this nether world, he should be able to bring the people any tidings of that upper world, wherein dwells righteousness. His mouth is muzzled, and he cannot speak; and if he could, he has it not in him to speak; for God will not enrich a soul with the better riches which is intent upon the lower.

Will God reveal Himself unto a soul which is worshipping the lowest of His works? Therefore a worldly ministry must ever be an ignorant ministry, and an ignorant ministry will ever make an ignorant Church.

Thus it was in the Laodicean, and thus it is in the present

state of the Church. But it may be good, for the sake of greater distinctness, to condescend upon the particulars, as they are given in order by the chief Shepherd.

I Am Rich

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...I am rich,...

To be rich is a comparative term, which, in various lands, and various times, is variously estimated. Taken as a character of the Christian Church, it must denote a period wherein riches abound, and are in much esteem, as now they unquestionably are.

It is but lately I sat in the company of some Christian men, and listened to their conversation, which turned upon this: how much every thing in these days was estimated by the scale of riches. They said,

“If a man be spoken of, you hear it asked, What is he worth? is he in good circumstances? And if he be very rich, they ask if he is not about to be raised to the peerage.”

And they further went on to say, that when a man died, the question generally was, what he had died worth. And they gave it as their opinion, that in these things they had seen a great change since the days of their youth.

Indeed nothing is more common than to hear men calling money the thing needful, and self-interest the main chance; and by a good man is commonly understood in the commercial world, a rich man.

When you present such characteristics, many say, it has always been so; and there is some truth in what they say, for man is always man; but still there are tides and currents in human affairs, which, slowly proceeding, do at length produce great changes, and these changes in the Church are rated under seven varieties in the vision before us.

Now, we maintain, that one of these visible notable changes, is now well-nigh accomplished, when riches rule all things, churchmen and statesmen, yea, and crowned kings. To raise loans, and to manage debts, and themselves to attend to pecuniary matters, are in truth the chief occupation of ministers of state, and I think of ministers of religion also.

Increased with Goods

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...and increased with goods,...

Applied to the ministers of the Laodicean Church, this must signify a comfortable house, with abundance of useful and ornamental furnishing; a Church also possessing endowments whereof he is the administrator, perhaps also possessions of his own, houses and lands, and other worldly equipage.

These outward things comforted his heart: the wealth of his house, the wealthy members of his flesh, the flowing plenty, and abundance of respectable men which was among them. These things pleased him well. He thought little of their souls; he forgot the spiritual treasures, of which he was the keeper; he enriched not his people; he built them not up in goodness, he urged them not to spiritual attainments; he claimed not from them righteousness, and love, and mercy, the fruits acceptable unto God.

I know well enough how it was with him, because I see it on every side of me, and am not insensible within myself of the common temptation. Ah! the poor of Christ's flock are sadly neglected by the ministers of the Churches, in the court which they pay to the rich of their flock.

Oh when I look at the state of this city, and know the condition of the poor, and see the ministers of religion enjoying themselves among the gay, the noble, the rich, and the well-conditioned classes, leaving the poor unvisited in their habitations, a prey to ignorance and to vice of every kind; and when

I think and know that this is the common condition of all the lower classes in the towns, and frequently in the country parts of this empire, I feel as if I should have written in the spirit of an ancient prophet, rather than in this patient, painstaking way of an expositor.

I am sure that God's mind is severer than mine in this matter; and that His words, when they shall be uttered, will be sharper than ever were mine.

I feel that if the judgment of ejection from their livings should fall on all the ministers, though our tithes and our stipends were stripped from us, with our houses and our lands, we have amply earned the judgment by our unfaithfulness in the stewardship of the Church's goods.

Aye indeed we are increased in goods; but whence have we this same increase? From sacrilegiously laying our hands upon the Church's property, and using as our own that of which we were only the administrators for the poor of the whole house of God.

If there is a Judge over all the earth, and a Head of the Church, these things will be required at our hands.

Have Need of Nothing

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...and have need of nothing,...

This is the consummation of the evil. It is not wrong, that a minister of the Gospel should abound in riches and in goods. Paul knew how to abound, as well as to suffer want; and as ministers are set for an ensample they ought to have an opportunity of showing others how to administer the stewardship of riches, and of goods, as well as every other stewardship, which, although it be the lowest, is not on that account to be trifled with.

This our Lord showed by the parable of the unjust steward,

teaching that he that is unfaithful in the least, is unfaithful also in the greatest; and if we be not careful over the unrighteous mammon, we shall not have the true riches committed to our care.

The truth is, that, as by self-denial of the desires of the mind we procure the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit of Christ within our souls, and as by the contempt of the body, and the not counting of our lives dear, and the crucifixion of the flesh in every way, we attain unto ourselves the resurrection of the body in incorruption, even the first resurrection; so, also, by the foregoing of worldly goods, or rather by the right use of them, in alms deeds and acts of charity to the members of Christ, we do procure unto ourselves that kingdom which was prepared for us in Christ from the foundation of the world.

Forasmuch, then, as there rests upon the right use of mammon very great issues indeed, and we ministers of the Gospel are set for an example unto the flock; it will always come to pass in the Church, when things are working together according to Christ's ordinance, that ministers who have first given the example of forsaking all, will by the bounty of the people, be put into possession of various goods, to the end they may show by their right use of them an example to the flock of God.

The evil, therefore, of the Laodicean bishop stood not in his having riches and goods, but in his saying to his heart:

“Behold I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.”

He ought to have said unto God,

“Behold I am rich, and increased in goods: I thank You for Your bounty to Your poor servant, and pray for grace to devote the gifts of Your Church to the service of the great Head of the Church.”

And so of our own times, the evil stands not in the riches of the Church, nor yet in the diverse allotments, and unequal distributions thereof, for it is the method of God to appoint that it should be so in the world, and ministers are set for examples unto all varieties of men:

- one with a princely income, to show princes how to use the principedoms;
- one with a nobleman's state, to teach the nobles how to use their state;
- one in a middle condition, to show to the middle classes an example; and
- one in the condition of poverty, to be an example to the poor, to teach poverty of spirit unto all.

It is a poor and erroneous way of healing the disease to speak of equalizing the income of ministers of the Gospel, as if they only could not be trusted with more than enough. It is such a confession on the part of the people, what ministers they have chosen to themselves, that they cannot trust more in their hands than a bare sufficiency for this world's necessity. But so it is with an evil-minded generation: their remedies are always worse than their diseases.

No, it was not in the outward condition of this bishop that his crime consisted. There is no crime in being rich, and there is no crime in being poor. His evil-mindedness lay in his looking upon his riches, and saying, "I have need of nothing," whereas his true condition is described in the words following:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

He knew it not, and why didn't he know it? Because the god of this world had blinded his eyes. His eye was not single

but evil, and therefore his whole body was full, not of light but of darkness.

There is no one's case so desperate as his who thinks himself to be all-sufficient in himself, instead of seeing his sufficiency to be God. In Christ there is a sufficiency of strength for the weakness of the weakest minister; but this Laodicean sought and saw it not in Christ, but sought and saw it in himself. Christ's counsel to him was to come and buy of him that grace, and those goods, which would prove sufficient for him; thereby showing that at this time he was in a state of self-dependence, and vain-glory.

Now it matters not what a minister builds himself upon, if it be not upon Christ. Be it riches, goods, worldly reputation, natural gifts, friendship and patronage, a numerous and reputable flock, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit unto God, if Christ, and Christ alone, have not the glory.

We are ministers of Christ, not of ourselves, held in His hand, His property and possession; and by our strict dutifulness to Him we should teach the people, yea, and teach principalities and powers, to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, who bought all with the price of His precious blood.

Now he that rests in Christ has no confidence in the flesh, because Christ communicates not with this world through his flesh, nor through visible things, but through his Spirit only. The flesh is, except as reclaimed by the Spirit, death's spouse, and corruption's banquet. The world is Satan's palace and kingdom: wherefore the man, be he minister or member of Christ, who serves Christ, does crucify the flesh, and deny the world, and has confidence in nothing, save the Holy Spirit, the invisible, insensible, Divine power abiding in His soul.

For a man to look around upon his worldly condition, be it ever so good, and delightful, or establish his soul thereon, is to deny Him who alone establishes us, which is God.

For a man to look into the book of his past experience, or to make a survey of his present condition, and not see the marks of a good and gracious providence therein revealed, is likewise to turn away from God, and from Christ, the invisible and unchangeable good ones, and hope upon some past, or present, visible, or intelligible object, which, even granting that it be the work of God, and of Christ, is not wrought by them to draw our attention from, but to themselves.

God made the world for man to subdue and govern, but He made man for the image and companion of Himself. And let man turn himself away from God to be the companion of any work of God, or to make any work of God his confidence, and that man denies and prostitutes the dignity of his being; he forsakes the fountain of living waters to hew out unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water. And the certain effect will be what is here declared of the Laodicean angel, wretchedness and misery, poverty, blindness and nakedness; and, what is worst of all, insensibility to his miserable estate.

Concerning the particulars here enumerated, as descriptive of the true estate of this minister, we have to observe, first, that wretchedness seems to denote miserable circumstances in general—such as a noble-minded and virtuous woman would at once feel if she were to enter into the chamber of a licentious and dissipated prostitute, who might be invested and surrounded with all sorts of ornaments, pleasing to her own sight, and satisfying to her own degraded mind; such as a generous and bountiful Lord might feel if He were to enter the habitation of a rich miser, who had surrounded himself with everything which pleased his own penurious taste.

The like wretchedness our great and good Shepherd feels, whose heart overflowed with spiritual benefits, and whose desire is to see the flock yielding spiritual fruits unto God, when He casts his eye upon this hireling shepherd, who has gath-

ered about him all the sufficiency of this world, and called upon his people to rejoice over the abundance of their corn, and wine, and oil.

Ah me! worthless as I am to be accounted the shepherd of a flock, how oft have I felt the same loathing, when I have visited some shepherds and their flocks, enjoying good fellowship with one another, walking in apparent brotherhood, full of good-conditioned facility, and well-pleased with one another; yet without one drop of the waters of life, without one word of glory to God, and to the Lamb, orthodox but unspiritual, good-natured but uncharitable, orderly but without heart. And wherefore? because their sufficiency was in one another, and not in the Lord. Ah! God will not be mocked: such an estate cannot prosper: God will not give glory, God will not give confidence, in anyone, save in Christ only.

Next to the general wretchedness which Christ perceived on surveying the condition of this self-sufficient Church, He notices their misery, or, according to the force of the original, their pitiful, or pitiable condition; as if He had said:

“You think yourself an object of complacency to every beholder, but truly you are an object of pity, and I do pity you from my heart. You boast yourself in your riches, when, lo! you are standing in slippery places, and ready to fall into the jaws of destruction.”

And so it ever is with a man who is all-sufficient to himself, or has chosen his all-sufficient portion in this world. None so pitiable as he. The case of the remorseful murderer is more hopeful than his. The person whose conscience is driving him to despair, and who can hardly refrain from self-murder, is more hopeful than he who says, “I have need of nothing,” whereas he is far removed from God, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

There ever rests on my mind, as I proceed, the greatest de-

sire to speak home to the consciences of living men, and not to amuse myself or others with a piece of well-reasoned or plausible discourse. I have my own soul, and the souls of my brethren to save, and therefore I am ever and anon pressed into the quarters of living men.

Now, I make no doubt, that this condition of the Christian minister is that which I perceive to be around me, and more especially among those called Evangelical. I know how the mention of this word exposes me to all manner of false charges and suspicions, but I love the people too well to mind much their reproaches, so that I can awaken them from that dream, and delusion, and self-sufficiency, in which they are spellbound.

The resentment which they feel to be told of any fault or failing, is the clearest proof that they are in the state of the Laodicean angel. Why this bitterness? Why this resentment? Why this suspicion, and these misrepresentations? If it so be that you conceive of yourselves to be as fallible and imperfect as other men? It is mere hypocrisy for a man to acknowledge his sins, when he will confess to no transgression; or to confess his shortcomings, when he will submit to no correction.

Now, I declare before God who judges the heart, that on whatever subject I converse with the ministers of this generation, and especially of that denomination:

- be it of the love of God, in freely fully, and once for all forgiving a world saved in Christ, and forgiving the most guilty sinner at once to come into His presence as an unoffending and holy man, through the way of Christ Jesus;
- be it of the humiliation of the Son of God, His conflicts, contentions, and controversies in the flesh; His agony, His heart-breaking, His abandonment by the Father, His sorrow, like no man's sorrow, His vileness like the

worm, His trials and temptations of every kind;

- be it of the work of the Spirit to cleanse the conscience, and make it full of light with no darkness at all, to take away the very conscience of guilt to chase away fear, and to destroy doubt, to beget love, confidence and trust, and, in one word, to make the mind of man as the mind of God is, to make the heart of man see and feel, as God sees and feels, to renew us in the conscience, or inward man, after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness;
- be it of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, given to the various members of the body of Christ, for the manifestation of the manifold Spirit of God;
- be it of the life of holiness, and perfect obedience, and complete service of God, in thought, speech, and behavior;
- be it of the present glory, and power, and right of the Son of Man over all kingdoms, and principalities, and powers;
- be it of his glorious advent to judge the quick and the dead, of the resurrection of the saints, and their glorious kingdom;
- be it of any subject whatever which concerns God, or Christ, or the Church, or the sacraments, or the one faith, that you discourse with the ministers of religion in these times;

There is such poverty, disinclination, hesitation, back-drawing, and almost total blindness, as does make me feel how true the word of the Lord is, in respect of them, “but you are blind, and poor, and naked.”

But if, on the other hand, you speak of religious societies, of collections, of subscriptions and donations, of building Churches, of continuing or taking away tithes, of the Established Church, or the Dissenting interest, of humane benefac-

tors, of this and that minister, this and that missionary, this and that publication, this and that good work, this and that person's opinions, there is no end of their earnestness and volubility. God knows I do not exaggerate, I seek to state the simple truth; and that truth, in one word, is thus expressed:

“You, O Laodicean Church; you, O religious world, say ‘I am rich, and increased in goods, and need nothing,’ and know not that you are wretched, and pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

COUNSEL

How sweet it is to know that there is no disease in the Church which the Head of the Church cannot heal; that there is no case so desperate which He cannot minister to, and that this infallible Physician is not to seek, but ever stands at the door seeking entrance to us for His sure and certain remedies. There is no God like unto our Saviour; and never, never was a people entreated as we are during this the day of our merciful visitation.

- You have heard the lukewarmness of this Laodicean minister.
- You have heard how loathsome was his spiritual estate to the heart of Christ, who was ready to spew him out of His mouth.
- You have heard how his soul boasted of his riches, and rested in his own sufficiency.
- And you have likewise heard how false and treacherous he had proved, both to his Lord, and to the flock of his Lord.

Hear now the grace and forgiveness, the counsel and earnest pleading of that rejected Master, and remember that He who thus speaks is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Almighty Ruler of the universe:

Revelation 3

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

Buying Gold

He condescends to address him in the language of his favorite pursuits, saying:

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of Me gold that has been purified with fire, that you may be rich.

This I consider the same as our Lord's exhortation:

Matthew 6

²⁰ Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

And again:

Luke 12

³³ Sell what you have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts.

And to this same heavenly treasure, the Lord refers in the parable of the unjust steward, when He says:

Luke 16

¹¹ If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

As to the expression, "having been tried in the fire," while I look upon it as chiefly intended to complete the figure for expressing riches which will not corrupt, I think at the same time that it has a real allusion to that fire of judgment which is to try every man's work of what kind it is:

1 Corinthians 3

¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

As the fire receives the earthy ore, and delivers forth the metal pure and precious, so the fire of judgment shall purify all creation, and deliver it forth incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. And in that world to come, I believe there will be things more precious than others, which shall be for beauty and for ornament, as is set forth in the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose foundations and gates, and very streets, are described as constructed of the gems, precious stones, and pure metals of the earth.

Moreover we find that the angels include "riches" in their sevenfold ascription unto Christ in the heavenly state:

Revelation 5

¹² Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

What they ascribe in adoration to Christ, we may not think beneath us to hope for a share of in glory; and therefore, when I hear the Lord counseling the Laodicean angel, to buy of him gold that has come purified out of the fire, I am not ashamed to believe, that there is a real thing promised to him, if he will pay the price for it; which price is, to receive it thankfully and freely from the hand of Christ.

But it may be said:

"What use of riches in the world to come? and in what will those riches consist?"

I answer, as I have often answered, It is not given to me to understand, nor yet to explain, in what way the Lord will constitute the details of His kingdom. But because I cannot reach

unto this, I am not permitted to explain away the precious promises of Christ as mere figures of speech. It is said in this very Book, concerning the new Jerusalem:

Revelation 21

²⁴ ...and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

And in divers parts of the Old Testament it is prophesied of Christ in the age to come, that all the kings of the earth shall bring Him tribute:

Psalm 72

¹⁵ And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.

And in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, when the Apostle would comfort the Church suffering under spoliation by their enemies, it is by setting before them a better and enduring substance in the heavens, in the faith of which, they were able to make the sacrifices of earthly goods which God required of them:

Hebrews 10

³⁴ For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

So I find it with respect to everything else. If Abraham be required to leave his country, it is to look for a city whose builder and maker is God. If the Apostles are required to forsake all, it is that they may sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. These are not words without meaning, or the inventions of a luxuriant fancy, to set forth the one truth, that we shall be happy. Such loose interpretations are fatal to God's word, and to our own salvation.

Nor yet are they to be understood in the latter merely, as if

they signified very gold and very silver, used for purposes of exchange and merchandise. But they are to be spiritually interpreted, and yet according to the letter, as signifying, that in the world to come there shall be varieties of dignity and preferment, varieties of possession and influence; one appointed over ten cities, another over five. The varieties of reward and condition, which are purchased by the greatness of our self-denial for Christ's sake in this world, have a certain correspondence with the dignities, possessions, and riches, which are enjoyed here, so that by means of the forms of present things, the forms of future things are capable of being expressed in words.

Yet while the relations and proportions of the present world are carefully to be studied and observed, we would be wide of the truth, if we were to suppose that in the substances themselves, and the use of them, there will not be the greatest change for the better, yea and very perfection.

When the Lord would exhort the young man to sell all, it is by the consideration of having treasure in heaven; when the Lord would counsel this Laodicean minister to remove his heart from worldly riches, it is by counseling him to buy gold tried in the fire which would make him rich indeed: and thus I believe people with possessions ought ever to be addressed.

There is no desire of the human mind which is not implanted there by the Creator's hand, and intended by Him for His own service. The present world, through sin, has become all unworthy of these the innate desires of the human mind; wherefore God requires us to satisfy ourselves with the enjoyment of Him, and to abstain from worldly delights, until having purified both the flesh and the world, He shall restore them to the soul as her fit habitation and rightful possession.

As if the son of a holy father, educated in all virtue, should be cast upon a land of savage people, who delighted in pur-

suits of cruelty, sensuality, and lust; which abhorring he would with strong resolution abstain from, and if he could not profit the people, at least not destroy himself, but patiently wait until the providence of God, which cast him into such bad company, should deliver him thence. Yet he would not cease the less to cultivate within himself those high capacities of enjoyment which for the present lay reserved within his own bosom.

Even so, man's regenerate soul abides alone in this unregenerate world, living on hope, its life hidden with Christ in God, its high capacities waiting for high objects on which to exercise themselves. And because it knows of a glorious body, and a holy kingdom about to be revealed, preserving itself in this waste howling wilderness of its pilgrimage, unpolluted from the world; according as it is written:

2 Peter 3

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

But the time is coming, believe me, when every faculty of the soul of man being served by every member of the body of man, shall exercise itself with diligence and with enjoyment on every object within the dominion of man, which is the outward world. And from the sweet harmonies between creation and flesh, between flesh and spirit, between spirit and God, shall grow that ineffable peace, and joy, and holiness, wherein consists the blessedness of the saints in glory.

I do therefore look upon the counsel of Christ to the Laodicean minister, as containing in it the promise of full enjoyment to that desire of possession which he was now bestowing upon the unworthy dust of this earth. Says Christ:

“Come, come and trade with me, and I will furnish you with the true riches. Come, come and buy of me; for I am the Beginning of the creation of God. All is mine, all that the Father has is mine, and I will give it unto you.”

Isaiah 55

² Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Gracious Lord! These treasures we will seek; we will forsake all and follow You. And when we are poor, then are we rich, for all things are ours: whether things present, or things to come, all are ours; for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

If anyone now do ask of me:

“And how are these better riches to be purchased, and what is the price?”

I answer in the language of the Lord:

Luke 12

³³ Sell all that you have, and give alms, and provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fail not...

They are to be purchased in the way of barter and exchange. Give to Christ now, in order to receive from Him hereafter. But where is He, that we might give to Him?

Matthew 25

⁴⁰ Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.

Matthew 10

⁴² And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

But he that shall feed them when they are hungry, and give

them drink when they are thirsty, and clothe them when they are naked, and visit them in prison, and comfort them when they are sick, shall enter into the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for Christ the poor one, and for the benefactors of Christ's poor companions.

It is not that I would prescribe voluntary poverty as a law of the Gospel; nor is it the base doctrine of purchasing heaven by our good works, which I would commend, but it is that truth which is at the bottom of both these errors: the truth that, according as we serve God and Christ with our minds, our bodies, and our substance here, shall be our degree of honor and power hereafter. This is God's manner of enforcing self-denial; and therefore I make it mine, that I may walk in His footsteps.

It is not profitable to God that a man should deny himself any enjoyment, but it is profitable to himself. God is not inquisitor-general over men's minds, nor the torturer over their bodies, a hard master over their worldly estates, as if He had need of us, and of our services, and of our goods. But He is our benefactor, He wishes our dignity and honor, and enjoyment for ever and ever.

He does not desire that we should lose ourselves and our faculties in the whirlpool of time: and for this reason it is, that the doctrine of rewards and punishments is a doctrine of all religions, and a leading doctrine of the Christian faith.

Buying White Raiment

Revelation 3

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy of me...white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear...

Next to riches, the Lord counsels His unworthy steward to come and buy of Him white raiment, that he may be clothed,

and that the shame of his nakedness might not appear. From this we may well believe, that robes of office were an object of gratification to this hireling and worldly minister, as they always have been in the Church, according as the robe of righteousness and salvation ceased from her ambition.

As our first parents discovered not that they were naked, until the white robe of righteousness had departed from them, so their children, in proportion as they become naked of truth and holiness, do seek to adorn themselves with the raiment of ostentation and pride.

And to this, in a remarkable degree, the ministers of religion had come to be addicted, insomuch that the vestry of a Church was almost as variously and fantastically furnished with garments, as the chamber of a fashionable woman. And even now, in these reformed lands, there exist by far too many relics of this foolish and fantastical vanity.

The Lord would withdraw His servant's mind from all such outward ornaments, and direct it to that inward adorning which, in the sight of God, is of great price. *1 Peter 3:4*.

The white garments, as we have already explained in our Lecture on the Church of Sardis⁵, are significant of that panoply of holiness in which the believer should walk invested, and which is derived from Christ, the only Holy One, who, of God, is made unto us righteousness and sanctification. *1 Corinthians 1:30*.

In addition to what we formerly said upon this subject, we have now to add, that while our personality is looked upon as held from God our Creator, and ever responsible to Him, the investments of the same, which are the various powers of reason, and the various members of the flesh; are looked upon as

⁵ *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 8, "Epistle to the Church in Sardis", Chapter: "The Approbation", Sub-chapter: "The Meaning of Garments", p. 140-165.

derived from Christ, in whom they reappeared in their original beauty and brightness.

A man is not reason, neither is he flesh; but he is a person endowed with reason, and responsible to God for the right use of the same. Reason and flesh, or, to use the Scripture language, a living soul, first appeared in Adam; and though now existing in parts, in time and place, and divided among many persons, it is still the same one substance, with common properties and common responsibilities unto God; which may well be entitled the clothing of men.

This our blessed Lord found all sullied and vile, and by His use of the Holy Ghost, restored to its original excellence, holy as it came from the hands of its Creator. And having accomplished this, He became the possessor and sole proprietor of holy flesh and holy spirit, to bestow them upon every one, who should receive Him as the messenger of God, and believe in His message. For though Christ by His own work earned to Himself from the righteousness of God, eternal life and glory for human nature in His own person, it lay with the Father to determine whether this should be extended to the guilty persons of the children of men.

And Christ came with the Father's grace, to make known unto the children of men, that what He was doing, He was doing, not for Himself, but for all who should believe upon His name.

Through faith therefore in God's grace, and through faith in Christ's work, we obtain robes of righteousness meet for appearing in the presence of the Divine Majesty. That is to say, we receive power to become sons of God, to cleanse the heart, to purify the affections, to enlighten the mind, to sanctify the whole being of man, to be clothed upon with the beauties of holiness.

I labor much to express the completeness of this change,

which is effected in the soul by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a change from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the service of the living God. And whereas the conscience was full of accusations, it is full of approbation; and whereas it was full of palsied fears, it is full of unshaken trust; and whereas it was vexed with continual aversion to God, and His holy service, it is now blessed with continual inclination thereto and delight therein.

There is a beautiful illustration of this subject in the fifth chapter of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, where the Apostle, having spoken of the glorious hope of the resurrection; which filled his mind, and enabled him to speak out fearlessly, whatever he believed, does in reference to the things unseen and eternal, thus speak:

2 Corinthians 5

¹ For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

⁴ For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

In this passage, the idea of clothing is carried still further outward than we have ventured to express, being applied to the habitation as well as to the bodies of the risen saints; for from the context, we cannot doubt, that both the glorified body and the new Jerusalem are referred to in this beautiful passage. The new Jerusalem I take to be “the house not made, with hands, eternal in the heavens,” “the house which is from heaven,” in which apparel the Church shall then be arrayed, as a bride for her bridegroom; according as it is written:

Isaiah 52

¹ Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city...

And again:

Revelation 19

⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

In this the custom of the Holy Ghost, to speak of our habitation as a part of our clothing, is conveyed to my mind a very beautiful moral, which is: That all nature, and all art working with nature's gifts, are but the right efforts of man to surround himself with those habiliments that God has provided for our being.

- His eye has need of its clothing; and its clothing is whatever is beautiful in nature, and whatever is congenial in art.
- The ear needs its clothing, which is whatever is harmonious in melody, sweet and tender in expression.
- Every other sense has its appropriate furniture provided for it, in the elements of nature, or prepared thence by the skillfulness with which God has endowed the mastermind.

And for all these God will have Christ to be inquired at, and all beauty, and all order, and adoration of man's estate, and all fitness and rightness and holiness, and all power and strength and majesty, and all grace and joy and blessedness, with which the world shall be filled, and man's estate most nobly endowed, must come from creation's first Designer and Architect, who is also creation's Redeemer and Preserver for ever and ever.

O always misguided and misleading man, why will you go

astray from Him who is the beginning of the creation of God? why will you set your affections upon your own handiworks, which are but like hovels in the midst of splendid ruins?

Instead you might by looking to Jesus, and longing for His appearance, and become the denizen of the city of God, and thence go forth, rightly taught and practiced, to become, under Christ, the reclamer of desolate regions, to subdue them, and to have them under your dominion, to behold and rejoice in the labor of your hand.

It seems to me as if I saw, in the long established prerogative of Papal Rome to be the center of arts, another token of Jerusalem, that future city of God, which, as it is the light of the world, and the treasury of its wealth, so also is it the model of all beauty, and of all perfection, to which city built of God, all inferior places shall look for their style of art and workmanship; even as paradise was the perfection of the earth, the temple of Solomon the noblest structure in the world, and the clothing of the high priest the very perfection of beauty and glory, as having been all designed by the mind of God.

Let no man look upon these things as dreams unworthy of spiritual entertainment, but as dim shadows and meager outlines of a glorious state of things yet to be, which shows but uncertainly from this far-off point of view, and seen through the murky atmosphere of mortality where we dwell.

Furthermore our good Shepherd counsels His thoughtless servant to anoint his eyes with eyesalve that he may see; that he might see his true condition, for:

- He saw nothing of the wretchedness with which he was surrounded.
- He was blind to his condition; he knew not that he was naked, nor felt that he was miserable.

- He was living in the vile dwellings of sense, and was not ashamed.
- He was clothed with the garments of hypocrisy and vanity, and knew it not, because he was blind, the eye of his understanding being darkened by the wickedness that was in him.

Therefore the Lord said:

Revelation 3

¹⁸ ...anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

Matthew 6

²² The light of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light.

Without the eye to look upon it, creation is almost as if it were not. And surely to the eye of the mind, in its natural state, God is indeed as if He were not. Nothing is more certain than that the inward sight of man is dark, and discerns not the beauty of the Lord.

The eye here spoken of is doubtless the eye of conscience, which converses with the mind of God as revealed to us in His holy word, and in the person of His dear Son, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. If man would discern the glory of God, he must see it in the glorious face of Jesus Christ; with whom, alas! nature, dead in trespasses and sins, has little sympathy: for He is unto her as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, or desirable beauty.

And why is He in whom God beholds Himself full and perfect thus uncomely and unsavory to the taste of man? Because man has ceased to resemble God, and come to resemble the devil. Pride, selfishness, malice, and worldly-mindedness, have degraded him to the pit of hell whom God formed for the city of heaven.

But He who opened the eyes of the blind, He who forgave sin, He who created man's soul, and redeemed man's soul, so that it should with open countenance see and rejoice in God, has an unction, the unction of the Holy One, which can, and does, unseal the eye of conscience: so that the whole light of God shall burst upon our vision; that spiritual world, that perfection of beauty, riches of grace, and fullness of goodness, which God is, and never ceases to be.

Revelation 3

¹⁸ Anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.

It is in *our* power to do so; the healing salve is at *our* hand. Christ has wrought out this salvation: we are in darkness only through our own hatred of the light. We will not come unto the light.

Matthew 5

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Christ has purchased purity of heart for every man, that every man may see God. And what is that eyesalve? It is the washing of regeneration, and the purifying of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And what mean these words of Scripture? They mean this: that the High Priest Jesus Christ does with the oil of holiness, and of gladness, which He possesses, bring us into the temple of God, that we may behold His beauty, and reverently inquire of His name.

And what again do these words mean? They mean, that Jesus Christ has by His work in flesh condemned sin, and conquered death in flesh, and is able by the Holy Spirit to communicate unto men the capacity of tearing asunder the veils of sin and death, and looking as He did upon the very face of God, and beholding His beauty, and loving to behold it.

These words mean that Christ Jesus, who of old skilfully

made the soul of man to be God's own likeness: so that, in seeing itself, it should see God; in exercising itself, it should exercise the will of God; has now, through His work in flesh, received power to banish forth from it all fear and faintness, error and darkness, doubt and distress, dismay and despair, with other forms of hell, and restore to it its ancient being, its first features, its primeval glory; so that it shall again resemble God, think as God thinks, feel as God feels, and do as He does.

This is the eyesalve, even the Holy Ghost elaborated by the human nature of Christ in such a healing substance, as being applied to us shall, like the ointment, eat out the speck, and purge away the obscuration, and let the wonderful organ of God look once more upon the goodly world of God's own being and workmanship, which it was made to know, and to possess, and to enjoy.

The eyesalve of the physician does not make the eye; nor is it made for the eye in its sound and healthy state, but for the eye obscured and obstructed by disease, and deprived of its excellent function of beholding and admiring the creation of God. Then does the physician cast about for some kindly mixture able to eat out, or carry away the foreign substance which makes the whole body to be dark. And though such agents do generally occasion pain, the patient willingly submits, that he may again look upon the holy light.

Even so, the eyesalve of the conscience is not to make the conscience; for the conscience being made by God can never be destroyed: nor is it for the conscience in a healthy state, able to look into, to understand, and rejoice over the being of God; but it is prepared of Christ for cleansing away that film which sin first brought over, and ever deepens upon the eye of the soul.

Christ has prepared an unction of the Holy One capable of healing us, which, indeed, troubles and affects somewhat the

present state of the diseased soul, but must be patiently endured for the excellent knowledge, and wisdom, and revelation of God's own mind, which the conscience thereafter continually feeds upon.

O but it is a mighty work, this work of cleansing the conscience, and it is a wondrous power of God through which it is performed! And such aspects of the Divine goodness it reveals, and such secret hidden springs of health and joy it opens up, as no one who has not felt the same is able to understand, or even to believe. Hear how the Apostle Paul speaks hereof:

Ephesians 1

¹⁶ ...making mention of you in my prayers;

¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him:

¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

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

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

Such is the counsel of the good Shepherd unto one of His ministers, who had arrived at such a pitch of loathsome and disgusting wickedness as that He should say of him:

Revelation 3

¹⁶ ...I will spew you out of my mouth.

When we consider his worthlessness, and the worthiness of that Master whose patience he had so abused, we may well wonder that His counsel should be couched in such gracious and generous terms. Well may it be said of Jesus as it is of

God:

James 1

⁵ ...[He] gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not...

If ever there was cause of upbraiding and withholding, it was in this unworthy minister. But so far is Jesus from being a hard Master, as men think, that He is willing to forgive “seven times, yea seventy times seven”:

1 Chronicles 16

³⁴ ...for He is good; for His mercy endures forever.

Nor that He is an indulger of wickedness, or that He can look upon it without detestation and abhorrence, but that He is very tender-hearted, and pitiful, and loath, very loath to afflict the children of men whom He loves even to the death. He is about to bring discipline, to come in severity upon His licentious and profligate servant; but first He would ensue the method of grace that by repentance, judgment might, if possible, be prevented.

Ah me, how it afflicts me, O dear Lord, that You should be so misunderstood, and misrepresented by the children of men. O that they were wise, that they knew what a loving gracious Lord they have in You. Judgment is indeed Your strange work; God sent You not to condemn the world, but that through You the world might have life.

And lest when You come with chastisement You should be mistaken, as if You had laid aside Your love, You ushered it in with assurances, that therein Your love is shown forth no less, yea and more than in blessing: for to bless is congenial to Your nature; to afflict, and to bring pain, You incline not. Therefore, before dealing with this Your minister in the way of chastisement, You warn him that it is also in the way of love, saying:

Revelation 3

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous there-

fore, and repent.

This brings us to the fifth part of the charge: discipline.

THE DISCIPLINE

Nothing can be more certain than this, that evil is not of God, but of the world. Suffering, and sorrow, and death, are not the works of God, though they be in the works of God; neither does God cooperate with them, but against them.

James 1

¹³ No one may say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.

Not the temptation, not the evil, but the good is from God.

¹⁶ Do not err, my beloved brethren.

¹⁷ Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

If then, it be so that all the adversities and afflictions of man's estate, are not of the Father, but of the world, what end does God produce by them, and to what use of goodness does He turn them?

The answer is, He uses them for the chastisement of His people, that they may be partakers of His holiness. Now that these whips and scourges of man's estate are through the wickedness of man's being come to be, God appropriates them for the ends of perfecting that being. He made His own Son perfect through sufferings:

Hebrews 12

⁶ Whom He loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.

In this God's grace unto man, his froward child, is shown, that when he had brought himself into an evil state, God overruled the evil unto greater good, thereby proving likewise His

own mastery over His own creation, overruling the wickedness of the wicked, to the glory of His own goodness.

In bringing evil into the world God had no hand directly or indirectly, but now that it is in the world He takes account of its doings, and orders them all for the good, for the greater good, of the people who trust in His name.

The meaning of His perfecting Christ, and Christ's people, through sufferings, is, that there is a dignity and glory to which He is bringing them, through manifold tribulations, and for which these very tribulations are necessary to prepare them. Of which, if any one ask for the particulars, I give those which are mentioned by the Apostle to the Hebrews, when speaking of Christ.

1. Overcoming Sin

Whereof the first is, that by faith in God we may overcome the devil, and his angels, tempting us to evil, and destroy death the triumph of sin. That this which Christ did, and which He was the first to do, is likewise our calling, is declared in the 8th *Psalm*, to which the Apostle refers in the passage alluded to:

Psalm 8

² Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength, because of Your enemies; that You might still the enemy and the avenger.

We are called, like Christ, to triumph in our cross, which is His cross, over principalities, and powers of darkness, tempting us through the world, and the flesh; and every temptation of disease, of lust, of worldliness, of devil-worship. Whereby is so much glory unto God and Christ given, through whom the victory is achieved.

Therefore the Apostle Peter declares, that the trial of our faith shall prove unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the ap-

pearing of Jesus Christ. Our trials are so many occasions of glorifying God, which otherwise we should not have had; and therefore we rejoice in tribulations also, because they work patience, and patience is the only way unto perfection.

2. Prepared to be Faithful and Merciful

The second service which God makes evil to do, unto all who trust in him, is expressed in these words of the same *Epistle to the Hebrews*:

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren; that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.

As Christ was by His human temptations prepared for His present ministry of intercession, so also are we for our office of priests; which even now we fulfill in making intercession for all men, which hereafter we shall fulfill in glory over creatures still in flesh, and girt about with infirmity.

There is a two-foldness in this idea: first, as relates to faithfulness; and second, as relates to mercifulness.

Unto faithfulness we are prepared, as Joseph was, by encountering in this world the strongest seductions and temptations away from the law, of our God, by having every form of good proffered to us as a bribe to forgo our allegiance to the unseen, and in this life unrewarding, God.

God intends us to be lord of all His works, and takes proof of our faithfulness, by casting us into the midst of the rebel host, into the land of disloyalty, blasphemy, and misrule; where, if we continue faithful unto the death, He will give us a crown of life. Now, without such a sinful and felonious

world, this kind of proof could never have been taken.

What a glory, for example, redounds to Regulus the Roman captive from his resistance of the bribes presented to him by the enemies of his country, and by his countrymen themselves;—whom neither friend nor foe, home nor exile, reward nor cruelest death, could bend from his fidelity and honor.

Such every son of God should feel himself called upon to be, and such has he an opportunity of continually being, through that knowledge of good and evil, unto which the Fall has brought us, to the end we may continually triumph over sense and sight, over present reward and present sufferings, through our faithfulness to the commandments of our God.

And so, as a master upon returning from a far journey does take account of his servants, and promote those who have been faithful unto him, Christ the Lord of all, upon His return from the far country where His Father dwells, calls an account of men, and promotes to honor and trust those who have preserved their fealty to Him, during His absence, against the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Those have proved themselves worthy to inherit a glorified body, a body of life, who preserved their body in this state of probation from the works of darkness and death. And they have proved themselves worthy of receiving government over the world, who have shown during this probation, that the world could not tempt them from their allegiance unto God.

It is, as if in the Master's absence, the whole household had risen together in insurrection, and resolved: to eat and drink and make merry at their Master's expense; to waste his substance, and dishonor his habitation, and his name; among whom some two or three, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, will not give in to the wicked confederacy, but endure scoffs, and stripes, and persecutions, and are found for their faithfulness lying in the darkness and vileness of the deepest

dungeon.

Whom, I ask, but these will that Master make rulers over all his goods? The like insurrection and base confederacy has sin introduced into this earth, the paradise of God; and we have thereby got a glorious opportunity of approving our allegiance and duty to the great Creator, as Christ also did, and enables us to do, in order to become faithful priests over the house of God.

And with respect to the mercifulness, which through suffering and temptation is brought into the fabric of man, it springs from that sympathy with distress which those who have known distress are alone fully adequate to feel.

I say not but that grace and mercy are original elements of human nature, as it was created by God; for how otherwise should it have been the image of Him who is, in the essence of His being, grace and mercy?

But as by the entering in of sin that goodness which was in God pure and holy, like the light, divided itself into the rainbow hues of grace and mercy, pity and compassion; even so, that original faculty of our nature obtained for itself diversified expression, opportunities of proving itself, after that all the world came into a state of penury, distress, and sin. Now:

- Who is he that will show forth grace and mercy, such as in God appeared by the forthcoming of His Son from His bosom?
- Who will show the merciful heart of God, while at the same time he has no fellowship with iniquity, but abhors it with a perfect hatred?
- Who, purging himself from all sin and iniquity, will yet be the companion of publicans and sinners, longing over them like a mother over her prodigal child?
- Who is he whose mercy will bear the cutting

reproaches, the cruel mockeries, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spears, the swimmings and swoonings of death, from those whom he is laboring with all his might to profit and save?

And all the while by words of grace will seek to sooth their rage; and when this fails will, by patient and silent suffering, more eloquent than words, seek to avert from them their fearful sin; and when all action and all passion fail to turn them from their fell intent, will yield himself like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth, save to cry unto God:

Luke 23

³⁴ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

This, this, is the man of mercy, whom the merciful God will appoint unto the care of His flock, into whose hands He will commit the priesthood of His house. For why? Because:

Hebrews 5

² He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that He Himself also was compassed with infirmity.

Such high ends serves evil in the present world.

3. All Things for Our Good

And yet though these be great and glorious truths, there is another which is expressed in the words of the text:

Revelation 3

¹⁹ As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.

At least in so far as they refer to the case of the angel of the Laodiceans, and to all servants of the Lord who, like him, have strayed from the path of duty. The truth taught to all such is, that God loves them too well, and is too faithful to the covenant which He has made with them, not by every means

to endeavor to bring them back to the way of righteousness and honor; as is beautifully set forth under the similitude of an unfaithful wife, in these words of the Prophet Hosea:

Hosea 2

⁵ For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.

⁶ Therefore behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths.

⁷ And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.

Whatever may have been the occasion of bringing us into a snare, God will rather than lose His child, remove the occasion, that the snare may be broken, and when He does so, His goodness is much to be adored.

Did Christians but know the secret history of all the adversities which they have proved, they would read such a tale of love, written as it were with the tears and blood of Christ! For, O He afflicts not willingly; yet whom He loves He chastens. Truly is it written, that:

Romans 8

²⁸ All things work together for good to them which love God, and are the called according to His purpose.

- The death of children,
- The death of parents,
- The nippings of the fair blossomings of hope,
- The dashing of the full cup of enjoyment to the ground,
- The coming on of the dark clouds of adversity,
- The dissolution of friendships and associations,
- The finger of public scorn,

- The reproach of those whom we have never injured but ever loved,
- The triumph over us of wicked persons,
- The despoiling of our good name, and the making of it to become a reproach,
- Drooping sickness, pallid disease, writhing pain, comfortless sorrow, yea, and death itself, (for the flesh is at times destroyed, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord;).

These I say, all these, are measures of love, expedients of wisdom, proofs of fatherly care which God continually bestows upon those whom He loves, that He may bring them to Himself; and make them partakers of a health, strength, honor, prosperity, dignity, and blessedness, which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away.

Therefore, O you children, be wise and consider your ways, when the Lord rebukes you. And when He chastens you with His hot displeasure, turn unto Him; for He is a present help in the day of trouble. There is indeed a necessity for all such trials: they are so many helps to crucify the flesh, they are so many handmaidens of holiness.

Surely severity and adversity are the true schools of virtue and godliness. Discipline makes the good soldier of Christ: without discipline there can be no order nor service, and all discipline proceeds out of love, and in love advances, and by love is made perfect.

Revelation 3

¹⁹ As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.

Think now, how far Christ's patience will go, and learn to exercise the same, when you call to mind over whom these words were uttered, even over one, who, being wretched and miserable, and blind, and poor, and naked, could with compla-

gency say:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.

The Coming Storm

O you brethren of mine, fellow laborers in the vineyard of Christ, fellow-servants in the household of God, hear the voice of your good Shepherd, and see His hand in those trials which are ready to come upon you, in the prospect of which you are even now in dismay.

When He shall arise, O you shepherds of Britain, and smite your corn, and your wine, and your oil, whether by the word of civil government or by the hand of lawless violence; when your barn floors shall be consumed by the midnight incendiary, and your houses shall be rifled at noon-day by your much neglected people, take it in good part, take it as the chastisement of your own and your fathers' lack of watchfulness over the land, of your own and your fathers' unfaithfulness to God and to the Head of the Church.

Be zealous; serve God, and kiss the Son. *Psalm 2:12.*

Be faithful; at length cease from your wine and your strong drink; cease from your pleasant and ceiled houses; cease from your academical groves, and recesses of studious ease; gird up the loins of your minds; take into your hands the shepherd's crook, and go forth and feed the flock of His pasture.

Be done, be done with your pulpit essays, your tasteful compositions, your learned disquisitions: stir up the elements of human heartedness, and speak from the heart, to the hearts of the people; awake, awake the Holy Ghost within you, and plead for God; lift up your voice aloud like a trumpet, and sound an alarm.

Go in, go in, among the infuriated people, and divert, with

words of truth and grace, the tempest of their indignation. Go in, go in, to the rich men of your flocks and parishes, and require it of them, as they would be saved, to dispense bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked. Go in, go in, you heads of the Church, unto the nobles, and princes, and monarch of the land, and tell them of the nation's condition in the sight of a holy God.

Why do you sit silent in your palaces, why do you throng the gates of ambition, why do you court the possessors of preferment; why this self-seeking when the name of Jesus is ready to be rejected, and the very covenant of the land to be broken?

O but, if you will not bestir yourselves; if you will not arise to the help of the Lord against the mighty; if you will not now listen to the voice of wisdom, crying aloud in the street; if you will not be zealous and repent, then also will He...

Proverbs 1

²⁶ ...laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes;

²⁷ When your fear comes as a desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind.

I have a solemn conviction, which daily grows upon my mind, that the Churches in these lands are about to be cast into the furnace of affliction, because the rulers of the Church are unfaithful to their trusts, and from promoting truth and godliness, have for a long time set their faces against the servants of truth and godliness, and taken in hand to promote friends and favorites: men of family, and men of respectability, men of mere learning and natural endowments.

And I perceive discipline perverted in the Church, to the vexation and hindrance of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, to the discountenance, and discouragement, and prohibition of those who are faithful in the same.

I perceive withal that the servants of the Most High God, whom the authorities of the Church are troubling and tormenting, watching and suspecting, and in all ways dishonoring, have learned a deeper lesson of reverence for authorities ecclesiastical and civil, than the Reformers possessed, and that they will not resist the power, nor carry themselves insubordinate thereto.

And what then remains? If religion is not to perish in the land, there only remains one thing possible to be done; which is, that God should:

- profane His own ordinance, as I believe He will do;
- cast down these self-seeking dignitaries, and subvert these evil authorities;
- take away their houses and lands, and all in which they prided themselves.

And, having weakened their hands, let forth His imprisoned truth, and send His heralds of salvation from their closed parishes, through the length and breadth of the land, to save whom He will save from the general wreck.

Through these only true churchmen, these only true dignitaries, the men who can face king and nobles, and furious people, He will build again the walls of Zion, if rebuilt they are to be. Be zealous, therefore, and repent, you slothful shepherds of Great Britain and Iceland; for there is a day of glory at hand to the faithful, a day of dishonor to the faithless.

O you builders in the house of God, both you and your works are ready to be cast into such a furnace that no counterfeit can withstand, no stubble, nor hay, nor wood, but only silver and gold, and precious stones.

Come then come all you poor ministers of religion, and you rich ones, be ashamed of your riches, and come, come buy honor of Him, fine gold tried in the furnace, that you may be

rich. Remember these words of the Lord:

Revelation 3

¹⁹ As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.

THE APPEAL AND ATTITUDE OF LOVE

We come now to the most tender and pathetic part of this, and of all the epistles, expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

It might be made a question whether this verse belongs properly to the second or the third division of the epistle; to Christ's charge to the angel, or to the Spirit's promise unto all. The language of it is not personal, like that of the preceding verses; but general, like that of the verse which follows after: and for this reason we might prefer to connect it with the Spirit's promise, rather than with Christ's charge.

On the other hand, it wants the constant introduction of the words, "to him that overcomes," which in other cases has put the mark between the second and third parts of each epistle; and this reason, as well as its natural and beautiful sequence to the former parts of the charge, has determined me to treat of it under this head of our Lecture.

Heaping up of Riches

The expression, "Behold I stand at the door," carries the mind back to several parts of Scripture. First, to that famous exhortation of James concerning the latter days, wherein woe is denounced upon the rich men of the earth, because they had heaped up riches to the impoverishing of the poor; yea, and gathered them together by grinding the faces of the poor,

and holding back from them the proper reward of their labor, whose groaning, under oppression, the cry of whose wants, and the pleading of whose rights were entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Meanwhile His representatives upon the earth, His stewards, the rich and the noble, instead of imitating His pity and compassion, or fulfilling the obligations which possessions and riches entail upon men, do live in pleasure and in wantonness, and nourish their hearts as in a day of slaughter;—yea, condemn and kill the just, though he makes no resistance.

In such a time, answering in most of its features to this time, and in its ecclesiastical features well answering to the character of the Laodicean Church, the brethren are called upon to be patient, until the coming of the Lord, and over again are exhorted to be patient and establish their hearts,

James 5

⁸ ...for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

And again, lest their hard and evil plight should sour and embitter their temper, and lead them to smite one another, he exhorts them in these words:

⁷ Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold the Judge stands before the door.

I cannot peruse this sketch of the Apostle James, which is expressly said to be for the last days, without being fully convinced that the original is now under our eyes, in these days in which we live; when the accumulations of wealth are enormous, and the masses of abject poverty are likewise enormous, beyond the example of any former time of the Christian Church.

Such an evil state of things may be found in the history of Rome, during the reign of the Caesars, and in Persia before

the Grecian conquest, and is still to be found in heathen lands; but the Gospel was given to do away with that as well as the other maladies of society; and behold the love of riches has prevailed over the Spirit of the Gospel.

Christendom, and especially this island, is come into the very condition from which the precepts and institutions of the Church were intended to keep mankind. In every city you have the quarter of palaces, and the quarter of hovels; and the pulpit is silent against such iniquity: and rich men say,

“It is my own.”

And the servant of God dare not answer,

“You speak a lie, it is God’s.”

And so they drop their shillings and their pounds into the lap of charity, when they should drop their hundreds and their thousands. Yea, verily, I will speak the truth, the richest and noblest congregations in this city are the least charitable. And are they the richer for it? No, but the poorer. It goes to gratify vanity and lust; it goes to keep up pomp and state; it goes to feed fat the heart for a day of slaughter.

Ah me! there will be such a day of reckoning upon rich London as will pay off the scores of a century. The two extremes will meet, and the vilest of its people will yet revel in the palaces of its nobles.

And what do we, we watchmen of the city? Why do we not speak out? Because we love feasting and getting, and ourselves figure our little part amidst the circles of fashion and assemblies of gaiety. Oh what a sin! And God also will reckon with us, and it is near for to come, and the Judge stands at the door.

The Awakening Call

Another passage forcibly brought to my mind by the expression, "Behold I stand at the door," is written in the 13th chapter of the book of *Mark*, where the Lord having set forth in order a large discourse concerning His coming, concluded it with an exhortation to watch, which He enforces by a short parable, containing, as I think, the original of the language in our text.

Mark 13

³⁴ For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

³⁵ Watch therefore; for you know not when the master of the house comes; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.

³⁶ Lest coming suddenly, He find you sleeping.

³⁷ And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

Christ having been long absent from His Church, does to the Laodicean, or last stage of it, present Himself again, and knocks for admission into His own house:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold I stand at the door and knock.

But the servants of the house have all betaken themselves to eating and drinking, and reveling and fighting in their cups, saying one to another:

Luke 12

⁴⁵ Behold the Lord delays His coming.

And so the porter is found off his post, and the whole house in disorder, little dreaming whose knock it is they hear, no, nor hearing it even; and there He stands and knocks, for loath is He to break open the house and consume them in His hot displeasure. He will rather stand and lift up His voice and make it to be heard, that some, haply wiser and more faithful

than the rest, may come and welcome Him back again to His rightful habitation.

Once He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; again shall He come unto His own, and His own shall not be ready to welcome Him. There is however a season, during which He will stand waiting and knocking, as it were lingering upon the confines of creation, and sending through its regions shrill and loud summons to prepare for His coming.

The sea shall give sign of it, and the moon and the stars of heaven, the elements also, and the distress of nations, earthquakes, and the sea and its waves roaring. Many, very many methods of mercy will He take. He will cause the voice to be lifted up:

Matthew 25

⁶ Behold the Bridegroom comes, prepare to meet Him.

And loath, loath is He to break in upon the world with judgment; fain, fain would He save them all. He lingers long, He sends His angels through the midst of heaven, preaching the everlasting Gospel, saying:

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come.

Besides this application of these words, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," to the warnings and alarms which in His mercy He will send forth through every region of nature, just before His breaking in upon its long revelry of wickedness; I think there is also signified, and perhaps more specially signified, the warning voice of the ministers of religion, which shall go forth to the ears of men, calling upon them to prepare to receive into their hearts the Lord of glory.

And, in concert with the preacher's warning voice, I believe there will likewise go forth throughout the natural region of

man's apprehensive mind, a certain dread and forecast of something awful about to fall in upon the world's ordinary course. The disturbances of nature's laws, the misgiving of man's spirit, with respect to the future, will keep harmony with the preacher's voice, and make men inexcusable if they flee not from the impending ruin into the ark of salvation, which the Gospel holds forth continually.

Parable of the Marriage Supper

To believe that there will be given by preaching, or by the Church in general, some notable signs of Christ, while He is just at the door, I am led on many accounts, but especially for this, that whenever the Supper is mentioned in the Gospels, or elsewhere, such an earnest entreaty to the people is given as may be seen by examining the parable of the marriage supper, contained in the 22nd chapter of *Matthew*, and the 14th of *Luke*.

In the latter of those narratives, there are three distinct bid-dings to the marriage. The first given to the worthy part of the people, the landholders, the agriculturists, and the comfortable well-conditioned classes, who would not come. These, I make no doubt, signify the Jews, God's chosen people, bidden from of old to the feast of fat things which God should make in the mount of Zion:

Isaiah 25

⁶ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

But they, instead of welcoming the invitation to the marriage of the King's Son, settled themselves down contentedly in their several enjoyments, and refused the honor and the duty which they owed to their sovereign Lord and Master. Yea, and certain of them...

Matthew 22

⁶ ...took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

⁷ But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their cities.

Then went forth a second bidding, not as formerly to the privileged Jews, the nation of kings and priests, but to the wretched and worthless Gentiles, who had given themselves up to all manner of open and abandoned wickedness.

Luke 14

²¹ Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind.

And such is the invitation which the Gospel carried abroad over the face of all nations. But lo! there is a third bidding that goes forth:

²² And the servant said, Lord it is done as you have commanded, and yet there is room.

²³ And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Now I ask, what is this the note of in the dispensations of God? I think it is the note of that knocking at every man's heart, which, on the eve of Christ's coming, shall more importunately be made.

After the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, had furnished their complement of guests, there yet was room. The number of the election was still incomplete. There wanted many to make up the Lamb's bridal company, whom to complete there shall be a hasty ingathering at the time of the end, and this ingathering shall be from all classes, both bad and good, from the highways and the hedges, the resort of wayfar-

ing and outlawed men.

This now I believe is the voice with which the Church is called, in her last or Laodicean state. She shall hear an invitation such as the Jews heard by their Prophets, and the Gentiles by the Apostles of the Lord.

A voice of preaching, such as has been heard only once before, shall be heard again. Christ shall speak once more by men fully gifted with the Holy Ghost. A free Gospel, and a full one, the Gospel of the marriage supper of the Lamb, shall be heard, yea, and now is heard in the Laodicean Church, and blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And who are these by whom this invitation shall be given? They are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Themselves of the Laodicean Church? I think rather of the Philadelphian; for the angel of the Philadelphian Church is faithful to his Master, whereas the angel of the Laodicean is altogether faithless.

As the Lord took out from the Jewish Church a body of men, who gathered by their faithful witness a glorious company of guests, so from the present Gentile Church I believe He is gathering another band of brothers to go forth among the Churches, and among all nations, and complete the number of His elect people; after which the door shall be shut, and there will be no more admitted to that blessed communion.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

In this opinion, that just before the coming of the Lord, there will be considerable ingathering, the preparation of a goodly company to meet Him, I am confirmed by the parable of the Ten Virgins, which represents the Church, and the part she takes on the eve of the Bridegroom's coming from heaven to this earth to be married to His Church; for that the marriage residence is on earth, is clear from the language used of

the new Jerusalem:

Revelation 21

² I saw new Jerusalem descending out of heaven, like a bride adorned for her bridegroom.

I have no doubt the earth is the marriage residence; but I think the cloud in which He comes, and into which His Church ascends to meet him, is like Sinai of old, the place where the covenant of wedlock is sealed. There the Church ascends and meets her descending Lord, as Rebekah met Isaac in the eventide.

Conceiving, then, the fullness of the Father's times to be well-nigh accomplished, the time of the Son's session at His right hand to be drawing to its long expected close, and the Father about to bring in the only begotten a second time into the world, and in His mercy giving the world warning, and likewise the Church, this parable of the Virgins reveals to us the effect which the warning has upon the Church. They are all found in a state of slumbering and sleeping at the time the voice is lifted up in the midnight:

Matthew 25

⁶ Behold the Bridegroom comes.

But part of them being both sincere in their expectation, and wise in their preparation, starting from their sleep, arise and trim their lamps, and, being ready, go in with Him to the marriage, and the door is shut.

The others, having been only formal and hypocritical in their professions of expecting the Divine presence, and being in no state of preparedness, but deeming that there would be time enough to get ready, are taken all in hurry and confusion; and while they are in perplexity, in the midst of the night, the Bridegroom comes, and enters into His chamber, and shuts the door, and opens it not again. They knock, but it

is in vain: they cry,

Matthew 25

¹¹ ...open unto us,

¹² But He answers, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

And so they lose the great blessedness of those who sup with the Bridegroom, who sit at His table in His kingdom, and ever enjoy the sight of His beauty.

Receiving Wisdom

This parable, besides confirming the doctrine of our text, that the Lord on the eve of His coming, while He is just at the door, will cause a voice to be heard loud enough to break the slumber of the Church, likewise gives us some insight into the meaning of the expression:

Revelation 3

²⁰ If any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.

His supping with us, is previous to our supping with Him, and is doubtless a prerequisite thereto. Now, the prerequisite to our supping with Him, is wisdom. The wise virgins, and they only, are admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb. We must therefore receive Christ as our wisdom, before He will receive us as His marriage guests. As wisdom He sends His Holy Spirit, who is:

James 3

¹⁷ The Wisdom...from above,...peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

This wisdom is now crying aloud in the streets, in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates in the city, she utters her words, saying:

Proverbs 1

²² How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity; and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

²³ Turn at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

This spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind, is now crying aloud in the ears of men, and entreating access unto their hearts, and she promises to them many blessings:

Proverbs 3

¹⁶ Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.

¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She also promises to them a supper and a banqueting-house, speaking on this wise:

Proverbs 9

¹ Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars.

² She has killed her beasts, she has mingled her wine; she has also furnished her table.

³ She has sent forth her maidens, she cries upon the highest places of the city,

⁴ Whoso is simple, let him turn in here: as for him that lacks understanding, she says to him,

⁵ Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

⁶ Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

While I have interpreted these last two verses of our good Bishop's charge, chiefly in a historical sense, as relating to this last age of the Church, and applied them chiefly to the ministers of the word, I am well aware that they contain together, one of the most perfect statements of the Saviour's love unto, and dealings with, every believer, and indeed every man; and

it would be an unpardonable omission, did I not present them also in this aspect to every one who has an ear to hear. To do so I feel not only drawn by inclination, but likewise directed by the language itself, which is of the most general kind:

Revelation 3

¹⁹ *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent;*

²⁰ *Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man will open I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.*

Rebuke and Chastisement

Let us therefore endeavor to conclude this, the last of the seven charges, with a practical exposition of these words. Rebuke and chastisement are two stages of the same action, each being a penal infliction of God our Father:

- the one expressed in rebuke of words, the other in visitation of distress;
- the one manifested in the conscience, hearing and acknowledging the rebuke of God, whether brought home by the voice of the preacher, or by secret meditation of our own; the other manifested to the sight of all men in the afflictions and adversities of this present life.

Now, in what way soever the rebuke of God reaches us, we ought to regard it as a token of His love. No matter from what apparent cause it may have arisen, though it may appear to have been brought on by our own guilt; yea, though beyond doubt, it have been the offspring of our own wickedness, we are not on that account the less to regard it as a token of God's love. It is not a part of the evil course of this world, which He overrules to His own ends, but it is the whole sphere and operation of it:

Amos 3

⁶ *Is there evil in the city and God has not done it?*

He is in it all, or He is in none of it. There are no loose ends in the web of His providence. There is no waste chamber in the house of His creation. He is in it all, or He is in none of it; and in it all He is in His own true character, a God of goodness and of grace. Therefore we deceive ourselves if we look upon the adversities and evils of life in any other light than as God's rebuke and chastisement to us whom He loves.

This is universal doctrine, universally applicable to all men. Therefore I call upon all prisoners, whose feet are laid in fetters of iron; all sick and diseased persons, whose soul abhors all manner of meats, and who draw near to death's gates; and upon all oppressed, aggrieved, and miserable men, suffering from innumerable heartaches, and misfortunes of every kind, surely to believe without any exception, be they ever so worthless, they cannot be worse than this Laodicean minister, that their trials and punishments, their solitude and starvation, are oft by God commissioned for their soul's health, to the end they may be partakers of His holiness.

There is not an event of evil, that has come upon this world since the Fall, but that it has been weighed and measured by God with scrupulous nicety, for the good of him to whom it was sent. I say this not to the Church only, but to all people that dwell on the earth. Mercy rejoices over judgment, love is the heart's core of the roughest blows that man endures. Love is in the pestilence, and in the famine, and in the pains of death, as much as love is in the chastisement of a Father.

That progeny of mischiefs, which sin begat, God transformed into a penal code, with which to prevent sin, and in the end to destroy it utterly from the earth. God was a Father to Adam; and when Adam became a prodigal, God, the unchangeable God, continued His Father still, and, because He is Almighty, suffers not that anything should prevent Him from acting the part of a Father to the end.

And that no extremity of evil is any proof of the restraining of a Father's bowels, He proved by sending His Son into the utmost straits and agony and extremities of evil, yea into death itself, and that a death accursed, even a malefactor's death. Yet withal was God His Father still, loved him still and from the lowest level of a felon's grave raised him to the throne of heaven on high.

Who is he, therefore, that from his circumstances, be they what they may, will, conclude himself forsaken of the love of God? No, I say it again, these are proofs of His love—proofs of a pure, an abiding love, which in its devotedness to the well-being of a man will cut off all his enjoyments, weaken and wound and slay the flesh, so that the spirit may live. They are not the less punishments for our sins, because they are likewise means of our sanctification.

Indeed this is the true character of chastisement:

1. That it should proceed for an offense;
2. That it should be measured out by love, for the removal of the offense.

It has in it both of judgment and of mercy, of anger and of love. Such is the view which the Prophet of God, Jesus Christ, who loved the world, and gave Himself for the world, would have us to take of all the evils, which in this life befall us. I speak not now of the day of judgment; I am speaking of this, the day of grace.

Now, then, when we are thus rightly taught, concerning our trials, what should we do in order to secure to ourselves the good intentions of God, and to be delivered from the state of suffering under which He has placed us? for, as the Apostle says:

Hebrews 12

¹¹ No suffering is for the present joyous, but grievous: never-

theless it works out the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised therewith.

Be Zealous and Repent

The Lord answers this question in the two words which follow:

Revelation 3

¹⁹ Be zealous therefore, and repent.

Zeal has reference to duty neglected, repentance to duty violated. The one is addressed to a state of luke-warmness and indifference; the other to a state of sin and transgression.

If we, therefore, would be delivered from the evil with which we have been visited of God, it is by stirring up the gift that is within us, and fervently serving the Lord. It is by considering our ways, by examining and proving our hearts, and turning from the evil which we have done, and walking in the way everlasting. Then:

- When the Lord beholds that we are both observant of His hand, and apprehensive of His displeasure,
- When He perceives that we have attained unto right views of affliction, and are taught to regard the bitterness of it, and the cause of it, as standing in sin only,
- When God hears in our confessions, and witnesses in our repentance, that we have opened our eyes to that sin, particular or general, which is the cause of His visitation,

His holy and loving mind is satisfied, His stroke has answered its holy end, He makes the waters of his anger to assuage, He dries up the tears of our souls, and shines forth from the rainbow of peace and of salvation.

This, now, is the second part of that practical lesson to all

men, which these verses contain. But lest any one should say like Zion,

“The Lord has cast me off, my desolation is complete; I am forsaken, and there remains no hope for me; my sins are gone over my head; things have drawn down upon me the fearful indignation of God, and the Lord has no more grace for me.”

When thus Satan enthrones himself in an afflicted and desolate heart, and scatters its solitude with the lightnings of hell, and would cover it with death and shame, then hear the voice which is lifted up by the friend of man, who is likewise the Son of God, by Him into whose hand all judgment is committed, by Him who has received all power in heaven and on earth. And what says He to the afflicted, downcast, and overwhelmed soul?

Standing at the Door, Knocking

He thus expresses the mind and attitude of God to all such oppressed ones:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any one open the door I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me.

It is not so then that anyone is given up, though in their fearful hearts they might so misdeem. Far otherwise: there is no cottage door so lowly, no cell so miserable, no hovel so desolate, at which the King of Glory knocks not in His unwearied rounds of mercy, up and down this well-beloved world. He would lift every latch and enter in, but He honors the rights of the poor householder, and He waits for a welcome.

How often in these Lectures have I had to admire the constitution of this our dear land, and here again it comes into

my mind. One of the most eloquent of her senators said:

“The poor man’s cottage is his castle: the storm may whistle round it, every wind of heaven may enter it; but the king may not, he dare not.”

Even so the King of heaven will not enter into any man’s house, that is, any man’s heart, without waiting a welcome. It is not that He loves us less, but that He honors us more. God made us to be lords, and as lords He ever entreats us. He who bought us with His blood, He who has a crown to bestow upon us, yet accounts so highly of our station that He waits until we are willing to receive Him, and that willingness is from...

Philippians 2

¹³ ...God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

We cannot come unto Christ unless the Father which has sent Him draw us. Christ honored the Father by waiting the Father’s operation in the will, and sets us the example of the same, waiting upon the Father, and thus by all our hopes of consolation, by all our desire of honor, by all the good which will come to us from receiving Christ; we are drawn to the Creator and suspended upon Him continually, whose love we can never doubt, in that He has given us Christ, and with Him freely promised to give us all things.

The Condescension of Christ

There is a condescension, as well as an assiduity in love, a warm and hearty devotedness to the salvation of every man, bespoken in these words:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold I stand at the door and knock.

And this is indeed, and in truth, the very attitude in which

Christ, the Lord of glory, seated in the Father's throne, would have Himself to be understood, as occupying towards every sinner.

This is the true symbol of the grace of God; Christ the Lord of glory knocking at the cell of the condemned criminal with a reprieve, and a patent of nobility in His hand asking admission, that He may deliver him from his fetters of iron, and seat him among princes. And it were not more ungrateful and unnatural for that condemned criminal to refuse to rise and admit the Son of his offended King thus fraught with grace, than it is for any sinner to turn a deaf ear to the voice of Christ speaking from the throne of God, and saying unto each one of us:

Revelation 3

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

I feel a power irresistibly binding me to these words, and which will not suffer me to proceed until I shall have solemnly drawn the attention of every human being to the goodness, grace, and condescension which is contained in it.

Would any one feel otherwise than honored if he were to hear that the crowned king of Britain was standing knocking at his gate for admission, and that he had come to honor his house with his presence, and to partake of his homely household fare?

Anxious he might be how to give the royal guest a worthy welcome; oppressed he might be with the wonderful condescension of his sovereign lord the king, and the weight of honor which was put upon him, one of his poor people.

But would he stay a moment, to consider whether he should admit him or not? Would he keep him there standing in doubt and uncertainty? Would he not rush with all his heart to the gate, and with his own hands unfold its leaves,

and attend most dutifully upon the footsteps of his prince?

Now, truly this is the attitude in which the Lord of glory, the King of heaven presents Himself to the most lowly; yea, and the most wicked of mankind. It is indeed a wonderful inversion of place and dignity, that God should thus condescend to one of His creatures, and a wonderful suspension it is of His rightful anger, that He should do this, for worms of the earth, children of a day; creatures whom He trusted, and they betrayed His trust; to whom He gave power, and they lifted up their heel against him;—against him, the Creator of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord of all.

It is, I say, a strange inversion of place, a wonderful suspension of justice: but it is all for the purpose of revealing His grace, and manifesting His love. Such is His grace, and such is His love. This is the favor, and measure, and manifestation of it, that He should be standing and knocking for admission into the habitation of the meanest and most rebellious of His people.

To Sup Together

And for what end thus stands He without, seeking admission? That He may come in and sup with us, and we with him. The supper was the principal meal in the east, and eaten when the labors of the day were closed. It was the season of familiar and friendly intercourse, when both the body and the soul were refreshed with their appropriate provision of God. Christ proposed Himself as a guest at every man's table; and well might every man say to Him, as did the centurion in the days of His flesh:

Matthew 8

⁸ Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof.

But He delights to be gracious; it is His pleasure to condescend: and as, when a king desires, it is always the true sign

of reverence and obedience to obey, even though it should be contrary to our sense of what is due to His superior dignity. So when Christ asks to be permitted to come in and sup with us, it is ours to say:

Revelation 22

²⁰ Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

There is no such mark of fellowship as to enter your house, and eat of your bread. It is in all countries the sign of confidence; and it constitutes a ground of trust, which even our Lord felt and acknowledged, when He said:

John 13

¹⁸ He that ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

Christ, therefore, in asking to be admitted to sup with us, condescends to enter into bonds of the closest hospitality and friendship. He wishes to be indebted to us; He wishes to appear to take when He is bestowing a grace. He knows the greater blessedness of giving than of receiving, and of this He would have us to be partakers: not that He does so in appearance merely, but that He feels it in reality. He feels to every man as a brother, and He earnestly desires brotherly love from every man; and it is only by being first entertained as our Brother, that He afterwards makes us partakers of His throne.

It is the season of the marriage supper, when the bride shall see the Bridegroom, and be divided from him no more. He is sending round the invitation to all men to be guests at that table which shall never be drawn, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom of heaven.

- He takes a last round among the habitations of men;
- He sends His messengers far and near, to invite all, both good and bad; He will furnish them with robes, to sit in comely and decent array, in the presence of the king.

- He is making a feast, and He is obeying His own injunction, sending for the halt and the maimed, the poor and the destitute; He craves it of them to receive His invitation.
- He wishes to enter into their heart by faith; He wishes by love to woo His future spouse; He stands at her gate, and entreats her love; He would win her with lowliness, He would entreat her with grace, He would load her with benefits, He would make His own Spirit to enter into her, that in the day of the resurrection He might quicken her from the dust of the earth, and array her in garments worthy of being looked upon by His Father, into whose presence nothing may enter that defiles and makes a lie.

I quoted from the *Song of Solomon* (chapter 5) language appropriate to this action of a loving bridegroom; and I now remember, in the great poet of nature, a passage which not unworthily does express the same assiduity and condescension of love contained in the text. One who, being deeply in love, knew what love's desire is, is made by our great bard thus to personate a man, and tell how she would carry herself towards her whose love she sought. She is asked what she would do: she answers in these words, which faintly shadow forth the thing which God, in the person of His Son, has done to win the soul of man:

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
 And call upon my soul within the house:
 Write loyal cantos of contemned love,
 And sing them loud, even in the dead of night.
 Holla your name to the reverberate hills,
 And make the babbling gossip of the air
 Cry out Olivia!
 Oh, you should not rest
 Between the elements of air and earth,

But you should pity me.⁶

Such then is the last of these seven charges, which contain the very essence of a shepherd's love, a shepherd's tenderness, and a shepherd's care. If His rules and canons there expressed be admirable, no less admirable is the spirit in which they are expressed. This spirit He wishes us ministers of the Gospel and shepherds of the flock to study and to express unto all the people, that they, taking example by us, may carry themselves in like wise towards the brethren, in their several relations, combining the same love with the same wisdom, the same mercy with the same holiness.

He wishes us to show the example of men in trust under Christ, to act nothing for ourselves, but all for Him; this to do out of the submission of our own will, and its devotedness to Him who has redeemed it, to the end that kings and magistrates, and all office-bearers in the political estate, fathers and masters, and husbands, and every person whatever, may follow the example of their minister, and do everything as the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, honoring him as their Lord and Master.

6 William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, Act 1, Scene 5.

THE SPIRIT'S PROMISE

AND now we come to the third and last part of this Epistle, expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on His throne.

In the original, throughout the whole of this book, there oftentimes is, as we have already observed in these Lectures, a setting aside of the rules of grammatical construction in the sublimity and condensation of the matter to be expressed. This verse, as well as some of the other verses containing the promises of the Spirit, is an instance wherein the subject stands without any verb, in order that it may appear in stronger relief. It is, being literally rendered:

“the conqueror—to him I will give to sit with me in my throne, as I also conquered, and sat with my Father in His throne.”

It is very remarkable, that among the many characteristics of the faithful Christian which occur in Scripture, the Spirit always makes choice of this one, namely, victory, to designate those whom He would reward. Seven times has He occasion to designate those who should enter into the reward of Christ; and every time He adopts the same designation of the vanquisher.

And why should it be so? Because controversy and conflict, and endurance of hard service, are the conditions of everyone who would attain unto glory. Wherefore also, the whole of this book, from the beginning to the ending, is a scene of tumult, war, and bloodshed.

To this arena of conflict, set forth in the seals and the trum-

pets, in the witnesses, in the persecutions and subtlety of the dragon, that old serpent the devil, the Church is introduced by her great Commander in this first vision; which, as it were, contains instructions to His army on the eve of battle:

- His making of them acquainted with the various methods of attack which they should have to sustain, and of defense proper to each;
- His holding out of the several rewards which, when the battle is ended, He shall bestow on the valiant and the victorious.

The vision of the Churches, I say, considered as a part of the one great action of this book, is the equipping, instructing, and marshaling of the Lord's host; the furnishing of them with their spiritual weapons of knowledge, and faith, and virtue, and patience, and temperance, and charity.

Likewise the propounding of the spiritual rewards which should come to every one who should stand in his place, and keep his charge, nor flinch from the face of the foe.

The last three chapters contain the fruits of the victory, the peace in heaven and in earth, which the long and tedious conflict has purchased, the glorious crown and reward which the faithful combatants have achieved unto themselves. So that, taken as a whole, this book is certainly one of the most precious in the canon; being to the Church at once her law, her history, her prophecy, and her triumphant rest.

And yet for all its excellence it had almost gone out of the sight of the Church, who, in consequence of neglecting her instructions, has lost sight of her calling, and fallen from her battle, and knows not friend from foe; has dropped her weapons from her hand, and is gone to sleep in the midst of her perilous work.

I feel that the Lord is awakening and bestirring her to re-

new the conflict. He is calling upon His ministers to blow the trumpet, and sound an alarm; for the enemy is coming in like a flood, and the Lord is lifting up a banner against him. *Isaiah* 59:19.

And because to all well-fought fields, the first and chief prerequisite is well-disciplined, brave, and cheerful soldiers, wise instruction, and right order and method, I feel within myself that a very great honor has been conferred upon me, in being permitted to open and to apply unto the militant Church, these instructions of her absent Captain, on this the eve of the perilous conflict. Let me then endeavor, by the Spirit, to present this the seventh and last great prize of battle, to the ambition of every good soldier of Christ.

SITTING IN THE THRONE

The promise consists of two parts; the first containing the assurance of a throne, and that no mean one, the very throne of Christ:

Revelation 3

²¹ ...I will give him to sit with me in my throne...

The second containing the encouragement of His own example, in that, for His conquest, His Father had given Him to sit down with Him on His throne.

²¹ ...even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on His throne.

In order to lay the basis of an interpretation of this promise, it will be necessary to examine into the difference between the throne of Christ and the throne of the Father; of which the former only is promised unto us, and the latter pertains to Christ alone.

With regard to the throne of the Father, it is that in which Christ now sits, not the throne of David, which is not yet pre-

pared on Mount Zion, nor yet the throne of the Son of Man, which all kingdoms of the earth shall obey, both Jew and Gentile, but the throne of God Invisible, yet omnipotent; not in the world, and yet ruling over the world. That throne which is essentially spiritual, because God is a Spirit, which is eternal and unchangeable, and never has been, neither can be resisted.

The angels which kept not their first estate, and tempted man from his allegiance; and man who has rebelled against God, and carried with him his whole habitation into evil, have only brought to light the graciousness of that throne of God without in the least disproving its omnipotency.

Everything is working out the purposes of His will. It has appeared to go against the good pleasure of His goodness; but His kingdom yet rules over it all. The angels and man have betrayed their trust; and the consequence has been evil and disorder. But God had not committed to the creature any of His own essential, incommunicable, and inalienable attributes, of power and goodness.

He could have stricken them and their work into nothing, by the word of His power; but preferred to show forth His long-suffering and grace unto men, and His power to redeem and save the world which He had created and made. The throne of God remains all entire, not a pillar of it is shaken; nor can be shaken, while the grace, and mercy, and righteousness, and holiness of Him who sits thereon, have conspicuously appeared unto all men, and unto all creatures.

Psalm 76

¹⁰ He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of His wrath He restrains.

Psalm 103

¹⁹ His throne is in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.

The throne of Christ, again, I take to be the throne of the man, that part of infinite power, that commission of government, that function and charge which God originally intended man to occupy, and which Christ, the Man-Redeemer of man, shall occupy in the fullness of the times.

Christ's throne is not the throne of David merely, for that has respect unto the Jewish nation, and unto them only. But it is the throne of man, taken at the highest, which God for man did purpose;—not as in Adam it appeared, but as in Adam it would have come to, if Adam had not fallen; and as in Christ it will come to, who has recovered and restored all things.

Christ's throne, whereof we are promised the fellowship, is a throne which all created things shall observe and obey: but itself also is a created thing; whereas the Father's is increate and incommensurate with any created thing. For Christ, to sit down with His Father in His throne, proves Him to be commensurate with God. For us to sit down with Christ in His throne, proves us to be commensurate with Christ as a creature.

The Father's throne is the Creator's absolute power, Christ's throne is the creature's summit of power: the one essentially Divine, the other essentially not Divine; the one that cannot be shaken, the other that has been shaken, but coming into the condition of never being shaken again. And why never again shaken? Because it is confirmed with the Godhead's firmness, being united to Godhead in the person of the Christ, who is therefore the nail fastened in a sure place, whereon is hung all the glory of His Father's house, and the issue.

In describing the throne of Christ, I have been thus insensibly led to the similitude of the nail; which, when I refer to the Prophet Isaiah, I find used in like manner to illustrate the throne of Christ:

Isaiah 22

²³ I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place, and He shall be as a glorious throne to His Father.

At this present time then, Christ is seated with His Father on the Father's throne; and not idly seated there, but for the purposes of rule and government: and being seated there, He exercises all the Father's rule. That is, He fulfills Godhead's Divine function: and after the manner of Godhead He fulfills it; that is, by the Spirit. His scepter, since His ascension into glory, has been a spiritual scepter. He has ruled for God, in God's stead, in being God. Unseen, yet everywhere present; unfelt, yet everywhere acting.

And what then, it may be said, is the Father's function? The answer is, To glorify the Son, to put forth the plenitude of Godhead through the Christ. Christ having made an image for Godhead out of the substance of the creature, it has been the Father's part to inform that image with Godhead life and power.

The Father's work since Christ's ascension into glory, has been to manifest Christ as very God. "He is a man," said the devil, "and but a man." "He is a man," said the Jew, "and but a man." "He is a man," says the unbeliever, "and but a man." And God says:

"Yea, He is a man, a very man, but behold He is also God; and in proof of it, see I seat Him on my throne; see, I put into His hand my scepter, and behold He has strength to wield it. See that you worship Him, all you angels: see that you worship Him, all you gods.

"Ask of me, O mankind, any prayer in His name, and see whether I will not grant it; ask me any prayer in any other name, and see if I will grant it. By Him shall every one swear that swears upon the earth; and he that blesses himself, shall bless himself in the name of Christ."

Verily, with what care, frequency, and urgency, Christ, in the days of His flesh, did not His own will, nor spoke His own words, nor came at all in His own name, nor sought His own glory, but the Father's. With that same care does the Father, since the Son has finished His work of glorifying Him, never cease to glorify the Son, to hold Him up in that place and prerogative proper to Himself, and to insist for the same honor to Him as to Himself.

This is the meaning of Christ sitting with the Father in His throne. Christ at present is the end of rule, the Father may be said to be ministering to the glory of Christ, as Christ heretofore ministered to the glory of the Father. Jehovah said unto David's Lord:

Psalm 110

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

Christ is the enthroned majesty, and the Father is become the active subduer of all who will not bow the knee and confess to Him. The Father is acting for Him, and Christ is receiving the fruit of the Father's action. This is the honor which Christ has now manifestly in spiritual places; that is, in the region of the pure and disembodied, and likewise the embodied spirit,—by the Holy Ghost.

And forasmuch as all visible creation, even in its present rebellious state, is subject to the Spirit, either as a leader or restrainer, Christ has now the Godhead dominion over even the rebelliousness of nature itself:

- keeping of everything to its law,
- binding of everything within its limits,
- blessing of everything according to its goodness,
- punishing and restraining of every thing according to its evil, revealing God's hand in the raging and tumult

of a wicked world.

All of this now belongs unto Christ, and is by Christ exercised, into whose hand all power and judgment both in heaven and on earth are committed.

Such is the Divine dignity of the man Christ Jesus, such the glory which He now enjoys, the same as that which He had with the Father, before the world was; but with this difference, that now He has it, as a man in the flesh, in His creature subsistence, whereas then He had it in the pure Godhead.

How, it may be asked, can a being in manhood subsisting, put forth the power of the eternal Godhead? The answer is, By the ministry of the Holy Ghost, who is very God. Christ's Godhead exercised itself through the Holy Ghost, as well as Christ's manhood.

Even in the Church there is at once a witness to Christ's manhood, and a witness to His Godhead. The witness to His manhood is in our regeneration, wherein He begets in us a new man, after His own image, and likewise after the image and likeness of God. The witness to His Godhead is by the Holy Ghost working in us all mighty works above and against nature, certifying God to be in us of a very truth.

There is in the Church the spirit of Christ, the author of holy humanity. There is also in the Church, the Holy Ghost, the indwelling God. The former prepares us to be the temple of the living God; the latter is the living God, who dwells in the temple. Both do testify to a life of Christ; the one the glory of His manhood, the other the glory of His Godhead; both testimonies to one person, and together proving that He is Christ, very God, and very man, two distinct natures, in one person subsisting.

And this twofold witness in the Church is the Father's doing: He it is who subdues us unto His Son, and makes us His

willing people. He it is who gives to Christ such a succession of martyrs and prophets, such a glorious inheritance in the saints; and this He does, because of what Christ did for Him, and thus the honorable relation of the Father and the Son, that parent of all relations, is gloriously revealed by the Holy Ghost, in the Church.

Christ then at present possesses both His Father's glory and His own glory. But this is, so to speak, an inversion of the eternal order, seeing the Father is the first in origin, and the end of worship; self-originated, self-subsisting, and sustaining in His person, the immeasurable and unchangeable Godhead: whereas, of Christ considered as the second person, it is the property to be eternally originated from the Father, yet having a necessary self-existence in the Godhead; out of which self-existence, in order to become the Christ, He continually dies, in order to receive Christhood, or an anointed life.

And therefore to Him it is proper as the Christ to derive continually His life from the Father; to have life in Himself indeed, inasmuch as He is a fountain of life, yet to derive the same from the Father:

John 5

²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in himself.

This present exaltation of Christ to be the end of rule, the object of worship, and the Lord of all obedience, is therefore, as we said, an inversion of the eternal order, a manifestation in time of certain great and glorious ends, but not the eternal order and subordination which will be seen for ever and ever.

The eternal order and subordination is:

1. The Father, origin and fountain of all, invisible and incomprehensible, cause of all; unto whom all worship, and praise, and service, from all creation, ascends in a

continual stream losing itself forever in His unseen glory.

2. A Christ the Head, and King, and Priest, of all the visible world, who comprehends all being, and orders all motion, and centers in Himself all honor and glory, yet acknowledged it not, nor retains it to Himself, but carries it within the veil of the invisible and incomprehensible Godhead.
3. A Holy Ghost from Christ, the head and heart proceeding in streams of life through the body, which is the Church in them, and by them testifying at once of the Father and the Son, of God and of Christ, as has been said above; testifying of Christ as the Head of all, even as we now testify of Adam, by perfect conformity to His image, and testifying of Him, the Mediator, who lays hold also of the Godhead, by those mighty works, those miracles of power, which the Church shall forever exercise for Christ, and, exercising for Him, shall ever prove Him to be God as well as man.

I say the eternal order is God, Christ, and the Church, standing in the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and together working in perfect unity, yet preserving distinctness of subordination.

Since, then, this is the necessary and eternal order which for the present is kept out of sight, to give place for the manifestation of Christ's Divinity, the question arises:

“When shall this manifestation cease, and the eternal order become the manifested order? When shall Christ cease from the throne of the Father, and come to occupy His own throne?”

This is the event known in Scripture by the giving up of the kingdom to the Father; and it ought to be well cleared up in this place, in order to our understanding the distinct differ-

ence between the throne of the Father and the throne of Christ.

God is known, as God, by the creation of all things, and men among the rest. Man created nothing, but was himself created; and though he was created for governing all, he is himself not the less a creature on that account. To create therefore, is the glorious distinction of God; to rule creation, is the glorious end of man.

Now Christ appeared first as a man, although He was also the Creator. He was first seen, handled, and heard in the world, as a sorrowful and suffering man; promised indeed before, and in all worthy ways presented unto the world's desire, yet first manifested in the world as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as a creature, and of the creatures the most lowly and despised.

And though, as we have shown under His title, "The Beginning of the Creation of God," that this also was true of Him from the beginning, from the time He came under the decree of creature existence. Still it was not the whole truth; for He was Creator as well as creature, and Creator He never ceased, nor can cease to be.

In order therefore that God may rightly and truly manifest Christ, it is necessary that the manifestation should not stop here, with His incarnation, but proceed forward in some way which shall manifest His Godhead, His Creator-power, His Creator-action.

This began to be done from the time He was baptized with the Holy Ghost; whereupon He did works proper to the Creator, imparting life to withered limbs and dead bodies, giving commandment to the elements of nature, creating bread, ordering the chaos of the heavens and of the deep, and doing other things which pertain not to man as man, but to man as the witness, the life, the hand of the invisible and omnipotent

God.

Yet withal, this was but the manifestation of His being the temple of God, just as the Church possessing her supernatural gifts is the manifestation of the same. In virtue of what He said and did by the Holy Ghost, after His baptism, He was proved to be the faithful and true Witness of the Father.

But this is not enough; He must be shown to be verily and indeed one with the Father; and this is done by exalting him from the grave to the throne of God, where sitting in the inaccessible light, and having the seven Spirits of God, He puts forth in and by His Church Godhead works: of raising the dead, healing the sick, working miracles; and likewise manhood works: of presenting the image of God in flesh, and doing all God's holy commandments. Thus Christ, as Head over all unto the Church, is manifested to be God.

The Church, if she had within her the signs and wonders, and miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, would be an efficient witness of Christ's Godhead. She is not such a witness, as she now stands devoid of these.

It is not by words, but by works that Godhead is proved; namely, works of creation, such as occupied the first six days. The Church ought to have in her hand such works; if she would prove Christ to be God. His Godhead is a tradition without these; a venerable tradition, but not likely to stand the infidelity of these times, which with hardihood is setting all tradition civil and ecclesiastical at nought. And I believe, that if Christ's Godhead is to keep its ground in the world much longer, the powers of the Holy Ghost must be, yea and will be manifested again, and they will be manifested in the Church throughout eternity.

By her wise regiment of this earth, she will manifest forth Christ's perfect manhood; by her works in a higher sphere in the way of continuing creation, or ordering creation, or in

some such way, she will manifest Christ's Godhead, and the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, whose lip for word, whose hand for action, whose mind for wisdom she is.

GIVING THE KINGDOM BACK TO THE FATHER

Forasmuch then as Christ's Godhead is now in the progress of manifestation, by means of the Church, as also is His manhood,—traditions both in the word of the Scriptures, realities both in the works of the Church,—and to this end, God the Father Himself is condescending to be the agent; the question propounded above as to the time when the kingdom shall be given up, is in other words this question:

“When shall the manifestation of Christ as God, be concluded?”

For the solution of which, as in all other questions, the Holy Scriptures must be consulted. Christ Himself declared that He...

Luke 9

²⁶ ...shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and [in the glory] of the holy angels.

This shows clearly, that as Christ is now the possessor of the Father's throne, so shall He come clothed with His Father's glory. And because Peter declares, that what they saw upon the holy mount was the manifestation of the glory in which He is to come again, and this consisted not in the glorification of the man only, but in His investiture with the Father's glory also, we must infer, that in both of these He is to come again, having in His hands the reins both of Divine and human regiment.

And in this book of the *Apocalypse* we have many things confirmatory of this conclusion. In the very next vision, a throne is presented to us, and a man is seen seated thereon, as

was seen also by Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 1:26). This we know to be the throne of the first person of the blessed Trinity, from the benediction with which the book opens (*Ezekiel* 1:4); and it is continually called the throne of God (*Ezekiel* 7:10, 15).

Now, this same throne, when the new Jerusalem descends to the earth, is called the throne of God and of the Lamb (*Revelation* 20:1, 3). Nor is it ever so called till then, although the Lamb from the beginning is represented as in the midst of the throne, and has co-equal share of all the reverence and worship.

It is in truth the throne of God and of the Lamb, from the beginning, as it was seen in heaven; and it is so named when it descends to, and rests upon, the earth. And this, I think, is a strong proof that Christ shall in that future state of things exercise upon the earth, all the power of God, as well as all the power of man. That honor of Godhead which He now has within the veil shall then be seen in open manifestation.

The throne of God which has heretofore been in the heavens, shall then be upon the earth. The whole vision of celestial things which is spread out over the fourth and fifth chapters, is certainly realized on the earth in the 21st and 22nd chapters. And if so, it seems to be put beyond question, that Christ shall come as God, and exercise the functions of Godhead upon the earth from the time of His coming.

What these functions are to be, as yet appears not; and when or how they are to terminate, does not yet appear; but it certainly appears, that as the representative of God, in the throne of God, no less than as the representative of man, in the throne of man, He is to appear.

This much having ascertained in general, we now proceed to examine some passages which cast forth light upon the subject, especially as to the time of the giving up of the kingdom back again into the Father's hand.

In interpreting the Scriptures, which bear upon the coming of Christ, this canon is to be kept in mind: that they did not anticipate the further knowledge revealed in the *Apocalypse*. If that knowledge was in the Church already,

- What need for the Father to give it unto the Son after His ascension?
- What need of Christ's giving it to John with such solemnity and importance?
- What need of John's consigning it to the Churches with such awful charges, to know and to keep its sayings?

It is an integral part of the whole revelation of God, necessary to the completeness, waited for by the other parts, and casting light upon them all. It stands to the New Testament, as the New Testament stands to the Old: and as the Old Testament needs the light of the New, so the Gospels and Epistles need the light of the *Apocalypse*; especially in what concerns the coming of the Lord, and the condition of things which is to follow.

And as the Gospels contain but hints of the calling of the Gentiles, reserved for Paul to open, and make the argument of his Epistles, yet prepare the way for it in the act of Incarnation, and the command to preach the Gospel to all nations. So the Epistles and Gospels contain but hints of the things connected with the coming of Christ, and expect the full revelation thereof in the *Apocalypse*.

And therefore I lay it down as a canon, that with what carefulness we study the Gospels, for the exposition of these things in the Prophets, connected with the coming of Christ in humility, and the Epistles of Paul for the exposition of what concerns the calling of the Gentiles, we ought to examine the *Apocalypse* for all which concerns the coming of Christ in glory and majesty, and by it open the other Scriptures which speak thereof.

This is the defect of every creed of the Church whatsoever, and especially of the Protestant creeds, that they have slipped from the responsibility of coming to conclusions out of the *Apocalypse*: they have left out the light of that book, and constructed their symbols of faith, as if they could do without it. And the consequence is, that the Church is entrapped in the snare, and held fast from making any progress, and, unless she open her eyes to more light, will surely be taken by surprise, and caught unprepared.

Do we, or do we not, honestly believe the *Apocalypse* to be of the canon of revelation? Yea. Then for what end was it given? For the end of throwing light upon the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we have already ascertained from the *Apocalypse*, that upon the earth, in the new Jerusalem, Christ fills both thrones; the throne of God, and the throne of man. And therefore we conclude, that the throne of God cannot be surrendered in order to come to the earth, but is actually enjoyed upon the earth.

But then, it may be said, What mean these declarations, that He is to sit on His Father's right hand, till His enemies be made His footstool, and then to give up the kingdom? Do not these imply, that when He leaves His Father's right hand to come to the earth, He must have given up the kingdom?

I answer, What means that word, *leaving His Father's right hand in order to come to the earth*? The fallacy is in that word, God comes with him. He comes in His Father's glory. In new Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb, and new Jerusalem is on the earth. It is said:

Psalm 110

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

Because of this, it is rashly concluded that when He comes again, He ceases to sit at the same right hand of the eternal God; because that Majesty in the heavens is, in the fullness of time, to come and abide with men, and not always in the heavens to remain. Wherefore it is proclaimed over the descent of the new Jerusalem:

Revelation 21

³ Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them.

When the Majesty in the heavens is spoken of, and Christ's being seated on the right hand thereof, it is not the invisible Godhead, but the glory which once appeared on Sinai, and dwelt between the cherubim, and again on the mount of transfiguration, and again to Stephen and to Paul, and shall yet appear to all kindreds of the earth, when He shall come in the glory of His Father, and in His own glory; even as Christ in express words declares to the high priest and the assembled council:

Matthew 26

⁶⁹ Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Compare this with the version of *Luke*:

Luke 22

⁶⁹ Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

This makes it clear, that His manifestation is indeed the manifestation of that glory which He is presently enjoying with the Father, of that Father's throne, wherein His is presently instated.

And in His parable of the tares and the wheat, He expressly names that kingdom in which the righteous are to shine like stars in the firmament, "the kingdom of my Father." *Matthew*

13:43; 26:29.

There can remain no doubt therefore upon the mind of any one, who rightly apprehends these things, that the kingdom which is to be manifested on the earth under Christ, is the kingdom and power of the Father.

Christ does not give up the kingdom to the Father, in order that He may come to the earth, but is revealed as occupying both thrones, the throne of God the Father, and His own throne. And if I err not, the 20th chapter of *Revelation* describes the throne of the Son of Man over the earth, and the 21st and 22nd the throne of God.

The thrones of the 20th chapter are the thrones of Christ's saints governing the earth: but His own throne is not there described; because it is the new Jerusalem, where He reigns in the glory of the Father. And if some think that this great white throne of chapter 20 be contemporaneous with, and not consequent upon, the Millennium, then it represents the new Jerusalem under another symbol, and is the throne of the Father. But more of this hereafter.

Forasmuch then as Christ is upon the earth, not only in His own throne but in His Father's throne, we must reject the conclusion, that He gives up the kingdom to the Father, in order to come to the earth, if it agrees with the 110th *Psalms*, and the other parts of Scripture resting thereon, as we now proceed to show it certainly does.

That Psalm we know, from Apostolical authority, is to be interpreted of the glory, unto which Christ was exalted at the ascension; yet the chief part, indeed the whole of its scenery (except the first verse) is laid upon the earth, in Zion, in the destruction of the kings, and especially of the head, (not heads, but head, the last personal Antichrist,) over many countries. And in the midst of this action He is still called:

Psalm 110

⁵ The Lord at your right hand.

Now, this *Psalm* is announced as concerning, and altogether concerning, the act of the bringing all His enemies under the feet of the Son. And therefore we must infer, that when He begins to act upon the earth, against the kings of the earth, and the head of their confederacy, He is still understood as seated upon the right hand of God, or in the Father's throne.

Anyone perusing the *Psalm* would at once say:

“This is an action done upon the kings of the earth, in order to bring their rebellious necks under the yoke of Christ.”

The New Testament adds the information, that He has taken that seat already, and waits there for the fulfillment of what is here written. And it further informs us, that the throne of God shall come down, and consequently along with it both God and the Lamb;—in other words, that He will come in His own glory, and in His Father's glory.

With many others I had supposed the session at the right hand of God to be Christ's state of invisibility, and supposed that between the first and second verses of this *Psalm*, He left that seat, in order to act upon the earth. But a more close consideration of the *Psalm*, convinces me that it is an expression of Christ's exaltation, as it shall be manifested in putting down all His enemies. In one word, that it is the description of the glory of His coming in power and wrath; and referred to by Him in the declaration made before the high priest, as cited above.

And so, in the *Hebrews*, it is referred to as the event for which He is waiting. His enemies have a period of grace allowed them, during which He commands all men to repent; and waits long, and bears patiently; but at length the day of wrath comes, and the action of putting His enemies under His

feet proceeds.

The 8th *Psalm*, oft joined with this in the references of the New Testament, we know, from *Hebrews 2:6-7*, is not yet fulfilled, but shall be exhibited in the reality of it in the day of His personal appearance and reign upon the earth. His having all things brought under His feet, is there declared to be a state of things which belongs to the age to come. It is, in very truth, the state of things during the world to come, not preparatory and previous to the reign upon the earth, but the very condition of reigning upon the earth. He comes to do it; and He is exhibited as the doer of it, in the glory, not of man only, but of God also.

Let us now pass to the famous passage in the 15th chapter of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The subject of which the Apostle is entreating, is the resurrection of the dead, which formed the hope and consolation of the Church; first, as to the certainty; and, secondly, as to the manner of it.

Not a few of the Antichristian faction in his time argued, that the resurrection was past already, and the time for enjoying the world was come. Among these were Hymeneus and Philetus, who, like some of our modern spiritualizers, took the first resurrection to be the same with regeneration, interpreting carnally the expressions, that we are buried with Christ in baptism, have crucified the old man with him, are risen to newness of life, have ceased from sin, are passed from death unto life, &c.

Now then, said they, let us eat and drink, and rejoice and make merry, and hold the millennial kingdom, and sit at Christ's table, and drink wine with Him; and so they made their belly their god, and became drowned in all manner of licentiousness.

Our modern spiritualizers, who believe regeneration to be the same with the first resurrection, go not so far only be-

cause their faith is not so influential, nor their reasoning so consecutive. Also their mode of spiritualizing takes away the power of honest interpretation, and enables them with all imaginable ease to accommodate the Scriptures to the state of public feeling, and the form of conventional religion.

To meet the shameless errors into which this tenet, in the hands of the first heresiarchs had brought many of the disciples, the Apostle discourses of the hope of the resurrection. And having presented the risen Christ as the first-fruits of them that sleep, the assurance of resurrection unto all men, and of a blessed resurrection unto as many as will lay hold upon it, he proceeds to draw out the order of time, and the succession of events, until the work of redemption should be completed.

Christ's resurrection from the dead, he says, is the first-fruits of them that are fallen asleep, who rest in their graves until Christ shall come, when they also will come along with Him; "they that are Christ's at His coming" (*1 Corinthians* 15:23)—they, and no more than they. And why, it may be asked, gives the Apostle no account of the rest? Because it is of the resurrection hope, not of the judgment, that he is treating.

This is the point of doctrine which had been perverted in the Church by those who said:

"It is past already,"

and to whom he answered:

"It is neither past, nor yet come, nor comes until Christ shall be manifested in the clouds of heaven."

That it is not the general resurrection of which he entreats, is not only manifest from his entire silence concerning it, but also from the glorious particulars which he enumerates of

honor, immortality, glory, and spirituality, as proper to the raised body, whereof not one is applicable to any but the saints: “those who are Christ’s.”

Then, says he, that is, upon the coming of Christ with His saints, is the end. Not *now*, says the Apostle, but after we are raised in those incorruptible and spiritual bodies, which shall not be liable to temptation, but the continual occasion of holiness, and instruments of the Holy Ghost for all Divine enjoyments.

1 Corinthians 15

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

That this is the end of all, is marked by the deliverance of the kingdom up to the Father, who is now working for the purpose of showing Jesus of Nazareth to be the very Christ, the very God who created all things. This He does by putting forth through Him the Godhead power of wresting all things out of the hands of Satan and of death, of judging all creatures thus rescued from the power of evil, and rewarding them with a just recompense of honor or dishonor, of reward or punishment in the eternal world.

This being done in Christ, and through Christ, Christ is proved to be the Head of creation, and from thenceforth rules it in peace and tranquility for His Father; being Himself subject to the Father, subject King and Priest of a subjected world.

But while this is truly the argument of all these passages of Scripture, there is nothing in it to favor the opinion, that the time for the accomplishment of all this, is at the coming of Christ; which I believe to be at the end of the Millennium, for the reasons set forth above.

But, to continue our interpretation:

1 Corinthians 15

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered the kingdom to the God and Father, when He shall have put down (undone) all rule and all authority and power.

²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

²⁶ The last enemy shall be put down (undone) is death.

²⁷ For He has subordinated all things under His feet [see also *Psalms* 8:4-8; *Hebrews* 2:6-9]. When, however, He says that all things are subordinated, it is manifestly with the exception of Him who subordinated all things to Him.

²⁸ When, however, all things shall be subordinated to Him, then even the very Son shall be subordinated to Him that has subordinated all things to him, that God may be all things in all.

This passage, of which I have preserved the form of the original, contains these things:

1. That when He comes with “them that are His,” there remains a work still to be done before the end, and which therefore must be done in His presence, and by Himself.
2. This work is the putting down, or utter undoing of all beginning, liberty, and power, to prove Himself to be the Beginning, and the only Beginning of the creation of God, the only giver of liberty, and the only possessor of power. I know not well what is the distinction of these three things, nor is it very material to our argument. But it is manifest from what follows, that they are His enemies, whether spiritual or earthly potentates is not said; perhaps both.
3. Next comes the period and end of His reigning, anterior to that surrender of the kingdom: “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” *1 Corinthians* 15:25. This reigning is posterior to His coming, as indeed are all these events; and properly begins from that time at which He comes to subdue and rule over

His enemies; the thousand years during which we reign with Christ upon the earth. Of these enemies, the last which shall be utterly undone is death.

4. That the only thing excepted from this universal subordination to Christ, is God Himself. And the reason of this is, that He, even the Father, may be proved to be the all things in all persons, that is, in Christ, and in all who govern with Him over the subject world.
5. Lastly, that this complete subordination of the world being accomplished, Christ shall deliver all which He has now brought into perfect harmony with the Divine purpose, up into the hands of the Father, and rule over it in the Father's name for ever and ever.

Now, though the Apostle does not define the period which these events should take in being accomplished, He distinctly avows that they are all consequent upon Christ's coming with His saints; a thing which remains to be done thereafter, for which He has received power, and in the accomplishment of which He shall put that power forth.

He informs us that the great end and design of His kingdom is to put every thing into its proper place, order, and office; which being accomplished, He shall surrender all into His Father's hands, as the excellent work which, as man, but man endowed with God's power, man wrought in by God, He has accomplished. He is now, even now, exalted to that superlative dignity, as the same Apostle, in terms of the same two Psalms (8 and 110) declares:

Ephesians 1

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

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

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

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

Here is the same order, Christ, the Church, and ail things heavenly and earthly, subordinated for the same end of God "being all in all." It is now in spiritual and real existence, but it remains to be manifested. He comes to bring it into manifestation. He has accomplished His triumph in the spiritual or heavenly regions; it remains that He should accomplish it in the visible and earthly.

And He is now sitting in expectation at the right hand of the Majesty on high, waiting till the fullness of the times for gathering into one, and subordinating all under His headship, be come. And meanwhile the Father is giving him a people to come and reign along with him; "His inheritance in the saints." Which times of the Father being accomplished, Christ is manifested again to complete His work of redeeming the inheritance, and bringing it into the condition of eternal order, according to the design of the Father. This being done, He surrenders it up into His Father's hand, and humbles Himself for ever to remain His Father's servant.

The question is not concerning that absolute Godhead, which can neither be seen nor comprehended; but concerning that manifested Godhead, of which there was an objective manifestation in the acts of creation, and a symbolical one in the Shechinah, and of which there shall be a subjective and personal one in the world to come.

Among the people of Israel, the high priest was the symbol of Christ, the man; the Shechinah, before which and unto which He ministered, the symbol of Christ, the Word of God, which was with God, and which was God. With Christ's absolute Godhead as a person of the Divine essence, there is no having to do, save by profound worship.

It is with His manifestation as the God, Creator, and Preserver and Appointer of all that we have to do. And we have shown, I think, beyond a question, that this takes place upon the earth, and has its beginning to sense and sight there, though to Spirit it had its beginning at the ascension, and has been exercised ever since in the region of the spiritual. These things enable us to explain the very words of the promise:

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes, I will grant to sit in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

Now, the first question is, How can many persons sit down with Christ in His throne? The answer is contained in the 20th chapter of this book, when all those hosts who came out of heaven with Christ, and are exhibited as conquerors over the head and the kings of the earth, have each a throne prepared for him on the earth, and reign with Christ one thousand years.

But it may be said, How is this reigning in Christ's throne? is it not rather reigning each in a throne of His own? They are so represented, first in separateness, for the purpose of showing that their distinct personality remains, and that they are not absorbed into Christ, or into one another, by that perfect unity which they have among themselves, and also with Christ.

But, so soon as this object has been served, they are then presented in their collective unity in the vision of the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb; the city which rules over the kings of the earth, and into which they do bring their honor and glory.

And the same observation may be applied to the vision of the same things in heaven, anterior to their manifestation on the earth, as given in chapters 4 and 5 of this book; where the

Church, in its unity with Christ, is presented to us under the figure of the four living creatures uniting to form the throne, their separateness in the twenty-four crowned elders.

The vision of the 19th chapter, from the 11th verse, realizes these words of the Spirit's promise, "to him that overcomes;" the whole victorious Church being therein revealed as conquerors over all the enemies of Christ, and of the Church, the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of the earth and their armies.

Then comes the vision of chapter 20 to realize the promise, "he shall sit down with me in my throne;" for straightway, after their conquest, thrones are planted down upon the earth, and they sit upon them, and reign with Christ a thousand years. Many questions are raised upon this condition of things, as:

What an infinite number of kings for such a small kingdom!

Will they each have their several portions to rule over?

How can risen saints rule over men in flesh?

To all which I answer, I know not, and care not to know; but do not the less believe the word of my God; who, not here only, but from the beginning, purposed in the Jewish people to have *a nation* of kings and priests. And such a nation He will have.

But how many they shall prove to be that are saved, I cannot answer, and our Lord would not answer; and therefore I think it is better, to build no arguments upon such an uncertain point, but let every one strive to enter in by the strait gate into the kingdom.

A more important question, a real question, for these are not questions but fancies, is this:

But where is Christ's throne at all in that vision of the Millennium?

We see nothing but the thrones of the saints. To this it is not enough to answer, that they are said to reign with Christ. For, is not Christ among them? Yea, verily, for He comes out of heaven at their head. And where then is His seat of dignity in the midst of them?

Also seeing you have reasoned it out so diligently, that He is thus to be seated on the throne of God, as well as in His own throne, we ask:

Where is that throne of the God-man to be found in that millennial representation of the earth?

Nor is it a sufficient answer to say:

We have it in the next vision of the new Jerusalem, which is contemporary therewith.

For there the saints are represented in their collective and confederate capacity. It is a new picture, and therefore cannot be a part of the other one. They are both pictures of the same thing, under different aspects; each having a completeness in itself.

Now, in this picture of the millennial thrones of the conquerors, where is Christ's throne of Godhead, as well as Manhood? I confess that I cannot answer this question upon the commonly received interpretation of the 20th chapter, which I have been accustomed to work with, and which holds that the great white throne of the Judge, set forth in verse 11, is at the end of the Millennium, and not contemporaneous with the many thrones of Christ's people.

For some time past I have had misgivings, as to the truth of that commonly received interpretation, and would now try it by a more careful examination of the chapter than I have hith-

erto given to it.

THE THRONES OF REVELATION 20

The vision properly begins from the 11th verse of the 19th chapter, where a glorious company of white-robed saints, with the King of saints at their head, come forth to judge and make war. The powers of Church and state upon the earth battle themselves against the powers of Church and state in the heavens, who prevail to capture or destroy them all.

This done, an angel with the key of the bottomless pit in His hand, whom I take to be Christ, comes and chains Satan, and locks him up for a thousand years. And thus all power and authority being evacuated from the earth, both visible and invisible, He orders it according to the Father's purpose and His own promise. The thrones He fills with His victorious saints; who have partaken of the first resurrection, in order to come with him. Of which it is expressly said, that no others partake but these reigning conquerors.

Over whom then do they reign? Over the inhabitants of the earth, "the nations of those who are saved" from the battle of Armageddon; which chiefly concerns the reigning powers everywhere, and the inhabitants of apostate Christendom; those who have the mark of the beast, and the number of his name.

The risen saints rule over the sons of men upon the earth. And thus things are constituted for a thousand years, under the government of those who are blessed and holy; over whom the second death shall not have any power. There is no mention as yet of Christ or of God, save twice over that He is with them, or they with Him. They...

Revelation 20

⁶ ...reign with Christ a thousand years.

We have it intimated that their dignity and blessedness is

subordinate to, and stands in the presence of Christ, but not a word as yet concerning this state or occupation. Yet we may be assured that this will not be omitted, but is postponed in order that it may have a separate and more particular description.

But, first, an event is mentioned at the close of the Millennium; which is, that Satan, being again loosed, does corrupt the nations under the government of the risen saints, and bring them up in armed confederacy against “the camp of the saints, and the beloved city” (*Revelation* 20:9), after the manner of the Gog and Magog of *Ezekiel*, chapter 38.

This conspiracy, which I take to be against the Jewish people, and the new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, ends in the destruction of them all by fire from heaven. Whereupon the devil is cast into the lake of the second death, beside the beast and false prophet.

Such is the termination of the thousand years’ reign of the saints over the earth; a new and most miserable picture of the depravity of men, and his alliance with the devil.

During all this time, no doubt, Christ has been the leader and actor; because He is the Head of the governors, and the person struck at by the diabolical confederacy. Yet has He not been introduced, for the reason that the throne on which He sits is to be described, not as a human, but also as a Divine throne; and executing judgment not only over the quick, but also over the dead. It saves repetition thus to order it, and prevents confusion; while at the same time it confers solitary grandeur upon that which is at once the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I conceive John therefore to say, at verse four:

Revelation 20

⁴ I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was

given to them.

And then at verse 11:

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it.

These two I place together in time, as constituting the complete vision of the millennial thrones; the former, the throne of the Son of Man divided among His fellow-soldiers and conquerors; the latter, the throne of the Son of God ruling over them all, and having besides functions proper to itself.

What intervenes between the 4th and the 11th verses, I regard as narration, getting forth the properties and prerogatives of the throne of the Son of Man. What follows the 11th verse, is the property and prerogative of the throne of the Son of God; the one the manifestation of the glory of the Son of Man, divided among His followers; the other the manifestation of the glory of the Father incommunicable to any.

Moreover, I think these thrones are related to one another: as the one throne of God, and the twenty-four thrones of the elders in the heavenly vision of the 5th chapter. And that, as they are there contemporaneous, so are they contemporaneous on the earth also. And that they ought not to be separated from one another, in respect of time, or purpose, or relation. The one is Christ's own glory divided among many; the other is God's glory concentrated in Christ.

If now we go further into this matter, and observe what are the functions of that throne, we shall find them altogether Divine.

Changing of Heaven and Earth

First; from the face of it, the heavens and earth fled away, and place was not found for them. This is taken from the 102nd *Psalms*, where it is written of Christ:

Psalm 102

²⁵ Of old have You laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

²⁶ They shall perish, but You shall endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed.

²⁷ But You are the same, and Your years shall have no end.

²⁸ The children of Your servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before You.

At this time, therefore, when the servants of the Lord are established, and the generation of His children, the heavens and the earth are changed as a vesture, and hide themselves from His sight, It answers also to that prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 24

²³ Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

As it is expanded and enlarged in the 65th of the same prophet, and appropriated to us Gentiles also in Peter's *Second Epistle* (2 Peter 3:13), which sets to a side the erroneous notion, that this fleeing away of the earth and the heavens, is their annihilation, and the creating of new ones.

Peter there speaks of the earth and heaven before the deluge, as other than these which we now behold; nature from that time having undergone a great revolution, such as it shall yet undergo in the day of Christ's appearing upon the throne of God.

This changing of nature's law, and nature's form and order, by the purging out of all sin, and consequences of sin, is a Divine work, and attests the Creator. For who but the Creator were able to do His will upon creation; by the brightness of His countenance to rebuke it away from before Him?

Judgment of the Dead

The next act of the throne of God, is the judgment of the dead, which Christ received as the Son of Man, and as the Son of Man fulfills. But it is not the less an attribute of God, with which no other man intermeddles.

Now, this takes not place till the end of the Millennium, because till then the rest of the dead live not again. So that we have nothing said of the acting of this throne, and the enthroned One upon it, during the Millennium, but simply the effect of the first appearance, and its act of judgment when the Millennium is past. From which we are to conclude, that it has been occupied in the interval with giving power unto, exercising authority over, and ever receiving the acknowledgment and worship of, those crowned ones.

The nature of their cooperation it is the object of the next vision to describe, and therefore there needed not to say anything about it here. Sufficient was it to secure us against misunderstanding it, as if Christ were not present, by saying over and over again, that they reigned with Christ.

Now, the act of this throne at the end of the Millennium, besides enforcing and empowering the others to resist and to destroy the confederacy of Gog and Magog, is in its own Divine attribute and prerogative to raise the dead, both small and great, to open the books of the recorded words and works of every man, and also the book of life; and the dead, even all the dead in the sea, in death, and in Hades, are judged; every man, according to his works, and whosoever is not found written in the book of life, is cast alive into the lake of fire, with Hades and death, and the devil and the beast, and the false prophet.

I place all this act of judgment at the end of the Millennium, because it is said that the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were expired. Some by whose judgment I

have been much helped in these interpretations, place it at the beginning, and during the progress of the Millennium.

The whole subject of the judgment is what I least understand of all that is contained in this book, and I am glad that it is not at all necessary to my present argument to give any deliverance upon it whatever. It is enough that we have shown our reasons for holding that this great white throne of God and of the Lamb is upon the earth during the time that we possess the fellowship of the throne of the Son of Man.

The millennial period therefore is clearly the time during which the promise contained in our text is to be realized by the servants of the Lord, during which Christ shall reign as God, and we shall reign as kings and priests upon the earth.

And if it be further inquired concerning the time when this manifestation of Christ upon the Father's throne is to end; for there is a time at which the kingdom is to be given up unto the Father; I answer, that it certainly cannot be till after the end of the Millennium. Because till then, all power and authority and dominion are not put down, nor till then is death put down. The devil has still a liberty, and the nations of those who fear not God have still a power. They are not yet bound in the chains of the second death. Christ has not till after that last conflict made an end of enmity and strife and disorder in the creation of God. And therefore He cannot yet have given the kingdom up to the Father.

It is no sufficient reply to this, to maintain, that because it is said in the 15th of the *Corinthians*, that death is swallowed up in victory, by the resurrection of the saints at Christ's coming, it follows therefore, that death, the last enemy, is undone. With far more reason might it be asserted, that, because Christ is said to have abolished death (*undone*,—it is the same word as in *1 Corinthians* 15:26), therefore the kingdom was given up when He rose from the dead, then death was virtu-

ally destroyed; and at the resurrection it will be swallowed up in victory, but not actually made impotent, until even death be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

It is this second death which renders impotent forever the enemies of God; and until they are cast out into that eternal limbo, they have both a liberty and a power, as is seen by the enclosing of Satan in the bottomless pit, and his loosing thence again. And because all such power is to be put down, before the kingdom is given up, we may, and most assuredly believe, that this great event, whatever it is, does not take place till after the Millennium. And then, it seems to me, it takes place; because then all opposing power will have been put down, and utterly done away with in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

And so soon as this is done, it is declared by the Apostle, that the kingdom shall be given up. He sits upon His Father's throne till the close of the Millennium; and from that time forth He sits upon it no longer forever, but passes into the condition of the subject:

1 Corinthians 15

²⁸ Then shall the Son also be subject unto the Father, that God may be all in all.

THE DIVINE ORDER AFTERWARDS

And then this further question arises:

“How shall things be ordered thereafter?”

The answer is, That order of things which is the proper manifestation of Godhead, and which for a season has been inverted, will take place and continue forever. And what is this?

1. The Father, the object of worship, the all in all;
2. The Son, the head of the worshippers, the King and Priest

upon His throne;

3. The Holy Ghost, in and by the Church, His body, serving Him in the government of all the creatures, each in their several appointed places for ever and ever.

This is the Divine, and, so to speak, the natural order; which has been for a season inverted, first in order to redeem all, and then in order to show that the Redeemer of all is very God. It was inverted when Christ, in order to redeem all, from being Lord became servant, from being the life became dead; and now it is inverted, by Christ being the reigning One in glory, as God, in God's supreme estate.

The one inversion was the consequence of the other; and both together do manifest the glory of the Father, and the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Holy Ghost, in recovering the world from its bondage under sin, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

When this has been accomplished, things resume their natural course; which is, as has been said:

1. God the Father acknowledged as the supreme Originator and continual sustainer of all;
2. Christ the Son, as the Head over all to His Church, and with His Church the governor of all, through the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost;
3. The Holy Ghost, as the Life of Christ in all, the secure binder of all in unity, and the blesser of all with the blessings of goodness for ever and ever.

Such is the theological answer to the question:

“And how will things be ordered after the Millennium?”

And if anyone ask for a more formal answer, as to the place, nature, and extent of Christ's throne and our throne, I have these things to set forth.

The Place of the Throne

First, as to its place, that it will be upon the earth, and that for ever and ever. The doctrine of the Millennium is perverted, when it is made to signify a reign on earth only for a thousand years, and not for ever. It was so perverted in the beginning; and against this the article of the Nicene Creed, “whose kingdom is for ever and ever,” seems to have been addressed.

The thousand years’ blessedness is the period of His action as the Man of God’s right hand, to the end of putting down all power adverse to God, of making it void and empty; of purging and purifying all things; of bringing them into the order and harmony of the Divine purpose, and fixing them there for ever.

But the kingdom does not thereupon cease to be upon the earth, but abides here for ever and ever; as is expressly declared in all the Scriptures, and in this book itself:

Revelation 22

⁵ And they shall reign for ever and ever.

In that new earth, we look for...

Hebrews 11

²⁸ ...a kingdom which cannot be removed.

Psalms 45

⁶ Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever.

This is applied to Christ (*Hebrews* 1:8); and, in the passage before us, imparted unto us also.

That the kingdom of the Son of Man, and of His saints upon the earth, is for ever and ever, is declared by Daniel, both in the vision of the great image (*Daniel* 2), and in the vision of the four beasts (*Daniel* 7). And even of David’s throne, the duration is declared to be:

Isaiah 9

⁷ ...from henceforth, even for ever.

And all the promises made to Abraham, and the seed of an inheritance, is for...

Genesis 17 [also Genesis 48:4]

⁸ ...an everlasting possession.

And without exception, Christ's throne is everywhere throughout the Scriptures described as an everlasting throne of righteousness upon the earth.

The revelation of the Millennium, which is confined to this book, does not nullify these continual declarations of Holy Scripture. No word of God can make void some other word of God. The revelation of a Millennium casts additional light upon the promise of God, showing us that for the first thousand years of that eternal kingdom, Christ with His Church should be occupied in the work of subduing all things unto God, and ordering them in blessedness, and bringing forth to him a great increase of children; and doing many other things of which we can have little idea. This is a very blessed hope, that, coming with Christ, we shall subdue the world, and have dominion over it.

We know that Adam is the type of Christ; that Eve is the type of the Church His bride, who comes along with Him; that paradise is the type of the new Jerusalem, with its tree of life and water of life. And the occupation of the millennial period is, we believe, typified in these words:

Genesis 1

²⁸ Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...

While the after and eternal period is typified in these words:

²⁸ ...and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the face of the earth.

I say *typified*, but in what way of greatness, and of glory, and of blessedness, the antitype shall pass far and away beyond the type, I cannot say, and never presume to speculate.

Christ and the Church shall be so occupied during that thousand years, as that they shall be able to look upon the kingdom for ever, and feel that its blessedness is due unto them. God puts His fullness into Christ, and Christ puts His fullness into the Church, His body; and so the mystical Christ, being filled with all the fullness of God, does bring the earth out of all its evils, and order it in that condition of glory and stability in which it shall ever be, the dwelling-place of God, and the center of the universal kingdom of Christ.

The Millennium is but an act, and in my judgment a preliminary and preparatory act, of the universal and eternal kingdom, whereof the earth shall be the seat. The seeds and elements of enmity are still in existence, for they burst out at the close of the Millennium; but being under the government of Christ and the Church, they are held down and kept inactive: whereby the glory of the Son of Man is wonderfully manifested over the head of all His enemies, and many ends there are doubtless besides, for which God appoints that period introductory of the eternal and immutable blessedness of the earth.

But into these matters I question whether it be given us to enter; only let no one suppose that the kingdom upon the earth is not for ever, because these thousand years of it are specified.

The Condition and Extent of the Kingdom

Next, as to the condition of the eternal kingdom, some have

thought that it is set forth under the figure of the new Jerusalem; whereto they are led by several things such as the declarations:

Revelation 22

⁵ They shall reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 21

⁴ ...and there shall be no more death.

⁵ ...Behold I make all things new.

And of a surety there is, in the description of that sublime city, a certain tone which bespeaks eternity and perfection. There is a peaceful rest within its walls, and a perfect brightness around it, which bespeak no change; and I have no doubt that it contains the germ of the world's regeneration.

But while I agree that words like these:

Revelation 21

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

⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

⁵ And He that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

⁶ And He said unto me, It is done.

can be applicable to no shifting scene or changeable estate of things, I cannot agree with those who will therefore argue that it is not upon the earth during the Millennium, but the delineation of the after state.

It is, I have said, in my judgment, the delineation of the after state, but I think beyond a doubt it is in existence from the beginning, and during the whole continuance, and forever

after the Millennium. To this I am drawn, not only from particulars in the description, as that:

Revelation 21

²⁴ The nations of them which are saved, walk in the light of it.

Revelation 22

² The leaves of the tree [which grows in it] were for the healing of the nations.

...and...

Revelation 21

²⁴ The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

And also from the expression, “the beloved city” (*Revelation* 20:9), against which the seduced nations rise in rebellion. But still more from the continual language of other parts of Scripture, where this city is made mention of. For example:

Philippians 3

²¹ Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

²² Who shall change our vile body...

Here the city, the resurrection, and the coming of Christ are mentioned together.

Again, in the 12th chapter of the *Hebrews*, where the whole hopes of the Christian are exhibited together, “the heavenly Jerusalem” stands among the rest.

Also, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, looked for that city and country at their resurrection (*Hebrews* 11); and the Apostle gives it as our mother city, to which therefore we must enter so soon as we get the resurrection right and title.

Also because it is among the seven promises to the victorious, and, like the other six, should come to them so soon as

the battle is fought and over.

Sound interpretation, as well as sound doctrine, therefore, I think, require of us to believe, that the new Jerusalem is in existence from the beginning of the Millennium, from the very coming of Christ; while at the same time, I believe, it has in it all the features of the eternal state also.

My idea of the new Jerusalem is, that it is the figure of the inward purity, peace, and power which there is in the Church, (the Head and the members, the Bridegroom and the bride), during the Millennium, and forever; and that it stands collateral and contemporary with the crowned and enthroned kings of the millennium vision (*Revelation 20*), as Babylon, the false Church, is collateral and contemporary with the kings of the earth over which she rules.

And like as those be the same persons who govern in the kingdoms of Babylon, and who compose the city of Babylon; as the city and the confederacy of the kings are but symbols for the same form of Antichristian power; so deem I that the kings of *Revelation 20* and the city of *Revelation 21*, are but two symbols for the same thing, which is the righteous and holy dominion of the Christ during the millennial age, yea and forever.

And I think that the living creatures and elders are the compound symbol for the same thing. I can see throughout, the same doubleness of symbol; but whether I have attained to the exact reason and utmost depth of this arrangement, I cannot take upon me to say. I have touched, and will touch upon it, as it occurs, and perhaps God may vouchsafe us more light as we proceed.

- Sometimes I think it is to set out the double office of kings and priests;
- Sometimes that it savors of the two dispensations, the

Jewish and the Gentile, and presents the united, yet distinct, brotherhoods of the saved out of each; and

- Sometimes I think it is a twofold symbol, one part to express the separate personality of the saved, the other to express their community.

And I leave everyone to take the view which pleases his mind the best, for I confess my own is not altogether made up.

In the book of *Daniel*, where the fourth empire is brought to its end, there are thrones cast or planted down; and besides them a throne of judgment, whereon is seated the Ancient of Days, who instates the Son of Man in a universal and eternal kingdom (*Daniel 7*). This is the vision to which the 20th chapter of the *Revelation* carries a continual reference. The planting down of the thrones, the opening of the books, the act of judgment, the reign of the saints, have all their origin in that vision of Daniel, which is most explicit as to this point, that the kingdom of the saints has no end.

We conclude, therefore, from this other source of knowledge, that the thing which comes to a close at the end of the thousand years, is not the reign of Christ and His saints upon the earth, which continues forever, but the putting down and casting forth into the lake of fire of all adverse power whatsoever. It is the ending of the judgment, and the beginning of the eternal state of holiness; answering to the eighth day of circumcision, to the eighth and great day of the feast of tabernacles.

The Millennium is properly the day of judgment, beginning in judgment, and ending in judgment, and all along continuing in judgment; that is, in the putting down and suppression of all evil;—evil in existence, but under restraint; Satan in life, but in imprisonment; the evil passions of men in being, but kept under by good government: in one word, Christ and His people exhibited as able and successful resisters of iniquity,

holy judges of wicked persons, and blessed governors of the world.

This ended, they have been proved by power as well as by weakness, by possession as well as by destitution, by enjoyment as well as by suffering, and having by their labors accomplished the complete redemption of the earth, and the eternal suppression of evil, they enter into the eternal enjoyment of the work which they have wrought.

Christ is working now, and under him the Church disembodied, of which He is the Head; and they are together achieving a great victory over the spiritual powers. Then Christ shall work, and His embodied Church along with him, and they shall achieve and keep a great victory over the visible world also; which being finished, they shall enter into their finished work, and possess it forever.

Daniel had not the change at the end of the thousand years revealed to him, nor had any other of the prophets until John; and so they simply announce the kingdom as eternal, without end, and for ever and ever.

And when we find John giving specialty to the first thousand years, we are not therefore to suppose, in the face of all the Scriptures, that therefore the whole scene of things will be shifted away from this earth altogether. This is to fly in the face of all Scripture, and to use the further revelation of the *Apocalypse* to supersede, contradict, and make void the other Scriptures, and not to open and explain them.

So do others abuse the Gospels, containing the coming of Christ, and opening all the prophecies which speak of His coming to the earth, in order to reign there forever, into an occasion and means for making void those prophecies, and turning them into a dead letter; as if there was to be no more coming of Christ, nor acts for him to accomplish upon the earth.

The canon which we have laid down above is good for guiding us in the right use of the *Apocalypse*, which opens all Scripture, contradicts and supersedes none. The reference which we have made to *Daniel*, confirms much the conclusion which we have come to above, that the great white throne is in being upon the earth with the other thrones during the Millennium, for the very beginning of the day of judgment; because the same supreme Throne ruling over the others, is set forth in *Daniel*.

Matthew 24 and 25

And there is yet another passage to which we will refer, as casting light upon the same great truth. It is our Lord's famous discourse, in the 24th and 25th chapters of *Matthew*, which, the more I consider it, impresses me the more with a sense of its completeness, as an exhibition of the full truth of His coming and kingdom.

There, after tracing the course of events until His coming, and enlarging upon the signs thereof, and commanding all to watch, He presents three parables, which, being well and justly weighed, record a consistent idea of the kingdom.

There is first the parable of the virgins, and the marriage supper, and the Bridegroom entering into the chamber, and shutting the door, and His Church entering in along with him. This is the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, the marriage chamber, the blessed nuptials to which the people are invited.

Next there is the parable of the faithful servants, who receive their rewards of government over five cities, and ten cities, &c. which they are to hold as kings under the King's Son. This answers exactly to the thrones of *Revelation 20*, in which the faithful are instated at the coming of the Lord from the far country unto His kingdom.

And, lastly, there is the parable of the Son of Man coming

in the throne of His glory, and calling all the nations into His presence, to render Him an account of their treatment of Himself and His children.

This is the great white throne of the *Apocalypse*, and the throne of the Ancient of Days of *Daniel*; and the throne of the Father in our text, which sits in judgment upon the fourth beast, and upon all the beasts, upon the quick and upon the dead, and whose decrees fix the fate forever both of angels and of men.

So these three parables give a compact and consistent view of all the matters which the *Revelation* unfolds. And in this case also, it is forever that the sentences extend:

Matthew 25

⁴¹ ...into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

All these things work together, in strong confirmation of our doctrine, that both the great white throne and the new Jerusalem are in being upon the earth from the beginning, and during the continuance of the Millennium, and forever.

It is not our purpose to go into the details of the exposition of these symbols, but simply to appoint to them their proper place, time, and condition, and gather from them the instruction and consolation which they afford to us.

Conclusion

Now, the conclusion is, that the Father's throne in which Christ sits is in existence during the Millennium; or, in other words:

- that He is manifested as God, and reigns as God; also
- that He is manifested in the glory and power of the Son of Man, which He shares with us His faithful people; likewise,
- that together with them He forms the dwelling-place of

God, the seat of His power, and the instrument of His working, to the effect of reducing all things into the very form in which God would have them to be.

After which millennial works Christ surrenders up the Divine glory, and takes the subordinate place of the Son of Man, exercising with His Church forever the function of King and Priest over the created world. And then the inversion of the eternal order is at an end; and the eternal order is in existence. God is all in all, Christ is Head over all; the Church are His ministers, manifesting under Him the fullness of the Spirit; and the whole creation is the world, which God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost do thus govern in peace and blessedness for ever.

Some may feel that I am prolix, and sometimes indefinite in opening these subjects. The reason is, that I feel the sacredness of the ground, and I tread it with a slow and solemn pace. I feel the awfulness of the scene which opens at every footstep, and I stay to survey it, and to expatiate over its fullness and perfection of beauty.

I am not like a measurer taking the dimensions of it, but like an heir considering the magnificence and vastness of that which I am called to inherit. Besides, I feel that my faculties are not equal to the whole undertaking; and therefore when I cannot speak definitely, I am content to speak indefinitely, and rather to venture by slow approaches, than at once to rush into so great a matter.

Everyone must take his own method of expressing his own mind upon these subjects. That which I prefer is, by coming, and coming, to it again, and doing my endeavor by successive efforts, and waiting upon the Spirit, and catching every favorable moment, and entering in at every door which the Revealer may open.

And I am not careful though I should repeat myself often,

and though at one time I should give clearer light than at another, and though one thing should seem to take away from or make alteration upon another. For I am not casting a work of art, but digging in the earth, and bringing up ore, some richer, and some poorer, according as I find it in the mine. Let others found it if they please. My work is that of a laborious drudge, hewing the rocks, and bringing to light the hidden things of God, by means of the revelation of Jesus Christ, opened by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who leads us into all the truth, and shows us things to come.

THE EXHORTATION

IT REMAINS, that we add a few words upon the exhortation of the promise, after having thus largely spoken of its substance. We have set forth the wonderful grace which is here promised to us in the day of the Lord's appearing; and we would now use the same for application unto all the children of men, that they may gird themselves to the battle, enter the fight, and overcome.

And, first, I would propound the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid aside His glory, and entered in weakness that field of combat; for which the first qualification is, that we should be likewise weak, yea, and utterly empty of all strength in ourselves. For it is a combat wherein God, not man, is to be glorified; and therefore when Christ became man, He must become a weak and empty man, in order that the glory of the victory may be due unto Godhead, and not unto the manhood.

They understand nothing of this matter, who will maintain that His manhood must be in itself and of itself, other and better than our own. That way of it was tried already in Adam, and it came to naught. Another way of it, which is the way of weakness, made strong by faith in God, is now in the progress of trial; and for the trial Christ presents Himself, who was not made a creature.

If a creature He had been made, and found Himself mortal, He must have been answerable for the guilt of so making Himself. But He is the Creator, and therefore may take what form of being it pleases Him, that which is best for the glory of God to take.

And seeing the point which God has been making good, is that He is gracious to the fallen, and forgiving to the sinful,

and strengthening to the weak, if they will but trust in Him, the Son of God, who came to realize this lesson, became poor, and weak, and suffering, was made sin, though without sin, and brought under the weight of all burdens, and smitten with all strokes, and had no resource nor help, nor maintenance, but what He obtained through the exercise of faith in His Father, and in our Father, in His God, and in our God.

He stood in the battle as a common man; and if there was one post harder than another, that was the post He was called upon to maintain: yea the whole tide of battle rolled against this single man; and single-handed He had to encounter the fiercest shock; and this with no weapons, but the weapons of our warfare, weakness and faith, which in His hand ever proved effectual to the pulling down of all the strongholds of the enemy,— to the disarming of all our foes, to the capturing of them, and the leading of them captive.

This is what He had to do, and what He did. And it is a damnable doctrine to teach, that He had any advantage over us in the field. They are teachers of error, who say that His flesh was otherwise constituted than ours is. And I pray devoutly that they may be converted. If this be the doctrine they are preaching in this land, and the people will receive it, then the Church shall soon become a Church abandoned of the Lord.

They are very slow of giving forth what they hold: we gather it more from what they oppose. But if they be holding that Christ's flesh was not weak and tempted as ours is, they hold the doctrine of heretics; and if they cleave unto it as their faith, they stand in peril of death. They may talk of atonement, and substitution, and satisfaction how they please; it is all a system of indulgences, if they believe not that Christ came in our flesh, and overcame our temptations in the flesh, and crucified His flesh, and sanctified it as a sacrifice, and pre-

sented it holy thus, and in no other way.

There are a set of ministers who have been stirred up to fight against this truth; and who are driving the Church into the awful guilt of condemning it in our persons who hold it, and in our books which contain it. I hope and pray the Church will have grace given her to resist these stirrers of strife, all holy as they seem to be; but if not, then the Church will seal her own death-warrant, and die by her own hand.

Oh, my mother Church! I say unto you, as David said to Jonathan:

1 Samuel 20

³ As the Lord lives, there is but a step between [you] and death.

That step these evil counselors would have you take; because, like the Pharisees of old, they are full of self-sufficiency, and know not the awful thing which they are about to do. God only knows how my heart is rent and torn asunder, and how my bowels are pained, and my zeal stirred up. I will not give place to these men; no, not for a moment. And I call upon every child of God, upon every minister and man who knows the truth in the realm of Scotland, to put on his armor, and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

What were the meaning of the Lord's calling upon us to overcome as He also overcame, if so be that He did not overcome as He would have us to overcome? If the battle was not arrayed against him, as against us it is arrayed, or if He had, in virtue of His Godhead or of His manhood, weapons of offense and defense, which we have not in Him, what is the meaning of asking us to overcome, as He also overcame?

The same truth is taught us in all other parts of Scripture. For examples of this, take first, what He says to the twelve Apostles, upon the occasion of the young rich man, who

would not part with his all, to follow him into poverty, and the preaching of the Gospel.

Matthew 19

²⁷ Then answered Peter, and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You: what shall we have therefore?

²⁸ And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

²⁹ And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Here is much the same language as in the promise before us: He assures these twelve of the royalty over the tribes of Israel; by which I understand, that as Christ Himself shall be King of the Jews, the twelve Apostles shall be His twelve viceroys in that dominion. And I believe that after the same manner the most faithful of the martyrs in each several region of the earth, shall in that day of His glorious appearing have a local superintendency, being, as it were, to take advantage of Satan's rehearsal, the legates, envoys, and nuncios from the regal and metropolitan city of the new Jerusalem.

Observe also, that these dignities and rewards are bestowed upon us against that day, "when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory." Which being interpreted according to the foregoing prophecies upon the Son of Man, carries us to the 7th chapter of *Daniel*, where is the full and distinct exhibition of the throne of glory, and the Son of Man's receiving it to sit upon, and with it the kingdoms of all the earth to distribute among His saints.

Moreover, this same passage of Matthew's Gospel does exhibit to us the kind of warfare to which He calls His disciples; not against depravity and lust, and avarice, and other gross

sins, heinous even in the world's eye, but against the strongest and most honorable, yea, and dutiful affections of the heart; not against worthless, lawless, and profligate persons, alike hated of God and man, but against the most near and dear relations, the fastest and closest friends, brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife and children.

When in another place He says, we must not only forsake but absolutely hate; that is, hate in the same sense in which God has said "I hate Esau," and other wicked persons, though they be His own creatures, made in His image, for whose ransom He has given His own Son to suffer and die.

And like as God surrenders all natural ties, when His holiness is in question, nor suffers for a moment a balance in His mind, between affection and holiness; but as He loves them, and because He loves them, divorces them from all enjoyment of His countenance, and hope of His favor, unless they will kiss the Son, and yield unto Him obedience; even so He commands us, to count every natural affection hateful, and our very parents our enemies, if they would rise up against Christ.

And with respect to the goods of this world, it is not the honors and preferments merely of the world which we are called to be denied unto, but even to give up our houses and our lands, and everything which we are wont to call our own. Such are the contentions and controversies of which the Christian warfare is made up:

- Contentions against all that is dear and honorable in the world;
- Controversies with our own heart, with the best and most virtuous feelings of our heart.

All these, Christ for His Father's sake forewent, and became motherless and brotherless, houseless and homeless; preferring His Father's pleasure to the eating of His daily bread, and

having found His Father faithful to His word, yea far more generous than His word, yielding Him not the throne of David His Father, but the throne of God His Father, He cries unto His followers, whom He left treading the same wine-press of tears and sorrows, to be of good cheer, to go on with the heart-crucifying work, and surely to expect the fellowship of His heavenly throne.

Revelation 7

¹⁴ These are they who have come out of great tribulation...

¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God...

Another beautiful illustration of the promise in the text is to be found in the 16th chapter of the same Gospel; where, at the 21st verse we are informed that the Lord began to discourse to His disciples concerning the sorrowful and suffering path through which He was to win the dignity of “The Christ, the Son of the living God;” which Peter not savoring:

Matthew 16

²⁴ Jesus said unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

²⁶ For what is a man profited, if He shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

²⁷ For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then He shall reward every man according to his works.

Here, as in the former case, the reward presented in the distance, is His coming in the glory of His Father, as it is also in our text; and the scale according to which the rewards of heaven are to be dispensed, is:

- self-denial,
- taking up of the cross,

- indifference to this present life,
- readiness for martyrdom at all times, and
- a willingness to part with the whole world rather than to put our souls into jeopardy.

Of works of this sort are the thrones of heaven the meed. I would I saw some more of them!

Who of us can nowadays take joyfully the spoiling of their goods as did the Hebrews? Who of us rejoice and are exceeding glad when men revile us, and speak all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake? I know what it is to have been reproached for the truth of Christ; would that I knew more of joy under the temptation. The school is now so forsaken that there are neither masters nor scholars in it anymore.

And why this unsuffering state of the Church? Because she has been ignorant of the rewards of suffering. The doctrine of the Church since the Reformation, has been taken up chiefly with the question:

“How are we to get off at the judgment-seat?”

And they have hardly dared to think of the question:

“How are we to obtain the dignities of the world to come?”

Indeed the world to come has been a visionary Elysium⁷ of ghosts; not the *terra firma*⁸ of this material world, governed by embodied men. That prison allowance of doctrine will do no longer for the followers of Christ, who must have both wine and milk, and marrow and fatness; because it is no longer a question of sects, or a strife of words, but it is a battle with an infidel world, with a Pharisical Church which we have to

7 In Greek mythology, originally the paradise to which heroes on whom the gods conferred immortality were sent.

8 From Latin: “solid earth”.

wage.

We are about to bear the brunt of brothers blows, and to be cast out of the house by brethren; and our Brother is thus early beginning to entreat us with discourse concerning the thrones of His Father's house. Like a good captain on the eve of battle, He sets out to His soldiers the rich rewards and splendid endowments which abide them after the conflict. But in every other battle, only the survivors receive the reward; in this one, all, as well those who lose their lives in His service, as those who wear out the time till His appearing.

This doctrine of rewards in the kingdom of glory, proportionate to our forfeitures in the kingdom of patience and suffering, we would illustrate a little further, as it is so seldom borne in mind; hardly even mooted in the Church, too intent upon the question, "By what means she may satisfy Christ her hard master?" to think of any glorious aims or heavenly ambitions.

Let us then take that noble instance of Paul described by himself in the 3rd chapter of the *Philippians*, wherein having delineated his high degree and distinction among the Pharisees, he declares not merely that he had foregone them all, but that he nauseated them as vile things; he hated them as the splendid trappings of his bondage; to the end he might obtain Christ's righteousness, and know Him, and the power of His resurrection, which enables us to enter into new life; and the fellowship of His sufferings, which is the yielding that new life to the encounter of all trials, that its heavenly temper of joy and proof of faith may the more appear.

Sufferings to such an extent does he covet, as that he may be conformed to Christ's death, or be brought into as weak, sorrowful, and passive a state as Christ died in.

And why all this panting after the lowliest and most painful experiences of the Christian life? In order that by all means he

might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; that is, the resurrection out from among the dead, the resurrection unto life, the first resurrection, of which every one that partakes is a crowned king. *Revelation 20:4.*

That this is the thing which he has in his mind, he declares in the context twice over; calling it first: “that for which Christ had apprehended him” or laid hold on him, or, as it were, enlisted him into the service. Christ had chosen him for this dignity, and, setting it before the young soldier, said:

“Now win your prize, and disappoint not my choice; keep your post, and achieve your reward!”

Therefore, he adds a second form of his eagerness:

Philippians 3

¹³ ...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

¹⁴ I press towards the mark for the prize of the high [above] calling in Christ Jesus.

That is, the calling to the new Jerusalem which is above, the city of the thrones of God.

After this beautiful picture of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, struggling in the heat of battle for the palm of victory, it is most delightful to peruse another passage of his mature age, and, as it were, veteran experience. The old experienced captain and field-marshal is giving his last counsel to a young soldier whom he was to leave in his room; and thus loftily the strain proceeds:

2 Timothy 4

⁵ But watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry.

⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

He no longer stands in doubt, but is assured not only of his safety, but of his crown. And wherefore assured? Because he had fought the good fight. The like assurance may we, ought we, all through the same means to attain unto. I would that it were more sought after. I would that Christians would bear in mind that they are apprehended or taken up by Christ, not merely to get clear off and escape condemnation, but to inherit honor and glory, and eternal life.

Why are men so low-thoughted with respect to the other world, when they are so ambitious with respect to this? It is because they think God less generous than man. It is because they wish just as much religion as will bring them off; and for the rest of their time and talents, they waste it all for other purposes.

They would not like to have hell-fire flaming upon them, and scaring all their happiness. Escape from this they are willing to purchase by so many hours of church-going, and such a percentage of charities, and so much of what they understand by faith and good works.

But as to the honors of the world to come, they desire the more solid honors of the present, and do not thank you for any discourse thereof at all. Keep hell's mouth under the horizon, and they care not for any of the stars of heaven. The riches of the earth content them, and the honors and the lands too: they have not the slightest intention of giving them up, on any future account. They prefer these in hand, to those upon God's word, better though they may be accounted.

Truly, the cloak of Romanism was better than this Protestant rag of religion. The only good of Protestantism is, that it

carries in itself its own principle of rectification, which Romanism does not. And yet not even this; if we are to be forced to square ourselves by articles of certain synods, instead of the word of God. The question is not Trent or Westminster with the Protestant, but man's word or God's word. If we are to lose this, then I wish to know, of what use was the Reformation? Oh, but it is come to low waters with us now in the Churches! And yet all is not lost.

I do, therefore, by the example and the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ; by the reward into which He has entered; and by the assurance of the like reward which the Apostles had within their hearts; by the words of the Holy Scriptures, and especially by the triumph of the faithful exhibited in the book of the Apocalypse,—I do call upon those angels of the Churches, who, like this Laodicean, are at present rejoicing in popular favor, and living at their ease in comfort and contentment, abundant in goods and prospering in the world's favor, straightway to disengage their hearts from those vanities, and sit loose to all those worldly affections, to trim their lamps, and let their light shine in the midst of the world. For lack of such illumination the people are stumbling upon the dark mountains, and are ready to be engulfed in destruction's yawning pit.

Proverbs 29

¹⁸ Where there is no vision the people perish.

There is little or no vision in the Church, and the people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. *Hosea* 4:6. We are the watchmen, but we have not been faithful upon the walls of Zion. *Isaiah* 62:6. We are afraid of the damps of the chilly night; we are afraid of the arrows of the enemy; we love sleep and slumbering, the feast and the wine cup, and the chief rooms in the synagogue, and flatteries and gifts, and other such soft and smooth allotments.

Our phrase is measured, our words are accommodated: God is not so much in the thoughts of the preacher as himself and the people.

“If I lose their good opinion, if I lose their ear, I lose all; what will it avail if I preach them all away from my Church?”

Oh, brother, you are set for preaching the truth, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Let Paul’s conduct at Corinth, as recorded in the 19th chapter of the *Acts*, be your guide. He first reasoned with both Jews and Greeks for many days; then he was pressed in spirit and testified; and when they would not receive his testimony he did shake off the dust of his garments against them, and turn unto the Gentiles.

If we were faithful men and under the leading of the Holy Ghost, we would do likewise; we would reason and debate the matter with the present deadness and darkness of the Church; and if we prevailed, as with many we doubtless would prevail, it were well: but if many, and the greater number still held out against the truth, we would clear our conscience and leave it with them, and betake ourselves to other parts; for the world is wide and populous, and a preacher’s commission is to every creature under heaven.

My dear brethren, do you think that without suffering for Christ’s sake you shall ever enter into His glory? Do you think that without tribulation you shall ever be made perfect? I do entreat you to go into battle and endure hardness as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep vigils over the armor of the word of God.

Why will you not awaken and be up and doing? for the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. What means this monotony of preaching, when the enemies of Christ are mustering their hosts to the battle against the camp of the saints,

and the holy city? Why do you not sound an alarm of war?

What means this piping in the shade, O shepherds, when the wolf is in the midst of the flock, ravening over his prey? Would Christ ever have won the inheritance of His Father's throne, if He had thus idled in His Father's work? And will you ever attain to the fellowship of Christ's throne, if you thus saunter about dallying with your idol of popular favor, and seeking honor of one another?

Surely there is a need for some sufferer to set the example of suffering to the rest. Words will no longer avail. Men's conscience is seared, and the faith of words is gone. Works now must come, if the Church is to be saved. Persecution and suffering alone can awaken the Church. The Pharisees must have blood, they have already taken the life-blood of her good name: they must have more, and then the stupefied Church will know what their true nature is.

Still I linger and long over the Church with hopes, and would fain prevent calamity. And therefore I do call upon those who have understanding of these things, and know the Laodicean state of the Church, to enter into suffering on this account, and to sorrow as the Lord did sorrow over the impenitent and foredoomed Jerusalem. Thus shall they walk in His footsteps, and attain unto His crown.

The depth of the Lord's sorrow was His perfect holiness: hence arose at one and the same time His sharp discernment of sin, His suffering from its presence, His abhorrence of its contact; and His continual crucifixion of Himself on account of it. And it was by this maintenance of God's abhorrence of sin, though in the midst of it always, that He purchased for Himself the honor and glory of the everlasting kingdom:

Hebrews 1

⁹You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy

above your fellows.

Now I entreat those mourners in Zion who discern the pitiful and lamentable plight to which we are come, to be in like manner moved and stirred up to make mention of her dismantled and ruined estate in the ear of a merciful and gracious God. Thus let them suffer for righteousness; and the Spirit of glory and of God shall rest upon them.

But, and if we, to whom the Lord has made known both the evil condition and hastening judgments of the Church, will only rail and rebuke without compassionating and grieving before God; then are we but discontented, querulous, malicious puritans, not holy, humble, and devoted Christians. And our judgment will be only the more severe, because, knowing the way of truth, we have turned from peace into contention.

Therefore I do entreat all those dear brethren who are now blowing the trumpet in the mount of the Lord, to remember that this office belonged to the Levites under the Law, and to the priests, who were holy unto the Lord. So ought we to be holy who make known the word of the Lord to the people concerning things to come.

Yea, and I am assured that whosoever will not clothe his spirit in sackcloth, while he prophesies of judgment to come, shall not prosper. It is reported of our Lord, that He was seldom if ever seen to smile; not that there was not joy and gladness in His heart, not that His word was not a word of joy, even the Gospel of salvation, but that withal, He was the bearer of heavy tidings to Jerusalem, and the tribes of Israel, unto whom He was sent.

So we being Gospel-bearers, are yet also judgment-bearers to this generation. So ought we to be rather of a grave and sorrowful countenance, than of a merry and joyful mood. I desire for my own part, and pray to God that I might so carry myself in the sight and at the head of that Church over which

I am set; and that I might write in the same spirit unto all to whom these records of my thoughts may come. For I myself desire one of these thrones of judgment, and shall seek to obtain it by a continual forgetfulness of the things which are behind, and reaching forward to the things which are before.

RECAPITULATION AND RE-UNION OF THE SEVEN PROMISES OF THE HOLY GHOST

AND now having finished this the last of these seven promises of the Holy Ghost to the Churches, and to all who have an ear to hear, I would be lacking to my subject did I not endeavor, in this the last of these Lectures on this vision, to gather into one point of view the seven aspects of blessedness which are therein presented to the faithful.

In the outset of this Lecture, I endeavored to present such a recapitulation of the successive conditions of the Churches, and such a review of the sevenfold style of our great Shepherd, let me now endeavor to do the same by this the third part of the epistles. For the true view of the Church is unity, and the perfection of the Church is unity, though for the sake of our divers conditions it be broken down into parts, which we by means of the oneness of our personality should ever endeavor to bring together into one.

These promises have no doubt a unity in them, as have the seven styles, or titles, of our Bishop and Shepherd, and are intended, by successive efforts, to express the completeness of that blessed estate, which in the world to come He is about to construct for all who believe in the name of Jesus, and are willing to follow him through His various battles with the devil, the world, and the flesh, and with patience to enter into His victory over them.

These seven promises contain the true account of the future estate and blessedness of the righteous, of that heaven concerning which people take liberty to indulge so many airy imaginations. And he who would write truly concerning such things ought to make these promises his text, and express himself in terms measured according to the rules of strict interpretation, and sound commentary of these seven words of

the Holy Ghost: and this we will do, by the grace of our God.

THE FIRST PROMISE

The first promise is thus expressed, being accurately translated from the original:

Revelation 2

⁷To the vanquisher, I will give to him to eat from off the tree of life which is in midst of the paradise of God.

This supposes life to be already given; otherwise how should we either fight the battle or gain the victory of the Lord, or need the nourishment of the tree of life? This life of the Holy Ghost we receive in our regeneration, whenever we are enabled of the Father to believe on His dear Son. And it is in its very essence everlasting and indestructible.

The state of the saint in this world is one form of this life, in which it feeds on the flesh and blood of Jesus, the disembodied state is another form of it, during which it enjoys the vision of God, and sleeps in Jesus. The resurrection state is another form of it, where it rises to the enjoyment of the seven-fold blessing.

Through each and all of these states Christ ministers life to all His members in the substance of the Holy Ghost, without destroying their personal responsibility, preserving their union to Himself all unbroken by the accidents of life, by the corruption of the grave, or by the gates of Hades (hell). Being brought from the dead, they shall have the tree of life to eat from.

This is the same tree of life which was anciently planted in the paradise of God, and from which man was prevented, when he had become the subject of death; because he would have eaten from it an eternity of death, or because mortality was not worthy to partake of such a food.

But when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, then shall the raised saints be admitted to that nourishment, which was of old ordained for Adam, along with the other trees of the garden, excepting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But of this tree alone, of all the rest, had not man the wisdom to eat; or else it is reasonable to believe it might have wrought in him that other sort of life, which we now receive from the flesh and blood of the sacrifice of Christ. Through diet of flesh we have received that life, which man at first might have obtained from off that blessed tree of life. Not that the tree would have given it, but that it would have awakened it within his capacious soul, just as the other tree awoke the consciousness of good and evil.

But now having obtained the source of life out of the grave of Christ, we have it nourished upon this tree, which I take to be the symbol of the productive creation, all springing and blooming with fragrant and delicious fruit for the children of men. For creation is not to cease then from its sweet office of serving the table of its monarch man; nor is man to stride over its fields, or hover on angels' wings above them, without blessing them, and recognizing his humble origin from the dust of the ground.

And no animal shall then be slaughtered, for death shall be no more, but the animals shall lend their various gifted shoulders to man's service; and the earth, all productive, shall teem forth from her bosom, the nourishment of all life, from the life of man to that of the lowest of the animal creation. Man shall suspend the creation from his bodily sense; and all creation shall minister right lovingly to the sense of man.

And thus shall that link anciently joined, and still continued under sore distress of both, be blessed for ever, when the creation also shall be delivered from its bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, for whose manifestation it labors

and groans, yet meekly and patiently waits.

But not of every tree of the garden, still less of any shrub or green herb, shall we eat, but only of that tree, which bears twelve manners of fruit, and the leaves are for the healing of the nations; the fruit for life, the leaves for medicine. In which distinction of royal dainties, I do at once see the pre-eminency of the risen man, of the victorious warrior, and also his tender care for the rest of the living ones in flesh as well as for the whole lower creation, and vegetable world.

As from the king's table go forth services to the various household; and from the tables of our city corporations all manner of broken meats for the poor, and even the very dogs do eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table; even so, in that divine order which is yet to be established throughout creation, the princes whose habitation is the new Jerusalem shall take the fruits of the tree of life, and refresh their life, feed high their giant strength, and sustain their bodily vigor even at the spring-tide fullness; and the leaves they shall disperse abroad throughout the earth, in order to preserve the bodies of the mortal people from all diseases, who, so long as they will be beholden to these physicians of nature, and this balm of Gilead, shall go on well, flourishing in health and strength and happiness.

All this and much more of benefit and enjoyment, of good and gracious ministry, of bodily refreshment and delectation, is promised to the victors: in the prospect of which flow of bliss and feast of soul they are called upon to bear hunger and thirst, poverty and misery, fasting and weakness in this wilderness; and to contend most manfully against the allurements of the sense, the service of the world, and the base bondage of the sensual appetite; to fight and to overcome.

THE SECOND PROMISE

But man's former estate of blessedness, when he possessed the tree of life and all other trees of the garden, fell away from him like the shadow of a pleasant dream, when one awakes in the height of a mortal disease. And he was sent forth into the wide world, from that region of delight, which God had planted for him in Eden. Death came between him and all things. Well worthy is it then of the Spirit's goodness and grace, to still man's fear of any such second catastrophe with assurances, such as of old He gave to Noah, when He promised that no second deluge should cover the earth. And this the Spirit promises next in these words:

Revelation 2

¹¹The vanquisher shall not be injured of the death the second.

The first death has its course upon all flesh created of God, the second death shall not have its course upon all flesh, as it shall be raised by Christ, these vanquishers being specially exempted therefrom. Whether any others shall be exempted we inquire not, but they surely shall.

Now, because that second death is indeed the condition of utter destruction from the presence of God, wherein lie sweltering in the lake of fire, all evil persons, and all evil angels, and all evil things, the dross and the corruption, death and Hades, and whatever besides has arisen in arms against God's goodly and blessed creation of life; we are given to understand, that to these vanquishers of pain and sorrow and peril and sword and death and hell, there remains neither sorrow, nor pain, nor death, nor tears nor crying, nor any other evil accident whatsoever, but only joy, blessedness, and glory.

And because this evil which is warded off from them is entitled the second death, and not the second mortal life; because that state shall not have any power or liberty or bounds

of action, but shall remain forever close prisoned up in vain impotency, and fruitless struggling, for an existence, and incessant toil after something that cannot be realized, we argue from this interdict of all such evils from the estate of the vanquishers, that they shall never know weariness, nor exhaustion of their strength, nor be capable of hurt or injury in their members, nor be pressed beyond the limits of their strength, nor in any other way whatever experience any discord between the bounds of their will and the bounds of their habitation. Death, or the fruit of death, or the precursor of death, shall in them have no representation whatever, but, contrariwise, a continual stream of unwearied and inexhaustible life.

And, moreover, it is signified that this blessed estate shall know no change to the worse; be liable to no temptation, be overcome of no evil, be hindered or hampered in no good. There shall be such sweet harmony from the will within, where God ever works, throughout all the spheres of reasonable speech, bodily activity, outward work, and external impressions, as shall make all nature like one many-stringed harp, obedient to the touch of the master mind of man. No cogitations of evil, nor fearful recollections of evil past, nor anticipations of evil to come, nor injury, nor injustice, nor, possibility of change; positive good, and the absence of all positive evil.

What an estate worthy of God to design from the first, of Christ to bring out from the ocean of sin, of the Holy Spirit to constitute, of man to strive after, to fight for, spurning death, remembering that he who loses his life shall gain it, blessed hope of my soul! For which I will bear man's rebuke, disease and sorrow and pain, and man's oppression, and death, and all things contradictory and evil, because I have a state in reserve for me which cannot be hurt of the second death.

Security, safety, and freedom from contingency are before

me. What need I fear this loathsome world, or care about man's terror, who can only kill the body? but God can destroy both soul and body in hell-fire forever.

THE THIRD PROMISE

Such is the manifest and open blessedness of life, the perfect and entire security from death, which the vanquishers are promised in those first two words of the Spirit. But His third admonition ascends into a loftier and more mysterious region of being:

Revelation 2

¹⁷ To the vanquisher I will give to him to eat from [not *from off* as in the first, but simply *from*] that manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name having been written, which no man knows save the receiver.

This is the nature of their *hidden* life and *unknown* name or being, for the name always denotes the nature of the being. The first gave us the outward and ostensible form of their life, as the heads of creation. Eating off the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God; dwelling with God in His own appropriate habitation, and feeding at His own table; they thence dispense according to their several needs and deservings, the blessings of goodness throughout the inferior creation.

But they have another and a higher fountain of life, another and a higher region of being, which is expressed by the hidden manna that was laid up before the Lord in the golden pot, and eaten of no one, approached by no one save the high priest on the day of atonement. This aliment of an unearthly being shall then be ours, and ours alone, who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, under the wings of him who is the Almighty.

There being arrived in that new Jerusalem, which is the

holy of holies of creation, the dwelling place of God, the seat of His inaccessible light, His holy temple,—which temple He is,—we have a new nourishment of life, hidden and unrevealed, a communion with God, a life of God, an inworking of God, pertaining only to the ransomed of the Lord, who have taken up His battle and conquered therein.

This hidden life has a hidden food, and that food is manna, which is the humanity of Christ; yet not the manna corruptible, but incorruptible,—that is, the glorified body of Christ, whose capacity of spiritual communion is such, that it is able to drink up and to contain the whole fullness of the Godhead. And we, drinking from that full river of God, do enter into the same divine communion, and have a life like to that which Christ now possesses:

Colossians 3

³ ...your life is hid with Christ in God.

⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.

1 John 3

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

Very flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone, one with him of His substance, His very wife, we shall surely be made partakers of that heavenly life which circulates through all the members of His body, but beyond the precincts of His body shall not flow out, save in words of command, influences of blessing, and acts of good government to all other beings whatever, who shall wait upon the queen, though they be daughters of kings, and live upon the smiles of her countenance, and do all her good pleasure.

Oh, what a peerless dignity is this! the bride of Christ, who ever reserves unto herself the very substance of her living and

loving Lord, being made of a rib taken from His side, and built up unto him for a wife most dear, for whom He will leave His Father, and with whom He will dwell for ever and ever.

The same secret love, and life, and communion of being, with which no other creature intermeddles, are revealed to my mind under the symbol of the white stone with the inscribed name, inscrutable by all others but the receivers thereof. This is His name, His bounds of habitation, His definition of being which He knows, and no one besides, which He knows in the act of receiving it, and which can in no other way than by impartation be conveyed.

It is as the pure and spotless God, clear as the light of God, wherein is no darkness at all. It comes by bequest, and not by right; it is an act of grace and acquittal, of conferred honor, a boon, a blessing, which the Spirit gives, whereby we arise from the cell and the prison house of death into that most glorious life and fellowship with the Almighty God, through the glorious body of His mediatorial Son.

This is life of God, this is name of God realized, is the substance conveyed in that word, "son of God;" the first promise is the substance of that word, "son of man." Ah me, what a mystery of love is expressed in that word "sons of God!" It is an unrivaled dignity, to which only the peculiar people (*Deuteronomy* 14:2, *1 Peter* 2:9), the people for a possession, the "peculiar treasure" (*Exodus* 19:5, *Psalms* 135:4), the "jewels" of God are admitted. *Malachi* 3:17. This same honor we are all by the baptism of Christ admitted to, and we do in the Spirit enjoy:

Galatians 3

²⁷ For as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

Why is it not found, why is it not preached, why do not our divines strain after this subject, instead of doling out the dregs

of Dutch and Genevan theology? Ah me! surely we have forsaken a royal banquet to feed on garbage.

THE FOURTH PROMISE

Next comes the outward manifestation of this inward right and property of being. For every dignity in God's creation is for use, and this the superlative prerogative of His creatures is for the greatest use. And the occupation is revealed to us in the next promise to consist in the beating down of all adverse rule and government upon the earth, and exalting over the whole bounds of it the blessed ascendancy of the Morning Star that comes out of Jacob.

Revelation 2

²⁶ The vanquisher, and the observer of my works unto the end, I will give to him liberty upon the nations;

²⁷ And He shall rule them with an iron rod; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in pieces, as I also received from my Father,

²⁸ And I will give to him that morning star.

This contains the excellent service which we shall do for God and for man, against those nations who have gathered themselves against Him and His Christ, and so long corrupted the earth with their abominable deeds. God uses us for His judges of the wicked, for His men of might to crush the seven-headed monster, and put him and his crew under iron government.

Not only to dash their structures of wickedness to pieces, but also to put down the powers of wickedness themselves, and keep them under iron rule during all the millennial period; which is indeed one of blessedness to the whole earth, but that a blessedness wrought out by violent outpourings upon the wicked rulers, and continual suppression of them throughout the long age of time which precedes their utter rejection into the lake of fire; after which they shall cease to

need suppression of any rod, being held impotent in the lake of fire.

As the same Spirit of Christ does reduce this nature of mine into obedience and blessedness, by first putting down with an iron rod, and keeping down the potentates of sin who are encamped there, and over their prostrate heads, sends forth the sweet authority of the Holy Ghost; as Christ in person now does exercise this double rule of the iron rod and olive branch, in His saints; even so Christ by His saints shall at His coming, and throughout the Millennium, smite with the iron rod, until He have smitten down the evil, principalities, and with the same iron rod, shall keep them down, extending the while over all nature, the holy, and beneficent sway of that morning star which is the dawning of a day of light and sunshine never again to decline into the shades of night.

There is in this both an act and the continuance of an act. The act is the host of heaven encountering the host of earth; the continuance of the act is their keeping Satan in prison, and death in subjection, and all evil in the dust; so proving that it is not any new nature of creation, but the new government of the sons of God, which so keeps all things in their places, and blesses all things with their proper purpose and enjoyment. This is the regeneration: not the alteration of the created materials, but the shooting through them of that baptism of fire, which shall purge out of them the unclean spirits which now divert them from God, and the ends of their being.

Those flaming ministers who heretofore showed themselves on the top of Sinai, angels and ministers of every name, under the mastery of the heirs of salvation, whom they serve, shall take the place of the evil angels whom they have bound in fetters of iron, and being ever obedient to the men of power, shall bring nature back into the observance of all those good ends, and the possession of all those enjoyments for which

things were created at first.

All this will be seen by that vehement outbursting of evil which takes place at the end of the Millennium, and prepares the way for the final catastrophe, and eternal condition of the wicked. This power of bringing order out of disorder, obedience out of contradiction, and good out of evil, is after the nature of that creative power which did at first bring creatures out of nothing; and so we are proved to be sons of God, as Christ is proved to be Son of God.

And if anyone ask, why it should be that the counterpart of creation, and what in some respects is more than creation, (for contradiction is more than mere negation of being,) should be done by means of man, the answer is to be found in the fact that creation was all done not by the absolute God, but by God subsisting in the Christ; that is, in the form of the risen man. And therefore it is in harmony with and demonstrative of the work of creating all things by the Christ, that the work of redeeming all things should likewise be by the Christ, the man-child who is to rule the world with a rod of iron.

I cannot tell how often it has been impressed upon my mind, in following out the train of these cogitations, that all redemption wrought out in and by the man Christ, and His members, is but the doing in time by an intelligent will, of that very thing which was done by God, under the form of an intelligent will; so that redemption is but creation discovered; the form of the Creator, the worthlessness of the materials, and the perfect accomplishment of the end.

And lest we might think that the Sod of God was after all but a creature, some more refined humanity, behold creatures of that form make shipwreck of themselves, and find their bed forever in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

To this high work we are called as the members of Christ,

having in us the one Spirit, over us the one Head, and wrought by the one God, even to the work of asserting for God, God's supremacy over His own creation, and binding up the enemies of God in their several quarters, and making them do unwilling homage, and so getting God glory in the face of all His enemies.

This work of mighty power we shall be endowed with in virtue of our being the sons of God; and in the hope of this, God requires of us to stand up against His enemies even now, and put forth an earnest of the gift in doing miracles, healing the sick, speaking with tongues, and otherwise triumphing over all the power of the enemy.

This is a firstfruits of that power in the Spirit which we shall then receive for the ridding of this world of all the enemies of God; and when that is done, for the presentation of it to the Father. And as no one ever receives the earnest but he who has fairly engaged for the whole, and no one engages for that which he does not know, I do entreat the Church to be conversant with this noble inheritance, and to buy it with the price of all which they have; and then they shall receive this spiritual earnest of the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, faith, miracles, healing, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

These firstfruits of our redeemed dignity we can have only upon closing the bargain with God for the whole inheritance, and engaging heartily to the whole service by which, and by which alone, it is to be purchased.

THE FIFTH PROMISE

Next after the action of valor and power and service rendered unto God by the Church, and in behalf of all creatures, comes the rank and estimation in which they shall be held by God, in God's own presence:

Revelation 3

⁵ The vanquisher, the same shall be robed in white garments. And I will not blot out his name from the book of life; and I will confess openly his name in presence of my Father, and in presence of His angels.

This now I take to be our open avowal of God, our being clothed upon with honor and with glory. It is the outward show of that inward life which is set forth in the third promise. The white raiment is outward, the inscription of the name in the book of life is also outward and ostensible; and; so also is the avowal thereof in the face of God and of His holy angels.

In this respect the blessing here vouchsafed to us stands in contrast with the hiddenness of the third; and it stands in contrast with that which follows, in respect that it is personal, whereas the following one is common. Raiment is proper to a person; and so is a name, whether enrolled in a book or confessed in the face of others. These symbols, therefore, I regard as delineating the personal condition of those whom the Lord delights to honor.

The white robe being their perfect righteousness and thorough clearness in the sight of God; in virtue of which we may ever stand in His holy presence, and enjoy the indwelling of Him who cannot dwell with unholiness, nor take up His habitation with the workers of iniquity.

Revelation 19

⁸ The white raiment is the righteousness of saints.

Besides this, I see promised therein all comeliness of person, and gracefulness of appearance, such as becomes the presence chamber of God, and the court of the whole creation. In all the Scriptures, and in all civilized countries, the raiment is that by which both the rank and the comeliness of the person are expressed.

The white raiment, was proper to the priesthood, and to the High Priest when he went to minister in the holy place, which, is the presence of God. It was such as encompassed Jesus on the mount of transfiguration:

Mark 9

³ And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

And it betokens that source of purity which is within. As the high priest's ointment flowed down his beard and went to the skirts of his garment, so the inward unction of the Holy Ghost shining from within penetrated and purified the flesh and the outmost vestment of the body. So that the whole person shall be but as it were the shrine of the indwelling God.

The inscription of the name in the book of life, never to be erased from it, bespeaks the highest honor and renown; and the confession of it before God and His angels marks the love of election, the separating of them for His own forever. The feeling connected with this seems to me to be admirably expressed in that passage of *Malachi*, from which I think the language is taken:

Malachi 3

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

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him.

If the tree of life be the open support and nourishment of that new life, if the hidden manna indicate a more secret and hidden support of it, then the book of life betokens both honor and safety, and abiding remembrance. It is that our names shall be ever before Him, and shall never be hidden from Him, and shall ever be honorable in His sight.

These three things:

1. Comely, clean, and graceful raiment;
2. A high and honorable and everlasting name;
3. Distinction in the high places of the earth, and open acknowledgment in august and venerable assemblies,—

are what men now most eagerly covet after; and from which a Christian is sure for Christ's sake to be cut off. Rags and poverty, contempt and contumely, destruction in prisons and places of execution, are what the true followers of Christ have most surely to expect. Degradation from their natural birthright, robbery and spoliation of their property, the curse of father and mother and tender kindred, are what Christ calls us to.

And it was very mindful, in the midst of such immoderate and miserable conditions, to present His people with the hope of that raiment which is graceful in the sight of God, in the midst of execration as the off-scouring of the earth, to present us with a name better than the names of sons and of daughters, in the midst of abandonment, divorce, exile, and unutterable loathing of those who dwell at ease, to present us with the acknowledgment of the Son of God in the court of His Father, with His choice of us as His wife and the beloved of His soul, and the sharer of His dignity forever.

But who is he that endures any such dishonor for Christ's sake? I cannot tell. I find that it is no longer the calling of the Church to suffer, but to enjoy; not to lose reputation, but to gain it. There is in truth no difference. Suffering for Christ's sake is a work of supererogation. To be a churchman, is to follow an evangelical preacher, and to separate ourselves to particular classes of society, and to believe in the atonement, which means in their mouth no more than that Christ has some hand in our salvation. To have some feelings, to interchange some words, to follow some customs, and to carry

about a certain outside profession; this being the whole of what is regarded as orthodox and evangelical religion; there is and can be no use for any such encouragements as those contained in these promises.

But I feel assured that other times are setting in, and that God is preparing the Church by the opening of these epistles, and especially of these seven promises for the fearful things which are about to take place. Already the name of the best and most famous men has given place to the odious appellation of heretic; and it may not be long till the faithful servants of the Lord may have to wander about in sheep skins and goat skins. Then these promises will become precious as at the first, and the preacher of them welcome to the Church.

THE SIXTH PROMISE

Revelation 3

¹² The vanquisher him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and outward he shall no more go; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, to descend out of heaven from my God, and that new name of mine.

This contains the occupation of the Church in glory, signifying that the worship and the government shall be upon their shoulders; and that they shall fulfill the behests of the Creator, being His body of priests and kings through whom He gets His mind and will expressed to creation, and receives from all creatures, men as well as others, the homage and the service which is due from them to their Creator.

The Church is far more intimately connected with God through Christ, whose body she is, than are any other of the children of men over whom she rules; than are the angels and other invisible spirits; than are all other creatures whatsoever.

It is the circumscribed limited portion of the created thing

which God has chosen for a habitation to Himself, a body and spouse for His Son; His inheritance, His election, who are in Christ, and all other creatures are not in Him, but out of Him; who are of the Christ a part, and all other creatures are under him.

As of all dust, that which composed my body has to me a nearness and a dearness which the rest has not. So of all creatures, the Church has to Christ a nearness and a dearness, is of Him and in Him, and concerns Him, having His Spirit, and being of His flesh, and of His bones; an honor which pertains to no other beings whatsoever.

And, when we speak of Christ, we mean the whole Christ; not that one person, but many persons in that one subsistence: as when we speak of Adam, we mean not that person, but all the persons in him created, and sharing with him in his lot and destiny.

Anyone who should understand by the creation or fall of Adam the creation or fall of him alone, would grievously err; depriving man both of creation and original sin, and of redemption and righteousness. So, in like manner, he who, speaking of the work and reward and present estate of Christ, should speak only of the person of the Son of God, and not of all the persons chosen in Him to the same honor and glory, deprives God's idea of its completeness, and does exceedingly mar the purpose of God; which is not one person in one subsistence, but many persons in one subsistence.

The community which we have with Christ is the thing set forth in these symbols, to be a pillar in that majestic and fair-proportioned temple, of which Christ is the foundation and the chief stone of the corner, of which God is the whole subsistence, and in which alone are offered the spiritual sacrifices that He will accept. This is the first dignity, answering to the name "a holy priesthood," or "a kingdom of priests," and

amounts to the great truth, That, as no man might present a sacrifice or offering elsewhere than in the temple of Jerusalem, so shall no creature have any access to God, for any gift, or act of worship otherwise than through the Church, of which Christ is the Head and we are the members, yet one with Him, a body of holiness, through which alone the beneficence of God flows downwards, and the gratitude of creation flows upwards; the priests of creation, whose blessing is effectual, whose intercession is effectual, because they are one with Christ.

To this dignity of being, built into that temple, which is God, is added the security of going no more out, of never losing this place and office, to the effect of removing all fear and apprehension of change, all risk of danger, all possibility of loss or downfall.

Besides this, we have the name of God written upon us, which can mean no less than that God's being acts in us, even as now it does, and then shall do, with all its might and power, so that He shall do nothing without His Son, and His Son shall do nothing without His Spirit, whose compass of body is the Church.

I say, compass of body; because His compass of power and influence is creation, but of inhabitation is the Church, and only the Church. And as under the creature Adam all the creation was subjected, being under his word, influence, and power, so under the creature Christ (head and members having one creature subsistence) is all creation whatever placed, so as to answer to the word of God, speaking forth from thence, and to feel the influence of goodness thence proceeding.

This is the mystery of our having the name of God written upon us; that all His being which can be expressed to, and understood by, creation is embodied in, and proceeds from, the

Church; and has no other container but the Church; is contained within the Church, is not contained within any other creature, but comes forth upon, and unto it, in the way of an outward influence, authority, and blessing.

The same thing, with a new aspect, is promised to us, under the symbol of being inscribed with the name of the heavenly Jerusalem, which comes out of heaven, the region of the dwelling place of God, and is His city for political ends, as the temple is His house for ecclesiastical ends, and the Church His body for personal ends.

The New Jerusalem, our city, which is the mother of saints, and bears rule over all the world. It is our strength, our home, our habitation, in which, and from which, go forth the ordinances of government from the Great King. The true city of palaces; the abode of the true kings; which kings without do serve and give tribute to; where dwells the kings of kings and the lords of lords.

And besides this, there, is another, inscription upon us of that new name of Christ; for both the name of God and that new name of Christ are to be written upon us. Now this is the name of persons, and denotes that which is proper to a person's inward experience: signifying to us, that we shall have the very mind and will of God, the perfection of His image, and the fullness of His joy; the rest of His blessedness, and the full flow of His goodness; that whole inward experience of Him which to a creature can be expressed, or by a creature be apprehended.

And also Christ's new name, which does imply that we shall possess all Christ's delight over a redeemed creation, all His love of His Father, and all His dutifulness to His God, all His glorying over a redeemed world, all His sense of gratitude to His Father, all His devotedness to His Creator, all and every one of His feelings as the Christ, when He shall be brought in

a second time into the world, and all the angels of God shall worship Him. What profusion of gifts, what affluence of promise, what exuberance of description, what enforcement of hope, what unweariedness of application, unto His well-beloved fellow-soldiers! And not a word of extravagance, not a thought in excess; the very truth as the word of God can express it, and the very thing which through eternity shall be realized by the militant Church, is the day of Christ's appearing.

THE SEVENTH PROMISE

Finally comes the promise of the throne, the last, the highest dignity for which there is any symbol among men. Christ is the throne of the Father, and we, the throne of Christ. And when He shall give up the kingdom to the Father, then shall we occupy with Him the seat of His royalty for ever and ever. But into this we go not, having just finished the full and explicit detail of it in this Lecture.

And now what can we say to this body of honor and privilege, and power and blessedness, but that it is greater than eye has seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man has ever conceived; and that the work which the Spirit will yet accomplish in us is the most wonderful work of God, and the perfection to which He will bring us is the perfect manifestation of God.

All this, when I think upon, and compare with the lean and meager account which is rendered of heaven, the shallow, shadowy, flimsy thing which it is conceived to be by our people, and by our ministers set forth; when I think that, instead of bracing up the courage of the Church by these glorious hopes, and carrying her to the pitch of bearing the cross and crucifying herself with Christ, she is served with some theological common place upon the method of a sinner's acceptance; as if that were the all in all, which is in truth no part of the matter, but only the way to it; can I be but grieved? Yea, I

am grieved at the very heart, and am ready to burst with indignation against the treacherous dealers between my God and the souls of men.

Having in my mind and heart such an idea of the Church, and the expectations of the Church, as these seven epistles set forth, can I be but sick at heart, to see the ignorance in which God's people are kept of it all, and the stern front of opposition which almost all the ministers of the Gospel make to such heavenly discourse? I grieve all the day long; and as oft as my soul is filled with these glorious thoughts, I could weep my heart out, when I think that an ignorant and unfaithful ministry have deprived a hungry and thirsty people of these treasures of goodness.

For example, my own Scotland, what a state she is brought into, and what a state she is held in by a clergy, of whom, though they claim to be, and perhaps are, the best body in existence, do not know and wish not to know any of these matters! Can I be but grieved? Are these imaginations of my own? No; they are the verities of God. And can I be but grieved that they are held up to the people by nine out of every ten who speak upon them as the ravings of fools, as the heresies of abominable apostates?

Verily, verily, I will not be silent while I live; and if it should please God to raise war against me, I will fight for His truth as a man of war and a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. 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.

PRESENT STATE OF THE SEAT OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

AND now, with respect to the history and present state of Laodicea, I make the following extract from *Dr. Chandler's Travels*:

“Laodicea, with Colossae, its neighbor, was enriched by sheep, which produced fleeces exceeding Milesian in softness, and the jetty raven in color. Some shepherds came with their flocks to the ruins; and in the evening to the water near our tent,” says Dr. Chandler, “I remarked only one or two sheep, which were very black and glossy.

“Laodicea was often damaged by earthquakes, and restored by its own opulence, or by the munificence of the Roman emperors. These resources failed, and the city, it is probable, became early a scene of ruin.

“About the year 1097 it was possessed by the Turks, and submitted to Ducas, general of the Emperor Alexis.

“In 1120 the Turks sacked some of the cities of Phrygia by the Maeander, but were defeated by the Emperor John Comnenus, who took Laodicea, and repaired or built anew the walls.

“About 1161 it was again unfortified. Many of the inhabitants were then killed, with their bishop, or carried with their cattle into captivity by the Turkish sultan.

“In 1190 the German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, going by Laodicea with his army toward Syria on a crusade, was received so kindly, that he prayed on his knees for the prosperity of the people.

“About 1196 this region, with Caria, was dreadfully ravaged by the Turks. The sultan, on the invasion of the Tartars in 1255, gave Laodicea to the Romans, but they were unable to defend it, and it soon returned to the Turks.

“We saw no traces either of houses, churches, or mosques. All was silence and solitude. Several strings of camels passed eastward of the hill: but which we first discovered by his ears

peeping over a brow, was the only inhabitant of Laodicea.”⁹

After this it may be as well to sum up the whole account of these Churches, with the following extracts from a letter of Mr. Lindsay, of date 1816:

“1. If the population of *Smyrna* be estimated at one hundred and forty thousand inhabitants, there are, from fifteen to twenty thousand Greeks, six thousand Armenians, five thousand Catholics, one hundred and forty Protestants, and eleven thousand Jews.

“2. After *Smyrna*, I visited *Ephesus*, or rather (as the site is not quite the same) *Aiasalick*, which consists of about fifteen poor cottages. I found there but three Christians, two brothers who keep a small shop, and a gardener. They are all three Greeks, and their ignorance is lamentable indeed. In that place, which was blessed so long with an apostle’s labors, and those of his zealous assistants, are Christians who have not so much as heard of that apostle; or seem only to recognize the name of Paul as one in the calender of their saints.

“3. *Laodicea*: in the road to this is *Guzel-hisar*, a large town, with one church, and about seven hundred Christians. In conversing with the priests here, I found them so little acquainted with the Bible, or even the New Testament, in an entire form, that they had no distinct knowledge of the books it contained, beyond the four Gospels; but mentioned them indiscriminately, with various idle legends and lives of saints.

“About three miles from *Laodicea* is *Denizli*, which has been styled (but I am inclined to think erroneously) the Ancient *Colosse*: it is a considerable town, with about four hundred Christians, Greeks and Armenians, each of whom has a church. I regret that here also the most extravagant tales of miracles, and fabulous accounts of angels, saints, and relics, had so usurped the place of the Scriptures, as to render it very difficult to separate, in their minds, Divine truths from human inventions. I felt that here that unhappy time was come when men should ‘turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables.’

⁹ Dr. Chandler’s *Travels*, p. 225.

“Eski-hisar, close to which are the remains of ancient Laodicea, contains about fifty poor inhabitants; in which number are but two Christians, who live together in a small mill: unhappily, neither could read at all; the copy, therefore, of the New Testament, which I intended for this church, I left with that of Denizli, the offspring and poor remains of Laodicea and Colosse. The prayers of the mosque are the only prayers which are heard near the ruins of Laodicea; on which the threat seems to have been fully executed, in its utter rejection as a church.

“4. *Philadelphia*, now Alah-shehr. It was gratifying to find at last some surviving fruits of early zeal; and here, at least, whatever may be the loss of the spirit of Christianity, there is still the form of a Christian church: this has been kept from the hour of temptation, which came upon all the Christian world. There are here about one thousand Christians, chiefly Greeks, who for the most part speak only Turkish: there are twenty-five places of public worship, five of which are large regular churches; to these there is a resident bishop, with twenty inferior clergy.

“5. *Sardis*...The few Christians who dwell around modern Sart were anxious to settle there, and erect a church, as they were in the habit of meeting at each other’s houses for the exercise of religion. From this design they were prohibited by Kar ‘Osman Oglu, the Turkish governor of the district: and, in consequence, about five years ago, they built a church upon the plain, within view of ancient Sardis; and there they maintain a priest. The place has gradually risen into a little village, now called Tatar-keny; thither the few Christians of Sart, who amount to seven, and those in its immediate vicinity, resort for public worship, and form together a congregation of about forty. There appears then still a remnant, ‘a few names even in Sardis,’ which have been preserved. I cannot repeat the expressions of gratitude with which they received a copy of the New Testament, in a language with which they were familiar. Several crowded about the priest to hear it on the spot, and I left them thus engaged.

“6. Ak-hisar, the ancient *Thyatira*, is said to contain about thirty thousand inhabitants, of whom three thousand are

Christians, all Greeks, except about two hundred Armenians. There is, however, but one Greek church, and one Armenian. The superior of the Greek church, to whom I presented the Romaic Testament, esteemed it so great a treasure that he earnestly pressed me, if possible, to spare another, that one might be secured to the church, and free from accidents, while the other went round among the people for their private reading.

“7. The church of *Pergamos*, in respect to numbers, may be said to flourish still in Bergamo. The town is less than Akhisar; but the number of Christians is about as great, the proportion of Armenians to Greeks nearly the same, and each nation also has one church.”

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE VISION OF THE CHURCHES

FROM this vision, upon which we have spent so much sweet labor, and brought forth so much of what has been to our own soul profitable discourse, we have several conclusions, which we would express with all brevity and comprehensiveness.

1. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Concerning the Church, which is the main subject of the vision, we conclude, that it is an infinite promotion above our standing as creatures, yea even as redeemed creatures, to be made members thereof.

The whole world is redeemed, and every man who dwells thereon; all the children of Adam are redeemed out of death, and in virtue of this redemption shall stand up out of death again. But they are not therefore all made members of the Church, which is purely and solely of the election of God, who alone has a right to adopt whom He would into the name and degree of sons. For to be a Churchman is to be a son of God, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

This Church is to be for ever, in all ages and in all places, the activity of God, His abode, His manifestation, by which He does everything, and without which He will not do any thing; His fullness, the fullness of him that fills all in all. It is the last pre-eminence of creature being, compared with which the highest name in heaven among the creatures is but as a servant's humble place.

To set forth the glory and excellency, the privileges and prerogatives of the Church, is the subject of this vision.

2. THE CHURCH CONSISTS IN CHRIST

The Church consists of an election made by God from the common mass of redeemed men. And because redemption out of death's hand is first necessary, in order to obtain from God this body of living activity, wherein He may express all the riches of His glory, fulfill all the purposes of His goodness, and put forth all the actings of His power unto all men and other creatures for ever; He among men who is able to remove the let of death and corruption out of the way, and the antecedent let of sin, is the Man under whose headship it must all be constituted, because without such a one there cannot be a Church: without His victory over death, and the devil who has the power over death, God's purpose to have a Church, and to work in and by a Church, must utterly fail.

The Person who wrought this work of redemption for the whole creation of God fallen under sin was Jesus of Nazareth, who in virtue of this work is exalted both Christ and Lord, above every name that is named, whether in this world or in that which is to come; is given to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body.

And beside Him there is not nor can be any other Head, because no one but He had any hand in the work of redemption; by which He procured for Himself this solitary and sublime height of place, to be the Head of the body in which God makes all His delights to be felt, and by which He expresses all His actions of power and goodness unto all men, and other creatures, for ever and ever.

If there be a right inalienable and indefeasible, it is Christ's right to be the Head of the Church; and if there be a name which should not have been appropriated by angel or man, or by any creature, it is that name; and though it was a good thing for our king to negative the pope's pretensions, I do solemnly protest against it as an evil thing to have done so by

appropriating this name, however the evil signification may be explained away.

3. CHRIST IS THE REDEEMER OF THE CHURCH

Because Jesus, the Son of Man, who ensured to Himself the title Son of God by His resurrection from the dead, though He had it also by inheritance as the only-begotten of the Father, is the Christ and Lord, and only Head of the Church; it is necessary that the election of the Father should proceed upon the admission of this prerogative of Christ.

For, seeing that to become a member of the Church presupposes redemption out of death, and Christ as the only Redeemer of every man, the Father will surely acknowledge, and cause to be acknowledged, the other Persons without whom His purpose of a Church must have stood unaccomplished.

And so it is, that only as many as receive Christ for their Redeemer, both acknowledging that they need such a Redeemer, and receiving Him as such, receive power to become the sons of God; only those whose sins for His sake are remitted, receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. And there is no other condition towards becoming a child of God but faith in the love of God, who has sent His Son to redeem us, faith in the righteousness of Christ by which we are redeemed.

But this is a condition which cannot be departed from, and never was in the case of any member of the Church, who have all acknowledged their privilege to be due, not only to the free grace of God, but also to the finished work of redemption.

The Church, therefore, is founded on the basis, and arises sublime from the floor of redemption, as the cherubim stood upon the propitiatory or mercy-seat, and were indeed beaten out of the same piece of gold. In one word, it is impossible that there can be a churchman who does not first believe in

his redemption by Christ.

4. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

God brings His own right of electing from among the redeemed, and Christ's prerequisite of redemption, to meet together in the one act of baptism, which seals us members of the Church: forasmuch as the actor of baptism is Jesus Christ, whose twofold function, as pointed out by His witness, was:

1. The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world;
2. He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

The former, the act of redemption to the whole world; the latter, the act of bringing the redeemed into the infinitely higher standing of members of His Church.

And as Christ is the actor of baptism, surely the Holy Ghost alone is He through whom He accomplished the work of bringing a redeemed man into the membership of the Church. The workmanship of the Holy Ghost stands in three things:

1. The destruction of the sense of guilt, and the introduction of the sense of grace, which ever cries Abba, Father;
2. The purification of the inward man, his perfection in the image of God, and complete mastery over the members of the body;
3. The manifestation of the supernatural gifts for an earnest of that government which we shall hold, that influence which we shall exert over all men, and all other creatures whatsoever.

And thus it is that the three persons in the Godhead work together in the constitution of the Church.

5. THE CHURCH: VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

The Church thus gathered together of redeemed men must

have visibility; inasmuch as it consists of embodied men, and not of disembodied spirits only. And also it must have invisibility, inasmuch as it consists of disembodied spirits, as well as embodied men.

Yet is it essentially and indissolubly one, and that a unity like to the Divine unity, wherein many persons subsist. Its unity arises from the one sustaining Head, the one informing Spirit, and the one inworking God. To the Divine persons it is the one creature form through which their existence, power, and goodness is communicated to the knowledge and enjoyment of the creation.

The finite cannot comprehend the infinite; and therefore the infinite must take a limited form, in order to be seen, known, and possessed. That form is the Church; constituted by the three persons of the incomprehensible Godhead, as is said above. And because the three persons of the Godhead are essentially one, the Church must be one.

Yet this unity, like the unity of a man, consists of two parts: the spirit and the body; not dissevered indeed, though distinct substance, but made for one another, and working together the one great end of demonstrating God's one being and attributes. These two parts are in existence apart; the one a company of departed spirits, and the other a company of living men. But they are one not the less, and as one working together the work of one God, one Christ, by the one Spirit.

Concerning the invisible part of the Church, we have no light in this vision, but not a little in the next. Christ is the only invisible person of all His Church which in this vision is presented to our view. It is the vision of the Church as existent in the several places of the world, under the sole inspection, ministry, and support of the great High Priest in the heavens. Neither angel nor disembodied saint comes between Him and us in all this vision.

The Holy Spirit alone, besides Himself, has part or lot in our preservation. This is a most important conclusion to establish, inasmuch as it sets the Church into immediate communication with Christ; and teaches every member thereof, that he needs no intercession of blessed virgin, or of saint, between him and his own flesh, which is Christ.

We know not what place or function in the body the disembodied spirits may occupy. No doubt they continue of the body still a constituent and integral part, for there is no separation from Christ, when we have been once joined to Him by the Holy Spirit. Whatever it be, it is swallowed up in Christ: theirs is only a subsidiary portion of His action: occupied they may be by the Spirit for carrying on His ministry, but not seen in any way, though they may be seeing.

6. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

The one Church, inspected by the one Shepherd and inspired by the one Spirit, subsists in various places upon the earth, without having its unity at all disturbed thereby, and likewise in all times from the departure to the coming of Christ.

Nor is there the least hint given as to the numbers necessary in any place, or in any time, to constitute the Church. Time, place, and number of persons are of no account in respect of these integrant portions of the Church.

It would seem to say, that in every place upon the wide earth, where there is any number of believers, however few, or however numerous, they should consider themselves as forming one Church: the Church in London for example, the Church in Edinburgh.

To this idea the original scheme of the Church of Scotland seems to have striven to conform itself by uniting the Churches of a town under one eldership. But it seems to lack

some point of conformity, in not having one angel over all the Churches in one place. This the Church of England seems to have better preserved, in appointing one bishop over the Church in the cities.

But then we are nearer the truth in the smaller towns and villages, having there an angel, whereas the Church of England has only one of inferior dignity. But it is manifest that these angels over the Churches were all of co-equal and co-ordinate dignity. Upon the whole, we have the advantage; though, in the cathedral towns, the Church of England seems to have the advantage, in this respect.

7. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

No Church is without an angel, whose office it is to bear the Church upon his heart continually, and to be between them and Christ. I know not whether the Romish superstition of every village, town, and city having its guardian angel, be not derived from the true Christian idea, that every town, however small, ought ever to have an angel over its Church, however few the members be.

Seeing no mention is made of elders or deacons, it seems to be intended, both that they are not absolutely necessary to the being of a Church in any place, and also, that like the counselors of a king, they are included with the subsidiary offices in the person of the angel. There is no mention of Presbyteries, Synods, or General Assemblies; nor of Deacons, Archdeacons, Bishops, Archbishops, or Primates; teaching us that none of these are necessary to the constitution of a Church, but have their origin in the occasion or necessity, and must be able to show reason for themselves.

One responsible person, in whom the Church may be regarded as summed up, whom Christ may look to, as His delegate, the Shepherd or Pastor, the Minister or Preacher, or by

whatever name he is called, there must be; and no Church, without such a head, has completeness. Who are these heads? The parochial clergy in their several parishes. And are they not of derived authority? I think not, or else the Churches are not rightly constituted. For if there be Churches which assemble in the parishes of the land, it is absolutely necessary, in order to their being so, that there should be over them a man taking his orders from Christ, and Christ only.

And what is a Presbytery? A court like that which met at Jerusalem, for settling questions that may arise among the Churches.

And what is a Synod? For the same end, when the Presbytery cannot accomplish it.

And the General Assembly? Just the same. For order, for the prevention of schism, for the preservation of unity. May they not without a cause interfere with a minister's liberty? They do it at their peril. Must a minister resent such interference? He does give way to it at his peril.

And the same things say I, where this matter is ordered by grades of persons instead of courts. I like that worse, lest it should lower the angels of the several charges into some inferior station, which may not be permitted for any sake.

In one word, Church government, which has cost so much blood and controversy, is in these epistles a simple matter; namely, a Church in every place, and an angel over it who represents Christ in the midst of them. And I believe a Church thus constituted might be sure of Christ's fostering hand. But how they are to choose their angel, the vision says not; or how they are to remove him, the vision says not. Other parts of Scripture do indeed testify to this matter; as the *Acts of the Apostles* and *Epistles*; but this vision is intent on other things.

8. THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH

Every Church is tempted in its angel, and in its angel is judged; just as every kingdom is visited in its king. It is, like angel like Church; and, like Church like angel. Each several Church is so; and not the combination of Churches, as the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. These combinations are growths of charity, not constitutions of God. And even though they had been constitutions of God, as is a kingdom, still they would not have broken up the law of the several Churches laid down in this vision, any more than the constitution of the kingdom breaks up the law of the family, which is, that the children are judged and represented in the father of the family.

I wish particularly to impress this upon the angels of the Churches, because I feel it to be a cause of watchfulness, and an encouragement to piety, and a stimulus to perfection, which nothing else can supply. And I am assured that it is not felt as it ought to be. The confederation has taken away the dignity and responsibility of the persons. I would restore the dignity and responsibility of the persons, in order that the confederacy may regain its end of charity and promotion of unity.

Whenever the persons merge their personality in the combination, it is the combination of slaves; for the feeling of personality is indispensable to freedom, and such a combination must sooner or later oppress the liberty of the Church.

Now, this is the very state of things at present in existence in our Church. The responsibility of the several ministers for their several flocks, which this vision makes paramount, not deigning to mention another, is lost sight of in the responsibility of the whole confederacy. Now, in as far as the Church is a confederacy, it stands under the kingdom, and is represented in the king, who employs its ministry for the sake of

his people. Hence comes the uniformity of its creeds and books of discipline. Thus it has a being national, as being “the king’s prophet.”

Creeds, in most cases, were drawn up under authority of the king in the exercise of his high function, of providing proper instructions for his people. Christ will not, at the judgment-seat, acquit me of my responsibility as the head of a flock, if I should say, I did not this because the Church forbade it, or yet because the state forbade it. We must do the will of His Father which is in heaven, if we would pass that tribunal.

This is a great point of truth. There is no mention of either king or prelate, or Church court in this vision; but there is continual mention of Christ. To Him then I, an angel of the Church, must look, and Him serve, though the Church should cast me out and the king slay me.

9. THE DUTY OF THE MINISTER

While the angel of each several Church thus addresses himself to his responsibility,

- with all reverence for every other angel, with subjection to none;
- with all reverence of ecclesiastical traditions, with subjection to none;
- with all consideration of the authority of councils and assemblies of the Church, with blind subserviency to none;

Let him draw close to Christ, and feel himself ever under His eye, and before His face; and let him give heed to the answer of the Spirit in the members of the body of which he has the oversight;

- whom he is to feed, and treat in all respects according to their wants;

- in whom he is to rejoice according to their prosperity, and for them to give thanks according to their blessedness;
- and to bear them on his heart always, as Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel on his breastplate;
- and to give himself for them, as Christ gave Himself for the sheep.

He is to think of nothing else but Christ and His sheep, between whom he stands to receive the supply, and to serve it out and to receive the increase, and to return it to the great Giver. He is a representative in his little sphere of the Headship of Christ, and should fulfill it as Christ does; thinking only of God and Christ, and the people of his charge.

Thus should every settled minister and pastor of a flock carry himself. Nor is he to think of the persons who were instrumental in putting him there. They, be they laymen or clergymen, are but agents of Christ, to the effect of bringing him into a station, of which Christ Himself has defined the law and the limit; and no man, nor body of men, dare alter that law or limit, by a single hair's-breadth.

Therefore I cry aloud to every minister of Christ, administering word and sacrament to a people, be they few or many, of this name or of that name, to think neither of powers civil or ecclesiastical, but of the Universal Bishop only, and to pour out his soul unto death for the salvation of the people:

- nor to measure his preaching by any human formulary;
- nor to think of articles, or creeds, or confessions;
- nor to fear the face of clay;

But to preach God's own word with all his might, and watch with all diligence for the fruits thereof. In doing so, he will both save his own soul and the souls of those that hear him.

As his Church increases, he will need elders and deacons to help him with their oversight both of things spiritual and temporal. And such he will seek out according to the apostolical rules. And having set them apart, they, looking up to him as the responsible person, will occupy their spheres according to the spirit of the same holy administration.

This I take to be the way of God in the affairs of the Church; and if the angels of the Church will walk in this way, they may nothing doubt of His blessings upon their several charges, and through these upon the whole Church; and through the Church upon the whole kingdom, and through the kingdom upon the whole world.

And if in carrying out this the inherent law, liberty, and power of his office, he meet with let and hindrance from the powers that be, whether civil or ecclesiastical, then is he just in the condition of his Master and his disciples, who were in like manner cast out and hunted from the earth.

Be careful, brethren, to provoke no strife, and to give no offense, to acknowledge the delegated power, both civil and ecclesiastical, but to maintain the original source of power to be in Christ alone; to give a reason from His word of the hope that is in you, and the thing which you do, and so leave your faithful and true witness to work in its own way, and if need be seal it with your blood. That is all which is to be done. Speak the word which is true; do the thing which is right: stand forth and justify it, and then be ready to die for it.

10. THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH

Besides an angel, there is also a people appertaining to every Church, who have their duties as well as he. And what are these? To regard themselves as the temple of the Holy Ghost, which should be holy, as the members of Christ, which should be sinless and spotless, as the witnesses to God's Fatherhood,

to Christ's redemption, and to the Holy Ghost's sanctification, of those who once were sinners. Therefore ought they ever to cry Abba, Father; and not only to cry it out, but to have the assurance of an Almighty God working with Fatherly love within them.

They are witnesses to an indwelling, inworking Almighty God; and therefore they ought not to stand at works natural, but go into works spiritual or supernatural. For there is no manifesting of an Almighty God by works merely natural. Things natural manifest neither the perfect goodness, nor the perfect power of God.

Nature is out of course: its course is evil, and Satan is its god. To take it out of his hands, proverb the power of Christ, in whom dwells God: and we, as being members of Christ, should look to possess this power of God in Christ. And so we should not stop at natural actions, but go on, yea be chiefly conversant with things supernatural, as having a new life stricken into us, which is the life of the risen Christ, and because we are members of the one body of Christ, we should cleave together with a continual fastness, with the cleaving of an unquenchable love.

And to the end the gift of the Holy Ghost may serve the two-fold purpose of striking a common life into us, and of teaching us that the same life is not complete in every person, but by the conjoining of many persons into one, the gifts are diversely given; to one the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another the gift of faith, &c; that we may depend one upon another, and honor one another.

Therefore we ought to be careful against the very appearance of schism. The spirit of schism is the very contradiction of the spirit of love, and cannot co-exist with it. The member of a Church, therefore, ought to cleave fast to the brethren, and grapple them to his bosom with all the fastenings of

truth. Truth is the principle of all union; and wherever a man is walking in the truth, he will be walking in love towards all the brethren.

And if the brethren should be standing in the truth, they must be animated with the same spirit of love; and so through the mediation of truth they cleave to one another; and a Church in this way is always gathering particles to itself, and increasing its stature and its strength.

Withal there grows a wonderfully sweet spirit of enjoyment, and grace and goodness, a feeling of health and strength, a gladness and a joyfulness, like to that which every young creature feels in the day of its youth. This is the way in which the Church, through unity, spreads itself over the world, sows itself in every region, and takes possession of the earth.

But observe, that it is not one great confederation like the Papacy, which cannot live in parts; but because the root Christ is in every member of it, it is capable in all conditions and circumstances of its own sustenance and propagation. Chop it into pieces, and disperse it as you please, you can but sow it the more widely. For wherever we go, we go preaching the word.

11. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

While these things are most surely to be concluded, from the vision concerning the individual authority of every angel, and of every Church, it is at the same time ever to be remembered, that the Churches, however many, are still but one, are bound together into one, by the sevenfold unity of:

Ephesians 4

⁴ ...one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling;

⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

This truth is expressed in the vision, by the choice of the number seven, rather than any other, whose property it is to express many in unity.

And how then, it may be asked, is this unity manifested? By God it is manifested in assigning to each its proper place in the field of battle, tempting them diversely:

1. One by decline of first love, like Ephesus;
2. Another by fiery trials, like Smyrna;
3. Another by high dignity and learned error, like Pergamos;
4. Another by apostasy, like Thyatira;
5. Another by a hypocritical name, like Sardis;
6. Another by false brethren and feebleness, like Philadelphia; and
7. Another by temporal abundance, like Laodicea.

And with these several places in the field of battle, each has its appropriate banner under which to fight;—these banners being the several parts of Christ's glorious and all-inclusive name, the several styles with which he presents Himself, in the most appropriate manner to the several Churches.

And each also has its word of consolation and encouragement, in the several promises of the Spirit. The unity, therefore, is:

- a unity of spirit, and not a unity of form;
- a unity of end and design, not a unity of visible parts;
- a unity of service against the common enemy, and not a unity of constitution, like the Jewish Theocracy or the Roman hierarchy.

Each Church possesses power of life and of propagation within itself, and is competent to:

- the sending out of missionaries to preach;
- the issuing canons of right faith, as indeed did many of the primitive bishops, against any error which arose;
- the continuation of its own ministry, as in the primitive Church was shown, by the election of the bishop or angel from among the presbyters;

And in one word, is competent to all the functions of a body complete and perfect within itself. And yet, being so,

- is not separated from every other Church, but acknowledges the one baptism, the one faith, the one hope, the one body, the one Head, the one Spirit, and the one God and Father;
- is engaged with the one work of resisting and overcoming the evil which is around it, which is among its hands, which is bred in its own bosom;
- is willing to entertain the questions of other Churches when submitted to it,—or, if need be, to submit her own;
- is willing to meet in provincial, or in general councils, when need is, for the assertion of the one faith and hope and baptism;
- but is not dependent upon any of these occurrences, either for the feeling or the manifestation of the unity, which stands not in negatives so much, as in positives,—not in the prevention of evil so much, as the propagation of good.

The unity of the apostolical Church stood not in the council of Jerusalem, which occurred only once; but

- in the common faith and love and service of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- in the reception of the apostolical and other missionary

persons;

- in the recognition of each other's brotherhood; and
- in the continual interchange of all Christian offices.

The unity of the primitive Churches stood not in the provincial or ecumenical synods, which, upon emergencies at first, and afterwards, as worldliness grew, and spirituality abated, convened at stated and regulated intervals. As our parliament does not make us freemen, but emanates from our freedom, so these synodical meetings and acts do not make the Churches one, but come of their unity. They are expressions of unity, and testimonies to it, but no origin of it, nor yet necessary to its conservation.

I am the more intent upon this great point, because I perceive that in the Church of Scotland there prevails great misconception upon this subject. That the power to convene in Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, is inherent in the Church, all Christendom, in all times, with one consent has declared. And that in their apostles and elders, those who minister the word, and those who rule, have a right to convene, is also of common consent in all the Churches.

But that they should be ever and anon convening, with or without cause, is no where sanctioned, either in the Scriptures of truth, or in the records of ecclesiastical history. That they do so in our Church, arises, as it seems to me, from a false notion as to where the right of superintending is reposed; which is not in councils but in persons, not in confederations of the angels, but in the persons of the angels.

While I admire the liberty of our ecclesiastical polity, I cannot but acknowledge, that it presses hard upon the dignity of the angels or bishops of the Churches, whom I cannot for an instant invest with prelatial dignity over many Churches, but whose authority in their several Churches I will not surrender for any consideration.

12. THE AUTHORITY OF THE MINISTER

Therefore the *Jus Divinum*¹⁰ lies with the angels of the Churches, and not with any courts or councils, compose them how you may. There is a Divine right of government in the Church; and these epistles show me, that it lies in the persons of the angels, who are taken to be responsible for all the acts of the whole Church, just as kings are for all the acts of the whole kingdom.

Nothing to my mind can so establish a Divine right to be in one person of each Church, as the continual inclusion of the whole Church in him. And how is this person to be found out? And how is he to be instituted in his office? There is no mention nor hint of any such plan or method, just as there is no mention of forms of government or methods of appointing the chief magistrate of a state.

And wherefore this silence? Because God would not implicate the great question of power and subjection, either in Church or in state, with any such questionable matter.

A state cannot subsist without a governing head. Even Venice had its Doge, and America has its President. No more can a Church. And accordingly, from the Papal Empire, down to the last fragment of the Dissenting interest, you shall ever find some one who stands to the rest in the place of a head.

This is felt in our Church to be a thing so essential, that though the moderators of the several courts be elected yearly, and some of them oftener, the courts themselves never cease to have such heads, in whom they stand represented, who sign and seal, and authenticate all their actings.

I do not think that the *Jus Divinum* resides in any of these courts, inferior or superior, great or small, but in the persons of the angels of the Churches. Let every Church therefore

10 From Latin, meaning: "Divine Law".

look to its angel, as to the messenger of God, in whose mouth God has put His message, and upon whose shoulders God has laid the government, and whom Christ looks to as responsible. Let them give him reverence as the ambassador of God unto them for salvation, let them yield him obedience, as having the oversight over them, and watching for their souls.

And if they be ill-conditioned, let them not seek redress by schism or separation, but by faith and prayer, and all dutifulness; remembering that no ordinance violates or subverts our union with the one great Head, kept up and maintained by the Holy Spirit. It is, after all, but a figure of the real thing within the veil.

And as no one, by his having a bad father, thinks himself thereby prevented from the Fatherhood of God, or goes about to seek a better father; so, no one having a bad angel sent to them, ought to think himself thereby deprived of the one great Angel and High Priest of our profession, nor cast about how he may put himself under another.

There is not one hint in all these epistles of the right or remedy of Dissent, now deemed so sacred, and on such slight occasions exercised. And I believe it was a thing never contemplated by the great Head of the Church, and, when gone into out of a pure spirit of separating, is full of all evil consequences to the soul.

As it is cherished in this kingdom at the present time, I believe it to be the worst and most violent form of insubordination and insurrection. As it arose, whether in England or in Scotland, it was indeed a very different thing from what it is now come to be.

They were cast out; or at least the place was made too strait for them to dwell in. And their consciences would not any longer permit them to cleave to the confederation of the Churches, in so far forth as those points of uniformity were

concerned, though in other respects they preserved the unity of the faith in the bond of peace. And if now again those prosecutions entered into, against the most excellent of the clergy, of our Church, should issue in their expulsion, what can they do but take joyfully the spoiling of their good name, and go forth without the camp bearing Christ's reproach?

Are they to cease to preach God's truth, because the authorized ambassadors of God within the land have betrayed their Master, and entered into a combination against the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Never, oh! never should they cease to cry aloud and spare not, and only the more zealously and importunately, because the powers that be have betrayed their Lord and Master.

But let them be careful of bearing malice against the powers, for that were indeed evil: let them denounce their evil inventions, and warn them of God's speedy vengeance; but let them beware of any schismatical or divisive courses, of any sectarian or hostile feelings. Because one king is evil, another king may not seek to overturn his throne; to his own master he stands or falls. So also because these ministers deny and persecute the truth, we may not on that account seek to shake or to subvert that authority which they have received from God. So thought our Lord, who desired His disciples to hear them who sat in Moses' seat, but not to do according to their deeds.

Such are the conclusions concerning the Church, which flow from this vision. We have drawn them out fearlessly, without any desire to favor or to offend any established system of ecclesiastical polity; in which, if there be anything amiss, how is it to be corrected otherwise than by the holy Scriptures, which are the tests of all tradition?

There is no error so fatal to truth, and so destructive to the Church, as that her ministers and members should be entram-

melled in their study or preaching of truth by what is written in the formularies of the Church. He that consented to do so has not a single eye, and his whole body cannot be full of light: and he will prove neither for an honor nor for a strength unto the Church, which expects no such worship, but requires it all to be given to her Head.

The symbolical books of a Church are not the Church, but an utterance of the Church for a particular end; and the same Church which uttered them is capable at any time of uttering anything to explain, to curtail, to add to, and even to contradict them. And this is exactly what the Churches in Scotland and in England did at the time of the Reformation. It is the principle which, being acknowledged to be in the Church, justifies the Reformation; and being denied, the Reformation is necessarily a great act of schism.

I have no hesitation in affirming that the doctrine which is held on this subject by the most part of our churchmen is purely papal. The Westminster Confession is, with them, another book added to the Scriptures, and the Revolution is another day of Pentecost; and they lay their hands upon the book and say, "By this we live."

So strongly do I perceive this tide running towards the worship of men and men's works, that I have often felt as if it were wrong to plead out of any book but the Scriptures. And though in times past I have done so, I feel as if in the time to come I will do so no more.

The Church of Christ was in Scotland some fifteen centuries before the Revolution, fourteen centuries and a half before the Westminster Assembly, and thirteen centuries before the Reformation; and it is too much for men to talk as if we lost our liberty of serving Christ, according to the mind of the Spirit, at any one of these three epochs. God forbid.

Wherefore I have taken liberty to set forth the truth, the

whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according as the same has been made known to me by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And while I have a being I will do so by the grace of God. And I tell all my brethren, that if they do not likewise, they are found unfaithful witnesses to the God of truth, and as such shall be condemned in the great day. And however they may please themselves with the bare titles of honesty and consistency, they are both dishonest and inconsistent.

And to talk of the duty of separating from the Church, when you disapprove of anything in her standards, is to talk of the duty of schism.

- To sign the standards, when in heart you differ from them, is dishonesty;
- To leave the Church upon your discovering something in her which you can no longer approve, is schism;
- To hide it is dishonesty, and lack of brotherly love;
- To publish it abroad, is honesty and brotherly kindness;
- To bear reproach for it, is patience;
- To stand up for it, when called into question, is virtue;
- To be cast out for it, is honor; and
- To preach it still with all love and long-suffering, is faithfulness unto God, and unto Christ;

In which honesty, brotherly-kindness, patience, honor, long-suffering, and faithfulness, I desire to be found abiding unto the end.

End of Vision First
Gloria Deo in Excelsis

