

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

BOOK 8

REVELATION 3:1-6

EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS

EDWARD IRVING

1831



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March 2017
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CHURCH IN SARDIS

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*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

¹ And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write; These things says He that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead.

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God,

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess His name before my Father, and before his angels.

⁶ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

INTRODUCTION

TO anyone comparing the four former with the three latter of these seven epistles of our great Bishop to His churches, there will be manifest, in the midst of a constant unity of matter and of style, this circumstantial difference: whereas the temptation in the former arose from heresies, false apostles, and a false prophetess, in the latter they arise from none of these causes, but from hypocrisy, indifference, and self-aggrandizement. The former is an outward visible enemy, the latter an inward weakness and decay.

In all the third chapter there is neither mention of Nicolaitanes nor of Balaamites, of feigned apostles, of false prophets, of the sorceress, nor of anything holding of the flesh and the visible world, as in the second. But on the other hand, there is mention of a name to live while there is deadness at heart, of lukewarmness and self-sufficiency, and other forms of trial which come from within ourselves.

In each case we except one Church, that of Smyrna and of Philadelphia, which stand amongst the others as examples of what the Chief Shepherd would have them to be.

This remarkable difference between the forms of temptation, whereto the former and the latter divisions of the seven churches are exposed, induce inquiry as to the cause.

That it was really and truly so that the churches of Sardis and Laodicea were under the temptation of inward decay, and not of outward evil, there can be no doubt. But seeing that by these instances the Lord was speaking to all the churches, through all the time of His absence, we want a reason why He should choose part of them under the temptation of outward and part of inward evils.

The answer is, that thereby He would the more completely embrace the round of all temptations whatsoever, and present

to all churches, and to every Church the proper counsel and conduct in their various manifold perplexities.

There are these two open quarters of temptation:

1. Our own unfaithfulness from within, and
2. The assaults of our enemies from without.

From these two, every Church and every Christian is assaulted. And therefore it was most considerate of our good and wise Bishop to set before us the faith and hope, the strength and consolation, in which these various assaults are to be withstood and overcome.

While this is a good and sufficient answer to the question upon the first great principle of interpreting these epistles in such a way as to be fruitful of edification to the universal Church, and to the individual churches, and to the private persons who compose them, it obtains another very beautiful resolution upon the principle of a historical application into which we have been led as we proceeded.

In a historical point of view, the Catholic Church has existed in two conditions, the one before the other, since the Reformation. Before the Council of Trent, the true Church of God was in the bosom of that ecclesiastical and political system, into which Christendom had wrought itself under the pope and the emperor. But that most wicked council having sanctified all the abuses, and affirmed all the errors, and canonized all the corruptions which had crept in, having adopted the feigned apostles, and the Balaamite doctors, and the false prophetess, and everything else, however abominable, which the lapse of ages had introduced, did seal up the Roman Church into the condition of an apostasy, where a few witnesses may be maintained, and no doubt are maintained unto the end; but where the visible Church is no longer in existence, but the visible apostasy.

And from this time forth we must look for the visible

Church out of her, in those who came forth from her protesting against all her evils, and seeking to reform them; not constituting any schism or sect, but seeking to preserve the Church visible in contradistinction from the visible apostasy.

The second state of the Catholic Church, therefore, we have existing in the various Reformed churches of Europe, apart from the Papacy, which has now, in the Council of Trent, formally and finally apostatized from the faith, nor can be any more looked upon as a visible Church. And so, in chapter 3 we hear no more of Balaam, or Jezebel, or fleshly lusts, but of hypocrisy, false brotherhood, and lukewarmness.

Looking, therefore, to the Protestant Church for the historical antitype of Sardis and Philadelphia and Laodicea, it does but remain that we should discriminate the three states of it therein set forth.

THE GLORY OF A NAME

The first is the glory of a name which the Reformed Churches, one and all, acquired by the power of argument, with which they resisted and overcame their antagonists, and by the excellent forms of doctrine and discipline which they instituted among themselves.

Upon that name they are subsisting still, when almost all that entitled them to it is departed. They are unsound in almost every point of doctrine, utterly relaxed and broken down in discipline, indifferent to, or ignorant of, the great questions between the Church and the apostasy, yea, and of the authority and dignity of the Church, become the idolaters of a book, and of those persons who can make the most plausible and powerful arguments upon some of its words.

Behold the Protestant Church as vain and proud of her name, as if she still had amongst her the Luthers and the Calvins, the Hookers and the Latimers, the Knoxes and the Melvilles, through whose means God wrought her deliverance

from the house of bondage.

This is the Sardis state of the Church, which we see exhibited in the High Church parties of England and Scotland, as distinguished from the Methodist or Evangelical parties which have started up in both, and indeed in all parts of Christendom within the last century, originating with the labors of Wesley and Whitfield, and propagated by the labors of Romaine, Scott, Newton, and such like worthy men.

These, together with all their followers, differ from the old veteran school of the Reformers, by caring little about the glory of a name, whether for learning, for orthodoxy, for discipline, or for anything else, save zeal in promoting personal safety, and extending the bounds of the Evangelical kingdom.

The authority of the Church, the vitality of the sacraments, the deep and large knowledge of the truth, the zealous and masterful exposure of error, anything and everything which appertains to nice discernment and discrimination, is by them set at nought; and looked upon as troubling the happy peace and perfectness which they enjoy.

The great mass of their writing consists of Reports for religious societies, in order to show how increased they are in goods, and how excellent and wonderful are their doings over the whole earth; and next to these their popular sermons, holding up the all-sufficiency of those most narrow views of doctrine and practice which they hold.

If they are tried with any higher doctrine, Calvinistic, for example, they say:

“Of what use is it? It does but stir controversy.”

If they are tried with any newer doctrine, as the Lord’s coming and kingdom, they say:

“Why withdraw us from the sufficient way of truth in which we are walking? Is not that which we now hold sufficient for salvation?”

If they are tried with any fuller doctrine, as concerning the person of Christ, and the manifestation therein of the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, they say:

“Surely it cannot be true, for our ministers never preach it to us.”

If they are tried with any pure doctrine, as concerning the assurance of faith and the completeness of sanctification, body, soul, and spirit, they say:

“What dangerous doctrine, that a person should be sure that God has saved him in Christ! Where then the necessity of our religious societies and other works; for if we are safe, what more is needed?”

They are instant about nothing else but their own personal safety. If they be tried with any more hearty and loving doctrine, as the atonement and redemption wrought out for all, they are distracted with rage, saying:

“Where then is the difference between us and the wicked?”

They never dream that it is possible of the two classes they may be the more wicked, like the Pharisees of old, who were much farther from God than the publicans and sinners.

To this form of the Church belong the great body of the dissenters both of England and Scotland, and so many of the established churches as look upon the religious societies, and their subscriptions, and their reports, as the great index to the prosperity of religion.

THE VOICE OF THE MAJORITY

If there be any meaning in these names by which the seven churches are designated, as has been thought by many excellent interpreters, the name Laodicea, signifying the voice or judgment of the people, is most expressive of another feature of this last form of spiritual temptation. For, beyond all question, the only authority which they acknowledge is the voice

of the majority.

Their ministers and leaders everywhere are of the people's choosing, their responsibility to the people, their influence according to their popularity; newspapers and magazines are their oracles, and the extent of their circulation is the criterion of their excellence. It is as pure a democracy, and as little of a Church-polity, as the present government of France; it keeps up the form of a Church, as France does the form of a monarchy. But the reality, the power, the dignity, and the compelling authority are all gone.

This is the Laodicean state of the Church, which is running a most rapid career, and daily winning upon the old Reformation ecclesiastical spirit; which, like the old Tory spirit in the state, is ashamed to show itself, and content to conform to the arbitrary dictation of public opinion; of the popular judgment, which is the literal translation of the word Laodicean.

Between these two is introduced an intermediate state of the Church called the Philadelphian. It will be observed, that, in what we have written upon the historical application of those seven churches, we have regarded them rather as seven successive forms of trial, with the corresponding forms of resistance, than seven distinct and well-defined periods of time.

And, forasmuch as a new spirit flows in upon the Church, like a tide gradually and slowly swelling to its height, and then slowly receding to make way for another; we may, and commonly do, have the presence of two at the same time subsisting; the one in the condition of ebbing out, the other of flowing in.

Such is the state in which the proud and mighty spirit of the Reformation, and the broad, yet shallow, pretending, yet weak spirit of Evangelicalism, are exhibited before us; the former almost ebbd away, the latter coming in with crested pride, and expecting to sweep down all barriers of former wickedness, and possess the wide world.

But though thus proud and vaunting, it has done but little towards the conversion of mankind, and is yet very far from the mark of the prize of its high ambition. It is coming in, but not yet near its spring-tide mark.

WITNESSES OF THE LORD'S COMING

And before it arrive at this, there will be exhibited fair and lovely, yet small and unnoticed, "with little strength," yet faithful to the word of Christ and to the testimony of His name, the Philadelphian Church, whose commendation is the sweetest of all the seven.

In contrast to the Church of Sardis, which was bound together only by a name, this Church so united by true brotherly love, (as the name Philadelphian imports,) and keeps the word of His patience, and is preserved from the hour of fearful trial which is to come upon the whole earth.

This word of Christ's patience I regard not as referring to trials of persecution so much as to the patient looking for His appearing:

James 5

⁷ Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

⁸ Be you also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

And the hour of temptation viewed in reference to the same historical sequence would refer to that fearful tribulation of all nations which precedes His coming, from which this faithful Church is preserved, and out of which it is taken.

Without going into particulars at this stage of our inquiry, this Philadelphian Church has reference to that chosen few who are set for the witnesses of the Lord's coming, and for the testimony of all His truth, who are now beginning to draw

upon themselves the reproaches both of the waning high-churchmanship, and of the growing Evangelicalism.

Interposed between the two it stands lifting up its voice for all that is precious in the good work of Reformation, adopting all that is precious in the evangelical work; and adding thereto all that has been found most precious in other ages of the Church, a witness for all the truth. With these men I cast in my lot, to keep the word of Christ's patience, and to enter into the reward of His inheritance.

To the standard which with others I have been enabled to lift up for a fuller gospel than the Reformers preached, or the evangelicals preach, I perceive a rapid gathering of good men and true, from both the Sardian and Laodicean parties of the Church. But nothing like a general assent of the two bodies, who are only the more enraged, and forget their common quarrel to put down this family of brethren who are everywhere arising armed in the panoply of truth.

Scotland, the most active and energetic and religious of the kingdoms, is beginning the fierce and furious work of pulling down this novelty, and others will follow. And as there both parties are sworn against us, so elsewhere will it be. But Christ will give us the shelter of His wings, and we shall be saved when He arises to shake terribly the earth. To those who are looking and waiting for Him, He addresses the words of the prophet:

Isaiah 26

²⁰ Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about yourself: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

²¹ For behold the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Hatred and opposition to these, the wise virgins, who are witnessing against the Sardian nominalism and the evangeli-

cal self-sufficiency, will unite these two parties into one, and bring out the evil of both. They will no longer have any cloak for their sin; and our work of testifying be over, they will collapse and coalesce into one great hideous wickedness, combining all the people into a cold selfishness which the Lord shall visit with the loathings of His disgust.

And this is the true account of the Sardian, Philadelphian, and Laodicean spirits, as they are now witnessed in the Church called Protestant, which since the Council of Trent has been the only form of the visible Church; Romanism being the apostasy visible, the harlot confessed.

Such I conceive to be the true order of the succession of the last three churches of the apocalypse, looked at in their historical aspect.

But as this has always been in our eye subordinate to the catholic aspect under which we have sought to view them, for the profit of all Christian churches and of all Christian men, we now return to our ordinary method of considering the truth of God and of Christ set forth to us in the epistle to the Church of Sardis.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sardis was a city of great antiquity and renown, the capital of Lydia, and the seat of Croesus, far-famed for his wealth and splendor, whom Cyrus overthrew, and possessed his capital ere yet he became master of Babylon, which of all the cities of Asia was the only one that surpassed Sardis in riches and splendor.

It was situated about twenty miles southeast of Thyatira, and was noted for its prosperity and sensuality. To the angel of the Church therein planted, this epistle is addressed, which we shall as usual take up under its three parts:

1. The Universal Bishop's style or designation;

2. His message to the ministers;
3. The Spirit's promise and exhortation to all the members of that Church and of all churches, and to every one that has an ear to hear.

OUR HIGH PRIEST'S STYLE OR DESIGNATION

Revelation 3

¹ ...These things says He that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;

THE word in the original, which is translated *has*, signifies *possession*, or *ownership*, or *occupation*. The term *seven Spirits*, occurring in the benediction beside the Father and Christ, can only signify the *Holy Ghost*. And the *seven stars* are, by interpretation of Christ, the *angels*, or *ministers*, or *bishops* of the churches.

The style here adopted therefore asserts Christ to be the possessor of the Holy Ghost and of the Christian ministry; who has then to do with them as it seems to Him good.

What is intended to be conveyed by this information, and wherefore should it be held forth to the Church of Sardis in particular? Let us first do the part of the doctor in unfolding the matter, and then of the pastor in applying it.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS

In order to explain the full force and application of the prerogative implied in these words, “who has the seven Spirits,” it is necessary to take a distinction between the Spirit of Christ and the Seven Spirits, or the Holy Ghost, as given to and enjoyed by the seven, that is, all the churches; or, the one holy catholic Church.

We need to have the Spirit of Christ in order to be His members:

Romans 8

⁹ Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

This signifies that Spirit of a holy redeemed elect man which was in God's chosen One, whom He raised up from among the people; that Spirit which in its fullness, both of

faculty and of action, is described in these words of the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 11

² And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,

³ And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.

⁴ But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

This is that perfect form of manhood, that perfect image of God which Christ exhibited in our fallen nature, making it not to become unfallen manhood, as ignorant and ill-informed men foolishly set forth, but making it to become spiritual manhood, which can know neither fall nor imperfection.

And being so capable, when it has raised the body in spiritual perfection, of propagating itself into other persons, as a spiritual power capable, in a corrupt body, of overcoming its mortality, as it does in the Church, yet waiting for the redemption of the body, and groaning until it be brought to us at the coming of the Lord with all His saints.

This is the Spirit of Christ, not the Holy Ghost in His Divine essence, but the Holy Ghost as rendered into the life of holy manhood by Christ, and thence propagated in streams of life through all the Church of God.

As the mother alone breathes the vital air of heaven, and, having rendered into nourishment of life, imparts it in the warm stream of her blood to the babe which she carries in her womb, so Christ alone is capable of receiving the Holy Ghost in His proper essence, as being Himself God; and having therewith first sanctified His body in the generation and all His life long, and then raised it from the dead, He does from

that body send forth the regenerating life into those who are in Him, as the members are in the body, or the branch in the vine, or the child unborn in the mother.

He, with His Church in Him and of Him, forms one body animated with one life and one mind: He, breathing the spirit and elaborating it into the stream of human life which He sends throughout His many members. This is what in Scripture is called “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (*Romans* 8:2), derived to us from eating His flesh and drinking His blood; as it is written:

John 6

⁵³ Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

⁵⁴ Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁵⁵ For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

⁵⁶ He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him.

⁵⁷ As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eats me, even he shall live by me.

In these words we are taught that the life of a Christian is not by receiving the Holy Ghost out of the Godhead direct, (which is to make man capable not only of comprehending, but of direct communion with, and absolute receiving of, the incommunicable Godhead,) but out of the fountain of human life, of everlasting human life, which is opened up in Christ.

And this is the reason why over the bread of the Lord's Supper it is said, “This is my body; take, eat” and not, “This is my Spirit”, but “This is my body”. And why not “This is my Spirit”? Not because we receive at that time His flesh as the Papists dote, but because we receive the Spirit of an embodied Christ; not of a disembodied Christ.

The thing we want is the Spirit of an embodied man, able to take possession of this spirit of an embodied man which is in

me, and to empower it to please God. I have the life of an embodied man under a law of sin. What I want is the life of an embodied man under a law of holiness.

It is not abstract spirit, but spirit with bodily affections, which I need: it is not the voidness and incomprehensibleness of a disembodied Spirit which is presented to me in Christ, but the distinctness, and fulness, and sympathy, and power of an embodied Spirit.

I know a flesh-and-blood man, I see such a one altogether holy in Christ; and I know that He has power to propagate Himself by regeneration into as many as the Father shall give Him, and of forming in them an image of Himself, who is the perfect image of God. Now this is what I need; and this is preached to me to be in Christ, and to be communicated in Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper; the former being the regeneration, the latter the completeness of the body, and likewise the completeness of the inheritance.

This is what in Scripture is called Christ in us, (the Holy Ghost in us is, I think, a different thing). This is what is called the mind, and the Spirit, and the life of Christ. This also is what the apostle signifies, when he thus writes:

Galatians 2

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

And in respect of knowledge, this is what He means, when He says:

Galatians 1

¹⁵ When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen: immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

As it was the very God, who was present in the man Christ

Jesus, (though without Godhead attributes, which cannot come within the limits of manhood,) the very person of the eternal Son of God, even so verily is that very person present in the believer, and that continually to nourish and sustain him, and rear him up to the stature of the perfect man, to the measure of the fulness of Christ.

We are members of Christ, of His flesh and His bones; we have not a separate life or a separate being, or a separate substance, but the same, though our personality be distinct. And so the body of Christ being many members, and yet one Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:12*), continually holds up to view the great fundamental principle of the Godhead, which is more than one person in one substance or life.

This is the true doctrine of the Christian life, but one wholly unintelligible to those who account it as blasphemy to say that Christ could be tempted to sin; as if this were to assert that God could sin, or that God could be tempted.

What would those divines (falsely so called) say to the primitive Church, contending against the Arians for the liberty of saying, not that God could be born, and could be tempted, and could die, but that God was born, was tempted, and did die? Methinks some of our Presbyteries, and Synods, and Assemblies too, would make sad havoc of the Nicene Fathers, if they could lay their hand upon them.

But if, in saying that God was born, was tempted to sin, was dead, we did say that Godhead was under these conditions of the mortal creature, then indeed we were worthy to be excommunicated as heretics; and the same was done by the Nicene Fathers to those who would not assert all these things of God personal, though they would have died many times rather than assert them of Godhead substantial.

The ignorant man says:

“How can these things be?”

And the heady man says:

“Away with such subtle distinctions and refinements.”

And the self-sufficient man says:

“I abhor all such things.”

But the wise man says:

“I will consider them.”

And the well-instructed man says:

“I know them to be the ground and pillar of the truth.”

But to return—I have said this much concerning the Spirit of Christ, in order to clear the ground for what I am now about to say concerning the seven Spirits of God which He asserts Himself to possess.

The body of Christ, the Church of the living God, who are thus by regeneration begotten into the life, and reared up into the manhood and maturity of Christ, is for certain great ends of God thus constituted and prepared; and to fit it for these ends it is that the Seven Spirits, or the completeness of the Holy Ghost, (for that is the power of the number seven,) is given to Christ; in order to fit and furnish them for their high offices, whether in this age or in that which is to come.

When I say the completeness of the Holy Ghost, I mean the communicable completeness; that fulness which is necessary for the ends of God in constituting a Church, in giving to Christ a holy seed.

When God had raised Him from the dead, and set Him above all in the Highest, and put all under His feet, He gave Him, thus advanced and glorified, to the Church, which is His fulness, the fulness of Him that fills all in all.

Again, after He had perfected righteousness, and presented His body without spot upon the cross by the Eternal Spirit, and was by the Father declared to be His Son with power, by

the resurrection from the dead; He had still a something more to receive, which is the promise of the Holy Ghost:

Acts 2

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

For this unction, we have observed in our digression upon the endowments of the Church¹, He had positively and more than once commanded His disciples and apostles to tarry at Jerusalem, until it should be poured out upon them from on high; showing us, that though regenerate persons already quickened by His words, which are spirit and life, upon whom He had already breathed after His resurrection, still they must wait for the furnishing and fitting out of the Holy Ghost: before they could enter upon any undertaking for God and Christ; before they could be the Church:

- the witness of the resurrection,
- the preacher of the gospel,
- the pillar and ground of the truth,
- the teacher unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places of the manifold wisdom of God.

This office of accomplishing the Church for all things for which she is destined in the purpose of God, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, is performed by the Holy Ghost in his own, and not in Christ's personality; as the Comforter or Paraclete, and not as the Spirit of Christ.

In this office He abides with the Church forever, and leads her into all the truth, taking the things of Christ and showing them to her soul.

- Christ in His own person communicates to the Church His life and holiness, His flesh and blood, the continual

¹ See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 7, "Epistle to the Church in Thyatira", sub-chapter: "The Gifts", p. 129-166.

support of His being;

- The Holy Ghost, in His own person, communicates to her all the outward advantages which lie between this world of humiliation in which we are, and that world of glory to which we are called.

As Christ, when He ascended up on high, had given to Him all power in heaven and earth, received then “all things which were delivered to Him of the Father” (*Matthew 11:27*), so we by the Holy Ghost do receive in this present age the knowledge and the faith of the same, and in the age to come the actual possession of them.

Nor receive we only the knowledge and faith of them in this present age, but likewise a firstfruits and earnest in those gifts of the Church which are part and parcel of the full possession which shall be brought to us at the redemption of the inheritance.

And in this sense the Spirit is again and again called the seal of the good things to come, the heavenly inheritance, and made consequent upon a man’s believing in Christ:

Ephesians 1

¹³ After that you believed, you were sealed with that Spirit of promise,

¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance...

And therefore also He is called “the Spirit of promise,” both as being the promise of better things to come, and as being the special promise of the Christian Church, written in the Prophets, and confirmed unto us by the Lord, in these last words which He spoke to His Church. *John* chapters 14, 15, 16.

It is evident from all the promises in these chapters respecting the Comforter, that He is distinct both from the person, Christ, who sends him, and from the persons, Christ’s servants, to whom he is sent. And as a distinct person from the

persons of the saints He is ever recognised in the Scriptures. For example, in respect of his witness:

Romans 8

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

And again, in respect to His intercession:

Romans 8

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ And He that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Here the Spirit in the heart of the saint makes intercession for him in cases where he himself is in ignorance, not knowing what he ought to pray for.

The truth therefore is, that, so far as the personal subsistence of a believer is concerned, he is to attribute it to Christ, who has redeemed him, and forms anew in him the image of God; so far as his outward actings are concerned, his powers and functions as the Church of God, whether in humility or in glory, he is to ascribe them to the Holy Ghost,—Christ the inhabiting life, in whom we live and move and have our new being; the Holy Ghost, the endowment of that life with honor and power over the creation of God.

For want of keeping this distinction in view, together with general ignorance upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and the offices of the several persons thereof, the great question of our Lord's human nature is at present fearfully confused.

So far as I can gather the meaning of the gainsayers and persecutors of the truth, their notion is, that we affirm the Second Person to have been of Himself insufficient, and in continual peril, or rather certainty, of failing, had not the

Third Person come in to His help. And so they blow the trumpet of falsehood over the land, asserting that our doctrine, or rather the doctrine of Scripture, that Christ presented His body holy by the eternal Spirit, is as bad as to deny that Christ himself is God. Whereof the error, and the crime is, I believe, more from their ignorance than their malice.

Luke 23

²⁴ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

If they would be at pains to learn on a subject on which it is no dishonor to a man to be ever learning, they would find that their own imagination is the heretic, and, in some instances perhaps, their envy and malice. For those whom with unsparing rancor in all ways, and by all means they misrepresent, maintain that the second person, and He only, did the work of overcoming all His enemies, of condemning sin in the flesh, of overcoming the world, and casting the devil out. The Son in His own person, and not the Holy Ghost for Him, did the work of perfect righteousness in flesh of our flesh, in mortal and corruptible, and, so far as its own properties were concerned, in sinful flesh.

And why then do we speak so much of the Holy Ghost's part in the work?

1. Because the Scriptures do so,
 - a) as to His generation (*Luke 1:35*),
 - b) as to His baptism (*Luke 3:22*),
 - c) as to His temptation (*Luke 4:1*),
 - d) as to His preaching (*Luke 4:18*),
 - e) as to His miraculous works (*Acts 10:38*),
 - f) as to His sacrifice (*Hebrews 9:14*).

Now we are resolved to speak as the oracles of God do speak, according to the commandment: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." *1 Peter 4:11*.

2. Because it is the first point of all divinity, that Godhead properties cannot come into the compass of manhood

limitations. And therefore, because the Son of God, in doing the work, does it as the Son of man, we cannot bring His Godhead and mix it up with His manhood.

If He does not make use of His Godhead substance, of what does He make use in restoring life and holiness to the corrupt substance of the virgin?

He makes use of the Holy Ghost given to Him of the Father, who comes to the Son of man as the redeeming and regenerating life; and is by the Son of man used for the ends of sanctifying and immortalizing that nature of ours which He took as He found it, unholy; and made it holy the same instant He took it, by the eternal Spirit.

This gives us the manner of Christ's subsistence as a man, and the Son of man; this is the only scriptural and theological account of His personal subsistence; the person of the Son of God united to the nature of fallen man by the Holy Ghost, and thereby prevailing to stay and repress all its sinful and mortal propensities, to make it sinless and immortal.

And this also is the account of our personal subsistence in Him: He, with that same spirit of life, apprehends us and maintains us through faith upon Him in a continual life of holiness, notwithstanding the preventions of our own evil nature.

If I err not therefore, the distinction between the Church mystical,—that is, the Head with its members, the Vine with its branches,—considered in itself, and the same body possessed with the fulness of the Holy Ghost, is the same distinction as between the person and the office-bearer: the personality standing in Christ, the qualifications for the office standing in the Holy Ghost.

All the will is of Christ, all the manifestation is of the Holy Ghost. If we think a good thought, if we speak a good word, if we do a good act; in one word, if we live to God, the glory ap-

pertains to Christ, who quickens in us all life and holiness, and maintains what He quickens. As men redeemed, the glory appertains to the Redeemer; but as men advanced high above man's original estate, the glory appertains to the Holy Ghost.

To have brought us back again to be God's image and likeness, and, I think, also to bring us back again to be the lords of the earthly things, belongs to Christ. But to carry us into the higher region of the heavenly things, and to present us in the new Jerusalem to dwell with God, and to exercise rule over the heavens, this is proper to the Holy Ghost. But this is a deep subject, and needs yet further clearing out: we shall therefore endeavor to work it upon a deeper parallel.

The constitution of man originally was earthly:

1 Corinthians 15

⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth earthy.

His utmost dignity arose no higher than to the supremacy of the sheep, and oxen, and other creatures upon the earth. To him belonged "the earthly things."

To redeem this creature and his earthly kingdom out of the hands of the devil, and utterly to destroy the devil's works, and cast him out of the nations and kingdoms of the world, this is the work which is set for Christ, and plainly written for Him in Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets.

And to do this He must wear the image of the earthy man, and present it faultless in the sight of God, without spot and blameless. This being done, His reward is:

- the redeemed world, and the redeemed race of men;
- the abolition of death;
- the casting out of Satan, and
- the recovery of creation to that original intention and operation which sin had in all things defaced, but in nothing destroyed.

To rise from the grave in the condition of the first Adam,

eating and drinking, and having dominion over the earth, and to bring mankind from the grave, and to draw the world from under the curse; this, verily, was the thing for which Christ had wrought, and the proper reward of His finished work.

To this were added various subsidiary arrangements of God with respect to the ordering of the redeemed earth; as that Abraham's family should be a nation of kings and priests; and David's family the king over them, and so over all the earth; and Canaan their possession for ever and ever.

But these are only parts of the great whole, that the earth, with flesh and blood its ruler, should, by Christ's taking flesh and blood, be all reclaimed from sin and death, from the grave and Hades. And to do all this the Second Person of the God-head, in His personal subsistence as man, avails; and in Him thus redeemed, mankind in flesh and blood as at first created, and the world, shall be exhibited in the ages to come; fulfilling those very ends for which our Creator did intend them.

But, besides these earthly things which Christ purchased to Himself as a man by His blood, there are heavenly things which were given to Him by the good pleasure of the Father, and which are to be looked upon as the reward, and honor, and glory with which God crowned Him as His own Son; in His subsistence of man, indeed, and because He humbled Himself to subsist as a mortal and servile man, but chiefly because being in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He did thus humble and abase Himself for the glory of the grace of God.

Because as Son of God, and very God of very God, He did thus humble Himself to become a worm and no man, to be broken-hearted with reproach and consumed with grief, God did far more highly exalt Him than to the head of the earthly things, even to the head of the heavenly things. He rewarded Him with the fellowship of His own throne, and constituted Him forever both Christ and Lord.

This dignity, far above all angels, and principalities, and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come:

- is out of man's natural sphere,
- is out of redemption's proper limits,
- is a new going forth of God to glorify the creature,
- is a thing yet unprecedented in the annals of creation,
- is indeed the bringing in of creation's majestic Head—of creation's crowned King.

It was indeed the oldest purpose of God, co-eval with the birth of a purpose, that thus it should be completed, and thus forever stand secured. And the Church also is to be brought into the fellowship and likeness of the Christ, fashioned for His helpmeet, His beautiful bride, and faithful spouse forever.

But though old in the purpose, as the origin of any purpose in God, and old in the word as the fall of man, it became a reality at the ascension when Christ was carried up to the right hand of the Father, and crowned Lord of all; not there to sit inactive, but there to sit supreme in council and in work, to hold the scepter and execute the behests of God over all the creation of God, visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth. And to this heavenly kingdom we are called of God, who have received grace to believe in Christ and been baptized into His Church.

Be it then well observed, that this elevation of the man Christ Jesus, above man's original and primitive condition in which he was created, must, like every new work of God be performed by the three persons of the blessed Godhead.

It is a new thing that man should sit upon the throne of the eternal God; and to fit man for this occupation, cannot be without a working of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, superinduced upon that work which generated him the earthy man.

He, the Son, is the subject of this work; the Father is the worker of it upon the Son of man; and the Holy Ghost is the manifestation of it. That promise of the Holy Ghost with which He was gifted when He ascended up on high, is no less, therefore, than the needful putting forth of Godhead power to carry Him into the heavens, and fit Him for the work of ruling the heavens. And while it is the mighty beginning, it is also the mighty upholding of manhood in that new sovereignty of God, and the means, the only means, whereby the Church can be brought to that highest estate of creation.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost, therefore, as distinguished from the Spirit of Christ, I regard as the work of God in His ascension and glorification, as distinguished from the work of God in His generation. Both works are for a continuance; the work of His generation is continued in our regeneration; and the work of our glorification shall be at our resurrection to glory, whereof we have now an earnest and a firstfruits in the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with which the Church was endowed at her Lord's ascension, that she might know for what a high and glorious end she is destined of God, and of Christ, in the ages to come, for ever and ever. And, if I mistake not, we have now got to the root of the matter.

Be it so, then, that the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the baptism with the Holy Ghost, which was not until Christ was glorified, which was not but for the glorification of Christ, is a new forth-going of Godhead to advance his creature into a new estate into which creation brought it not, and for which incarnation of Godhead did but prepare the way; and we have a great light cast upon the text before us, and, indeed, upon the whole mystery of God and of Christ.

Up to the time of His baptism He was the man generated of the Holy Ghost, in the condition of keeping the law; the man made of a woman under the law, the holy man and the faithful Jew.

From the time of His baptism with water and the Holy Ghost, He is the Church man, the first Christian, enjoying the firstfruits of the Spirit, and the earnest of that glorious reward which at the ascension He is to receive from the Father; waiting, however, still for the redemption of the body, and the laying down of flesh and blood, in order to His entering the kingdom of heaven.

In these two estates He is successively the federal Head of two races:

1. The Jewish nation hereafter to exist in holy flesh and blood, upon whom and into whom He shall pour that regeneration which shall circumcise both heart and flesh, and make them able to keep the whole law of God. And to this state the other nations shall be free to enter themselves; and not taking the advantage of that privilege, nor yielding reverence and obedience to the Jew, Christ's mystical flesh, they shall, at the end of the thousand years, suffer a fearful catastrophe, after which the whole creation of flesh and blood upon the whole earth shall forever be Christ's mystical flesh, originating from and continuing that form of being, man redeemed from the curse of the law, which Christ was from His birth to His baptism.
2. The second race of which, from His baptism to His ascension, He is the federal Head, is the baptized Church; which now enjoys the same baptism of the Holy Ghost, and is required to lead the same supernatural and wonder-working life, until the day of her general congregation from the grave and from the world, into the New Jerusalem, which is the completeness of their number and the consummation of their glory; and thenceforth shall they show forth unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places God's archetypal form of being, creation's glorified Head, the Almighty's chiefest work, Christ and His

Church, one body, “the fulness of Him who fills all in all,” yea “all the fulness of God.” *Ephesians* 1:23; 3:19.

To the effect of advancing the being of the Church out of the natural into the spiritual, it is that Christ has the seven Spirits of God in His hand, to do with as pleases Him, besides having in Himself Holy-Ghost life to quicken those in flesh and blood subsisting whom it pleases the Father to give unto Him.

That surpassing mightiness of the power of God (*Ephesians* 1:19), whereby the dead Christ was exalted into the supreme Lord of heaven, is a working of the divine power, which far, far outpeers creation and regeneration, and aught that has been or ever shall be done of the Almighty God.

And all this energy of power exhausting the utmost amount of what shall ever be manifested on earth or in heaven, Christ now possesses in hand, to do with it the eternal purpose of God, which is to glorify the Church with the same glory He himself now possesses.

Christ is there asserted and vindicated against Socinians, Unitarians, Infidels, and Devils, to have been the Creator of all things, by His occupying and putting forth that unexampled work which lifts creation from its grave, and sets it far above creation’s primitive estate into an elevation, and a dignity, and an infallibility, of which there never has been and never will be the like.

The Church glorified as far surpasses creation arrayed and accomplished in all primeval goodness, as Christ upon the throne of the Eternal God, and upholding all things by the word of His power, surpasses Adam, creation’s lord. And therefore He who has in hand that power of God, the seven Spirits, with which to do the work that surpasses, is proved to be at the least not inferior to Him who did the work that is surpassed.

But He is proved to be the same, inasmuch as it is creation which He sets on its feet again, and fixes in its rest and in its glory forever, but who should be able to enter into creation's chambers and reform them all, out of creation's dust to rebuild creation's fabric all anew, and as He did it to infuse into it a cement of immortality, and cover it with the very glory of God: who could do this but the Creator himself?

Whereby we come to know that the man who was crucified is He who created all things in heaven and on earth, is the very power and mightiness of God, is above all power visible, above all power comprehensible:

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ For eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

And, oh! when this is made sure, which very many confess with their lips, but very few understand or believe in their hearts,—when it is established beyond all question that Jesus of Nazareth is the Mighty God, that He who so sweetly spoke, so gently behaved Himself, and so generously died for man, is the very God with whom we have to do,—ah me! what a dark secret is disclosed, even the secret of God Almighty's heart; and how beautiful, and lovely, and generous, and good, is the revelation of it!

How worm-eaten and dry-rotted is this great question of the Divinity of Christ become! what verbiage, what clashing of texts, what thin and slippery argument! Why do not they carry the ship out of these shallows into the deep sea, and let her steer a gallant course? It is because they are landmen, and no mariners, who have got the steering and the commanding of her: and there she lies broken upon the banks, oftener high and dry than in her proper element, beat upon by the sun until all her seams are beginning to open; and soon, very soon, if God send her not a better crew, the gallant ship

will be seaworthy no longer, and the country people will come down and break her up for firewood.

Come with me, O you enslaved people! who call man your master, and are giving and taking honor: and look at Jesus of Nazareth sitting in the throne on high, in the eternal throne of the Majesty on high, upbearing God's government and representing God's person; and tell me if He can be less than God who does this?

But if you want further proof, come and see Him putting a new life into creatures, so that they shall stoutly stem the main strength of creation's drift away from God, set their breast against creation's tumbling, toiling abyss, and rise sublime above it, bearing it aside with an arm stronger than it.

But if still this work of regeneration satisfy you not, come with me and see Him raise dead creatures out of dust, and set them up in a life transcending not only Adam's goodly estate, but the estate of angels, and principalities, and powers, and ascending into a glory upon which he that looks shall look upon the glory of God.

Revelation 21

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven...

¹⁰ ...that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

¹¹ Having the glory of God...

But if it be said by these daring unbelievers:

"I see not this now, and what sign and token have you to give of it? it is but your own dream."

And our word-theologians will be as ready with the skeptical retort as any infidel of them all. My answer is:

"The Church has a firstfruits of that power, an earnest of that glory, part and parcel of that reward, in the gifts of the Holy Ghost, into which she is baptized."

Hear Christ, speaking to her spirit in a way that understanding knows not, and edifying her spirit by an intercourse above and beyond all conception, in these men speaking with tongues: hear Him communicating intelligence of the unknown sounds to that other order of men, interpreting these tongues; and behold how the hearts of both are delighted and refreshed, though the understanding be unfruitful. The word may, when it is interpreted, be only some oft-repeated verse of Scripture; but behold it is new to them, because Christ is putting the Spirit of glory into it, and making it prolific of heart-power.

Remark that other order of men, in whom Christ is discerning all sorts of evil spirits in the hearts of men: behold how their eyes are reading consciences, and their word is upon the spirits of men, and they are cleansing hearts, and ministering to souls diseased, and casting seven unclean spirits out of possessed men.

Wonder to behold that other order of men ruling the waves of the sea, and the winds of heaven, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, and making the lame man to leap like the hart. And oh, hear what strains of meekest wisdom flow from that band, what ocean fulness of knowledge from this; what intrepid faith in the power and presence of Christ is with these, and what gifts of healing with those.

And thus offering to the skeptic's observation, the firstfruits of that power and glory, I would ask him if that be not enough to convince him of the creative, and more than creative, power which is in the name of Christ, if that be not a foretaste of a more excellent glory than creation's first estate, awaiting all those who believe in His name?

But if he turn upon me and say:

"Where are these things you speak of in all this world, for as yet I have seen none of them?"

I can show him the thing upon record as a matter of history in the New Testament. But if he say:

“I care not about such ancient records: surely God would not have left so great a thing as you speak of to be transmitted through the uncertain channels of eighteen centuries, which have swallowed up mightiest nations: nor am I able by interpretation to construct the glorious thing you speak of, or to get any lively idea of it into my mind; at least such an idea as ought to satisfy one in so great a matter.”

Alas, alas! I have no answer to make to this. The Church has lost the witness and testimony of the truth of the glory which is to come. She has ceased to be the pillar and ground of the truth. All I can say is, I believe but for our faithlessness this light would not have been darkness; and I trust to our faithfulness it will soon be made light again.

Christ—the perfect and all-sufficient man, who has, by taking the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh, and wrought out a perfect righteousness for mankind—is demonstrated unto all men in the work of regeneration, whereby other sons of men are enabled to become sons of God, other men in flesh enabled to overcome flesh, and hold it down in self-inflicted death, and to fulfill the righteousness of the law in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

While thus is manifested the certainty that Christ was true man, and holy man, and perfect man, though in mortal flesh and blood subsisting, the Second Adam who alone is able to beget holy men, and to produce God’s glory, and perfect God’s image in fallen mortal flesh, and fill up the measure of His righteousness, and satisfy His demand of law, and do everything proper to the man-redeemer of man; this is further and far more excellently demonstrated by His possession of the seven Spirits, by His endowment with the seven eyes, the omniscience, and the seven horns, the omnipotence, of God, by His ability to have and to hold, to use and to exercise the

all-mightiness, not of the God-creative of this world, but of God-productive of all His purpose, whereof creation was but the first leaf.

(Ah me! what a thought! that man, and the Son of man, should be the orderly leader forth of God's eternal purpose, its doer, its upholder; and that it should be but a chaos, and waste of death, until God in man's nature came to set it up again, to restore and rebuild, and forever sustain the fabric of the outward fulness of God. I am lost in wonder and admiration, in adoration and praise; I see my nakedness and vileness as a sinner, as a saint my eternal honor and glory. The Lord has enabled me to conceive and to utter His goodness. My soul is comforted. I cannot, I will not cease to praise Him.)

I say, what further and far more excellent things are manifested by the prerogative in the text expressed, "He who has the seven Spirits of God," which God has enabled me to unfold in these few pages, and which I never understood so perfectly before, whereby is shown forth the truth, that God within the bounds and limits of the Church, and the form of the risen God-man, predestinated but not yet realized, real indeed in the fixed purpose, but not in the historical event, did create all things, and redeems all things; and, what is infinitely more, will glorify the Church, and by her do with creation all which the Father's utmost beneficence and superabounding grace has determined to be done.

And can it be that my nature has in it virtues, powers, and possessions of this grasp and range, and shall be, yea, and is, informed with all the fulness of God, and crowned with the glory of God, and intrusted with the orderly forth-bringing of the purposes and executing of the behests of God? Ah me! what a creature I am formed to be!

O Jesus, the world's Redeemer, but man's glorious Brother, Champion of our primitive rights, Captain of our salvation, and Advancer unto God's own throne of our nature, what sacrifices of thanksgiving, what hymns of praise, what adorations, what meditations, are Your due from man!

And yet not Yours, but Your Father's; for it is to Your Godhead that the glory of Your manhood is due; it is to You, Son of the Father, very God of very God, that the prerogatives of the Church, head and members, are all due.

For in Your manhood You were like me a conceived child, a born babe, a swathed infant, a man of sorrow and reproach, a martyr, a dead and buried corpse. It is Godhead which brought You through the narrow passages and dark abysses of our being, and launched You fair and free into that ocean-fulness of the Godhead, where you bear us, poor, frail, and sinful creatures, in Your ark of salvation.

Oh that I had the love of the seraphim, and the voice of the cherubim, and the archangel's trump, that I might fitly set forth the glories of Your works, and the excellencies of Your ways unto the sons of men!

Oh my God! anoint me with the oil of joy, fill me with the word of wisdom, and put new songs in my mouth, that I may instruct this generation to know Your praise, before I go hence and be no more. I am full of matter, but they understand it not; oh make my tongue like the tongue of the learned, that they may say no more, He speaks parables. Take away their word-wresting, their lying in wait, their going about the city in the evening with eavesdropping purposes; and enlarge their hearts from the possession of envy and malice and ignorance and cruelty, that they may attend upon Your faithful servants, who are seeking to teach Your truth unto this generation of Your children.

Zechariah 9

¹⁷ How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!
Corn shall make the young man cheerful [margin: *to grow or speak*] and new wine the maids.

THE SEVEN STARS

Revelation 3

¹ ...He that has the...seven stars.

The style of Christ, the Universal Bishop, which He has preferred to assume in the ear of the angel of the Church of Sardis, is twofold:

“Who has the seven Spirits of God,”

...and...

“Who has the seven stars.”

Whereof the former determines Him to be the Head of the Church, which is the head of the redeemed creation of God, and proves Him to have been the Creator of that world which He not only raises from the ruins of death, but also, by means of these seven Spirits, puts the glorious dome upon it.

Now the second part of this style, “Who has the seven stars,” implies, according to the interpretation of that symbol given in the third lecture, and enlarged upon in the last, that He not only has the sole possession and occupancy of the Holy Ghost, abstractly considered, but likewise of the same Holy Ghost embodied in the persons whom He has constituted the angels of the churches.

- The former is the larger of the two designations, the latter is the more personal and particular of the two.
- The former has respect to the fulness, the latter to the firstfruits of that fulness.

These seven angels of the churches do in this book represent both the ear which hears Christ, and the life which declares His mind to the people, and withal the hand with which He governs and rules His Church, being inclusive of all persons whom God has set in His Church, whether for word or for work: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles, healings, helps, diversities of tongues.

I do not say that he whom Christ addresses as the angel of a Church did necessarily possess any or all of these administrations of the Holy Ghost. But that as he is the channel of communication between Christ and the Church, in him these subordinate orders are represented just as though a king have neither:

- the knowledge of justice and judgment, which pertains to his legal ministers;
- nor yet of diplomacy, which pertains to his ambassadors;
- nor yet of war, which pertains to his commissioned servants of the army and navy;
- nor yet of government, which pertains to his governors of provinces and of kingdoms.

Yet is he regarded of God as the channel of his gifts to a nation, and held responsible for the actings and doings of all these several departments into which the prerogative royal is subdivided.

When Christ therefore says, "I am He which has the seven stars," He must be understood to put in a claim, not only to the rulers and heads of the churches, but likewise to all the gifted persons of every name and order through whom any manifestation of the Spirit is made for the benefit of the whole.

And in making such a claim, he must be understood at once to demand the homage of these gifted persons, and the thanksgivings of the Church for such diverse channels of good, conveying to them power from their Great Head, unto whom all power in heaven and in earth is committed.

Yet, when taken at its fulness, the gift of the Holy Ghost thus distributed by many living channels throughout the living body of Christ, is but a firstfruits of that harvest which shall be reaped when the Son of man comes sitting on the

cloud with a crown upon His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand. Then, indeed, shall the Church put on her beautiful garments, and rise from the lowly bed of death to be the mistress of the house of God and the queen of the realm of creation.

When the Holy Ghost in His completeness, in that completeness which can never be added to, shall display His utmost power of life, in bringing forth from the dust of corruption, the living city of the New Jerusalem, fit abode of God, and furnished with the fulness of His glory; then shall the Holy Ghost stand perfectly expressed, and hence shall creation drink the radiancy of light and the river of life.

But into this fountain, of light and life shall no new particle of glory enter, nor shall its consummate completeness be ever diminished, for it is the seven Spirits of God embodied in the body of Christ. All this resplendent orb of light and life, shall concentrate within itself and give forth to creation's utmost bounds the whole of Godhead-beauty and blessedness which shall ever be expressed.

The Church has in her angels, stars to rule the night until the morning star, the Shechinah glory, burst upon the terrified nations, being the harbinger of the coming day, which scatters the spirits of darkness that now trouble the world's peace; whereupon the stars shall no longer appear, but lose themselves in that one globe of light, the New Jerusalem, which contains all the saints of God, both the ministers and the people.

I cannot help observing the perfectness of the symbol, which, in its broken fragments, we have oftentimes had occasion to explain, and which we would now recompose into one beautiful and harmonious whole.

The days of creation were not mornings and evenings, but evenings and mornings:

Genesis 1

⁵ ...and the evening and the morning were the first day.

And so also is it with the new creation of Christ the quickening Spirit, who having possessed Himself by purchase of blood, of creation-lordship, and being seated on the throne of God to make of the redeemed creation what seems good in His sight; and to this end, being possessed of the seven Spirits of God, brings out the order of His work by an evening and a morning.

The evening, the stilly evening, is the season which has run since He entered into His rest, and during which, like Isaac, He walks forth meditating upon the earth, and receiving the bride whom His Father has provided for Him.

During this season He has the stars to rule the night: and the stars are the angels of the churches, messengers of grace, guides of weary travelers and mariners tossed upon the sea. And as these stars were led forth like a flock by the Star of Bethel, the Shepherd of Israel, who shines forth from between the cherubim, the true Lucifer, at once the star of even and the star of morn, so shall their seasons of rule be ended by the reappearance of that star of Bethel, as the star of Jacob, the morning star, who now, gathering into Himself the whole lights of the heavens, shall shine alone His short hour flaming in the forehead of the morning sky.

Then shall the earth be refreshed with the dew, and its solitary places begin to be verdant and to expect the cherishing heat of the orb of day. Whereupon the light of the glory of God, the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, shall arise and shine, for her light is come, and the glorious God is risen upon her, in whose light the nations of them which are saved shall walk:

Revelation 21

²³ ...for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

And then the day dawns which shall know no decline at all, nor night at all. And now of creation may it be said in the language of the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 60

¹⁹ The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.

²⁰ Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

We conceive, therefore, that Christ, in this fifth style which He takes unto Himself, claims both the lights which He has set in the Church during this season of the world's darkness, and that complete light which He shall be unto His Church when the season of her darkness is ended, and the morning star of the epiphany in the cloud has brought in the eternal day of the New Jerusalem and the world's blessedness.

And with respect to the application of this style to the case of the angel of the Church of Sardis, wherefore the great Shepherd should have chosen it rather than any other, we have to observe, that this Church was beset with the temptations of:

1. Nominalism:

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

2. Slothfulness, and heedlessness, and indifference to the future:

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die.

³ ...and repent [of weakness]. If therefore you will not watch...

3. Shortcoming in obedience:

² ...I have not found your works perfect before God.

4. Great abuse of privilege:

³ Remember how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

...and being in such a state of weakness and unprofitableness, of heedlessness and deadness, Christ presents Himself as possessed of all the power of God for strengthening and reviving the weak, and of right in all the ministers of the Church, if possible to awake His servant to the sense of his responsibility, and the shame of his wickedness.

As if He had said:

“Arouse yourself, my servant, for in Me your strength is found: awake, arise from the dead, and I will give you light. Call upon your Church to seek help from the Head. I am the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are not straitened in me, you are straitened through your own unbelief. The fountains of the Spirit are all open to you as at the first. All your well-springs are in me.

“Why then, O thoughtless, thankless shepherd, are you so far departed from your first estate? Why stand you all the day idle? And why with folded hands do you weary My patience, and bring upon yourself the fierceness of my judgments?”

But the pointedness of the application will the better appear as we proceed to open the epistle itself.

THE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH

IF, as we are strongly inclined to believe, for the reasons laid down above, this Sardis state of the Church be that into which the work of the Reformation is now come, and in which the churches called Reformed are now sitting, then are these instructions to the angel of that Church most important to such of the ministers of the churches of Scotland and England as prefer with me to rank under those ecclesiastical constitutions of doctrine and discipline delivered unto us by the Reformers, rather than to adopt the unfledged views and fluctuating notions of the religious populace, known by the name Evangelical, and to be carried about by every wind of doctrine which they issue in their periodical publications.

There are still a goodly number both of the ministers and people of this land who cleave to the forms and habits and associations which gathered around the Church at the time of the Reformation, having a holy abhorrence of the Papacy, a deep veneration of the catholic Church, a reverend esteem of the Christian ministry, a deep feeling of the sacredness of the ordinances, and a dutiful observance of the customs and ceremonies of religion.

Indeed, there are whole provinces of Scotland, and England too, which have never been visited with evangelical liberalism, and hardly know that such a thing exists as is counted for religion in our large towns; which still look upon the creeds of the Church as the rule of orthodoxy, not the columns of a newspaper, and regard the heart, and the closet, and the fireside, as the proper seats of religion—not the saloons of fashion, public meetings, and committee-rooms,—who look up to the pulpit as the appointed channel of instruction, and the world as the appointed place for practicing it, and who can be religious without either a Bible society, or a

missionary society, or even a school society amongst them.

To these regions of the Church where old Matthew Henry has not given place to Scott, nor Luther to Wesley, nor Hooker to the religious reports, nor Guthrie to Newton, it is my calling now to address instruction from this letter to the angel of the Church of Sardis; as it will be hereafter my duty under the Laodicean epistle to address my reproof to the evangelical, at once the lowest and most grovelling, yet most pretending, form of godliness which has ever appeared.

The Roman apostasy flowed in through decay of love, yielded a noble army of martyrs, then nursed a set of corrupt and sensual doctors, and ended in permitting the false prophetess to have her will and her way in the Church of God, wherein she now sits as a queen, saying, I shall see no sorrow.

The Protestant liberalism, or infidelity, flowed in through the vain-glory and hollowness of a name, yields a loving band of brothers, mighty in word and witness, and is consummated in the supremacy not of a woman but of the populace.

The Roman apostasy is the woman, or the Church triumphing over Christ. The Protestant apostasy is the people drowning, with their multitudinous voice, all voice of God, and of Christ, and of the Church.

To stay this madness of the people, to entourage that little band of brothers, who are making their voice to be heard in the Philadelphian Church, and, if possible, to draw them fresh supplies of men, both from the wrecks of the Sardis. and the beginnings of the Laodicean Church, this is the good and gracious and glorious object which God now yields unto me His servant in the exposition of these three epistles.

A GOOD NAME

As there is nothing so excellent as a good name when it speaks the goodness of the inward man, expressing truly and

fully unto the ear of others that secret and hidden man of the heart, which having heard of they may come and prove and be satisfied; so is there nothing more pernicious, than to assume in name, what in reality we are not, and to hold forth in the ears and eyes of men, pretensions and appearances, which we would have them to receive and rest upon, whereas they are but baits to catch the unwary, or traps and gins set for their destruction.

The first and most precious of all things is an honest heart; and the next is a truth-speaking tongue and unpretending face. God, containing within Himself the fountain and fulness of all perfection, did from the beginning put forth the same under various names, whereof the three chief be these:

1. *God*: signifying His goodness to all creation.
2. *the God of Abraham*: signifying His love to the Church.
3. *Jehovah*: signifying His unchangeable and irresistible faithfulness.

This name of God, in many ways expressed, the world of wicked spirits, wicked men, and wicked things, strove together to obscure and to falsify, bringing the creation to be not an orderly fabric of goodness, but a confused mass of wickedness.

Abraham and the Church were made to be, apparently, not the blessed, but the cursed ones of God; God's promises to be, not very faithfulness, but seeming defeat and disappointment; for man, His image, lies low in dust and corruption; Abraham and the chosen seed outcast from the chosen land, and the chosen city, and the chosen mount of God,—not the kings and priests, but the outcasts and off-scourings of men.

Christ Reveals the Name of God

The name of God lay like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, hid in darkness, yea, like the name of a liar, without honor; like the promise of a deceiver, without faith: till He came whose work

it was by His former coming to glorify the name of God:

John 17

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave me to do.

²⁶ And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it.

This work of reclaiming the name of God from dishonor and distrust, did Jesus accomplish by presenting man, as man ought ever to have been, pure and holy, a reflection in all His being of the very being of God. And He did, moreover, by keeping the law, and winning the inheritance, prove God to be Abraham's God. And by overcoming death, and redeeming creation, and casting the devil out, He did prove God to be Jehovah, who changes not, and will make good what He intended from the beginning, and all along declares in His Word.

And now God's name is placed through the work of Christ beyond all suspicion, and His promises to mankind beyond all doubt. And for this excellent service, by the Son of man performed:

Philippians 2

⁹ God has...given Him a name which is above every name.

A name which is a passport unto heaven, and opens the treasury of God unto the poorest petitioner; so that whatsoever we shall ask the Father in His name, He will give it to us.

Such high store does God set upon a name, that He threw forth His own substantial being in the form of a name, for men to trust on, in spite of all gainsaying appearances; and men were saved, and were perfected, and were delivered according as they trusted in the dishonored and rejected name of God.

And Christ was perfect, complete in all things, wanting nothing, because He trusted ever and entirely in the repudi-

ated name of God. He glorified God's name by believing that behind it was God's being. And so He was delivered out of all temptations; and such unstaggering faith had He, such steadfast confidence, because His person was Divine, though His subsistence flesh: he knew God by knowing Himself; His person baffled His circumstances; His person overcame His nature, the devil, and the world.

If any man ask how I know that Jesus of Nazareth was God? I answer, Because Jesus of Nazareth never doubted one word of God, though His human nature, and the round world, and the spirits of delusion and darkness strove, with might and main, to shake His Jehovah-faith in Jehovah's faithfulness.

An honest man alone can believe an honest man in this dishonest world. God alone can believe God in this godless world. Well said a friend to me, It is like casting yourself over a precipice to believe in God; and he might have added, and that no one will, nor can do, but by God doing it in Him.

What is a believer? One in whom Christ's life is; that is, God's life. And what is the fruit of God's life in a believer? The fruit of God's life in a believer is, to believe.

Christ believing in the name of God, which had become empty as the echo, earned for Himself the honors of a name—the honors of a coequal name—so that it is no longer God's name which goes about the world seeking credit, but the names of God and of Christ go hand in hand.

God says: "Believe in Him whom I have sent, and believe on Me."

John 6

²⁹ This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom He has sent.

Christ says: "Believe in God who sent Me, and believe in Me."

John 14

¹¹ ...you believe in God, believe also in me.

Conjunction most glorious! unto which the Spirit bears eternal testimony; and not the Spirit only, but the water and blood, that is, the baptized Church and the redeemed world. The Church with water baptized, the world by blood redeemed.

The Reformers Reveal the Name of God

Such, then, being the glories of a name, behold at once the honor and the dishonor, the grace and the guilt, of the Sardian Church, set for the testimony of the truth which had become obscured and falsified by the words and works of Jezebel, that mother of harlots and prophetess of falsehood.

The false apostles, the Balaamite doctors, and the Nicolaitane professors, had brought the true Church of Christ into as great perversity and obscurity, as ever was God's name by the idolatries and traditions of the world, out of which Christ retrieved its grace and truth; for:

John 1

¹⁷ ...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

When things had come to such a pass in the Christian Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth, not accidentally connected with, but coming forth of, the substance of Christ, and an integrant part of the eternal purpose of God, it well became the care of God and of Christ to raise up men of renown, who should separate the good from the evil, and lift up single-handed witness like Christ's own, against those hordes of saints, doctors, and monks of every name, who had overspread the face of the Church with all filthy and hideous disguises.

(You birds of darkness, how I rejoice to see your vile and gloomy habitations ransacked in these days by the hands of the destroyer. O you deceivers, you are at length exposed. O you false and treacher-

ous dealers, they are now dealing treacherously with you. I rejoice, I do and I will rejoice, to see these Romish priests, these prophets of Baal, these priests of Moloch; for their worship was unholy as Beor and cruel as Moloch: I rejoice to see you scattered to the winds of heaven. "Double to her double according to her works; in the cup that she has filled, fill to her double;" Hallelujah!)

This evil confederacy which had overcome the Church, that horrible perdition to which it was doomed, to expose and express in word, was the calling of the heads of the Reformation, whereby they obtained unto themselves and the churches which they planted, the glory of a name: and to that name are they well entitled. For next to the work which Christ wrought in redeeming the name of Cod from the oppression of idolatry and falsehood of error, was that work which the Reformers wrought, in delivering the name of Christ, in His Church, from those sevenfold deceptions with which it had become altogether defamed.

It was a high vocation, and well and faithfully did they labor therein, whereby the Protestant Church became renowned, and Luther might, with more truth than vanity, well begin his last will and testament with these words: "I, Martin Luther, of note in heaven, and earth, and hell." And still better with a prophetic foresight was that wish of his, that his books might not live after him.

Only the Outward Name is Left

I say with the prophetic foresight of that worship of a name which was to become the downfall of the work which he had so gloriously begun; for truly how well it may be said of all the churches called Reformed:

Revelation 3

¹ ...I know your works, that you have a name to live and are dead.

To hear the Church of Scotland talk, you would suppose that she was still the same with her who attacked the dragon

in his den, and drove him in terror from her land: who broke the chains of darkness, and shook them off as a strong man does the bonds of sleep in the morning. To hear them talk who rule the synagogue, you would think that she was the same who endured almost a full century of persecution and bloodshed for the truth; and, what is higher pretension still, you would suppose that she is still the same who opened the treasures of God to a needy people, and made them rich in all spiritual good, who threw the cords of God and of Christ over a stout, self-willed, mighty, and indomitable people.

But what is the truth? The truth is briefly expressed in the text, "She has a name to live, and is dead." There are no such men as the Knoxes and the Melvilles of a former age. There are indeed imitators of their defects and deformities; men who have imbibed the radicalism and insubordination which deform their noble character, and think to build for themselves a similar name by enacting the part of bravos, and running amuck against the holy ordinances of good order and government.

There is no such gospel preached as did then enlighten the darkness, and break the bonds of the human mind. Their gospel is the name of a gospel, but without the power: they take unto themselves the name of preaching the gospel to every creature under heaven; but when you take it to task there is in it no good news to every creature, no, nor unto any creature under heaven, for they preach a benefit from God in Christ, to an unknown and unknowable portion of mankind, which is a benefit to no one, forasmuch as no one can know whether or not he be among the number.

They take the name of preaching the electing love of God, and therein think that they magnify His sovereignty and His holiness, in passing by the wicked whom it pleases Him not, and choosing the wicked whom it pleases Him, to save. But truly they do magnify neither His holiness nor His

sovereignty; not His holiness, because, by confounding redemption with election, and regarding them as one thing, they make God to elect without any respect to a redemption received by some, and rejected by others, without respect to a righteousness presented to all, but received by some and rejected by others.

Neither do they magnify His sovereignty, which is to choose whom He pleases to choose, because they make the redeemed to be only as many as the elected. But if it should be said that God, having a purpose of election for certain, sends Christ to redeem only so many, then do they destroy the love of God to man, as man, and the manifestation of God to men in Christ, as their God. For if Christ be only God manifested as an electing God, then is God, as a God loving His creatures, not manifested at all. He is manifested as a God making distinctions; but the principle on which He makes them is not manifested.

It is God the head of destiny, it is man the creature of destiny, whom this their abominable doctrine of particular redemption sets forth. And I might go through every other doctrine, as at present preached in our Church, and show that it is but a fallacious name: and this I will do, if God permit, in some separate treatise; for these convictions are not given to be hidden, but to be proclaimed on the house-tops, and, if need be, under the gallows tree.

Again, to hear the Church of England speak, you might suppose that her bishops were men, worthy to stand in the room of the Latimers, and Riddleys, and Hoopers, and Andrews, and Jewels; whereas, in general, the truth being told, they know not what be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and lie land-locked in the miserable shallows of Arminianism, or shipwrecked on the rocks of Pelagianism. Such thriftless waste of words as go to make up the sum total of their preaching.

And for discipline, if it be in use at all, in either of the national churches, it is for the end of restraining, fettering, and casting out, any one who distinguished himself for his orthodoxy and faithfulness.

And for ecclesiastical government, it is in our Church a continual contest of parties; in the Church of England, a usurpation of the rights of the clergy by a few prelates with no higher nor better orders than themselves. So totally indifferent is our Church become to the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the office and order of Deacons has ceased, and that of Elders come into as great a state of secularity as any order in the Church of Rome.

And yet the magic of these names, Church of England and Church of Scotland, and the credit of our excellent standards, and our admirable Confession and Catechisms, and the Liturgy, and the Canons, and other things of the like kind, carry with them the continual impression, that all things are standing in the same state in which they were, when these forms of truths were composed and enacted.

That name, that good and glorious name which the Reformed Churches purchased for themselves, with the price of all their mind, and all their heart, and all their life devoted unto God, we now live upon; and, forgetting what we are, nor caring to look into the poor remnant which is left us, we, with a dishonesty equaled only by our pride, continually appeal to the empty name, saying:

“Are not we the churches which cast down the Papacy, and set forth the forms of true doctrine and righteous discipline on the earth?”

There is nothing like this feature in the Roman apostasy, which is the same mother of abominations and prophetess of lies as it ever was. It has no claim to be changed: it is an unchanged and unchangeable system of wickedness. But the Protestant Churches are changed: they are in no respect what-

ever the thing which they were; yet they pretend to be the same; they have a name to live, and are dead.

So true is this felt to be, that, when the evangelical form of the Church came into existence, it began its course by denominating what it found in existence, *nominal* Christianity; and when they would take a distinction between themselves and others, it is in this very way they do it, calling themselves *evangelical*, and others *nominal* Christians. It is to these nominal Christians, and to these nominal ministers, that the instructions of our Lord in this epistle are addressed; and very remarkable it is that He should have anything kind to say to those “who have a name to live, but are dead.”

One should think that He, who is truth, would be so disgusted with such vile hypocrisy as to pass them by with silent contempt, or cover them with indignant reproach. Not so! And why not so? Because not only truth, but grace, came by Jesus Christ. He glorified the name of God; which name is:

Exodus 34

⁶ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.

That reverence for a name which still subsisted in the angel of the Church of Sardis, is still a spark which Jesus would blow into a holy flame, because he that is fullest of grace, is ever fullest of hope. Well was it written of Him:

Isaiah 42

³ A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.

And let me, who am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoes, imitate the high and noble example of charity which He sets before me. Ah me, were those calling themselves evangelical possessed of His spirit, would they thus entreat the nominal professor, as if He were an unbaptized heathen, or an excommunicated publican!

Let us who think ourselves spiritual, turn to the example of our Lord, and learn how to treat those, whom we have too good reason to believe, are but nominal Christians. The angel of Sardis, not in the judgment of man, but in the judgment of Him who cannot lie, was a nominal minister, and the head of a Church consisting mostly of nominal professors; and yet hear how kindly, courteously, and faithfully, the Good Shepherd deals with him and his people:

Revelation 3

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God.

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

WATCHFULNESS

The first part of this exhortation is unto watchfulness, pointing out to us at once the cause, and the remedy, of all declension in the Divine life, which God intrusts unto every one of His children, to be reared up to the stature of the perfect man, by a diligent use of all the means of grace, and watchful observation of all the temptations and injuries to which it is exposed.

For as in natural, so in spiritual things, no child will grow and thrive unless there be a continual care and watchfulness, first of the mother, then of the nurse, then of the master, and finally of itself; and what is true of a person is true of the pastor of a flock.

It is of the nature of a flock to increase, and to grow into more flocks through the watchfulness of the shepherd; and if it should decrease, and be ready to die out, it argues want of care and watchfulness on the part of the shepherd.

Whether, therefore, you respect the angel of the Church of Sardis in his personal or pastoral character, it was both wisely

and graciously said unto him, “Be watchful;” and this word Christ speaks to every idle shepherd, who, seeking a good name, neglects good works, or, having a good name, is grown indifferent to the eye of God, who sees not as man sees, but judges righteous judgment.

To those respectable ministers who seek and find the world’s favor, and are exceeding fearful to transgress the bounds of worldly prudence, or to be found in any extravagance from the broad way of common resort and good repute, Christ says, “Be watchful.” Be watchful over what? Over your reputation with Him, over your standing with Him to whom the seven stars belong.

As if He had said, “Mine you are by purchase” (for even the reprobate He has bought, *2 Peter* 2:1); “and mine you are by office and preferment, being the strength of my right hand; and mine you are by commission, for I have committed to you the cure of souls; therefore, be watchful.

Acts 20

²⁸ Take heed unto yourself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseer, to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.

“And if you want supply of the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind, behold the Seven Spirits of God, which are Mine for you, and for all who will receive and use them for the ends of edifying the Church which is My fulness.

“Betake yourself to your calling, you heedless shepherd, and fear not to be supplied with the needful strength. Look to My Father’s chosen ones, and I will look to you.

“But if you will go about to seek honor of your fellow-worms, you shall never be able to receive the honor which comes from God.”

Ah me! how needful is this exhortation of the Lord in these days, when the fear of public opinion, the brand of being singular and alone, the odium of being evil-spoken of, has eaten

out, not only the communion of ministers with their rejected and despised Head, but even the personal dignity of responsible men.

We are men no longer, but pieces of a machine, parts of a frame-work set up to catch the observation and excite the wonder of the multitude. To make a fair show in the flesh, to win a high name, or to appropriate to ourselves the name which our predecessors in the Church have won, to live idly and hypocritically upon their hard earnings, this is the deep-seated mischief which preys upon the vitals of the Christian ministry in these Protestant Churches.

There is no remedy but one, which is, to remember that not the people nor the ministry, but the Lord, is our Master; to remember the prerogative of Christ expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

¹ These things says He which has...the seven stars.

We are His property, and not the property of the people, or of any earthly powers whatsoever. If there be anything, in this office which I fill, peculiar and proper and essential to it, it is this: that it is responsible to no one but Christ.

As we have so oft asserted and proved in these lectures, the authorities of the Church do not stand between the minister and Christ. He has no business to be thinking of them, but of Christ, and laboring for Christ in the ministry of the flock.

And if the authorities of the Church would interfere to prevent him from declaring the doctrines and executing the commandments of Christ, he must obey the Head rather than the members, and look upon the members as rising up in insurrection against the Head.

He may be wrong in thus doing, and the Church may be right in preventing him; but to come to such personal determination, and act out his office under such personal responsibility, is his duty. And because there are perils in the way of

our duty, is not to prevent the undertaking of it, and the going through with it also.

The authorities of the Church with which he holds communion may take upon them to resent this his self-determining liberty of action, and may exert against him her extremest discipline, even to the greater excommunication: she is required on her responsibility to do so, and she does it at her peril.

And when the angel of a Church is thus entreated by the Church, it is his duty to receive his chastisement meekly, to be put out of the synagogue; and, so that he sees it to be for Christ's sake, gladly to go forth without the camp bearing His reproach.

But what then: is he to cease laboring in his vocation of declaring the truth because the Church, according to his conviction, has rejected him for holding it? While that conviction lasts, he is only the more strenuously to declare it, that the Church may not deceive the world, betray the truth, and dishonor God.

This is the great spiritual weapon of Protestantism: it is good to search it out from among the rubbish of antiquated notions, and to burnish it for action, because I fear it will be soon called into use again.

This is not insubordination to authorities, but testifying for the greater authority of Christ. It is not schism, but testimony for the truth. It is not apostasy, but the only way of preventing the Church from apostasy. It is the dignity of a person, it is the inalienable right of a responsible person; whereof an angel of the Church is set on high in his place, to give an example to all other persons whatever.

STRENGTHENING WHAT REMAINS

Revelation 3

² ...strengthen the things which remain.

The second part of this exhortation to the minister of the Church of Sardis, directs his watchfulness into the channel of “strengthening the things which remain,” as the right way of recovering those things which lay buried in neglect.

There was still some remnant of a Church in Sardis which the Saviour did not despise, and to the care of which He calls the nominal bishop of the Church; just as Jeremiah called the last king of Israel to use well the fragments of power which remained to him, with the assurance, that if he would obey his voice and observe God’s Sabbaths, it would be well with him and his posterity, notwithstanding all the threatenings of the Lord.

What these things were in the Church of Sardis which remained in a dying state, we are not informed, though I think from what follows it may be inferred that they were works of some kind, seeing it is immediately added as the reason of the exhortation:

Revelation 3

² ...for I have not found your works perfect before God.

To do good works is the calling of a Christian and a Christian Church. The truth as it is in Jesus is the light in which he is to perform them, and faith in the operation of God through Jesus Christ is the strength. But the works are the end for which the light shines and the power is given:

Matthew 5

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.

James 3

¹³ Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you, let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

It is by our works that the world is to know the excellency of our profession, for as yet they are ignorant of the doctrine

of salvation; and it is by our works that we shall eventually be judged of God.

Pleasing Man vs. Pleasing God

Now of all good works, love to God and Christ and the souls of men is the informing principle, without which they may not be called good, of whatever appearance and form they be.

Proceeding from custom, or man-pleasing, or the desire of a good name, or fear of God's wrath and the desire to propitiate His mercy, they are not good and acceptable unto Him, whom they acknowledge not as the supreme good, neither hold forth to men as the origin, the end, and the object of all goodness.

Any work, to be good, must proceed from a heart which God has made good; that is, a heart which God has filled with love, for love is the forth-going of goodness.

Now the angel of the Church of Sardis was consulting not for love, but for a good name. Like the Scribes and the Pharisees, he was doing his alms to be seen of men; and he had his reward of men, but not of "our Father which is in heaven." *Matthew* 6:1. This worm in the bud of them all was, I take it, the ground of their imperfection, as well as the incompleteness of their amount. For they lacked in quality as well as in quantity; they were defective in kind as well as in number.

Revelation 3

² ...for I have not found your works perfect *before God*.

The expression "before God" confirms me in the idea that there ran through all his works a radical defect, arising from respect to the opinions of men. His Master does not quarrel with their aspect before men, but with their aspect before God.

It is most likely that this well-approved bishop, who had a name to live, was the most respectable of all the seven in the sight of men; that he was a good man and a perfect bishop in

the eyes of the world, and had their approbation in all respects. I know many such, of whom the world does nothing but speak well.

Luke 6

²⁶ Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.

If this be so, I much fear for these that their works cannot at the same time be “perfect before God.” Without arrogating to man the Divine prerogative of judging the heart, we may without any hesitation pronounce that the favor of the world, the voice of public opinion, is not compatible with the voice and approbation of God; for the Lord puts the world and the Church into express contradiction, the one of the other.

John 15

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 16

³³ In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

1 John 2

¹⁵ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

These, with many other passages, and indeed the whole tenor of Scripture upon the subject, point it out as an everlasting truth, that the approbation of God and the approbation of the world are two things altogether incompatible with one another, and that he who enjoys the one may assure himself he does not enjoy the other.

This is a searching and trying truth, which is greatly abused by evil-tempered and schismatical men; but it is not the less a truth of God for the guidance and consolation of Christian and Catholic men. And it is the truth which, above all others, should be pressed upon the consideration of those ministers

of the gospel who enjoy the good report of those that are without.

In applying this truth to practice, there is no small difficulty, arising from the intermixture of the Church and the world in one heterogeneous mass of baptized persons, including the whole population of the kingdom.

From the total breaking down of discipline, and the indiscriminate administration of baptism to all, it is left to every one to distinguish for himself between the Church and the world, of whom the good opinion of the former should be our encouragement, and the good opinion of the latter our discouragement, in the ways of righteousness.

Some Rules for Discernment

In the midst of this confusion, there are one or two considerations which may help a man's judgment, though nothing can supply the want of discipline in the Church.

The first of these is, that the Church is "the little flock;" the world the multitude; the way of truth the narrow way, which few find, the way of lies, the broad way in which many walk. If therefore the many of the baptized nation be with a man, he may fear that he himself is not with God.

And instead of things growing better in the latter days, towards the coming of the Lord, they grow worse; insomuch that, when the Lord comes, it shall be a question whether He shall find faith on the earth.

A second help to discern our way, in the midst of the existing confusion, is by feeling whether we suffer persecution for the sake of the truth which we hold; for it is written:

2 Timothy 3

¹² All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Do those who profess to care for none of these things; the

politicians, the statesmen, and the economists, the fashionable, the busy, the literary, and the religious worlds; in one word, the worldly classes of the community; do they sympathize with us, or do they cast our names out as evil, and cover us with their reproaches?

Do the oracles of wickedness which issue from day to day, and from week to week, and from month to month, take part with us or against us? For there is no fellowship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, between God and Mammon.

There is a third test of a nicer kind, to which our Lord himself directs His disciples, in these words:

John 16

² They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you, will think that he does God service.

When the synagogues and churches of the land have come to include the whole community without discrimination, it is most manifest that they cannot be in a fitter condition for enacting the evil here foretold. The public opinion is become the Church opinion; the world and the Church are visibly blended in one.

It may be that the world's evil inclination will be somewhat prevented by the mixture of the Church; it is certain that the good disposition of the Church will be weakened, and in the end destroyed.

1 Corinthians 15

³³ Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

And the effect will be, that when one stands up amongst them with the words of Christ in his mouth, and the ways of Christ in his heart, he will so rebuke their evil deeds, and worldly compromises, that they will not bear him, but will

speaking evil of him, and cast him forth from the midst of them, as a blasphemer of God, and a hater of men.

And, to such a pitch will his uncompromising faithfulness and godlike charity excite the enmity of the natural man within them, that they will come at length, as the Jews and Romanists did, to count it a service done to God, to make away with him from the face of the earth.

Now let men consider whether in the midst of this heterogeneous mixture, named the Church, they prove these trials, and they shall be able to discern whether their name is good before men or before God; whether their works are perfect before men or before God.

While we thus do our best, in the midst of the hideous corruption and inextricable confusion of Church and world, to obtain the correction and safeguard which there is in the approbation of the righteous, and the disapprobation of the world, we ought to be careful not to treat baptized persons as the unbaptized world; from whom they differ in privilege and responsibility in the same way as, and to a far higher degree than, circumcised Israel differed from the uncircumcised nations.

Men are in all cases much changed by being baptized, either for the better or for the worse: for the better, if they know and enjoy their privileges, and walk in their duties; for the worse, if they do not. And when it so happens that a baptized Church is chiefly and almost entirely of the latter sort, then is it the most miserable quarters for a godly man upon the face of the whole earth. He will find there more scorn, more falsehood, more cruelty, more that is against nature, than amongst the most savage nations of the world.

There is nothing on earth half so fiendish as a Church which has resolved to walk according to the flesh.

Zechariah 13

⁶ Where did you receive these wounds? In the house of my friends.

In what I have set forth above, therefore, let me not be thought to gainsay, what I have so often said concerning the awful reality there is in baptism, and the entire change it makes in a man's standing: I have but endeavoured to help a child of God, out of the dilemma of having to do with such a hideous mixture as the visible Church is become through our neglect; and showing him, how still he may obtain the safeguard of the approbation of the brethren, while he is preserved from the delusion of thinking that he has it, when he is borne upon the shoulders of the irreligious mob, which the visible Church has become.

But the best way of all is, for every minister to do his endeavor to restore discipline, to stand stoutly up to the canons of the Church, and insist upon a blameless walk and conversation in every one who sits down at the table of the Lord.

And this he will best do by exhibiting to the consciences of all, the awful sacredness of the sacraments, and following up the word of preaching with a word of counsel and rebuke, and in the train of this bring up the authority of discipline; and, if need be, its severity also, which can as little be wanted in a Church, as chastisement can be wanted in a family, or pains and penalties in a state.

THE STANDARD OF PERFECTION

Next to the subject of standing well with men, and so ceasing to stand well with God, suggested by this second part of the exhortation, is the standard which our Shepherd and Judge sets before His servant, "perfectness before God," after which to shape and by which to estimate His works:

Revelation 3

² ...for I have not found your works perfect before God.

Nothing can be more demonstrative that the standard with which Christ measures is the standard of perfection; that nothing short of it will satisfy Him, and that everything short of it is to be confessed and mourned over, and with all diligence made up.

But where are the means, and wherein is the supply? Let the style adopted by the Chief Shepherd furnish the answer:

Revelation 3

¹ These things says he that has the Seven Spirits of God.

Has them for what? For the Church, to which He is given crowned with that surpassing glory for a Head; and she given to Him to have and to hold the fulness of power and glory which is in the Head:

Ephesians 1

²² And has put all under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all unto the Church,

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

Now if there be in the Head the sevenfold perfection of the Spirit of God, why should there not be the same in each of the members? For no reason else than that these members either know it not; or, knowing it, believe it not; or, believing it, keep it not in memory; or, keeping it in memory, fail to act upon it.

When God graciously informs us that Christ, filled with all the fulness of the Godhead which in body can be expressed, is the Head of the Church, which is His body, whereof we are members; we, receiving this gracious revelation, are that instant rendered responsible for the possession of the fulness, and, being so, are by the same token expected to be complete in Him, and to grow up into Him in all things.

This is the reason why perfection is, and must ever be, looked for by God, from the weakest and wickedest of men, when he joins himself, and is by God joined to Christ in the sacrament of baptism: and for God to expect less, would be ei-

ther to declare that the gift in Christ is not for communication; or that, being for communication, it is not equal to the work of triumphing over the imperfection and sinfulness of the creature.

A False Gospel

There has of late been introduced a most baneful method of bringing out perfect holiness before God, by saying that the creature can do, or can be made to do, no good or acceptable thing whatsoever; but, regenerate and endow him as you may, he yields an imperfect and polluted action at all times, which God could not by any means accept on its own account as righteous, but which He accepts as righteous on account of the righteousness of Christ. This, which is in everybody's mouth, has so many errors in it, that I hardly know where to begin the enumeration of them.

First, it makes God call that which is unholy holy. Now what is unholy is sinful, and cannot by any addition be made holy; it may be forgiven of God, but approved it cannot be. That it is forgiven to the believer because of Christ I fully admit; but that it is called righteous for Christ's sake, I utterly deny.

Secondly, it makes Christ have a power of righteousness which he puts into action through the believer, but which fails to produce one righteous action; and to remedy this failure, a store of inactive righteousness, a treasury, a reservoir of merit, which he keeps in reserve to make weight, and so bring up the defectiveness of the believer's works to the standard of God's absolute perfection.

Which is to present us with a Head who holds back His strength from the members out of mere reserve, and who puts forth what he does put forth only to be baffled, and so patches up the matter out of the remainder of merits which he took care to keep beside himself. Such conclusions!

Thirdly, it denies the nature of the regenerate man to be holy in himself, and contradicts all Scripture; and it denies that the regenerate man does good works, and that he fulfills the righteousness of the law, and that he is anything else than a sinner,—not so great, indeed, as the carnal man, but still thoroughly and in all particulars a sinner! Oh! what a wickedness is contained in that common form of humble or rather Pharisaical words:

“We do nothing good—our best actions are evil, and accepted of God only for the righteousness of Christ.”

They are either accepted or not accepted: if accepted, they are the work of Christ in us, the fruit and offspring of the regenerate man; if not accepted, they are the works of the flesh, altogether sinful in God’s sight, and the proper subject of godly sorrow, and repentance, and remission.

But that good works are done, and ought ever to be done, by the regenerate, is manifest, both from the requirements and declarations of all Scripture; as, for example:

Genesis 6:9; 17:1; *Exodus* 19:6; *2 Kings* 20:3; *Job* 1:1-8; *Psalms* 15:1-2; 37:3, 27, 37; 101:2-6; *Ezekiel* 14:14; *Matthew* 5:48; 19:21; *John* 14:23; 15:3; *Romans* 12:1-2; *1 Corinthians* 7:15, 19, 20; *2 Corinthians* 4:10-11; 5:15, 17; 6:16-18; *Galatians* 2:20; *Ephesians* 1:4; 2:10; 6:8; *Philippians* 2:12-16; *Colossians* 1:10, 22, 28; 4:12; *1 Thessalonians* 3:13; 5:23; *2 Thessalonians* 2:13-17; *1 Timothy* 2:2-10; 5:10, 25; 6:18; *2 Timothy* 2:19, 21; 3:17; 4:18; *Titus* 2:7, 12, 14; *Hebrews* 10:22-24; 11:5; 12:10-11, 14; 13:21; *1 Peter* 1:15-16; 2:9; 3:10-17; 5:10; *2 Peter* 2:7-9; *1 John* 2:5, 6, 29; 3:6-9, 22; *3 John* 11; *Jude* 24; *Revelation* 2:2, 9, 13, 19, 23, 26; 3:8, 15; 14:13; 20:12.

We maintain, therefore, that in virtue of these Seven Spirits, of that complete Godhead power which is in the Head of the body for distribution throughout all the members, every member, whatever be his office, ought to present a perfect

work before God.

The Perfect Work of the Spirit

In our observations upon these Seven Spirits, we referred them chiefly to the heavenly glory into which Christ has entered, and of which the Church received a firstfruits on the day of Pentecost, to fit her out for the perilous voyage on which she was then launched, of bearing credible witness to all nations, of a world which had been redeemed by Christ, and was about to be blessed with the presence and benefit of His glory in the New Jerusalem, which is to come down from heaven.

While we thus interpret the Seven Spirits as distinguished from the Spirit of Christ, the former the life of the heavenly glorified things, the latter of the earthly holy things, we are far from supposing that both are not equally and alike the work of the one indivisible Holy Ghost.

To set this great truth forth in its completeness, there are three manifestations of the Holy Ghost:

1. Creation, which is not the sevenfold, because it is capable of increase;
2. Regeneration, which is the Spirit triumphant over a rebellious creation, and enforcing it to obey the will of God;
3. Glorification, which is the creature purged from all wickedness, and filled with all the fulness of God.

But in all these, the selfsame Spirit works upon the selfsame substance, originating in nothing, and drawn through these successive stages of progress towards the full accomplishment of the Divine purpose therein.

Into the last of these states Christ alone of all creatures is as yet entered; and into this the Church alone has the promise of being brought; and for the end of testifying her exclusive title to His sevenfold glory, the gifts of the Holy Ghost are re -

stricted to the Church, while the redemption is extended to all.

It is true that these gifts of the Holy Ghost were for the unfaithful as well as for the faithful of the Church; because God will show in all stages of the creature's progress, towards good as towards evil, the presence and operation of a will which is not brought into a necessity of well-doing or of evil-doing, but in every stage free to choose or to reject, to use or to abuse; of a will which looks for its recovery and establishment, not to any gift of God, but to God himself, to the absolute and invisible Godhead, to the unfathomable will of God forever hidden in the Father.

It is the Father's prerogative to incline the will unto Christ by giving it faith upon, and desire after Him: that inclination of the will which God, who works all in all, has wrought in a believer, ever seeks to express itself in forms of reason and of action, and is thereby forced out upon Christ, who is the Father's will, expressed in perfect reason, and upon the Seven Spirits of Christ, which is the Father's perfect will, expressing itself in action.

And thus it is that God, and Christ, and the Seven Spirits, are co-essential and co-operative in every believer towards the production of any true and perfect work of godliness. Wherefore it is written:

1 Corinthians 12

⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all.

These working together according to their several offices in the members of Christ's body, it is little short of blasphemy to assert that the fruit will not be a good work perfect before God.

To hold that the actions of the regenerate man introduced into the body of Christ, and, having in him the power of the Head, are not, and cannot be holy, is to say that God is baffled by His creatures—that God, having purposed and undertaken a work of regeneration in man, has utterly failed. The truth of Scripture is, not “He that is born of God *must* ever sin;” but “He that is born of God cannot sin.” *1 John* 3:9. What is born of the Spirit is spirit; and the spirit ever lusts against the flesh, and its fruits are in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

The Doctrine of Antichrist

If indeed, as these poor erring brethren roundly assert, it would constitute Christ a sinner to take and to bear flesh with the law of flesh in it; then it must be that every action of the regenerate man must be sinful, having to prevail over the law of flesh in his members.

But if, as the truth of all Scripture and theology is, that Christ took flesh with the law of flesh in it, and against that law prevailed to work out a perfect righteousness, and present his body acceptable unto God, then did he originate a new power in law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, of which the very essence and character is to make man free from the law of sin and death; and to enable him to fulfill the righteousness of the law, by walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Now because a baptized man is baptized into this single truth that Christ has condemned sin in the flesh, and introduced into it the life and law of righteousness, he is a debtor to crucify the flesh, not in part, but altogether; and to serve the law of righteousness, not in part, but altogether.

And therefore God can require of us nothing short of perfection, or be satisfied with nothing short of it; and so at our baptism we are required to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh, like good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To require less, as has been said, would be either to say:

1. It is impossible with God to bring holiness out of flesh, and therefore that Christ did never take flesh as we have it, but in some better state; or
2. That as Christ is, we are *not* in the world; as He overcame, we are *not* to overcome; that there is *not* oneness between the Head and the members; that He has a power which we have *not*, and in the days of His flesh put forth a power which He does *not* give us to put forth in the days of our flesh.

And either of these positions is Antichrist. I have no hesitation in saying, that to deny that Christ came in flesh with law of flesh is Antichrist, and that the Church which will maintain it is apostate, and ought with all haste to be forsaken by the faithful, whom indeed she will not bear, but will persecute forth of her doomed city.

Sin in the Saints

If then perfection, and nothing short of perfection, it becomes the holiness of God to require, and the condition of a member or minister of Christ to yield, why is it that there is in every good man such a readiness to confess sin, and account himself guilty in the sight of God? And why does the apostle say:

1 John 1

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

The answer is, first, that a man confesses not his own sin as a person merely, but the sins of flesh, and so in some sort the sins of all persons. And hence it is that in those Psalms, as the 40th and 69th, which refer to Christ, we find him at one and the same time asserting his own righteousness and confessing his numerous sins, which were a palpable and glaring contradiction, but for the truth that a man feels himself answerable

for the sins of all flesh, and called upon to confess it as his own.

For flesh is one thing: there is not my flesh and your flesh, but flesh which one man made sinful in the mass, and another man redeemed in the mass from the power of sin by introducing through the soul the law of the Spirit of righteousness. And in this sense the greater saint a man is, the greater confessor of sin, the more lowly penitent, the more deeply exercised before God in intercession for all men whatsoever.

And so it is that Christ, being perfectly holy, is infinitely aggrieved with the sin of that flesh which He took, and taking which He thoroughly apprehended what a fearful pit of darkness, what a miry clay of iniquity it was. In this lay His suffering, His agony, His crucifixion, His warfare, His victory—His victory always, and always complete.

Now, in so far forth as confession of, and contrition for, sin is of this common and brotherly kind among all of the communion of flesh, it argues no personal nor actual transgression in him who makes it, neither any victory of his flesh, but is compatible, yea, and always present with a body, soul, and spirit blameless before God.

But it is most true that besides this agonizing of the believer, under the iniquities which flesh is ever breeding and ever bringing forth from all its fountains, there are personal sins, real fleshly sins, fruits and works of the flesh over which he has to mourn.

Besides such agonies as the apostle utters over the vileness of flesh in the 8th chapter of the *Romans* at the very time he could say:

Romans 8

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

Romans 7

²³ ...which is in my members.

There are, it is to be feared, in the most advanced Christians times and occasions wherein the flesh gets the mastery over the Spirit, and peculiar transgressions are committed. Whence come these daily sins in thought, word, and deed, whereof we confess ourselves to be guilty? I answer, without a moment's hesitation, from lack of faith in Christ as having crucified the flesh, and by the Eternal Spirit fulfilled righteousness with every member of His body which He presented holy upon the cross.

If a man ever believed in Christ as the flesh-mortifier and the spirit-quickener, I make no doubt he would be ever holy in thought, word, and deed. To deny this would be to deny that Christ was at the call of our faith; or else that, being at faith's call, He was unable to succor the believer; or, being able, that He is not at all times willing: every one of which positions is a blasphemy.

But then the question is put:

“Are you sure that a man may ever act faith?”

He both may and he ought. He may, because Christ as a man did so, and proved that manhood was capable of it when informed by the Divine personality of the Son; and he ought, because by his baptism he is brought into the body of Christ to have the information of that Divine personality.

And being thus sustained by the Son of God, who yielded the soul's perfect service of an unceasing faith, he ought to yield the same. And if he yield it, to deny that holiness will follow, is to deny that God is ever accessible to the poorest and most unworthy creature who puts his trust in Him, which Christ, a worm and no man, proved to be the greatest blasphemy against the inexhaustible goodness of God.

For lack of faith therefore in the Lord's Christ as a regener-

ate head of holiness through the Spirit, the regenerate man commits sin, and not from any necessity of sinning, or from any other cause in his condition or circumstances.

All sin in the Church comes of lack of faith, as all righteousness comes of the presence of it. And a believer is not a holy man in respect of sins past forgiven, but in respect of sins present overcome and put away.

So much then the more guilty are we for every sin, if so be that we ought ever to be perfect! Yea, verily; and to place guilt in its true light I have set forth these things. To exhibit it as an act, not of necessity or of circumstances, but of real deliberate pleasure in sinning; to show it forth in its true character as an act of the will, preferring evil to good, and the world unto God; not to please any one's vanity or self-righteousness, but to exhibit his sin as doubly sinful, I have put this point of perfection upon its true scriptural and theological foundation.

Well, and do you leave us there? Surely not. I have thus shown the believer that his every sin is of kind the same with Adam's first sin, being done against a standing of perfectness, though of far deeper die, as being done not against a God-Creator merely, but against a God-Creator sinned against yet forgiving, becoming a God-brother, and as such dying for men.

When I have thus brought out the true free-will guilt of sin against a God revealed in Jesus Christ, I do not leave the sinner there to pine and perish, but address myself to the work of showing forth the virtues of that blood which cleanses from all iniquity.

Having exhibited the baptismal covenant for an immaculate life, and the virtue of Christ's body to nourish this new life up into the perfect image and form of Christ, I then preach the virtue of the other part of the Lord's Supper, the blood of the New Covenant presented to us and partaken of in the cup; where is exhibited the blood of Christ, as the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness; whereby

every sin of every believer is freely pardoned.

And I entreat all to come and receive that pledge, of sins remitted, and of an inheritance bequeathed to the sinless. This is the act of faith on Christ as an intercessor continually presenting His body, as of a Lamb slain, in the heavens to the Father; and ever saying:

“Behold this perfect sacrifice for the sins of men; and, in consideration of this, hear, O Father, and accept these prayers, now presented to You by Your saints for forgiveness.”

And in honor of His continual High-Priesthood, the Father accepts the offering, and even grants them forgiveness out of the greatness of His love and grace.

There are these three things in the Church:

1. A new generation of water and the Spirit in the sacrament of baptism;
2. A nourishment of the same regenerate life up to a perfect man in the womb, (so to speak;) that is, in the body of Christ; and,
3. The atonement of His blood for all transgressions we commit against the mercy of God; through which atonement we obtain the fellowship of that inheritance which Christ purchased with His blood.

And how is the glory of that atonement enhanced, when it is seen as made, not only for all flesh, but likewise for the sins of all the Church of God, whose sins are so much deepened in their die, above the worst sins of the unbaptized world.

This is the true Christian doctrine of the membership of Christ; which being received, will cause much sin to cease, greatly increase good works, and make us advance more and more near unto perfection; will give sin its true depth of guilt, as the act of a will against the most gracious God, and so place the preciousness of the sacrifice and intercession of

Christ in its proper light.

Would that God might be pleased to make many souls receive and rest upon it; for it is not the word of man, but His own most sure word of truth given for the sanctification of His people.

Advice for Ministerial Recovery

And when any member or office-bearer in the Church has fallen away from his steadfastness in the faith, and departed from the way of holiness, and no longer yields “works perfect before God,” what counsel and instruction gives Christ our Head for recovering him from the snare of Satan? It is in these words:

Revelation 3

² ...strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die.

The method of recovery is, to look well after what we still possess, according to that standing rule of the gospel:

Matthew 13

¹² Unto him that has shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.

And that other:

Luke 16

¹⁰ He that is unfaithful over the least will be unfaithful over the greatest.

¹¹ If you have not been faithful over the mammon of unrighteousness, who will intrust unto you the true riches?

God never resigns His creature, however unfaithful he become; He still looks upon him as His responsible creature, and expects him to make a good use of what is left in his hand. God gives liberally, and upbraids not. His prodigal children are ever welcome to return, in whatever misery they are found, and however they may have dishonored their good Father's name.

There is a practical illustration of God's not imputing sin, in this His way of dealing with the angel of the Church of Sardis, which is very comforting to a poor sinner laboring under the sense of neglected opportunities and misused talents.

The great Judge, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, does not lay upon His servant any sore rebukes, or exact of him any severe penance, or place him at a distance upon his good behavior, or require of him any period of probation; but, without reference to the past delinquency, calls upon him simply to make the best use of what is left; to "strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die."

And this is true wisdom as well as mercy; for it avails not to grieve a man's heart with upbraidings, or to cast his spirit down with heavy tasks, or to represent to him how much he has squandered, or into what misery he has brought himself, unless you do show him what to set his hand to in the instant, and by what means to regain his lost ground, and recover himself from his present misery.

What, for example, would it avail in me possessed with the views of a Christian Church, which I have learned from these epistles, to go to some landward parish of my own dear Scotland, where all is dead as a stone through the freezing power of two or three generations of legal preachers; or to some city parish where all is sour as vinegar, bitter as gall and wormwood, and proud, scornful, and self-sufficient as Satan himself, through the preaching of some systematic, critical, hairsplitting high Calvinist; and bestow upon them violent philippics upon their present wretchedness, or set before them strong and vivid representations of a perfect Christian Church, full of life and love and power and joy? Such a method were sure to drive them mad with rage, or to intoxicate them with vanity, or to split them asunder, and rend them to pieces as when a ship is taken all aback with a mighty wind.

I once knew an instance of a Christian Church, which had long languished in a lifeless state, at length blessed with the ministry of a man who set his face like a flint, and without fear delivered the truth in its fulness, and loved to declare the mysteries of the kingdom; and I have lived to see their latter end worse than the beginning. The old bottles would not, or could not, contain the new wine.

Again, I knew another man who came unto a flock which was literally no flock, being but a handful of persons gathered through attachment to his person, who was as ignorant of the truth of God as evangelical ministers generally are, and was as zealous in the use of eloquence and argument and affection, and such like weapons of straw as other famous preachers are; but God was pleased to untie his evangelical bonds, and to enlarge his knowledge, and to open to him the riches of Christ; which ever as he learned he kept opening to his people, strengthening the while the orders and ordinances of the Church, and all things which were left of sound doctrine and wholesome discipline. And the result has been that they have grown with him, and have advanced thus far together in love and fellowship: and may God prosper them to the end!

Oh yes, I know from observation as well as reflection, that the true way to do either a person, or a minister, or a Church good, is to require him to strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die. If I, as an accomplished agriculturist from the Lothians of Scotland, should in my travels over the world fall in with some half-civilized people, scraping the surface of the earth with sharpened stakes, casting in their seeds, and so leaving them to thrive or perish as Providence might order it; what were my wisest course? To call them together, and read them lectures on the Scottish system of husbandry, and the wonderful inventions of art by which we wait upon nature's productiveness? How idle and vain were such discourses, however exact and eloquent!

The part of a wise man would be to take them where he found them, and, calculating upon the laws of human nature, which seeks the best that can be attained, to improve this implement and to correct that method of management; to improve the seed by sowing every choicest particle, here to drain the moist, and there to irrigate the dry places; to improve the breed of cattle, and the structure of the houses; and so from one thing to another to advance onward with a sure and steady pace towards perfection. Even so Christ would have the spiritual husbandry of any decayed Church to pursue the path towards recovery.

But to come to particulars on a question of such unspeakable interest to the Protestant Churches, which I have shown stand represented in the Church of Sardis; I would endeavor to do my part, through great weakness and many possible errors, to show how those wrecks of churches, which are in these realms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, may best find their way back to that primitive state of endowment in which, in my former lecture, I showed that the Church of Christ was set up.

As one given in trust with the vineyard, I would show how this vine, which is all dismantled of its glory, and trodden down to the earth, may rear itself again and hang in clustering bunches of richest fruit. God help me with wisdom. The words, "strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die," I look upon as the very oracle of Christ to the churches in this island; which, if observed by minister and people, will not only be our salvation from impending ruin, but likewise our restoration to ancient primitive faith and fulness of gifts. For that there is a remnant of life and piety and communion with the Head, and with one another, left among us, no one can doubt. Let me then go about the work of explaining this oracular response for our present time of extremity.

And to begin with those of my own order, in whose mouth

is reposed the ministry of the word: Theirs it is, to receive the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge promised by the Spirit, which may fit them to be pastors and teachers of the flock. And this they will do, by strengthening that dependence upon the Holy Ghost, which hardly anyone is without in a lesser or greater degree, by increasing prayer and meditation and secret exercises of every kind, and pressing upon their churches to cooperate with them for the same gracious end.

Also by denying themselves to the arts of human eloquence, to the powers of natural reason, to the words of man's wisdom, and all the attractive beauties of discourse; for while these precede, or go hand in hand with, the spiritual suggestions, the latter will make no progress.

Let the Spirit have His will and His way with your mind, and with your tongue, and be well assured that He will bring forth the word in strength and power and demonstration; and, if need be, in beauty and splendor and sublimity,—in one word, in perfectness.

A Personal Testimony

I have proved my lesson, and know that it is true. No one more studied, and, according to the general opinion, few had profited more in the gifts of natural reason as set forth in discourse from the pulpit, and certainly never was man more intent after the knowledge of the truth, or more zealous to communicate his convictions unto others.

But when God showed me the more excellent way of casting my reason into the forms of His own word, instead of casting His word into the forms of my own understanding, and taught me that His truth was not wrapped up in some score of texts, well culled from the Gospels and the Epistles, but developed in divers manners throughout the Scriptures, and fructified in the believing soul by the Holy Ghost; I communed not with flesh and blood, but laid aside all former ideas

of my profession, and submitted myself to the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Since which time I have somewhat profited in the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, and doubt not, by God's grace, to profit much more to the saving of my own soul, and of those who hear me. It is not from any desire to speak of myself, but to tell my brethren how God delivered me from the bonds and trammels of argument and oration, that I further put upon record the particulars of the method which He took; to the end they may be enlarged into the same liberty.

After seven years' silence in my native land,—a voluntary penance which I put upon myself, that I might not be ever vexing, by the liberty of my discourse, their more cautious, close, and dogmatic taste,—I went down to open my mouth once more unto my brethren; and having read one or two compositions in the pulpits of the metropolis, it was so ordered that I should spend a fortnight among the manly and unsophisticated people of the south of Scotland, the land of my fathers.

Strongly did the Spirit testify within me:

“Why would you go and read to them these fragments of truth, which you have written with so much care? They have not heard your voice these many years, and may never hear it again: so open your heart and not your papers to them, and trust Me.”

Oh, what a conflict there was then between nature and the Holy Ghost! Nature said:

“Your fame is great, your labor has been vast in composing these sermons; you are all unskilled in extempore discourse: the land is full of jealousy towards you; you have their suffrages all to gain: the Scotch are a stubborn and untoward people, and their ancient simplicity with respect to preaching is much corrupted by modern masters in the art, who have brought strength of faculty and power of natural reason to

bear upon the great questions of the orthodox faith.”

But the Spirit wrought with me, and said:

“Will you then treat your father and your mother, and all your kindred, and all these hearty people, with poor and puny fragments of your mind because there are cold critics and cruel enemies abroad? and will you be unfaithful to your Master, who has taught you so much concerning His coming and His kingdom, and the judgments which are ready to be poured out on the earth?”

Thus it went with me, and I was sore divided. I took counsel with two, the nearest and the dearest to me upon the earth, who inclined to think it was a hazardous experiment, and advised that I should take along with me my store of papers, the accumulation of seven years’ laborious study.

And so I did: but, praised be the Lord, they were suffered to remain undisturbed. For so much sustenance did I receive, such fulness and freshness of matter, such power and heartiness of utterance, that from that day to this I have felt the most assured confidence in the Holy Ghost; and, during months of daily laborious preaching, have often fainted indeed in body, and my very bones cried out with pain, but never have I once fainted in spirit.

Thus did the Holy Ghost deliver me from that dangerous pinnacle, in which the approbation and applause of distinguished men had exalted me, and set my feet in a large room and a safe place, establishing my goings. And thus will He speak in the hearts of all ministers, as it were, forcing them from their false positions, if they will but give heed to His voice.

The trial was no small one to my flock also; and some of them still regret the absence of that natural beauty and grace with which they were won from the world into the heavenly fold; but God strengthens me by degrees to wean them of these childish things; and I have a full confidence that, as it is

needful, He will supply all their wants out of His own spiritual fulness.

Still, however, I have not ceased to labor in my study, by night and by day, with diligence, strengthening myself in the knowledge of His Word, and, what is much more important, in the knowledge of Himself; waxing bolder and bolder, according to the distinctness and certainty with which the Holy Ghost speaks within my heart.

In the same way will others find enlargement from that terrible bondage to written words, which has ever been the millstone around the Church of England, which was introduced into Scotland by the frivolous school of Blair, and has now gotten the victory over almost all our preachers.

It is not by a desperate effort that a man will disentangle himself from the yoke, but by strengthening that trust in the Holy Ghost which remains alive within his heart. Samson's seven locks had to grow again before the Nazarite's might returned. Nature cannot cast nature out; it can only overturn and overturn the fabric; it cannot lift it from the ground.

It may be that the Lord will give some of the masters in the Church emancipation: I know He can: but they must know the evil of their state before they will seek deliverance from it; and that, I fear, they have not seen as yet.

I now perceive it to be a very great mistake to go to the pulpit with words composed in the closet, and reading them off, to think that we fulfill the part of a minister of the word.

1 Peter 4

¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.

And who shall so speak, but he who is speaking from the same Spirit who inspired these oracles? For the end of distribution, Christ has the Seven Spirits: He did not cease to have these Spirits when the canon of Scripture was closed; and, having them forever, He will distribute them forever through

the members of His body.

The unbelief of other ages was not so great infidelity, as that which in this day is called belief. The Church at present is, I think, a greater infidel than the infidels of former times. Mohammed believed a great deal more of the Scriptures than many of our most approved Churchmen. Never till now was it creditable to believe the least possible. O God, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us!

I insist the more upon the gifts proper to the ministers of the Word, because until this high-priesthood of reason, this continual ministry of incense to the natural faculties of men, be superseded, by the high-priesthood of the Spirit, and the ministry of supernatural truth to the faith of the Church, there never will be any general manifestation of the fruits of the Holy Ghost among the people.

The gift must reappear in word, before it reappear in work. There must be a testimony before there will be a fulfillment. Preaching, as it is at present practiced, is no ministry of the Holy Ghost, but of man's good sense, cultivated by education and learning; and it begets in the people the dislike of supernatural agency, the distrust of Christ as the possessor and distributor of the Seven Spirits of God.

When I hear of valiant preaching of Christ as the rightful possessor of the Seven Spirits, and of the Church as "His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all," I will hail the dawn of the Church's rising glory, and of the Spirit's returning strength. And it is because I hear of this in divers parts of my dear Scotland, that I have such steady hope in the midst of these tempestuous clouds which are ready to burst upon her.

And my exhortation to all the holy brethren who are looking for the consolation of the Church, is, that they would weary God, and give Him no rest, till He raise up stout-hearted ministers, who will come forth in the fulness of the Spirit, and set their face like a flint against the infidelity both

of preachers and of people.

The little brotherhoods whom He is gathering out of all the churches in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and I doubt not in other parts also, these beginnings of the Philadelphian Church, ought, I think, steadily to direct their prayers to this one object, that it would please God either to instruct their present ministers in the mysteries of the person, and office, and kingdom of Christ, or that He would raise up others in their stead, who might make an end of this high-priesthood of the natural faculties, and give forth the oracles of the Spirit from faith to faith; being endowed with the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, from Him who has the Seven Spirits of God.

The Revival of Gifts

Meanwhile, for the revival of the other gifts amongst those who know that they are the Church's dowry, I would press the general rule, "Strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die."

Let him who is moved with tender pity and compassion of the sick, and has delight in visiting their beds of languishing, and ministering comfort to their souls, strengthen this movement of the Spirit, and observe towards which object of His merciful visitations the Spirit calls forth his prayers the most strenuously and the most frequently: let him feel his way, and hear the voice within him, and observe the leadings of Providence; and he will be guided, yea forced, to those objects in whom God has a purpose to manifest forth His glory in the way of healing.

In a case which has occurred within these few days under my own knowledge and observation, as clear and distinct as was the healing of Jairus' daughter, the Spirit did in this way lead on, and, as it were, gently enforce His servant to say the word, "Arise and walk."

His heart had been strongly drawn to the handmaid of the Lord for nearly two months, though far distant from her place of abode, and not much acquainted with her or her family. On the day when the glory of God was to be manifested in the house, though drawn thither by the faith and desire of the work about to be done, he was twice on the eve of departing, and was twice gently entreated by the father of the maiden to abide a little longer, for the delight he had in his company and discourse: and as Abraham and Lot, for their hospitality, got signal manifestations of God's favor, so did this pious father, though nowise a believer in, but rather opposer of, supernatural power, that night receive his daughter whole and sound, after eight years of sorrowful disease, and disablement in her members.

The Lord permits not His servants to act presumptuously in such matters: or rather, our faith is weak; and as He did to Peter, He has to take us by the hand, that it sink not altogether. I should say, therefore, both from the general precept, and from the only instance of healing that has come under my observation, that the true way of obtaining the revival of this gift is to strengthen that ordinance of the visitation of the sick, which still remains in all the churches, and was instituted for the end of healing, and not for any mere consolation of the afflicted person.

Two other instances of as remarkable a kind have occurred under my own personal teaching of the sick. These had "the gift of faith by the same Spirit:" and when they heard from my lips, that there was ground for believing, not only that Christ in them could glorify God by enabling them in their agonies to say, "Your will, not mine, be done;" but also, that God would glorify Christ in them, by healing all their diseases; they did, one of them straightway, and the other, after two or three conversations, believe, and were instantly healed of their diseases, to the wonder and astonishment of all around.

Now, both these persons were examples of lively faith, in that which they did believe; insomuch that the one was most joyful in the prospect of instant death, and the other in the prospect of a life of disease and infirmity. God be praised, they are now healthy and happy in their families. This also confirms the rule, "Strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die." These had strengthened their faith, and were ready to receive the word when it was spoken to them. They were full of assurance of spiritual benefits; and when temporal benefits were proposed to them upon the same authority, they believed with the same assurance, and were healed.

Until the present most false and miserable doctrine, that a doubting Christian is a good Christian, be swallowed up in the belief of God's faithfulness, and assurance be preached as of the very essence of faith, there will be no general manifestations of "the gift of faith," which the apostle places next to "the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge." *1 Corinthians* 12:8-9.

And until prayers for the sick in the churches be more than a formality, and visitation of the sick more than an ordinary visit of comfort, instruction, or exhortation, there will be no general revival of "the gifts of healing," which come next in order.

And for "the working of miracles," it is to be eschewed by holding fast and strengthening the doctrine, that every work of the Spirit whatsoever is supernatural or miraculous. If men will break to pieces the base fabric of error, that conversion and edification come about by natural means and occasions, and that the Church is only a better sort of civilization, a purer sort of society, and will uphold with might and main, that every act of the Spirit is supernatural; and that the ordinances, though they have an appropriateness to the spiritual grace, have no power or efficacy to produce the same; if we will strengthen the good doctrine which is ready to die, that

the new birth is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;” and make the people familiar with the supernatural in all the operations of Divine grace, and beat down the affirmation, as false in fact as it is contemptible and pernicious in doctrine, that miracles were only provided in the Church till the canon of Scripture was completed, it will not be long before we shall see the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, as well as the poor evangelized.

Of “prophecy,” which is the next gift and endowment of the Church, to be occupied as a talent until Christ shall come again and call us to account, the way to revive the energy and the manifestation is, for those who have felt their souls most strongly drawn out to the consideration of things to come, and to the prophetic word, to continue to walk in this department of the manifold wisdom of God, and to give heed to the Spirit speaking within them concerning coming events; for it is as much the Spirit’s province “to show us things to come” as any other part of truth; and they who deny to the Spirit this office in the Church do verily blaspheme against Him, and contradict the promise of their gracious Lord. And to whatever arguments they may maintain their erroneous doctrine, that the spirit of prophecy is ceased in the Church, the answer is:

Mark 7

¹³ [You are] making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which you have delivered.

For Jesus said:

John 16

¹³ When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth...and He will show you things to come.

And yet you say:

“The future cannot be known by any man. Since the canon

of Scripture was completed, the Spirit gives no man to know the future. And even to interpret prophecy, which has respect to the future, is beside the office of a wise steward, and unworthy the attention of a good Christian, and must be left to wild and fanciful speculators, restless spirits, who care not to intend the present weal of the Church, but will be hunting after novelties and brooding over uncertainties.”

Therefore you make void the word of Christ by your traditions, O you evil-speaking men! thoughtless, it may be, but not the less evil-speaking men.

He that will most honestly and earnestly contend against this abominable lie, which in all forms they are serving up as an opiate to stupefy the Church, he that will occupy himself with the prophetic Scriptures, and maintain their high dignity, and show forth their excellent uses, he it is who is most likely to be the vessel for containing the precious gift of prophecy.

I do not mean that learning in the prophecies, or in the systems of interpretation, or in the canons of interpretation, avails much to the obtaining of this gift; but the drawing of the soul to look forward, the interest of the soul in things which are about to be, the intercession of the soul for the averting of calamities and for the procuring of blessings.

Ah me! what notable instances of this wonderful gift, are there not recorded in the histories of those excellent men, who were submerged beneath a sea of calumny, and living in secret places from the fear of man’s violence; of men who had a faith in Providence, and understood the mystery of the wheels of Providence; of men who had a faith in God’s truth, and, being cast out of the Church for their faithful witness of it, were left to feed on hope, and promise, and prophecy.

Our Covenanters, for example, whose story, written by the worthy Thomas Howie, has so many instances of this kind, that a late zealous, but unbelieving, editor has found it good to weed it of these unbecoming testimonies to a supernatural

gift still subsisting in the Church.

To men who are resting upon worldly prudence, and taking every kind of expedient for the security of the future, there will be no manifestation of this gift; but to those who are resting on God day by day, and wrestling with him earnestly for the Church and for her particular members, it will be given, I believe, and that speedily:

- to do the part of Agabus, who foretold the dearth and prophesied upon Paul;
- to do the part of him also who prophesied upon Timothy; and
- the part of them, in former times, to whom God revealed everything before He would do it in the city.

Therefore, if the Church would attain to this gift, let her strengthen the faith in God as a forewarning God, who gives to His servants notice of the things which are about to come to pass; let them meditate, and teach, and give heed to those who meditate and teach the prophetic parts of Scripture.

With respect to the “discernment of spirits,” which is the next endowment of the Church; it is written by the apostles that these spirits were to be proved by certain tests of doctrine, of which the chief were, that Christ was come in flesh, and that He is to be obeyed as Lord of all.

We are inclined to believe that by degrees, as the Church emancipates herself from questions of words and human forms of doctrine, and establishes herself in the doctrine of the holy unction which she has received, it will come to pass that the faculty of discerning spirits will revive in her, and believers will at once distinguish the spirits of Antichrist from the Spirit of Christ, false prophets from true, by the language which they hold upon these cardinal points of the Christian verity.

The way, then, by which to recover this dormant gift is for

the Church to have done with scholastic and systematic theology, which are men's tests, and to become wise and learned in those heavenly doctrines concerning the person and office and coming of Jesus Christ, who is the fulness and office of Godhead in a body.

The question should not be:

"Is he Calvinist, or Arminian; is he Episcopalian, or Presbyterian? is he Papist, or Protestant?"

But, rather:

"Is he of Christ, or of Antichrist; is he of the wheat, or of the chaff?"

The day of decision is at hand, when none but the plants which our heavenly Father has planted, shall be left standing by the ax of the feller who is coming up amongst them. And besides, there is neither truth nor charity in applying to each other the flattering unction of a human name, which has no weight or currency in heaven. What though your friend be a good Presbyterian, or a good Episcopalian, will that save him?

Acts 4

¹² There is no other name given under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved [than the name of Jesus Christ, vs. 10].

This gift of the discernment of spirits will, I likewise believe, make progress along with the revival of love; for I am sure that it was exercised out of a godly jealousy and watchfulness over one another, to pluck out the roots of bitterness which still remained amongst the brethren, to the endangering of their own souls, and likewise of the whole Church.

I am well assured, that if we loved one another with pure hearts fervently, God would grant to us as clear a discernment of each other's faults and evil possessions, and would raise up amongst us, persons who could search and probe the spirit for the knowledge of its ailments as skilfully as the physician ex-

amines the body, and ascertains the beginnings and hidden seats of its diseases.

Moreover, I believe that the strengthening of discipline, which in the Church is what regimen and medicine are. in the world, would be a great means of regaining the neglected gift of discerning spirits. Discipline, I mean, exercised not only by the rulers of the Church, whose office has to do only with notable cases, but by the members of the Church, in all faithful loving-kindness one to another.

I am sure that the Spirit is continually urging one to point out this and that evil in one's friends, whom our treacherous tongues, consulting, not for mutual good but mutual flattery, refuses to obey. Now until men will be faithful in these small things, they shall never be intrusted with the greater things; for:

Matthew 25

²⁹ Unto him that has shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; and from him that has not shall be taken even that he has.

Let us therefore strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die.

With respect to the "other tongues," whether as spoken or interpreted, which is the last of the gifts in the enumeration of St. Paul to the Corinthians, we have to observe that it is a sign which was given to the Church, to countervail in the sight of the heathen the contemptibleness of preaching, which is not with the words of man's wisdom, nor with the arts of human eloquence, but with the demonstration of the Spirit in the gift of tongues and other gifts.

Preaching is God's way of foolishness to shame man's way of wisdom by the mightier effects which it produces upon the hearer: but that men might not despise the childish simplicity of this ordinance, its "line upon line, its precept upon precept"

(*Isaiah* 28:10, 13), there was added the power of the Holy Ghost, for which the first preachers were required to wait in Jerusalem till they were endowed with that power from on high; and Paul, in a certain place, speaking of teachers, who with vain words of man's wisdom perverted the Church, says:

1 Corinthians 4

¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

From this consideration we are inclined to believe, that the gift of tongues will arise, in those parts of the Church where the truth is most called in question, and is like to be overpowered by the weight of human opinion and man's preaching. Then, and there, will God make His own voice to be heard, and His own presence to be recognised in the despised and rejected defenders of "the faith once delivered to the saints." *Jude* 1:3.

Moreover, when He is minded to send forth anew apostolical and evangelical men, to give that warning unto Babylon, and to all the nations of the world, which is prophesied of in this book, saying:

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come,

I feel a strong conviction that the work will begin, as it began of old, with the gift of tongues. And it appears to give no small sign of an approaching work of this kind, that the gift of tongues is reported to have reappeared amongst us.

Furthermore, I have come to understand from a deeper meditation of Joel's prophecy, that this gift of tongues which Peter asserts to be the fulfillment thereof, was intended as a seal against the fearful day of the Lord, from which there is to be deliverance in Mount Zion, and in the remnant whom the

Lord our God shall call:

Joel 2

³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

³² And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

And therefore I would say:

- Strengthen the missionary spirit that exists in the Church; deliver it out of the hand of self-constituted committees, and let it be resident in the members of the Church, whom God shall thereto call by His gifts;
- Strengthen the anticipation of impending judgments which is now in the Church, and with it the desire of warning the world, and God will add the gift of tongues, that the desire of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of His people may not be defeated.
- Beat down the error, the hideous error, that God does not love all men, and wills not that all men should repent; and maintain the truth, that the world and all mankind have the barrier of sin removed from between them and God, that they may draw near to Him in faith of the atonement which Christ has made;
- Act upon this truth in your families, in your flocks, in your neighborhoods: tell His love of all men unto all men, and rest assured that the Lord will enable you to tell it beyond the bounds and limits of the English language, in every language of the earth.
- Finally, "Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die;" make no bounds, nor leaps, nor desperate reaches, after a something which the Spirit has given no notice of in your own soul.

Let the Holy Ghost, and not man's ambition, move your prayer for gifts; let the Holy Ghost, and not man's affection,

move your desire to exercise your gifts. Thus, by abiding in your places, and minding your callings, and filling our offices in the Church, and strengthening our graces, and well occupying what gifts we have, shall we be increasing more and more in knowledge, and in love, and in power, and in humbleness of mind, until we come to be the fulness of Him that fills all in all.

There can be no doubt that God is greatly blessing His Church in many ways, both by word and by deed, that He is:

- reviving the power of preaching,
- awakening the spirit of love and unity in the hearts of His people, and
- confirming their faith by signs and wonders.

I see a glorious dawn; and though it be sadly clouded and overcast, I feel assured that it is no northern light sent to cheer the night, but the full blush of morn which fills the eastern heavens. Ours it is to propitiate its coming with songs of the morning, and to hail the rising Sun of Righteousness. Ours it is to welcome the unequivocal tokens of the coming Lord, to invoke the holy Light to come speedily and disperse these envious clouds of darkness.

And as, on the day of the jubilee morn, men were stationed on the eastern mountains of Jerusalem to catch the first streak of dawn, and give intimation thereof to the priests who stood in the temple, ready harnessed to sound its welcome through the silver trumpets, whence, caught by the watchmen stationed on every neighboring hill, the glad tidings were sounded from mountain top to mountain top, and reverberated through all the valleys of Israel, and welcomed everywhere with music and with dancing; so ought we, who watch around the walls of our spiritual Zion, and are scattered over her borders, to lift up our voice like a trumpet and welcome right joyfully the signs of the coming redemption and glory; nor be discouraged by those present possessors of the inheri-

tance, who, not being the rightful owners, are full loth to hear that their tenure is fast coming to an end.

REMEMBER HOW YOU RECEIVED

After this instruction to the angel of the Church of Sardis, comes another of the same kind, and not less appropriate to the condition of the Church in this land, and to all the Reformed churches:

Revelation 3

³ Remember therefore, how you have received, and heard, and hold fast till I come.

These words carry an appeal to the trust which had been committed to him, both as to gift and as to preaching; for the receiving, I think, refers to the gift of the Holy Ghost; being the same word as is used by Peter on the day of Pentecost:

Acts 2

³⁸ ...you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,

...and by our Lord:

Acts 1

⁸ You shall receive power,

...and in the narrative of the Samaritan Church:

Acts 8

¹⁵ Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

¹⁷ Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

¹⁹ Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

...and everywhere, I may say, throughout the Scriptures. But as to the hearing, I think it refers to the preaching of the gospel. How can they hear without a preacher? And both together are included in that word of the apostle:

Galatians 3

² Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

There being these two ways of communication by gift, and by preaching, which in the old time went together, and were intended always to go together, the chief Shepherd charges His unfaithful servant over the flock of Sardis, to remember how abundantly He had received and heard: and the like charge gives He to every pastor of every flock. Nor will He be turned aside in the day of account by any pretense that we received no such gift, and heard no such preaching.

The gift and the preaching were unto His Church; to every member according to its office in the body, to every servant according to his ability. Of all the true servants no one was passed over; each had a gift to trade upon, until his Master should come again. To all the baptized Peter promised the gift of the Holy Ghost, and all the brethren in the Church of Samaria received it.

Christ does not contemplate His Church as subsisting in many generations, and having a different responsibility, according to their distance from the time of His incarnation. He contemplates His Church, as one body, independent on time and place, of which all the members are equally near and equally dear to Him.

He presents Himself as the Head of that body possessing the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; and He says:

“Were you at a loss for power in the Holy Ghost? Why did you not believe on Me? Why did you not make your suit unto Me? Were you in want of a star, an angel, to enlighten you? Why did you not make your request unto Me? What I possess you possess: all Mine are yours: is it not written:”

1 Corinthians 3

²¹ ...all things are yours;

²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life,

or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

²³ And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

This is the law of the Church, and be assured this is the language which Christ will hold to every member of His Church; and the sooner men take this to heart the better for them. Let no one grudge or grieve, but rather rejoice that in Christ Jesus he has such a privilege.

Would the poor weavers in Spitalfields rejoice or grieve, did I tell them that there is wealth of money provided for every one of them, and standing at their names in the book of the Bank of England? And should the poorer Church grieve because I tell her, that in Christ Jesus there is provided for her riches and wealth to supply all her wants?

Let them deny, if they can, that Christ has the seven spirits of God: let them deny, if they can, that the Church is His fulness: but if these two verities they dare not to deny, let them rejoice in their strength, and go about their work manfully and cheerfully.

I say, therefore, to every minister, and to every member of Christ, "Remember what you have received and heard." You have received Christ, and with Him God will freely give you all things. You have heard the gospel, which is glad tidings of great joy to you and to all mankind. Or if, O reader, you knew not before that you had these words and these gifts treasured up for yourself in Christ, you know it now; and see that you believe it; and believing it, that you act upon it, and tell it to your neighbors and your friends, that they may be partakers with you of the fulness of Christ. Remember what you received and heard.

The gift of the Holy Ghost came with, and not without, the preaching of the gospel. As they heard Peter preach the gospel unto them, Cornelius and his company received the Holy Ghost; and the Galatians received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith.

At the Reformation

And I believe that the reason for which these gifts were not received at the Reformation was the defective preaching of Christ, whom indeed they well understood, and declared as the only sacrifice and atonement for sin, but very imperfectly as the High-Priest and Head of His Church. For had they understood His glory as they understood His incarnation, the heavenly things as they understood the earthly, I make no doubt they would have received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which hold of the former; as well as the fruits of righteousness, which hold of the latter.

The Reformers had too strong an enemy in their face to think of anything else but their deliverance out of his hand; and they rested too much upon the secular arm for the promotion of religion. They contemplated the Church more in its national than in its celestial aspect: they appealed too much to history and learning and human authority; all which was indeed greatly for the benefit of the kingdom, but much to the detriment of the Church. Their minds were possessed with the questions of the day; and being full of these, the Scripture was considered more in its bearings upon them, than in its own integrity and fulness.

Take up the writings of any of the Reformers, even such as Jewel or Hooker, and you find learning, wisdom, and sound divinity; but withal it has respect to the earthly, rather than the heavenly, relations of the Church. Their knowledge is limited, their ideas few, and their discourse scanty, concerning the glory of Christ, and the glory which is to be brought to us at His appearing.

To clear the questions of the king's authority and the authority of the Church, of the law and the gospel, of the sacraments and the orders of the Church, of ceremonies and customs, was the main argument of their discourse. In their symbols of faith they were Protestant more than Christian,

scholastic more than apostolic, systematical more than evangelical.

How little have you there concerning the personal offices and operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! How much concerning election, justification, and the sacraments; how little concerning the present office and dignity of Christ, the future glory and the kingdom! These things were not opened unto them: there was little or no discourse concerning the promise of the Spirit into which Christ entered when He ascended up on high.

Of the Spirit of Christ in the believer, they much discoursed: of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of the Father, exceeding little; wherein though I lament over their shortcoming, on their own account, I blame them not, neither would be thought to detract from their excellent work. But I would speak the truth for the truth's sake; and also to explain how it was that they received not the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The subject of the first resurrection, of the coming of Christ, of the judgment of the nations, and of the new Jerusalem, and the new heavens and the new earth, of the restoration of the Jews and the condition of the world, was to them still covered with that darkness and indistinctness which the apostasy had brought over every other doctrine of the Christian faith. Upon these points they retained very much the form of doctrine which they found.

Now, till these subjects are opened to the Church, till the Church is put into the condition of a witness for Christ's glory, which, personally, He now possesses, and hereafter will bring to His members, she will not be endowed with the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come, which are the seal of that testimony. Till then, she knows not what use to make of them; they are not for show, neither are they for comfort, but they are for proof; and before you bring your proof, you must first enunciate your proposition.

Within these few years the Church has been enunciating the truth, concerning the glory and coming of Christ. This is now the word of the preacher; and to this, which the multitude, with the rulers and chief priests, are denying, God is giving His testimony, by causing signs and wonders to be done, in the name of His holy child Jesus. This now is the true reason why the gifts in time past have disappeared from the Church.

Would any one expect holiness without preaching Christ's holy life in our flesh? Would he expect holiness by preaching the Anabaptist doctrine of Christ's having other flesh, or no flesh at all; or by preaching the merit of our own works, or by preaching free will; or by preaching the merits of saints, or any such "doctrines of devils"?

No more may any one expect the gift of the Holy Ghost without preaching Christ glorified, Christ endowed with the Seven Spirits of God, for the service of His Church; and, thus endowed, present in the members; and coming to glorify them with Himself; and to use them in judging and governing the earth.

The Loss of the Gifts

These truths have ceased from being preached openly in the Church, since the first four centuries; and, accordingly, since the same period have the gifts ceased in the Church.

There were many causes which conspired together to obscure and hide those truths, of the heavenly things, of the glory of Christ and His Church, of Christ speaking from heaven in His members, upon which the gifts of the Spirit attend as the witness. Whereof the chief were:

1. Reliance Upon Human Philosophy

The adoption by the preachers in the Church, of those methods of discourse which the ancient philosophers and orators of Greece and Rome brought to such perfection: very

early was the foolishness of preaching cast aside, for the eloquence and learning of the ancient schools.

Now, as we have seen, the power and demonstration of the Spirit were given to countervail the human weakness, artlessness, and childishness, which appeared in the method of the preachers. This evil by no means ceased at the Reformation; but was rather revived, and brought to great maturity in the theological and systematic discourses which followed thereupon.

2. Reliance Upon Human Order

The second reason was, the departure of the Church from the witness of the Holy Ghost to the witness of councils, whose collective deliberations and judgments came, to supplant the apostolical evidences, of signs, and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

At the Reformation, this was strengthened, instead of being weakened, in the Protestant churches; which, by their Articles and Confessions, defined the form of their doctrine, with even a more authoritative hand, than had been done before or was ever done after, save in the Council of Trent. And we, their successors, instead of giving liberty to the Spirit to testify upon any point more fully, seem to grow more and more resolved against permitting any such liberty of the Holy Ghost.

3. Reliance Upon State Power

The third reason, as it seems to me, for the cessation of discourse concerning Christ's glory, and the consequent cessation of the seal thereof in these gifts, was the transfer which, towards the end of the third century, was made of the Church's trust and confidence, from Christ her Head unto the "powers that be," His representatives on the earth; to whom, indeed, it was the duty of the Church to yield all subjection in the Lord, as it was their duty to furnish her all protection and patronage in the Lord; but in things spiritual, in things inter-

nal to herself, she must own no head but the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the time of Constantine, the Church began to make flesh her arm, to court secular honors and worldly well-being, until, by degrees, the Lord raised up in the false prophet, that is, the pope of Rome, a scourge both to her who gave, and to them who received the honor that pertains only to Christ.

Now, though the Reformed churches did faithfully and right manfully extricate themselves from the dominion of this the little horn, which domineered over the ten-horned beast, they still leaned much more to the civil power than they ought to have done.

I mean not to deny, that in the Scottish Church, we did put that question upon its proper basis; but to assert that the question altogether looked too large and prominent in the eye of the Reformers, to the eclipsing of the true question of the Headship of Christ.

The Scottish Reformers would have brought out of the civil magistrate a well-spring of nourishment unto the Church; and, had they understood the subject of Christ's headship, and His way of asserting it, by the gifts of the Spirit, they would have been preserved from such a delusive hope.

Not perceiving that Christ had intended, in all time until His coming again, to preserve in His Church, by signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, the presence of His own supernatural protection; and taking upon them, from the false miracles of the Papacy, to doubt, and even some of them to deny, that miracles were any longer to be looked for in the Church; it came to pass that they sought so to limit and define and regulate the office of a king, as that he should yield to the Church that patronage, safeguard, and promotion which Christ alone is able to afford.

And, laboring in this way, the Scottish Reformers, and not a

few of those upon the continent also, lost the true doctrine of the king's authority, and adopted the false doctrine, that if a king rule tyrannically, he may be resisted, and even deposed, by a Christian people; which is at once to disobey the commandments of the Lord and His apostles, and to refuse the example which they and the Primitive Church for three centuries set before us.

To refuse, indeed, the command of an earthly sovereign, when it contradicts the will of God, is the act of a true subject of the Lord Jesus Christ; but to resist him, is to resist God and Christ, whose minister he is.

While the Scottish Reformers, in their ignorance of the nature, extent, and continual manifestation of Christ's headship, did thus, by seeking to bring more out of an earthly king than his office can yield, overturn the principle of subjection altogether, making it to depend upon the judgment of private persons, whether they should obey or resist; the English Reformers being well guarded on this hand by the vigilance of a queen, jealous of her prerogative to the very uttermost, yet failed in preventing her from meddling with the sacred offices of the Church itself, even to the interdicting of preaching altogether.

Desirous as I am at all times, and in all ways to justify that great work of God, both in England and in Scotland, I cannot help lamenting that the Church of England should ever have permitted the name, "Head of the Church," to be given to any creature upon earth. In this matter the Scottish Church was more wisely guided of the Spirit.

When the kings of Great Britain would have practiced with her as they had done with the Church of England, she at once came forth with a noble testimony of martyrs against the usurpation; and, during that season of persecution which occurred in the reigns of the last two of the Stuart family, when the Church of Scotland was cast out for her testimony to

Christ as the only Head, there were wrought, for the sake of that noble army of witnesses, things wonderful; as truly miraculous and supernatural, I believe, as ever occurred in any age;—insomuch that when Wodrow, the father of the Church historian, and himself long a persecuted man, was upon his death-bed, it lay heavy on his conscience that he had not recorded the wonderful dealings of God with His persecuted servants in those days; and he took his son, the Church historian, pledged by solemn vow to a dying father, that he would do his best, to gather up the traditions and monuments of these miraculous interpositions, which were still to be found surviving amongst the people.

And how faithfully he did this, is partly known by his Church History, and is partly not known through the, I must call it, neglect of the university of Glasgow to make public those many volumes of his narratives which lie hidden in their public library. Methinks, to have given forth to the Church these monuments of God's dealings with our persecuted fathers, would have been a still more excellent work, than building a stone monument on the summit of every hill.

But since the period of these wrestlings for the headship of Christ, which concluded at the Revolution, there has been in this country, in Scotland as well as England, a deathlike silence concerning the headship of Christ, and a contentedness with the secularities of government, which has done more, at least in our own Church, to destroy the spirit of religion, than all the persecutions she has endured since the Reformation.

Now, however, that, with all her strength, with all her popularity among men of all parties, she is turning, or about to turn, her hand against the testimony of:

- God's love to the world,
- Christ's work in sinful flesh, and the Spirit's assurance of salvation in the soul of the believer,
- the coming of Christ in His glory, and

- the work of the Spirit by outward signs and gifts to testify thereto.

Now that the witnesses to these the foundations of the faith and hope as it is in Jesus Christ, are everywhere throughout Scotland contemned and spoken against, we may rest assured that the Lord will honor them, and speak for them from heaven; as He did heretofore for the apostles and disciples rejected from the synagogue, when He stretched forth His hand to heal, and caused signs and wonders to be done by the name of His holy child Jesus.

There are many other causes which might be enumerated for the cessation in the Church of these wonderful works and gifts of the Holy Ghost: but I think they all resolve themselves into these three, which have been mentioned:

1. The adoption of the wisdom of the natural man, instead of the foolishness of preaching by the ministers of the word;
2. The looking unto councils and assemblies of the Church for the determination of questions, instead of appealing them directly to the Holy Ghost;
3. The reposing on the protection of the king of the state, instead of the protection of the Head of the Church.

These three causes have conspired together to produce an almost total blindness unto, and silence upon, the glory of Christ, and the heavenly things connected therewith; whence also it has come to pass, as of necessity, that the Spirit, having nothing to witness to, has ceased from His witness.

But whose fault was all this? Ours, be sure, and not Christ's or God's; and when we cease from our backslidings and return unto the Lord, will not the Lord return unto us? Will He fail of His promise? Is His Church not His Church still? Are we straitened in Him? Verily no: we are straitened in ourselves: all this has come upon us for our unfaithfulness and unbelief.

Therefore hold up your heads, brethren, for your redemption draws nigh; lift up your voice like a trumpet, for your salvation comes; open your mouth wide, and it shall be filled. A day of glory is dawning upon the Church, and a day of strength. She is about to be separated from the dross, and to shine like the molten gold; and the dross indeed will be blown away by the windy storm that is arising.

I feel it: He is sitting as a refiner amongst the sons of Levi. I feel it: it is a day of searching. As the masters of the synagogue searched the houses of the Jews for leaven, to destroy it, if any should be found, before the days of unleavened bread, so He whose eyes are like a flame of fire is searching the hearts of His people, to see if there be in them any leaven of malice and iniquity, that they may be wholly an unleavened lump, holiness unto the Lord, and ready for the Master's use when He shall appear.

HOLD FAST AND REPENT

Therefore I say unto the churches in this land abiding, and unto all the angels of the churches, "Remember how you have received and heard;" and I add therewith the two other words of our great Shepherd:

Revelation 3

³ ...hold fast. and repent.

The word translated, "hold fast," is the same which in the epistle preceding is translated "keep," and not the same with that which is there translated "hold fast;" and would have been better translated here, as in the former instance, "keep." It does not convey in the original the idea of any force exercised to wrest the thing away; but simply the duty of carefully preserving that which has been committed to our trust. It is the word commonly used in the expression, "keeping the commandments;" and is three times used in this chapter, besides in the place before, as verse 8, in praise of the angel of

Philadelphia:

Revelation 3

⁸ ...for you...have kept My word;

...and again:

¹⁰ Because you have kept the word of My patience, I will also keep you from the hour of temptation.

To this duty of keeping what has been committed to His trust, the angel of the Church of Sardis is called, indicating to us, that every gift of God, and every word of God, is secured to us, only upon the condition of our own faithfulness in keeping it.

This ought to be of itself a sufficient answer to those who ask:

“Wherefore have the gifts of the Church ceased?”

The answer is:

“The Church was not careful to keep them.”

And so it is with every gift, whether of creation, of providence, or of grace; and so it must be, in all gifts from a holy God, unto a responsible creature.

If God were not to call an account, He would neither be acting the part of a holy God nor honoring the dignity of a responsible creature; and if He were not to visit the misuse of His gifts with the diminution or withdrawal of them, He would be the patron of unholiness, ingratitude, and disobedience.

At first He endued man with free will, and lordship over the creatures; both of which gifts he sacrificed by the one act of listening to the voice of the creature whose lord he was, and so lost the freedom of his will, and had it brought into bondage to the creation possessed by that evil spirit who spoke in the serpent.

So, also, the angels kept not their first estate, and are reserved for chains of darkness against the judgment of the great day.

Christ, the Redeemer, took up things as He found them; took the will under its bondage, and the flesh under its law of sin and death, and the creation under the dominion of the devil, and prevailed to cast the devil out, to condemn sin in the flesh, and to redeem the will of man, and make it at all points harmonious with the will of God.

And having accomplished this work, whereof the proof is in His resurrection, He requires of His people to keep that of which He put them in possession; that is, to keep their mind or will obedient unto God, their flesh with the sin in it condemned, the world with the devil in it cast out.

We have body, soul, and spirit, to preserve blameless until the day of the Lord; and because no mere man could do this, until the Son of God came and did it for us, so no man can keep what He did otherwise than by having the Son of God indwelling in him.

It is Christ in us who keeps the house clean, which Christ cleansed; and keeps the tenant free, whom Christ set free. Nevertheless this is not done without great personal sacrifice and self-denial on our parts.

For we are not like a wheel to be whirled round the other way at the will of another, nor like a balance to be poised down by an additional weight. But we are creatures with a will, though in bondage—with a mind, though alienated from God by the wickedness that is in us. And Christ in us is a purely spiritual presence, working in and upon the mind by knowledge, by love, and other spiritual applications, which, receiving the renewed mind, is called upon to gird itself to the work of denying the course and inclination of nature, of keeping alive its communion and fellowship with God, of mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, of denying the

world, and being transformed by the renewing of the mind.

Now this work of believing in Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and, having believed, of testifying to the wisdom which we have received, and enjoying cleanness of conscience, and devoting ourselves to the Lord, and escaping free from all bondage, is a heavy, laborious, painful work, and needs to be encouraged and sustained by every means whatsoever.

I say not but that the work is its own reward, and that we ought to love holiness for its own sake, yea, and glory in the freedom with which the Son has made us free; but truly, with all the advantages of promise and hope, and with all the firstfruits of that glorious reward, the Church has ever found it a heavy labor to persevere in the work of keeping that which is committed to her trust.

And therefore it is, that the gracious Lord,—when, by rising from the dead, He had set man upon his feet again, and by ascending into heaven had received the reward for that work accomplished, when He had received the celestial throne, in reward for having redeemed the earthly kingdom,—sent down a firstfruits of that heavenly treasure and glory, for the purpose of encouraging those who had set their shoulders heartily to the work of persevering in that redemption, which for them He had wrought out.

To those who were diligently keeping the earthly glory which His resurrection accomplished, and glorifying God on the earth, as He had done, He did send down the first fruits of their reward, as an encouragement to them to go on, to keep the faith, and finish their course with joy.

And I believe, that, while the Church stood to it, and preserved her holiness, and love, and liberty, and loyalty to God, she was fed and strengthened from that celestial fountain of the Holy Ghost. But as she failed to keep herself unpolluted from the world and the flesh, and ceased to be a witness of Je-

sus and the resurrection, the Lord in glory, whose righteousness is His Father's righteousness, must withdraw His countenance from His faithless spouse, and leave her forlorn of those celestial ornaments with which her beauty was worthily be-decked.

All glorious as the sun, with a crown of twelve stars, and raiment whiter than any fuller could white them, she stood on earth the mother of saints, the innocent object of all the world's contempt and hate, the beloved object of the Lord of heaven. And He left her not alone, but He fed her with celestial food, and gave her wings as the eagle, that she might ascend on high, and commune with heaven.

While thus she stood faithful to her Lord, she was honored of her Lord with heavenly gifts, wherewithal she might bless, not her own children only, but the recreant world, and teach the enemies of God what was the grace and mercy of Him against whom they were in arms.

"Keep," says Christ to the Church of Sardis; and "keep," say I, in His name, unto the Protestant Churches:

- keep faithful unto Christ;
- keep the standing of redeemed men, free and not using your liberty as a cloak of licentiousness;
- walk as He also walked, and crucify the flesh, as He also crucified it;
- perfect holiness as He also perfected it;
- have, in one word, the Spirit of Christ, and exhibit the Spirit of Christ,

...and it shall not be long before you receive the Spirit of power and glory. If the Church would keep the commandments of Christ, Christ would fulfill all His promises to her; and these commandments are not grievous to him who has the Spirit of Christ: to him who has it not, they are impossible.

But how can the Church have the Spirit of Christ, when not

the man Christ Jesus, but the evangelical system is preached to the people? If they would preach Jesus and the resurrection, instead of preaching a set of theological terms and dry moralities, God would use their word to beget Christ in the hearts of the people; and to the babes of Christ thus begotten by God, it would come easy to bear His yoke, and to carry His burden.

But with their preaching of natural things to the natural man, with their words of natural wisdom, they have made a Church of hypocrites and unbelievers, worshipers of reason, and haters of everything supernatural; so that they cannot receive the wisdom which is from God, the spiritual things which are spiritually discerned.

This is a great evil under the sun, that by false and ignorant teachers the Lord's flock should be corrupted. But it is still worse, that, when the truth appears in the mouth of faithful teachers, these self-sufficient naturalists and rationalists combine at once to extinguish it as foul error and superstition; and the poor Church is left like a man bewildered, who has wandered till he is weary, and is ready to lay him down and sleep in the cold night, though it should be to rise no more.

I feel assured in my own mind, that if our Church do so persecute the faithful in Christ Jesus, God will send upon her some scourge, either from the hand of the Papacy or of Infidelity, perhaps from both; and she will then feel what a poor wreck of her former self she is now become. If, as is truly the case with her, and not with her only, but with every Reformed Church, there be little left to keep, then is there much present to repent of, which is the last injunction of our Shepherd.

It is most comfortable to reflect, that for every disease of man's soul there is a remedy in God's grace; that from every wandering of man's wicked heart there is a way of return unto his Father's house. God is indeed very gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. A man would have despaired

of such a servant as this minister of the Church of Sardis; a man would have been ready to cast him off, as utterly hopeless; not so the God-man, “whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts,” (*Isaiah 55:8*)...

Psalm 106

¹ ...for He is good, for His mercy endures for ever.

Therefore, without any violence, without any upbraiding, with gentle and kind remonstrance, He deals with this squanderer and spendthrift, who thought only of the approbation of man, and set light by the favor of God and of Christ.

I am not worthy to be the interpreter, nor are you, O reader, worthy to have these gracious words interpreted to you. Let me, as they pass through my mind unto yours, have the first taste of their grace and sweetness.

How gentle a Master are You, O my Bishop! Verily, verily, You are meek and lowly, and with You the weary and heavy laden shall find rest unto their souls. O good Shepherd, think of me, and of my flock, in these backsliding times, and enable us by Your good Spirit to keep and to repent.

As Your servant has taken upon him to interpret these words of Yours unto the churches, and has lifted up his hand, and vowed to be faithful, and to set down nought out of favor, or out of malice, grant unto him first of all to repent of all his naughtiness, wickedness, and unfaithfulness in Your sight, to gird up his loins like a man and serve You with all his heart. In this mind it is, that he undertakes, without partiality and without hypocrisy, to apply Your words unto the ministers of Your Church, and unto their flocks.

Oh I am not ignorant, my brethren, of the sad condition into which we are all declined away. Our strength is gone like to a man dying of consumption: we cannot breathe the element of spiritual life; we have no voice to declare the glorious things of God; and if we had a voice, we have no knowledge

of them to set forth.

And how is this, O my brethren? God's hand is not removed, His arm is not weakened, His love is not exhausted, His strength is not impaired. And for Christ, hear Him speaking to you the comfortable words of this epistle, for you are not worse than the angel of the Church of Sardis. Awake, shake yourselves from the dust; arise, and Christ shall give you light. Say not within yourselves:

"It is not so; we are not so far-faded and gone; our beauty is not turned into corruption, nor are our garments moth-eaten."

Ah, so thinks the man in the last stage of consumption: he dreams of recovery, and oft is his pale and emaciated cheek flushed with a hectic hue, which, though it look beautiful and healthy to the inexperienced eye, is to the physician the surest symptom of death.

And so, be assured, is it with the Church at this present day. Her zeal for doctrine that now of late has flamed up, betrays only her ignorance and incapacity of entertaining sound doctrine. Her zeal for discipline reveals only the lack of that love which is the soul of discipline.

Ah me! What searchings of heart are there not for you, O my mother Church! Now be convinced, O men and brethren, that we are come to an exceeding low estate, that our garments are moth-eaten, that our beauty is like a fading flower, and our fruitfulness is utterly blighted.

Why should we perish for lack of taking thought, and timely repentance? Is there no man, is there no intercessor? Oh get up into your watch-towers, you that know the peril of our Zion. Gird on your arms, and stand in the breach, you mighty and valiant men; lift up your voice and weep, O you that look upon the desolation of our city; call upon the Lord, for He will have mercy, and will abundantly pardon.

I lately dwelt in a house beside a lady who was in the last stage of consumption, which the physicians pronounced one of the most rapid they had ever known, and that it would certainly terminate her days very shortly. In one day, she was made whole and well. So the consumptive Church, the Church almost entirely consumed away, may, through faith, in one day become whole and well.

There is not a minister, the most hardened in transgression, the most dead to every sense of duty, the most subject to the devil, the world, and the flesh, who may not in one day become faithful and true. Faith, and repentance the fruit of faith, are not dependent upon time, place, or circumstance for their efficacy, but are entirely supernatural works of the Spirit of Christ.

Oh that God would turn the hearts of my brethren to the things which He has enabled me to write, concerning the present estate of the Church; for it is true, and, being true, ought not for any unworthiness or infirmity in me to be postponed or rejected.

O my God, I turn to You: You are my Comforter. The land is sore afflicted. This day when I write these sorrowful words, such a cloud of apprehension hangs over this city, as in the memory of man has not been equaled. A sovereign, beloved of all the people, is advised by the heads of the government not to venture into the capital of his kingdom, nor to partake of the banquet which has been prepared for him, and a thousand of the chief of his people.

And for once, this day, which has been in ages past a day of festivity and mirth and splendid pageantry, is become a day of fear and dreadful apprehension. The garlands hang all around the halls of the banquet-house, but there is no eye to look upon their beauty: the meats are preparing, but there are no guests to taste of them.

Behold the chief ruler of the city, with all his counselors,

are afraid and hide their faces. They called unto feasting, but the Lord has called unto fasting. It is an omen hard to read: and perhaps the Lord would have it not to be read at all, but to exercise us with its fearful uncertainty.

Surely, as in the burden of the valley of vision, the Lord God of hosts did call us to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold there was joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep. But here He arrested us, and said:

“You shall not eat the flesh, and drink the wine, but you shall be in perplexity and dismay.”

Has He done this in grace and mercy, or has He done it in judgment? Where is the wise man, skilled in the ways of the Lord, who will give the interpretation thereof? It is a wonderful providence, a providence most strange and wonderful. It is too deep for my understanding; yet dare I to hope, and almost to believe, that it is done in answer to the prayers of the people who know the Lord in this city.

I know that at the very time the resolution was come to, prayers were making, by desire, in at least one church, that the Lord would bring the counsels of the wicked to nought; and I fondly hope, that the measures which have been adopted, are in answer to those prayers, and for the preventing of pillage and bloodshed.

God grant that on the morrow I may not have to cancel, or to contradict, what I have now written. Oh that man would believe that judgments of a fearful kind are hanging over this land, and that the Lord lingers to hear if there be any intercessors!

But, alas! the Church which should have been the interpreter of providence to the land, and the intercessor between God and the guilty people, we the ministers and elders of the Church have refrained our voice; we have been at ease in

Zion; we have not been faithful to our king, our country, or our God. We have been the loudest to speak of glorious and good things; we have sounded forth joyful acclamations, because of the things that are coming on the earth

And of all the Church, who have been the loudest in these prophecies of lies? Those who hold the head the highest, saying, We are the people; those who have taken to themselves the name of Evangelical. From them, and from their reports, and from their most erroneous views, have proceeded these false expectations in the bondage of which the Church is now held, that she should not be able to know the signs of these times, which even the worldly and the infidel people can discern. Ah me, what have we to repent of, to repent of in dust and ashes!

THE THREATENING

THE good Shepherd having thus given instructions to His unworthy servant, proceeds to enforce them, by a threatening in case of disobedience. And because, of all His delinquencies, the lack of watchfulness was the root, the threatening turns upon this as being inclusive of all the rest.

Revelation 3

³ If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know at what hour I will come upon you.

Though in our interpretation of the words, “be watchful,” with which the instructions begin, we explained it in a large sense, as applicable to the whole pastoral care, we feel now a disposition to add thereto a more particular application of it, derived from the connection in which it is here introduced.

WHAT IT MEANS TO WATCH

Not in this passage alone, but in so many besides, is the duty of watchfulness connected with the event of the Lord’s appearing, that we make no doubt there is a very frequent, and almost a constant and necessary, connection between the one and the other.

Let me first point out the instances in which the duty of watchfulness is connected with the coming of the Lord. In the 24th of the Gospel by *Matthew*, which, with the 25th, is a regularly constructed discourse concerning the coming of the Lord, after having declared, that “of the day and hour of His coming knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only” (*Matthew* 24:36); and added, that the world should be apprehended by it in the lap of ease, and peace, and carnal security, as by the Flood, and that His saints would be caught away from the side of their nearest and dearest friends, without being able to lend them any help, he adds:

Matthew 24

⁴² Watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord comes.

⁴³ But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

⁴⁴ Therefore be also ready; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man comes.

And having drawn out the same momentous truth into the form of the Parable of the Virgins, He concludes it in like manner with these words:

Matthew 24

¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.

This passage is the more to be noted, as containing the same similitude of the thief which is in our text. And this similitude is drawn out into a practical form by the apostle, in that very comfortable discourse upon the second advent, contained in his *First Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 4:18; 5:12. He there refers to it as a thing constantly known in the churches:

1 Thessalonians 5

² ...the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

The churches knowing this were so enlightened as that it should not overtake them as a thief; and by their expectation of that glorious event he denominates them “children of the day” (*1 Thessalonians* 5:5), as our Lord in another place calls them “children of the resurrection” (*Luke* 20:36); and therefore, says he:

1 Thessalonians 5

⁶ Let us not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober.

In another place also, and that a passage of the *Revelation*, is the same duty of watchfulness connected with the Lord’s coming as a thief:

Revelation 16

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

How incumbent the duty of watchfulness is upon all, and how it is connected with the coming of the Lord and the impenetrable secrecy of the time thereof, is strikingly set forth, and oft repeated in the following words of Mark's Gospel:

Mark 13

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

³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you know not when the time is.

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 you 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.

Of such watchfulness, the blessed reward is variously set forth in Scripture, particularly in these two passages of Luke's Gospel:

Luke 12

³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

Luke 21

³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

From these examples it is manifest that the duty of watchfulness is not accidentally but regularly and formally con-

nected with the uncertainty of the Lord's coming. I do not say that this is the only ground of watchfulness laid down in the Scriptures; for Peter says:

1 Peter 5

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant [watch]; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

But that it is the common and formal ground of watchfulness presented to the Christian Church. And while I say this positively, I assert negatively, that the uncertainty of life, and the nearness of death, is not the formal ground of watchfulness given in the Scriptures; though it be so by popular preachers, who thereby make void the coming of the Lord, as a practical topic of all preaching of the gospel.

THE TIME OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Now, wherefore the coming of the Lord should thus be continually made the ground of watchfulness, is evident to any one who will take the Lord's own views of His Church. This He represents by various similitudes; as of:

- a household of servants, whose master is gone forth to a wedding, which in Eastern countries took place in the fore-night, and left his servants in charge to sit up and wait till he should come home again:
- a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and meanwhile having set his servants up in trade, returns to reward them with dignities according to their diligence:
- a thief, who chooses the sleepy hour of midnight to break into the house and plunder it of its goods.

The ideas out of which these and all other similitudes are composed, are, first, that by His former coming He purchased the world, and the inhabitants thereof with His precious blood, and by His resurrection from the dead was by God

anointed Christ and Lord thereof. So that from thenceforth every living soul is called upon by its Creator to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth for its Lord and Master; and those His citizens, who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us," shall He, when He comes again, burn them together with their city in fire unquenchable.

This now, being by the gospel preached to every creature under heaven, puts every creature, king, and subject, master and servant, into the condition of responsible agents, tenants and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, to give an account to Him of their several stewardships whenever He shall appear; which appearance being hidden from every creature, puts every creature that has been, is, or shall be till His coming, into the dutiful position of having his house in order, his account ready, his lamp burning, his loins girt, ready to receive his Lord. And all this as they shall be answerable to God in the great day; for God, by the resurrection, has given all lordship and all judgment to the Son.

The second idea contained in these similitudes is, that the Church in particular, that is, those who acknowledge Christ's lordship, do thereupon receive a charge and trust; and that no mean one, being no less than all His goods and gifts, whereby they are appointed to hold up before the unbelieving world such an aspect of the risen and glorified Jesus as may present Him before the world, and teach them the honor which is due unto His name, and the blessedness in time and eternity which accrues unto those who faithfully yield Him homage. Without such a living witness and image of His glory, it is manifest that the world could neither know nor acknowledge the benefit which it has derived from, and the duty which it owes to, its Lord and Redeemer.

But if the Church, not keeping her goods and gifts, do but partially represent the fulness of her Lord; or if, conceiving selfishness, she lies unto the world, and says, "He did not re-

deem you, He did not love you, He did for you nothing at all," then is she become a faithless, false witness, who for her perjury will soon be made away with.

And if any Church shall cast the brethren out for maintaining that Christ by His death purchased the whole world, and will not repent of her misdeeds, she shall, after certain days of grace, be utterly destroyed.

The third idea which goes to the composition of these parables concerning the kingdom of heaven, is, that the Lord of the world and the Head of the Church, shall come to exact an account of every mortal creature, with respect to all His words and works, at a time which no mortal creature knows of, nor can by any means attain the knowledge of, so as to be able to say positively, "It shall be at or after such a time;" or negatively, "It shall not be till after such a time." This inscrutable uncertainty of the time of the Master's coming is that which imposes continual watchfulness upon every generation, and upon every individual of every generation.

It is very simple, We know not when He is to come, and therefore we must be ever ready. It is a blasphemy to say, "Christ will not come tomorrow;" and it is a blasphemy to say, "Tomorrow He will come."

In what condition then is the Church at present, which dares to say He will not come till after a millennium which is not yet begun? This is another of your traditions by which you have made the Scriptures void. And yet these are the people, who, speaking against the manifest truth, do say, that we who study prophetic events, and prophetic numbers, have fixed the day, and month, and year, of Messiah's coming.

To which we answer, first, "It is a lie;" and, secondly, "Take the beam out of your own eye before you look for the mote in your brother's." How dare you blaspheme by fixing negatively, that Messiah will not come till after a millennium not yet begun?

Poor men, in laying a snare for your laborious brethren, who are doing God's work the best way they can, you have stumbled into a trap, and are there fast held. Get out the soonest and the best way you can; for until you explode that opinion, or rather I should say that dogma,—for it is your creed upon the subject, ay, and your practical faith,—you never shall be able to watch for a coming of the Son of man which you believe to be so far off; and so you are fain to construct a new ground of watchfulness out of the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death.

O men, the life which you have to do with as Christians, is an everlasting life, which knows no death: the death which you have to do with is a death without a fear, without a sting:

1 Corinthians 3

²² ...death...is yours.

What a thing it is to have turned away from that manifestation of the love of God, from that congregation of the elect, from that joyful meeting with the Son of man, and dwelling with Him in His Father's glory and kingdom; from this consummation of all that is blessed, to have turned away, in order to contemplate the terrors of death, and the painful separation from the body, and from all friends we hold dear; not only to have bereft us of the Lord's coming, but to have conjured up again the terrors of death and the grave, which Christ had conjured away from His Church for ever.

Oh what spoliation! Oh what mockery! Oh what unfeeling cruelty, have these doctors been guilty of towards Christ's poor flock! Sure there is a day of fierce and fiery retribution at hand, for all who love not, who set light by, and speak against, the coming of the Lord.

The fourth, and last idea contained in these passages of Scripture, which connect watchfulness with the coming of the Lord, is this, that when He comes, the whole house, both

Church and world, shall be in a deep sleep, as a house at the midnight, which for this reason is called the dead hour of the night. And as the thief comes upon the house all unawares, so upon the world shall its Redeemer come.

Not indeed like the thief, to take what is not His own, but all unwelcome as He, and all unexpected; and as the thief, with stealthy foot, advances upon a peaceful slumbering house to break into it, and take whatever is most precious and carry it off, so shall Christ come into the strong man's house, into Satan's usurped principedom of the earth, and thence convey whatever is most precious, the gold and the silver, and the precious stones, rifling the grave for precious dust, and searching the corners of the earth for holy men, and thus shall the Dove prove Himself wiser than the serpent, and the Lamb mightier than the roaring lion.

That symbol of the thief has in it more than men suppose. It is not for nothing that Christ took so low and unworthy an epithet. It distinguishes between the act of His privily conveying away His elect into the cloud of His apparent glory, and the act of His presenting them on the earth in the manifested glory of the New Jerusalem.

It is as if our Alfred, when he stole his way into the Norman's camp, had taken thence his crown secretly and privily, with which being royally adorned, he should come in no harpers disguise, but in the right of England's king, to destroy the leaguer of England's foes. So Christ comes stealing on in midnight calmness, and having carried off His royal queen, in base captivity and thralldom held, He returns in triumph along with her, and with strength of hand beats the usurpers to the dust, and casts them forth forever.

And accordingly they for whom He comes as the thief, are those who have their garments clean; and those with whom He comes as a king, are the same company arrayed in those garments which they had kept undefiled.

Revelation 16

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Revelation 19

¹⁴ And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

These are the considerations which bind watchfulness upon the Church, and upon the world, as an unceasing duty; to wit:

1. Our responsibility to Christ for all our gifts natural, purchased by Him from death and the grave, and for all our gifts spiritual, bequeathed by Him from on high:
2. The inscrutable secrecy which hangs over His coming, insomuch that, without trespassing upon the Father's prerogative, we may not cease daily looking for the giving up of our stewardship, and the inspection of all our accounts;
3. The forewarning, that when that day shall come, the world and the Church shall alike be found unprepared, the servants smiting their fellow-servants, and saying, "The Lord delays His coming," the kings of the nations and the rulers of the people combining against the Lord.

These considerations, together with the blessedness which is everywhere assured unto the watchful, were intended by our great Bishop to preserve in the Church a continual good order and readiness for His appearing. And doubtless they are well fitted, and altogether sufficient for that holy end; for never yet did sentinel sleep on his post, when he was expecting his captain to make his rounds, nor porter neglect the gate when he was expecting his master to knock.

But the Church, yielding to the flesh, and inclining to the world, and ceasing from the desire of Christ's glory, and consulting only for her own safety and worldly welfare, did cease from loving or desiring the appearance of her Lord, to whom

her conscience testified that she had been unfaithful. And so breaking the inscrutable secret of the Father, she took upon her to say, "The Lord delays His coming," and began to eat and drink with the drunken. By and by the coming of the Lord was altogether forgotten, until it has become, as we now find it, the thing least thought of, instead of being the thing most thought of, the thing at the far end of all things, instead of being the thing nearest at hand.

And now that God has stirred up His faithful servants to tell her of that glorious event, with all its celestial accompaniments, behold they smite us on the cheek, and, being smitten, let us turn unto them the other also.

THE RESULTS OF NOT WATCHING

Meanwhile, because watchfulness is a Christian duty, which cannot be dispensed with, the Church, disconnecting it from its true and right motive, has cast about to find some other ground on which to enforce it, and has pitched upon the uncertainty of a man's life, and the account which, upon his death, they deem that he has to render up, of all the works done in the flesh. And so have we death in all its natural and artificial terrors represented to the Church, and the fear of death with all diligence propagated abroad, from which Christ died to deliver us.

Along with this, a whole system of extravagance, if not of error, has come in concerning the time of the judgment, and the state of the separate soul, and the resurrection, and the glory, and the kingdom; and a high way has been made for all sorts of airy speculations, concerning the Elysian and the infernal regions, into which the souls of men depart at death. Purgatory and the numerous limbos of the Roman Church have all come trooping in by this open breach, to do the work of watchfulness, which Christ would have done by the hope and desire of His coming.

And we Protestants have only been preserved from the same figments, by having the Scriptures in our hands, without using those Scriptures to enlighten ourselves as to the true form of doctrine concerning the future: nay, we have gone farther than the Papists in this, that we have flatly dared to assert, and commonly to preach, that the coming of the Lord means the day of a man's death; as they hold forth in almost all the churches.

The liberty which is taken with the word of God passes all comprehension, they might with as much propriety aver, that the creation of the world in the beginning of the Bible means the day of my birth, and nothing more, as that the coming of the Lord means the day of my death.

Rather many times would I confess my ignorance of the text, and, with respect to the commentators, say with the old Scottish minister, "Better let sleeping dogs lie," than so distort and falsify the holy word of God.

The consequence of this divorcement of the duty of watchfulness from its proper motive, has been to bring the Church into the most unwatchful and unready condition; for God's method of producing morality is not to be meddled with. His system of doctrine is commensurate with His system of duty; and if you will not know or believe the one, you shall not discharge the other.

- As well might you expect, without the doctrine of the atonement wrought by the blood of Christ, to bring cleanness upon the conscience, and peace towards God;
- As well might you expect without the doctrine of Christ's holiness in sinful flesh, to produce holiness in us who have sinful flesh;
- As well might you expect without the doctrine of election to produce dependence upon God, and
- As well might you expect without the doctrine of Christ's Headship to produce unity in the Church;

So likewise you may vainly expect, without the doctrine of the Lord's coming at an unknown and unknowable time, to produce watchfulness in the Church.

You may get up any substitute you please, you may adorn it with what eloquence you please, and it may look very well to the carnal eye; but it will never work the effect upon the spiritual mind. You lack the power, the heart-power, in lacking the doctrine. And it is a vain and idle attempt to produce the heart-obedience without the heart-power.

Watchfulness, with all its sister graces of diligence, order, hope, desire, and faithfulness, can only be obtained through the knowledge and belief of the coming of the Lord in His glory to reward, with the presence, and the city, and the kingdom, and the priesthood of God, all those who are found diligently looking for His appearance.

AS A THIEF

Before leaving this topic of the *Epistle to the Church of Sardis*, it is further to be observed, that His coming on any one as a thief, is put forth as the punishment of their remissness and indifference and neglect of watchfulness:

Revelation 3

³ If, therefore, you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief...

And to make the threatening more effective, it is redoubled in a new form:

³ ...and you shall not know what hour I will come unto you.

How then is this? If it be as we have said, that no one can know that hour, and that the Son of man Himself knows it not, how is it that it should take the form of a threatening and a punishment upon a certain class of men? How should that which is a universal and unchangeable condition of the whole Church, be now applied as the particular and appropriate visi-

tation upon a certain class of offenders? Does the good Shepherd mean, that upon them who are watchful He will not come as a thief; and that they *shall know* the hour of His appearing?

The answer to these questions is twofold:

1. It is universally true that all who are not watchful shall be taken by surprise, and find themselves in a miserable case.

To convince ourselves of this, nothing more is necessary than to refer to the passages of Scripture treating of watchfulness, and quoted at the outset of this topic. Though, therefore, nothing were to be said upon the reverse side of the question, the thing asserted in the text is true; that as a thief, and at an unexpected hour, shall He come upon the unwatchful and unwary: and how great an evil this will prove to them, we shall shortly see.

2. Upon the reverse side of the question, we have to say, that Christ *will not come* as a thief to those that are watchful.

And though the hour of His coming shall be hidden from all till He burst upon the world's view in the clouds of heaven, as heretofore the deluge did in the upbreking of the fountains of the great deep, and Sodom's overthrow in the opening of the fiery reservoirs of heaven; yet shall it be so announced to the observant by preceding signs in the heavens and the earth and the sea, and over the nations, that they shall be well prepared, and standing all ready for His coming.

And though the slumbers of that most sleepy hour shall also steal over them, as over the other virgins, yet shall they not therefore suffer loss from their most gracious Lord; who, seeing by their well-replenished lamps that they were thinking of His name, shall welcome them right gladly to share with Him the marriage supper, at that table which shall never

be drawn.

The signs of the times, I say, shall keep the watchful alive and alert, and be the means of their deliverance, as heretofore at the destruction of Jerusalem: and this is one reason for which the destruction of Jerusalem is so skilfully interwoven by our Lord with the destruction of the world at His coming; in order to show us that, by the same observance of His instructions which they gave, and, for giving, received deliverance out of Jerusalem, we also shall receive deliverance out of this doomed world.

How firmly I believe that the first Christians were saved by observing when the things spoken by Daniel the prophet took place, and then, without delay, seizing the moment of the truce to escape from Jerusalem unto Pella; so firmly do I believe that it is by the diligent observation and clear understanding of the things which are at this moment taking place, that we shall have our lamps burning, and our loins girt ready to meet the Bridegroom when He comes.

I have no doubt that those professing believers in Christ who despise the subject of the signs of the times, and of unfulfilled prophecy which these signs open to the studious, will, if they repent not, and that speedily, be found unwatchful, and surprised by Christ as the household wrapped in sleep are by the midnight thief.

This is no subject to be trifled with, nor to be spoken upon but with awful earnestness. I take shame to myself, and guilt also, that I do not speak of it in every company, and to every mortal creature: woe is me, if I hide it. Woe is me, if I be ashamed of His testimony.

Oh, it is not a time for smooth and flattering speeches. It is not a time for nice and delicate manners when the ship is creaking in every timber, and the ocean stream flowing in at every seam. What loud, what vehement cries from man to man do then arise, what shrill, what sharp orders from the

commander, what tight, what bracing work, what manly vigor in every arm, what eager looks in every eye!

Ah me the manly activity, the noble and true-hearted devotedness of a crew of British mariners in the midst of the whirlwinds and hurricanes of the deep, are the proper emblem of what we, who know these times and the seasons, should now be doing and speaking in the midst of the Church.

THE RESULTS OF WATCHING

That by some means or other, those who are looking for Christ's appearing shall be prepared for the same, though they continue ignorant of the very hour and day, is manifest from all the Scriptures, and particularly from that passage of the *First Epistle to the Thessalonians*, to which we have already referred; wherein it is distinctly said, that while the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night to others, it shall not so come to the brethren who know the Lord, and look for His appearing:

1 Thessalonians 5

⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

⁵ You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

Now what is the reason here assigned for their escaping the common surprise?

1. Because they are children of the light and the day, and not in darkness as others; that is, because they are full of information and knowledge upon the subject of the Lord's coming, being taught by the holy apostles, as well as by the Lord himself. Alas! would it were so still with the churches.
2. Because in consequence of this, their light and

knowledge of the subject, they do not sleep as others, but watch, and are sober.

In one word, it is signified in this remarkable passage, that the knowledge and hope of Christ's coming worked the same effects upon the Church to preserve her from sleep, and to keep her wakeful, as light does upon the natural world; and that it is as unnatural for her to give herself to chambering and drunkenness, and deep sleep, when illuminated with the knowledge of the Lord's coming, as it is for men to drink and sleep in the day season.

Some reckless and regardless persons there be, who will, even in the day time, be found drunk and weighed down with sleep; but this is rare, and cannot be taken as the ground of any similitude. Yet is it an exception worthy the attention of those who are walking in the light of the knowledge of the Lord's appearing, to warn them that it is possible, even for them, to become worldly, sensual, and wicked, as was the case with the early heretics of the Millenarian school, and with the Fifth-monarchy men of our own country. And as the open-day drunkard is the most desperate and incurable of all, so are those who, having the light of the coming of the Lord, do yet permit themselves in the worldliness and wickedness of others.

THE NATURE OF THE EVIL

It does but remain that we should explain wherein consists the point and pertinancy of this rebuke, and the nature of the evil which it threatens. It is pertinent, because not otherwise than by watchfulness can the direful calamity of being plundered of all our hopes as Christians be prevented, and watchfulness cannot be promoted otherwise than by the knowledge and belief of the Lord's coming.

In this, as in all other cases, the punishment is after the nature, and in the way of the offense. The offense consists in ne-

glecting all the glorious promises connected with the event of the Lord's coming. The judgment is in changing that event from being one of glorious promise, to become one of awful threatening; for, that direful judgment will fall upon the Church for neglecting to watch for her Lord, is declared in many parts of Scripture. Take, for example, the following:

Matthew 24

⁴⁴ Therefore be also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes.

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

⁴⁸ But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming;

⁴⁹ And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

⁵⁰ The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

⁵¹ And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This passage, though it refer chiefly to rulers of the house, whether civil or ecclesiastical, points out to us the awful consequence to all who keep themselves in the dark upon the subject of His appearing, and say within their hearts:

⁴⁸ ...my Lord delays His coming;

...which the Church at present says, not in her heart, but openly boasts, saying:

“He will not come for at least a thousand years.”

That false thought leads on to the evil consequence of cruelty and carnal indulgence; in the midst of which Christ

makes an end of them and of their doings forever.

That it is vain for them to flee for succor and redress then, is put beyond doubt, by the Parable of the Virgins, wherein they are represented as at length courting those whom they had smitten, and making preparations for that which they had despised; but neither the one nor the other avail to deliver them from the fearful doom of being excluded from the marriage-chamber of the Bridegroom.

Not only so, but in the corresponding passage of *Revelation* 16, they are exposed as hypocrites to the gaze of the world:

Revelation 16

¹⁵ ...lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

Pretending to be believers in Christ, they are proved to be unbelievers; pretending to be looking for Him, they are proved not to have been looking for Him.

When their brethren, walking with them by the way, sleeping with them in the same bed, grinding at the same mill, have been caught up by Christ, and openly acknowledged as His people, they are left exposed to their shame, and fairly convicted before the world as hypocrites and deceivers, dishonored of God, dishonored of men; they shall be cast out like salt which has lost its savor, to be trodden under foot. Ah, let us search ourselves, for the Searcher is at hand; let us judge ourselves, for the Judge is at the door.

You, my brethren, who know the truth of the Lord's coming, beware how you walk in the sight of God. Be watchful in all your hearts' thoughts, in all your life's occupations; and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die, and make your works perfect before God.

Remember how you have received and heard, keep, and repent; for if you will not watch, even upon you shall He come as a thief, and your exposure shall be the greatest of all. God prepare and make us ready. Amen.

THE APPROBATION

IT is the surest mark of a good man that he is observant of what is good in others, and delights in all ways to foster and perfect it; and if this disposition of the mind be guarded by righteousness, and prevented from degenerating into flat-tery, it is the best means of cultivating what is good in all souls, even in the worst and most neglected.

It is the law established throughout all nature, that everything should produce its likeness by the communication of itself. God's love shining forth from him, and by us received, produces love in return: nor did ever any soul love God until that soul has both known and felt that God had loved it. And because love is the keeping of the commandments, it comes to pass that the preaching of God's love is the foster-mother of all holiness.

But as the love of a parent towards his child is not moved by the desire of being beloved in return, but flows spontaneous from his heart; even so the goodness of God is not served out to His creatures with any view of advantage, but because He is good, and of very goodness loves to make His goodness to be known and felt by all.

If his goodness fail to produce goodness in return, then is our heart hardened and made insensible, and at length grows utterly reprobate; but his goodness remains all the same, shedding itself upon the evil as upon the good, upon the just as upon the unjust.

I am led into this train of thought by having ever presented to me in these epistles the goodness of Christ unto the worst of His servants; of which another instance comes before us in the next topic of our discourse.

A WORTHY NAME

Revelation 3

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.

It is not for that Lord who delivered Noah, a preacher of righteousness, from the destruction of the old world, and Lot, a just man, from the overthrow of Sodom, to fail to notice and distinguish in the Church of Sardis those persons, however few, who kept their garments undefiled: and this He does, in the language appropriate to that good Shepherd who “calls His own sheep by name.” *John* 10:3.

“You have a few names;” also, perhaps to rebuke the meanness of the angel of the Church, who preferred a name to live in the mouth of men, to a name to live in his Master’s estimation.

And moreover He uses this form of expression, to signify that His people are all written by name before Him in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. *Revelation* 13:8.

The remnant whom the Lord had reserved for Himself in the days of Elias, are denominated “seven thousand knees” (*1 Kings* 19:18), because in bowing the knee to Baal’s image stood the act of renouncing the worship of the living and true God. But here, where the temptation stood in the favor of the people, in the good opinion of the public, Christ pays His approbation to the faithful in terms of their faithfulness, saying:

Revelation 3

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments...

I know that it occurs more than once in Scripture, to apply the word names for persons; but I think there is a meaning in the case before us, from the terms of the promise contained in

the following verse, whereof two parts concern the name:

Revelation 3

⁵ I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.

The temptation, the approbation, and the promise, are all expressed in terms of the name. And wherein the dignity of a name consists, and the corresponding guilt of pretending to a name which is not ours by right, we have already sufficiently shown. And how the wisdom of law confirms our conclusions is seen in this, that to sign with another's name is counted worthy of death, the truth of the name being regarded as equally sacred with the life of the person.

PURE GARMENTS

Perhaps also there is a note of dignity contained in the use of the word "name," to those faithful servants, whose commendation is given in these words: "who have not defiled their garments." This language implies that a Christian has pure garments given him to keep, and is responsible at all times for their cleanness and purity. And that this is no secondary part of His charge, we gather from:

Revelation 16

¹⁵ Behold, I come...blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments.

These words point out the cleanness of our garments, as the thing which Christ will look to when He comes to make discrimination between His faithful and hypocritical servants. In the day of His coming, our blessedness shall stand in having garments white and clean: such only He will take with Him, and such also He will bring with Him to triumph over the wicked:

Revelation 19

¹⁴ And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And this is confirmed by the parable of the marriage supper, which adds a new and important feature, that the Father, when the Church is presented to Him by Christ, will by no means endure in that glorious company, one single person, who has not these robes of righteousness.

Moreover, if it be inquired how the filthy garments of nature are purified, and preserved pure for us, the answer is given by one of the elders, who said unto John:

Revelation 7

¹⁴ These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

By the purity of the garment, Christ distinguishes those whom He will present unto His Father...

Ephesians 5

²⁷ ...without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Should any other intrude Himself into that holy presence, He would be...

Matthew 22

¹³ ...bound hand and foot, and taken away, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Thus we may well understand how Christ, looking upon the Church of Sardis, expresses His approbation in these terms:

Revelation 3

⁴ You have a few names...that have not defiled their garments.

Such were ready for His appearing; they were well pleasing in His sight, and in the sight of His Father.

THE MEANING OF GARMENTS

And now it comes before us as a most worthy inquiry, why the holiness and acceptancy of the saints should be set forth by such language.

Originally as man was created, he was without a garment: the man and the woman were naked, and they knew it not: but in the eternal estate of glory the saints are represented as clothed in white raiment.

This difference between man's original state of innocence, and his eternal state of glory, represented by the matter of their garments, has its explanation, first, from considering that the garment is that part of a man's presence which is not of himself, but derived from a foreign source.

In the state of innocence, he was unclothed; in the state of glory, he is clothed upon: in the state of innocence, he was simple man; in the state of glory, he is man, with an addition derived from God; having the glory of God, glorified with that glory with which Christ is glorified beside the Father.

Manhood created is manhood alone: manhood saved, is manhood brought into union with God, through the flesh of Christ, and sustained by God, and informed in God, and giving forth the words and ways of God. In one word, it is man clothed upon with glory superhuman and Divine.

If we follow down the stream of God's revelations, we shall find this idea fully confirmed. The first thing, which, upon his fall, man became conscious to, was his nakedness. He came to know that there was another and a higher state reserved for him, than the nakedness of creation. His fallen nature put forth, by seeking to clothe itself with the leaves of trees, an instinctive appetite for salvation: which sense of nakedness and hope of being clothed upon.

God encouraged and rewarded, by making for Adam and his wife coats of skins, with which He clothed them. These skins, I make no doubt, wore taken from the animals which God had taught man to offer in sacrifice and for not offering which, Cain was rejected. The sacrifice is the showing forth of Christ, the Lamb slain to take away the sin of the world. The blood of the sacrifice takes away our guilt, the flesh of it sup-

ports our strength, and the skin of it clothes our nakedness—that is, Christ gives us life of His life, body of His body, and appearance of His appearance, beauty of His beauty, and glory of His glory.

Under the law the garments of the priests, and of the high priest, were appointed with exactest ceremony by the commandment of God himself: and they might never do the service of God in other garments than those which He had prescribed; white for the priests, and white for the high priest whenever he went into the presence of God; which signifies that God, in His house, will have none but such as are clothed upon with purity and righteousness, for the white raiment is the righteousness of saints.

Now the Church is called with a heavenly calling, to dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the city of God; and Christ said unto us before He went away:

John 14

² In my Father's house are many mansions: behold I go to prepare a place for you.

Before He departs, He gives us righteousness to keep until He shall come and call us to Himself—and when He goes, He goes to sanctify the heavenly things, and to prepare the tabernacle of God for our reception. Excellent love! most provident mercy! who, there or here, thinks upon us; so let us think only of Him.

We are those priests of Christ and of God set to do the service of God upon the earth, in His spiritual house, and therefore we should be ever arrayed in undefiled garments. In the prophets also, there is a time spoken of, when not persons, but places also, shall be clothed upon with garments for beauty and for glory, as the high priest was clothed in his outward manifestation.

Isaiah 52

¹ Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.

Isaiah 60

¹ Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

And of the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven...

Revelation 21

¹¹ Having the glory of God...

...it is said:

²⁷ And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie.

And of the earth also it is said, that it is “full of the glory of the Lord” (*Habakkuk* 2:14), for all the things which we now behold...

Psalms 102

²⁶ ...shall wax old as does a garment, as a vesture shall You [Christ] change them, and they shall be changed.

This new garment in which creation shall be clothed, is not of itself but of another; and what other than creation is there, save the Creator? Creation now stands arrayed in vile and filthy garments; which mantle of darkness and defilement its own sin has spread around it. This the Creator himself, by uniting Himself to it, and it to Him, purges away into the lowest hell; and instead thereof, He arrays his original work in holy beauties from the womb of the resurrection-morn.

Besides the idea expressed above, of the garment as signifying something beyond and beside the person arrayed in it, there are other ideas which we shall mention, without illustrating or enforcing them. The garment makes no change in the person whom it covers. No more does the communicated glory of Godhead make any substantial change, or bring any

addition to the creature, as originally made by God.

Creation has suffered no diminution of its substance, but shall be in number and in quantity, in law and in subordination, what it was when originally made; but it shall have impressed upon it a power and life, a stability, and beauty, and glory which it possessed not at first, but receives through union of Godhead to its substance in the mystery of the Christ.

To take an instance: Christ's creature-part, His body and soul, were not more or less than another man's; yet, through Godhead-union, it was not only able to maintain original innocence, such as Adam's had, but to cast off innate impurity, such as the virgin had; and that same body and soul of Christ in glory, is not less or more than ours here on earth, as ours is not more or less than Adam's created.

But yet, though numerically one nature, and no more, it has something far beyond anything created at first, or now extant: and how shall that be represented in natural imagery, but by the garment, which is something in addition to the man, and yet making no change upon him?

This is a great principle, sacrificed entirely, or indeed never thought of, by those speculators who say that Christ's human nature was a new creation. Redemption is not creation added to, as if it were originally defective; but creation upheld against sin's deadly assault, and glorified by God's grace and love.

Now this idea of the new dignity, grace, and loveliness, and majesty which the work of redemption gives to creation, without in anything changing its essence, can only be expressed by that magic power which there is in well-chosen attire, to set off the native graces and properties of the person.

Another idea conveyed under this figure of clothing, is derived from the completeness with which it enwraps us round,

and covers us on every side, leaving no part naked but the countenance, which is the implement of the soul rather than a part of the body. In this respect, no image is so fit for representing the idea of complete, and not partial, righteousness.

Yea, and something more than completeness, an exuberance and superfluity; for that person would think himself but meanly clothed, who had only wherewithal to cover his nakedness. Such is not the clothing of a king and of a priest: it is the ample robe, the flowing mantle, and not the mere covering, which is spoken of in this book.

These three ideas:

1. A thing not our own, but derived to us from another source;
2. A thing which alters us not, though necessary to our well-being and beauty;
3. A thing which completely, and more than completely, enfolds us;

...seem to me to make up the substance of the truth contained under the symbol of clothing.

Revelation 19

⁸ The fine linen is the righteousness of saints;

A true, not a fictitious righteousness; a real substantial purification of soul and body, notwithstanding the law of the flesh, but not self-originated, not self-supplied, derived all from Christ, by Him wrought out, and out of Him derived to us, for:

1 Corinthians 1

³⁰ ...Christ...is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Like all other precious truth, Satan has converted this also to his own false and unholy uses; making men to believe that, because it is derived from Christ, and by Him sustained, it is therefore not really a righteousness wrought in us, but only a

garment covering us; and that withal we continue under the cloak to be the same filthy creatures as before, whom God, for Christ's sake (as they, with seeming piety, express a most impious sentiment), is pleased to look upon as righteous.

If this be what they mean by the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and it is what they commonly express, then it is the vilest of all vile doctrines; comforting and encouraging a sinner in his wickedness, under the false notion that faith entirely covers and protects sin from the judgment of God.

The Church, by this word "imputed righteousness," means to express the great truth that the righteousness which we have in God's sight is altogether derived from another, and becomes ours, not for any worthiness or desert on our part, but wholly from an act of God's grace making it ours.

The Church has been careful to hold two things with respect to righteousness:

1. That it is nowhere to be found in any creature save in the creature part of Christ, and from no other quarter whatever to be derived;
2. That being there in abundance sufficient for the whole world, it is not conveyed to any sinner, otherwise than by an act of God's grace moving Him to do so.

The latter secures to God the right of dispensing it; the former, to Christ the honor of being the thing dispensed. He is made of God unto us righteousness and sanctification.

I stay not to argue whether the word "imputed" be the best that could be chosen, for it is not with words but truths that I am occupied; and I clearly perceive that these two are the truths which that word was intended by the Church to contain.

She never meant to assert, that because it was of Christ's working out for us, and of God's serving out to us, it was not therefore true righteousness, heart righteousness, righteous-

ness in the inward parts, and in the outward also; holiness of body, and holiness of soul; obedience of every member to the law of the Spirit, and to the service of righteousness unto holiness.

The Church *never* meant to convey, by the word imputed:

- that the righteousness was only skin-deep, or, if we may so speak, only cloak-deep, while all beneath was foul as ever; or
- that it was a supposed righteousness, and not a real and substantial; or
- that it was only a transfer done over from Christ's folio, in the great book of accounts, to ours; or
- that it was only an insufficient and still impure righteousness, which God ekes out from Christ's inexhaustible store.

All these are most unholy and blasphemous insinuations of the devil, under the disguise of that word "imputation," which, when interpreted truly, means God's conveying to us a righteousness which is Christ's property, made ours by an act of God's grace. But because it is Christ's it is perfect; and being made ours, it loses nothing of its perfectness.

God will accept nothing less than perfect holiness; and any one who thinks He will, must be undeceived before He can be saved. What is in Christ for me is perfect righteousness; and if my faith be eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, I receive a perfect righteousness, in thought, in word, and in deed; in body, in soul, and in spirit.

Faith embodies Christ in the believer; and Christ is in the believer a body of holiness, a complete man of holiness; an inward and an outward man as well as a garment.

Does any one say:

"What hard doctrine! And must I leave off every sin?"

Yea verily.

“And must I be always and altogether holy?”

Even so.

“And is there no salvation for me on other terms?”

None.

“What a fearful doctrine!”

Oh then, you love sin, brother, do you?

“No.”

Why then should it be fearful to tell you to get rid of it altogether? You would have reserves, would you?

“No.”

Why then start at a doctrine which asks you to give your unreserved self to God? Did I ask you to work out this perfect righteousness for yourself, you might complain. But when I tell you that it is in Christ for you at any time, and at all times to possess yourself of, why do you complain?

If God draw upon you large bills, is not Christ ready with the supplies? and are you honored or dishonored by the Holy Ghost in being made the agent through whom Christ's fulness might meet His Father's demands?

The Father asks perfect holiness: Christ has wrought out perfect holiness for you: why do you murmur?

“I murmur because I am conscious of past sin.”

There is forgiveness for it in Christ.

“But my conscience is defiled by it.”

There is cleanness of conscience for you in Christ, and peace with God, and enjoyment of His sweet and gracious face. That is what forgiveness means. Do you believe this word? Then has this word made you clean. Why do you still murmur?

“Because I am conscious of present sins.”

Do you love them, or do you love them not?

“I love them not.”

Then you should be glad to get rid of them: I have told you how you may completely get rid of them, by relying on Christ for a perfect righteousness. And yet you murmur to be informed how you may be delivered from what you love not.

Ah, brother! there is a love of that state of sinning and repenting; you love to have room to come and go with God: you crave for license; you are in love with imperfection, and while you are so, you cannot be in love with God who is perfect; nor be living in charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

The garment undefiled (*Revelation* 3:4) therefore, is not a complete outward seemliness without a corresponding inward saintliness; which was the evil case, not of those few approved ones, but of the many whom He rebukes in the Church of Sardis. Nor is it a complete knowledge or faith in the finished work of Christ, without any finished and perfected work in us corresponding thereto. But it is Christ formed within us by the Spirit, and subduing us wholly unto God, and making us to become perfect and complete in Him; so that we sin not, but walk in his footsteps always.

But where is the person to whom this did or could apply? and if it does not apply to any, how should the Lord find even a few in the Church of Sardis to whom it was applicable? Whether these were perfect, even in those times, or whether there be any now, or whether it be possible that there should be any, is a question, not needing to be settled, in order to understand the case of those whom the Lord commends. It is only necessary to perceive that they were believing on Christ for a perfect righteousness; holding Him up as pledged to work this in His members, and in that faith honestly setting about the work of perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

They might, and I have no doubt did, come short of, and

transgress against, the law of the Spirit of life; but they confessed and grieved over it, and came to Christ not only for purification from the stain, but likewise for redemption from the power of their sin; and receiving it, they went forward.

The man that is keeping his garments undefiled, and hating even the garment which is spotted by the flesh (*Jude 1:23*), is one who rests on Christ for perfect righteousness, not only for, but in, the believer, and in that faith holds on his course; and if he stumble, confesses his heedlessness, and laments his declension from God; then rises again, and “presses towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 3:14*.

It does not require perfection to have been attained, not to have been for a while enjoyed without interruption; but it requires perfection to be believed to be ours in Christ, and to be unceasingly ensued in our life; and every shortcoming or deviation to be confessed over the Lamb slain, and its guilt purged with His blood; and so forgotten and forgiven, no longer to impede our growth towards the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine which I have maintained is as much for the publicans and sinners when they first hear it, as it is for the most advanced saint, who hears it with gladness. And none but the hypocrite and the Pharisee will cavil with it when he has rightly understood it.

This will more clearly appear when we shall have answered the question, And when does a man receive this “pure garment” for the undefiledness of which he is ever afterward held responsible?

I answer this question by one word, At his baptism, in token of which every baptized person in the Primitive Church used then to receive a white garment, to be kept and produced as a witness against him, if at any time he should dishonor the purity of the Christian name.

At baptism our old man is put off. To represent this truth in the Primitive Church, they were stripped naked in order to baptism: and being buried with Christ we rise again with Him, and are quickened in newness of life; that henceforth we being dead to sin should live no longer therein. *Romans* 6:6, 2. Therefore the apostle says:

Romans 6

¹² Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.

¹³ Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Again, it is written of baptism:

Galatians 3

²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

If the word baptism has not changed its meaning, or the sacrament lost the force and efficacy, which were ordained to be in it by God, that holy ordinance contains under it the complete sanctification of the person: and his salvation from all the consequences of a guilty conscience; being to the soul what the ark was to Noah, according to that word of the apostle:

1 Peter 3

²¹ The like figure whereunto even baptism does now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh), but the answer of a good conscience toward God.

Every baptized person, I say, therefore, under warranty of all Scripture, receives a complete purgation from sin in that holy ordinance.

Acts 2

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

[putting-away] of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We are answerable, then, for an act of divorcement and separation between our body and sin, for a marriage union of every member of our body to the true body of Christ, which is the source of all holiness. This is the true doctrine of baptism: let the thoughtless, and unlearned, and unbelieving, gnash upon it with their teeth however they may.

I say to every baptized man:

“You should be stainless and unpolluted, beautiful and holy in the midst of this evil world, and pleasing in the sight of God as one of the members of His own risen and glorified Son.

“And it is your guilt that you are not so: it is your pure love of sinning; it is not any necessity of sinning, or any load of temptation, above and beyond your power to endure: but it is your pure and simple love of sinning, which has brought you into your present defiled state.

“And if you would be brought back to your original baptismal purity, you must wash these your defiled robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb: for which end, that precious blood, for the cleansing away of all willful sins, done within the Church by baptized persons, is placed for your use upon the table of the Lord; and you are earnestly entreated at all times to come and drink inward purification to your soul.

“And doing so in faith, you can at any time restore your lost purity: and, therefore, you are altogether without excuse in being ever found without your garments, your body, and your soul and spirit, spotless in the sight of God and of Christ.”

How much this was the doctrine of the Primitive Church will appear by the following extract from Bingham’s *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*:

“Whitsunday is said to be so called from this custom of

wearing white robes after baptism. These being laid aside were preserved in the vestries of the churches, as an evidence against men, if afterward they violated the professions which they made in baptism.

“A remarkable instance of which we have related in Victor Uticensis, concerning one Elpidiphorus, a citizen of Carthage, who having a long time lived in the communion of the Church, at last turned Arian, and became a bitter enemy to the orthodox in the Vandalic persecution.

“Among others whom he summoned before him as their judge, was one Muretta, a deacon, who had been sponsor for him at his baptism. He, being ready to be put upon the rack, produced against him these white robes, with which he had been clothed at his baptism; and with words melting all the whole city into tears, he thus bespoke him:

“These are the garments, O Elpidiphorus, you minister of error, which shall accuse you when the Majesty of the great Judge shall appear: these I will diligently keep as a testimony of your ruin, which shall depress you to the bottom of the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; these are they that were girt about you, when you emerged immaculate out of the holy font: these are they that shall bitterly pursue you, when you shall begin to take your portion in the flames of hell; because you have clothed yourself with cursing as with a garment, and have cast off the sacred obligation of your baptism, and the true faith which you did then profess and take upon you.’

“So that the design of this significant ceremony was, first, to represent that innocence and angelical purity which every man obtained by the remission of his sins in baptism, and then to remind them of the obligations and professions they had entered into, which, if they violated, would rise up as so many accusations at the day of judgment.”²

To those few names in the Church of Sardis who were keeping their garments undefiled by a firm faith upon Christ

2 *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book xii. sec. 3.

their risen Head, for perfect holiness, by a diligent pursuit and practice of the same, and a continual application to the blood of sprinkling, for the cleansing of every stain which sin brought upon their conscience, the good Shepherd promises, as their proper and acceptable reward:

Revelation 3

⁴ ...they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

The undefiled garments I understand to be a holy walk and conversation, in the midst of a sinful world, and begirt with sinful flesh, continually presenting occasions of pollution, calling for the utmost watchfulness and self-denial.

The white garments, I understand to mean, the same flesh given to us, in that glorified state which assumed in the person of our Lord on the mount of transfiguration, when:

Matthew 17

² ...His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.

Now, forasmuch as the thing which undergoes a change in the resurrection is not the soul but the body, which, from its present vileness, becomes fashioned after the likeness of Christ's glorious body, we are forced to the conclusion, that it is specially to the holiness of our flesh, to which the undefiled garments has reference in the passage before us.

The soul being quickened, by the seed of the word, which lives and abides for ever, being born again of water and of the Spirit, has given to it the charge of all the members of the body, to reclaim and recover them from the law of sin and death, unto the dominion of the law of the Spirit of life.

As Christ being generated man of the Holy Ghost in the virgin's womb, had from thenceforth the charge of all the members of His body, to present them holy unto God always, and bring them immaculate to the sacrifice of the accursed tree; which also He did, and so achieved the redemption of

man, and of man's dependent world; even so every Christian, having received from Jesus power to become a son of God, and being regenerate into the body of Christ, is required from that time forth until his change come, to present the members of his body blameless and faultless in the presence of their righteous God.

In this work of sanctification stands the triumph of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, over a rebellious and sinful creation:

- Of Christ, in that He empowers the sons of men to yield themselves obedient to the law of holiness, in despite of the law of sin, which is in their members and the world;
- Of the Father, in that Christ, who thus triumphs in His members, triumphed Himself by the Father who dwelt in Him, and glorified the Father, and is the monument of the Father's glory, which He perpetuates in every saint;
- Of the Holy Ghost, in that the Father and Christ being out of the world, He fetches forth their unction and power, and implants it in the believer in the world, and makes it there to live and reign, despite of a sinful and unbelieving world;
- Of God, in that He receives the end of creation in the service of His creature man, and is testified to have had no hand in the fall, and to be no party to sin, by means of a race of men, the Church, who triumph over sin, and shall triumph over death, through faith in His name.

All these Divine triumphs are wrought by means of men in sinful flesh, and are made only the more gloriously apparent, by the condition of natural sinfulness in which our members are found, and continue till the end.

For, through that law of nature, they sympathize with all the forms of wickedness which are in the world, and would fain draw aside and seduce the soul, to become the queen and the mistress of the mystery of iniquity, which is working in all

the chambers of nature: but the soul, informed with the knowledge, love, honor, and obedience of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, believing that Jesus, the righteous One, came in flesh of sin, and in flesh of sin was holy; and believing also that He is Lord of all, to hold up the obedient, and the disobedient to put down, does, notwithstanding of the heaven which the flesh portrays in natural things, cleave unto the heaven of faith and hope, which is to be revealed unto her at the coming of the Lord; and of very willingness (willingness made willing by Christ in her) sets at nought, despises, and tramples under foot all natural beauties, attractions, and pleasures, and draws every member of the body and the mind forth from under their base thralldom, into the glorious liberty of holiness; fulfilling to the letter that amplest precept:

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.

Let no one despise the body, or give it up as a prey to the enemy. The body is the very pledge of battle; in the winning or losing of which, God and Christ are glorified or dishonored.

The soul is the combatant for God; and Christ is the soul's life to combat: and faith, which presupposes knowledge, is the means of preserving life and strength in the soul to sustain the combat.

But the prize is indeed the body, the members of the body, to present their perfect holiness unto the Lord, and to take them out of the hands of sin, and to devote them to the obedience of one who is not of the world, even the Father; to one who is not in the world, even Christ; that it may be proved

that God and Christ do reign, and not the world, that they are over the world, and are redeeming souls of men from the world's bondage, and restoring them again to their lost sovereignty over the members of the body, and through them over all the chambers of the natural and visible world.

This is the dignity of kings and priests which we have now; a truly spiritual kingdom which we do now exercise; the kingdom of God, its power, and its holiness within us even now.

But this is not otherwise to be attained, than by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, so soon as ever a sin-spot appears upon our raiment, which, being in faith applied, does straight-way take it away, and leave it undefiled as before.

But if any one feel that he is thoroughly corrupt, he must even be washed every whit, in the...

Zechariah 13

¹ ...fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness.

And this is open to the greatest sinner, who has only to be baptized therein,—that is, to exercise faith on the worthiness of Christ's blood to atone for all sin,—and to receive it as the boon of the grace of God to a guilty soul, in order to be delivered from his guiltiness.

Baptism unlocks the fountain: he who has been baptized has it unlocked; one who has not been baptized comes to baptism in order to have it unlocked, and ever afterwards, he is to look upon it, as open to him at all hours of the night and of the day.

But if he should never after baptism have to go there, how honorable to his faithfulness! Alas! that we should have so often to present ourselves anew to be cleansed. It is our guilt, and it is our heavy affliction. It is not our infirmity, it is our sin; it is not to be palliated, because every time we do apply to the fountain, we honor its wondrous and Divine virtues.

We are not to do evil, that grace may abound: nor yet to palliate our evil deeds, because grace has thereby been shown to be abundant. It should be our shame and dishonor, the hanging of our heads, and the covering of our loins with sackcloth, our pain and our penance, our tribulation and our anguish, that being members of the Church of God, and clothed with its holy robe, we should ever be less than pure and holy and undefiled.

Every spot upon it should make us hang our heads before men who behold it; and these which men behold not, should cost us no less grief because they grieve the Holy Spirit within us, and are odious in His sight, who understands heart-secrets, and tries the reins of the children of men.

To men so proved, and exercised with trials from sinful temptations, and occasionally to their soul's humbling, overtaken of sinful desires and actings, what an acceptable promise is this before us, that they shall walk with Christ in white, in a body which cannot be any more disputed for by sin, or assaulted by Satan; in robes which cannot be defiled, but are ever beautiful, as on that bridal-morn, when we were first arrayed in them to meet the bridegroom!

Revelation 19

⁸ To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

This is quite another condition of the saint from that undefiledness in which he is now required to preserve himself: just as Christ's body glorified was different from His body humbled; both holy, the one holiness under proof, the other holiness rewarded;—the one, the holiness of God burning up iniquity in the flesh; the other, the same flesh glorified by the mighty power of God;—the one, God's goodly creature, which sin had darkened and defiled, cast into the furnace to prove its Creator's handiwork still to be in it; the other, the same

goodly creature brought forth from the furnace like gold seven times refined.

The present duty of a Christian is to be holy in all manner of conversation, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary: this is his very calling, his profession, and his use in the world, to yield a holiness perfect and complete.

When James would define what religion is, what terms does he use, but those which I have been laboring under this head of my discourse to unfold:

James 1

²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

²⁷ Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep Himself unspotted from the world.

Now, what sort of a man he means, by one that bridles his tongue, himself declares in these words:

James 3

² If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

- Those who do thus honor and glorify the holiness of God with their bodies, are counted worthy of partaking the glory of Christ:
- Those who are faithful unto the death, are counted worthy of the resurrection in holy beauties from the womb of the morning:
- Those who persevere in the word and testimony of God, and count not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course, and keep the faith, have given to them this robe of eternal and incorruptible righteousness; according as it is written of the martyrs:

Revelation 6

¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it

was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

But this leads into the subject of the promise; before entering upon which, we have one remark to make as to the worthiness of those who receive these white garments.

And that they are worthy, no man believing the word of Christ may doubt, who says, “for they are worthy.” We might as well dispute Christ’s “worthiness” to open the book, and to receive the seven-fold homage of the angelic host, recounted in the 5th chapter, as dispute the worthiness of the saints to receive these white robes of glory.

Wherein then consists this their worthiness of such resplendent glory and inestimable reward? In their having kept themselves, body, soul, and spirit blameless, until the coming of the Lord. And how did they do this great thing? By faith in the sanctifying blood of Jesus, who offered Himself upon the cross without spot and blameless. For by no other element in the wide world besides, can sins be washed out; as it is written:

Revelation 7

¹⁴ They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

1 John 1

⁷ The blood of Christ cleanses from all iniquity.

Hebrews 9

¹⁴ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

One who is clean, is one who is believing in the power of Christ to cleanse, and honoring Him as our righteousness and sanctification. One who is ever clean, is one who in all his thoughts and ways is so giving the confidence of his heart unto the Lord’s Christ, whom “God has exalted a Prince and a

Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.” *Acts* 5:31.

And more than this God does not require of any creature, nor is more than this necessary for the perfection of any creature. No more does God require than to be trusted in: there needs not to bring a price besides, or to add a work beside; for that were paying God with His own. He never required any more at any creature’s hand since creation’s birth, than that it should look up to its Creator for the continuance of that well-being which He has made it to enjoy.

To suppose that God requires any more than to be trusted in is to suppose Him less than good, and ourselves greater than creatures. That goodness which created, is an everlasting goodness, ever streaming forth in the same gushing fulness, which at first wrought blessedness out of nothing, in order to preserve blessedness in being.

The worthiness of any creature, therefore, consists in dependence upon its Creator, which is at once the expression of gratitude for its existence, and the acknowledgment of its Creator as the continuance of its existence. This was what Adam failed in, what Christ perfected. Christ’s whole life was an act of dependence upon the Father, without whom He spoke nothing, without whom He did nothing: and when He is glorying over the completion of His work, it is in these words:

John 17

⁷ Now they have known that all things whatsoever You have given me are of You.

⁸ For I have given unto them the words which You gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send me.

His will was tempted the other way, as ours is; but it resisted and overcame the temptation: He made himself nothing, He made his Father all. The deceived of these days are laboring to make Him everything, his Father nothing; and so to

mingle the creature and the Creator, which it is the great wisdom of God to preserve separate, and in their proper relations one to another.

Christ's worthiness came all from this, that He had glorified the Father; that he had manifested the Father's name, by living, moving, breathing, and having His being wholly in Him. It was the worthiness, not of self-righteousness, but of righteousness emanating from God.

Now, when the Father sets Christ into His own throne, and possesses Him with the completeness of Godhead power, His own seven-fold Spirit of light and life; and sends fiery tongues from heaven upon men, to proclaim Him Lord of all; and with His own signet of signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, attests their word to be a word from heaven:

- He totally turns over the reverence, homage, and dependence of the earth unto the hand of this Man;
- He glorifies Him with His own glory;
- He girds Him with His own girdle;
- He arms Him with His own scepter;
- He exalts Him to His own dignity;
- He fills Him with His own Spirit.

He either makes a creature God, or the creature to whom this is done is very God; is, and ever was, though as a creature apparent, God manifest in flesh.

This great revolution being wrought, and this new authority being proclaimed abroad, all creature-worthiness stands, in looking unto this man, the Christ of God, and He who does thus depend upon Him, is worthy in the sight of God, in what way a creature is worthy, that is, not in, nor of itself, but as it looks to the supreme Creator.

Ah! what a wonderful, what a stupendously wonderful work of God is this bringing in of His Son to be the head of all

creation, ever exhibiting Him as creature, and yet bringing it to pass that not the creature but the Creator shall be seen in Him; without resigning His rights as Creator, to make them manifest in a creature form. This is “the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.” *1 Timothy* 3:16.

Our worthiness is therefore exactly of the same kind as Christ’s, when we look continually to Christ, and are strengthened for good; as He looked continually to God, and was strengthened for good. God has not changed His rule of approbation, His sense of worthiness.

It is the same dependence upon the Creator which was required of Adam and the angels, yielded effectually by none but Christ, and by all others yielded only through Him, whether in the way of anticipation or of retrospection.

He was to the angels a head of sustentation, and to us He is a head of redemption. God, in thus interposing a Mediator as the object of confidence, does not withdraw Himself thereby, but shows Himself therein, while He teaches all saved and redeemed creatures, that not without an incarnate God, a God in creature form supporting the creatures, are creatures brought into blessedness.

Faith upon the fountain-head of its being is, and ever has been, and ever must be, the worthiness of every creature. In being turned upon Christ, it is merely proved that Christ was the fountain-head of our being, the Alpha as well as the Omega, the first as well as the last, the beginning as well as the beginner of the creation of God, the first-born as well as the former of every creature.

In one word, that God, having assumed the limited form of the Christ, having limited Himself within creature bounds, having done this in the person of His Son, did thereafter, and by this person thus circumscribed, create all things; and to this person of the Son of God as the Christ, all created things, with Adam as their head, ought to have looked, and for not

looking are brought low, and are fain to look again, ere ever they can be redeemed from their present sinful and miserable estate.

So much have I to say upon the nature of worthiness in the sight of God: it is faith in Christ:

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.

¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

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

If any one object to these forms of speech which I use concerning Christ, I answer, That they are those used by the Holy Ghost, and that they are the only ones which can satisfactorily establish His Godhead; that I am no minister of any book, so as to be bound to use its words, but of that book alone which is the Word of God:

Hebrews 4

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

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

I do therefore most earnestly entreat as many as read these things, to consider whether they are worthy of that glory which is to be revealed no one knows how soon.

- Are you, my dear brethren, keeping your garments undefiled—your members servants of righteousness—your whole man holy in the sight of God?
- Are you standing for the faith, and striving after the attainment of perfect righteousness?
- Are you loving God because of His perfect holiness, and delighting in His law because it is perfectly holy?
- Is Christ precious to you because He came in your flesh, and under your conditions of trial, and therein perfected holiness?

Why will not men believe this glorious truth? How will they feel when their Brother comes to judge them? He will tell them, that it was no impossible thing to serve God in human nature.

THE SPIRIT'S EXHORTATION AND PROMISE

THE language of these epistles is so rich, the matter in every sentence so weighty, and the current opinions in the Church feel to me so much out of harmony with the spirit which breathes throughout them, that, in my desire of exhibiting each several point of truth, I seem sometimes in danger of losing sight of the beautiful symmetry of the whole, and the adjustment of the parts to one another, in the system of truth.

There is, however, as we have often observed, a harmony of parts in this vision bespeaking the infinite wisdom from which it came forth. Each of the seven epistles holds up to view its own side of the truth, and presents it in a practical and embodied form, struggling with the co-relative form of falsehood in the midst of this dark and erroneous world. Among these, this Epistle to the Church of Sardis is intended to hold up the form and aspect of honor and dignity: wherefore so much of it is expressed in terms of the robe and the name.

The chief Shepherd first presents Himself, with two titles of dignity, as the Possessor of all heavenly power, and the Head of all earthly supremacy; which He had attained by seeking the honor of God's name, and thinking nothing of His own. Then He challenges the Bishop of Sardis for his low and unworthy estimate of the true source of dignity, as if it lay in the tongues of men, directs him into the channel of true nobility, and, having complimented those of His flock who were drinking of the true fountain of honor, He here proposes unto all the churches, and to every one who has an ear to hear, the prize of heavenly honor and a glorious name:

- the white robe being the outward aspect of glory;
- the name in the Book of Life, the intrinsical honor in the sight of God and of Christ.

This high eminence of dignity and honor is presented to every one who overcomes all temptations, especially those of worldly honor and reputation, which stood in the way of the Church and angel of Sardis.

THE VOICE OF POPULAR OPINION

Now in the present day, there is certainly no temptation so great as to stand well with the voice of public opinion, to be well spoken of and applauded. And of all classes of men thus beset, none seems to be so sorely tempted as the angels of the churches, perhaps from their addressing popular audiences.

The clergy of our Church, in particular, have been praised and applauded of a long time for their sobriety, piety, and pastoral faithfulness. The credit of a well-educated, well-principled, and well-behaved people, has decidedly been given to them: for Scotland had every disadvantage when compared with other nations, and no advantage but her humble and unadorned Church.

This has not been lost sight of by the envious and evil men, who are desirous to upset the more costly and splendid and influential hierarchy of the Church of England; against whom to act with the more force, while they serve their own malice, they have continually brought forward the Church of Scotland as their covert.

In these days of economy, also, when existing institutions are scanned with a severe and inquisitive eye, those of our Church, for education and for the poor, have been found at once so wise and efficient as to draw great observation upon the clergy, from whom they emanate.

These and other means acting upon the character of our nation, which is forward and daring, most reverend of dignities, and somewhat too much so of appearances, have brought it to pass, that, all retired from public observation, as the clergy of the Church of Scotland are, we have, as a body, no small con-

sciousness of our good name; and when we come to act ostensibly, as in ecclesiastical courts, perhaps no judges in the island act so much under the impression of what will be thought of the decision out of doors.

In the Church of England also, the same regard for appearances has of late begun to show itself, and somewhat to reduce the proud and stately bearing which she used to carry towards the people; and this has introduced many salutary outward reforms into the administration of her diocesans, as also into the character of her parish clergy. The hunting parson is almost hunted from the Church; as also are the drunkard and the openly profane; and, beyond question, her outward aspect is much improved within the last generation.

It is very curious that, within the same period, a similar change should have taken place in the Roman Catholic priesthood of Ireland; which, from having the character of good-natured sensualists, has, chiefly by political influence, taken that of smart, active, and ambitious churchmen.

Nothing is able to resist the force of public opinion: it bears down everything but a thoroughly honest man. No institution, no office, not the king's nor the prime minister's, can stand upright and walk according to its proper rules and laws. It is a temptation of wonderful strength; and I know not whether it be not more powerful to prevent men from the way of righteousness, than the fire and fagot of Mary's reign in England, or the imprisonment and torture, the heading and hanging of Lauderdale and Middleton's supremacy in Scotland.

I feel, by the form and pressure of this temptation, how well worthy it is of a place in the seven trials of the Church.

- The gradual invasion of worldliness and decrease of love to Him who is no longer in the world;
- The tenfold persecutions of the Pagan empire,

- The flood of false doctors, canons, and councils;
- The establishment of the Papacy itself, with its perfect system of superstition:

These four successive trials of the Church, brought to view in the four preceding epistles, were none of them more severe to truth and godliness, than this form of public opinion; which, taking occasion from the right of private judgment, so nobly asserted at the Reformation, and finding vent through the art of printing, is now exercised daily, and weekly, and monthly, and yearly in such infinite ways, and has brought the bravest and the best of men into pusillanimous fear; is shaking thrones, and overturning dynasties, and oppressing personal liberty to an extent which I doubt if the Papacy ever surpassed.

It is now pressing very closely upon the forms and institutions of the Church. In England, it is crying down the Church patrimony, with which it has nothing to do, and venturing to feel its way towards the alteration of her symbolical books. In Scotland, it is crying down orthodox doctrine, and hurrying on the clergy to cast the maintainers of it out of the Church. At Geneva, it prevailed to shut the mouth of the pulpit, and interdict the liberty of preaching, upon five of the cardinal points of the Christian faith. God grant that the same spirit of compromising the truth may not come nearer to us than the state of Geneva.

Measures of peace are fearful things when they are not governed by the love and knowledge of the truth. However it may end, the fact is certain, that the appeal to the people as to the voice of God is pressing us very hard, and a few men hardly sustain themselves against it.

This is the temptation which is held out as the next to arise after the adulterous doctrines of Jezebel; and beyond question it is now in the world. It is the tare sown beside the truth in the Protestant Church; it has grown up with Protestantism,

and is now the only thing to be seen over the wide field. Few, very few, servants of Christ are there in the Reformed churches, compared with the servants of public opinion: few, very few, asserters of Christ's supremacy, compared with the asserters of the supremacy of the people.

I have often my doubts whether amongst us the influence of public opinion be not as strong and as detrimental to the truth, as the influence of the Pope and his synagogue of Satan in Roman Catholic countries. This exact coincidence of the temptation of the Church of Sardis with that of the Reformed churches, convinces me the more that our view of the succession in the seven epistles is substantially true, though the catholic view be the great one, which the other does but corroborate.

Now as each soldier in an army, and each brigade, is expected to stand fast and meet the enemy who comes up against them; so we, having our several places and stations along the line of time, are expected to combat with that particular form of war which comes up against us. And there being no doubt that the force of popular opinion is our particular enemy in this day, to contend with and overcome this is our special calling, in the good occupation of which we shall do for our Captain the service required of us.

Our fathers the Reformers did God's work in casting out Jezebel from the Church, and our kings in casting her out from the land: they suffered her not any longer; they removed that offense of the chief Shepherd: they overcame her, and are entered into their reward.

The Culdees before them both in Scotland and in England, and at the court of Charlemagne, and over all the bounds of Christendom, resisted the Balaamite and Nicolaitane doctors, who had come in like locusts, and eaten up both truth and purity in the Church.

And now who are the chosen men in the Church to arise,

and in the strength of Christ, to face and overcome the popular voice, which is now ruling all things with a rod of iron? This is the peculiar vocation, as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called with; this is the particular form of battle which we have to wage, and those who overcome therein are promised the robe of everlasting glory and the name of everlasting renown.

PERTAINING TO CHURCH ORDER

This whole subject clears very much before my mind as I proceed; and I am made to feel the importance of that which I am called upon to put forth, even though it should be only for a testimony, and no eye of man should read, or heart of man should believe it. Let me, therefore, proceed in the fear of God, and do my work in His sight, who is ever walking among the seven golden candlesticks, and looking upon the seven stars which He holds in His right hand.

Concerning the influence of public opinion, or the temptation of a name to live, I would now discourse in a few words; and concerning the way of overcoming it. The principle of all private judgment is this, That while the word of authority is with the angel of the Church, the answer of approbation is with the body of the people; who being the members of Christ, put the word of prophesying to proof, trying it by its fruits, and holding fast that only which is good.

No pride of office must be permitted to undervalue the right of private judgment and the response of the Spirit in the members of Christ. If there be a *jus divinum*, a Divine authority with the angel, there is the same with the people, of the Church; and these are not to stand up against, but to reverence one another.

The Apostle John appeals to the unction which the people had received from the Holy Ghost, as the test of all truth; and writes to them not as to those “who know not the truth, but

who know it.” 1 *John* 2:21. This right in the body of the Church, in every two or three of Christ’s members, “to bind and to loose” (*Matthew* 16:19), “to ask what they will, and it should be done unto them” (*John* 15:7), the Roman hierarchy took altogether away, usurping it unto themselves. The Reformers restored it again to the people.

And from the abuse of this most precious boon, has arisen that tyranny of the popular voice which now puts down the dignity of personal freedom and responsibility as effectually as ever did the tyranny of the Romish priesthood.

This abuse has crept on from forgetting that those high privileges of the people arise not from themselves, but from the Holy Spirit dwelling in them as the members of the body of Christ; and stand not in the number or multitude of the people, but in each person giving forth the testimony of the Holy Ghost within him.

- As members of Christ, obedient to all Christ’s ordinances, not as men living how they list;
- As individual persons whose will is set free from the bondage of the world and the flesh, and enlightened in the knowledge of the truth by the Holy Ghost, not as a mass of persons giving up their liberty to a common influence, and acting with one another through good and through bad report;

It is thus that this most sacred privilege of private judgment is guaranteed to every man by the laws and constitutions of the Church, and even of nature itself.

Now the angel of the Church, the king of the state, or any other office-bearer whatever, instead of being called upon to yield to the influence of popular opinion, however rightly exercised and fairly gathered, except in as far as it has the response of the Spirit within his own conscience, is bound to set them all the example of an honest man and of a good Christian, by refusing to sacrifice the voice of God within him to

any power or influence whatever.

This is the very end of God in setting one man up in the sight of others, that through this man He may teach them in what way it becomes every man to act the part of a servant of the living God. He is the person, in the sight of all others, to fulfill the offices of a responsible person. And when the heads of the Churches, and of the kingdoms, do thus give to the people the example of godly and conscientious persons, and the people follow it in seeking for the answer of a good conscience within themselves, the result is harmony and unity, through the unity of that Holy Spirit which is within them.

To yield to no foreign influence as an authority, while we weigh it as evidence; to respect the opinions of all men, while we reverence the voice of God in our own conscience; this is the part of an upright and godly person. Every man ought to have the witness within himself, or else he is no honest man, nor servant of the Most High God.

It is a mistake, therefore, to think that mere numbers give authority to any judgment or deliverance, so as to put it beyond question that the right is on that side; for the promise of infallibility is to two or three, not to two or three thousand.

On the other hand, when great multitudes coalesce in one judgment, it is almost constantly found that they are following, not the voice of the Holy Ghost, whose followers are always a little flock despised of the many, but their own ruling passion, or feeling of present interest and advantage.

And this is, beyond doubt, the case, when that verdict or judgment of the many would trespass upon the rights of private persons, and especially when it would subvert the authority of office-bearers, in the Church or in the State; whose responsibility as men, and as men bearing trust, obliges them to acquit their conscience to that Master unto whom they stand or fall; and to give an example of conscientious servants of the living God, to all the people over whom they have the

oversight.

For example, if I, the minister of a Church, were required by the unanimous voice of my flock to cease from preaching any of the truths of God, it would be my part to refuse such an unholy demand, and maintain that very truth more firmly than before. If again, I, as the angel of a Church, were required by my brethren in the pastoral charge of other flocks, to trespass against some of the positive commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ in matters of discipline, it would be my part to serve God rather than man, and bear the blame and the burden, whatever it might be, which they might impose.

The misrepresentation of truth, the charge of schism, the loss of place and preferment, the odium and disgrace which follow upon such actings, are in God's sight of great price, and to be accounted subjects of great joy and rejoicing.

But if I were to admit into my own bosom, any spirit of the like kind, by seeking to control the Holy Spirit's witness in the hearts of my people, and to require of them to take my word for His word; or if I were to propose in the councils of the elders any injunction of mine, or partial interpretation of Christ's injunction, and require them to sacrifice their judgments thereto, then were I found guilty in the sight of God.

And in cases of difference, what is to be done? Disagreement is to be made the subject of deep sorrow, and humble penitence before God, and diligent self-examination, to discover from what root of bitterness it has sprung up. And peace and charity on both sides are to be carefully preserved, and the right of private judgment respected, until, by mutual forbearance, it please God to remove the infirmity and disease; which is generally by our outgrowing it, through the strengthening power of the Spirit of truth and love.

But how shall the Holy Ghost ever grow to any maturity within our hearts, if we suffer another voice beside His to have a share in the council? Be that voice dear as a father's, be

it revered as a pastor's, be it awful as a king's, be it terrible as the voice of an assembled multitude, be it impetuous and overpowering as the tide of public opinion, roaring through its thousand channels, we are meekly but manfully to resist it, come what will. And if we be overborne, to appeal our cause to the great assize, when every secret work shall be called into judgment, and all disputes rectified by unerring justice.

These are the doctrines which will support a man against the masses of the enemy, and enable him to preserve his personal liberty against such fearful odds. And without the steady recognition of a witness within us, an infallible witness to truth, even Christ, it is a vain thing for a man to think of keeping his feet for one single hour.

It is not public men, as heretofore, who are called in question by the people for their public acts, and rightly, seeing the people are constituted one integral part of the powers that be; but it is private persons, persons living in the utmost privacy, who are assailed and attacked on every hand, if in anything they dare to differ from the common opinion.

The modesty of woman cannot shield her, the confidence of the most sacred friendship cannot preserve you, the sacred laws of hospitality cannot protect you, nor the laws of the state defend you, from being invaded and attacked upon all points where you think and act differently from the mass of men.

It is really come to this, that if you will exercise any part of personal liberty in your house or your office, in your opinions or devotions, in any way whatsoever, you will be attacked for doing so. That is to say, if you will not serve God according to the rule of public opinion, you must be arraigned before the tribunal of public opinion. In other words, public opinion will overstay and overturn God in your conscience.

You may serve God as much as you like, so that you offend not this or that party of men; but if you serve Him otherwise

than they will authorize, then you must suffer for it by all the means of offense which they possess. It is a very easy matter to please them: you have only to dethrone God in your hearts, and enthrone them in His room. Well, who is for the Lord? Let that man prepare to suffer scandal and reproach, and all manner of evil which the law permits.

Of all the forms of this temptation, which it is our special calling to contend against and to overcome, that which is brought to bear upon us, by what is called the religious world, is by far the most formidable. The true principle of the Church, after baptizing every one into her communion, is to say:

“Now go your way and act the part of a free man of God; do, and be, no offense to the brethren; and the less I have to interfere in your affairs the better.”

This is to reverence the dignity of a person, and righteously to fulfill the part of a mother who teaches her children to obey their father, and to hear his voice, not hers.

But, now that a system of things is introduced instead of a system of persons, and called the Evangelical Body, or the Religious World, behold what they say:

“You must read books by rule, and adopt opinions by rule, and speak your thoughts by rule; you must eat and drink by rule, and marry by rule, and do everything else by our rules; or else we warn you, that you shall have the lash of our newspaper and magazine upon yourself: name and surname you shall stand blazoned, be you man or woman, preacher or parish priest, in our columns, covered with our contempt, and stigmatized with the reproach of all who read our writing. The religious world must be warned against you as an unruly person: you must be brought under, and, if not, your influence must be destroyed, and your name cast out as evil.”

This is the truth: many helpless women have proved it, whose name to make public, is almost to break their peace for

ever. Oh, it is a shameful, a shocking, a most sinful ostracism this, which is exercised against the liberty of a person to serve God with a free conscience.

But it must be borne, and meekly borne, and contended against and overcome. Not courted, but not shunned; when it arrives, it must be hailed as the righteous cross of Christ. And we must pray for the mockers and the crucifiers:

Luke 23

³⁴ Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Personal Testimony

I attribute all the knowledge of God and Christ, all the progress in the Divine life which I have made, and all the service which I have been able to do for the Church, in exposing her unlawful expediency and infidelity, and masses of heterodoxy, to this one cause under God; that I have now these twelve years, both as a private person and as an ecclesiastical office-bearer, resisted the external invasion of any, and every voice, which would intervene between my conscience and God.

In doing which my temper has oft been chafed, and the serenity of my mind beclouded, and my peace for a season disturbed, and my faith throughout has been but as a grain of mustard-seed. But yet, through abounding and superabounding imperfections and transgressions, I have, by God's grace, been enabled to perceive His truth and to express it, and to awaken multitudes to think of their present state, and of the things which are about to come to pass.

Every organ of public opinion in the land has declared itself against me, and every vehicle of abuse has been employed to pour contempt upon me; and be it known unto the timorous, for their encouragement, and to the weak, for their strengthening, that I stand at this hour more assured of the love and presence of my God with me in all my labors, than I have ever

done before. I may take up the words of my Lord, and say:

“The enemy has not been able to exact upon me, nor the son of mischief to do me wrong.”

My greatest temptation by far is, to be stirred up with a spirit of contempt for their most ignoble and abject meanness: from this may the Lord deliver me, and all who are in the like case. I put forth my own experience, as every one who knows the dignity of a person will, as Paul did, and Luther did, and He whom we are all called upon to follow, in order to confirm the doctrine which I have been laying down, and to encourage my brethren to go forward in their work and in their way, and not to be afraid of this intellectual supremacy, this Protestant inquisition, this rack of words and reproaches, which they are sure to encounter.

No Middle Ground

Moreover I add, that if a man will think to attain to the knowledge of his God, or to righteousness, without setting public opinion at nought, he utterly deceives himself: and this, I deem, is of such importance that I will open it in a single paragraph. Our Lord says, in a certain place:

John 5

⁴⁴ How can you believe who expect honor one of another, and expect not the honor which comes from God only?

And in that word He expressed an everlasting truth, which perhaps never, since His own days, was so necessary of application as in these our times, when man's opinion is wont to be spoken of in all large assemblies and high places, as coincident with the voice of God; said, and not contradicted, for example, in the Houses of Parliament, and repeated in the thousand forms of persuasion throughout the land.

The principle is, that where God may not reign alone, He will not come at all; that Christ will not be on any man's side, but every man must be upon His side: that the Holy Ghost

alone is true, and every other spirit a liar; and that no man can entertain these Holy Ones, or profit by them in faith and holiness, save only inasmuch as he is totally delivered from other collateral influences. He must sit loose to all favorite opinions, if he would know the mind of God: he must sit loose to all private affections, if he would possess the love of God; and set at nought all consequences, if he would know the peace of God, which passes understanding.

To a heart thus open to and confiding in God, God will speak at all times, and by all means: such a one shall never be brought into error, nor shall he ever fall.

- This is not to break up all the bonds of life, but to put them under the government of their rightful Lord;
- It is not to give all our past results of experience to the wind, but to try them by the test of unerring truth;
- It is not to despise the brethren, but to make them come and sit at Christ's feet;
- It is not to condemn the Church, but to tell the Church, You also are a subject, and must be taught to obey.

But, be the consequences of following the rule what they please, in the hands of headstrong and foolish men; the rule is peremptory and unchangeable, that if a man will think with a double mind, or love with a divided heart, or will look and make his observations with a double eye, his whole body shall remain full of darkness: and the darkness shall only increase by all his attempts to know God, under the condition of His agreeing with any men, or body of men, to serve God under condition of continuing to serve any man or body of men.

But when, by clearing our conscience of all secret reservations, and our purpose of all bye-intents, we do find ourselves brought into collision with other men, and these, it may be, in authority or office over us, we are not to resist them when putting forth against us the powers with which they are invested; but to yield quiet submission, and, if need be, to die for

the testimony of the truth.

Such I believe to be the true doctrine with respect to public opinion, that special enemy whom we have to contend against and to overcome. And now hear what is the reward promised to him who overcomes.

THE WHITE RAIMENT

Revelation 3

⁵ He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.

The reward stands in the two great attributes of honor, a robe of heavenly dignity, and a name of everlasting renown; but expressed in language the most rich and exuberant of meaning.

Concerning the white raiment in which it is promised that those who overcome shall be arrayed, we have discoursed already. It is the emblem of that glory into which the faithful soldiers of Christ Jesus shall, at His coming, be translated. The cloud on which He comes seated is in color white (*Revelation* 14:14), and the horse on which He rides (*Revelation* 19:11), and the throne on which He gives judgment (*Revelation* 20:11). All of which are emblematical of glorious purity.

By declaring that He has such raiment to give, Christ declares Himself to be the possessor and distributor of that glory with which the saints shall hereafter be invested. Wherefore also in all the doxologies, glory is ascribed unto Christ:

Revelation 1

⁶ ...to Him be glory and dominion.

God is the “Father of the glory,” and bestowed it upon Christ, when He “raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.” *Ephesians* 1:17, 20. And to share in that glory we are called according to that word of the apostle:

Ephesians 1

¹⁸ ...that you may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Now what is the nature of the thing signified by this word *glory*, which is continually presented in the Scriptures, as the hope of the saints? It is a new form of creation different from that form which it wears now, overrun as it is with sin and death, and also from that which it had at the first, outward as it then existed from God. The difference shall be derived from the union of Godhead with it in Christ, diffusing throughout every region the power of the seven Spirits of God, which shall not only raise it from its present death, but also inform it with eternal life, far beyond the reach of evil accident and change.

The glory in it is the glory of the manifest Godhead, wherefore the New Jerusalem is said to have the glory of God, and the nations of the earth do walk in its light; that is, in the beams of the Lord God Almighty, and of the Lamb, who are the light thereof.

To accomplish this change upon creation, requires the putting forth of that seven-fold Spirit, with which Christ invests Himself, to the angel and Church of Sardis, who were ambitious of honor and glory. For to raise Christ from the dead, and set Him in glory, required “the surpassing greatness of the power of the Father,” “the energy of the might of His strength” (*Ephesians* 1:19). And to change our vile bodies into the likeness of His glorious body, requires the putting forth of “the energy whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” *Philippians* 3:21.

That the risen man should put forth this power, which is able not only to bring all creation up again out of its grave, but also to reconstruct it in a beauty and strength far surpassing its original form, does, beyond all witness, prove that this same person was the Maker of it, and more than the Maker of

it: its Redeemer, Sustainer, eternal Saviour and Glorifier.

He is proved to be the Creator, inasmuch as, when its creature bands are all crumbled into dust, He does raise it up again, bound together by the same laws, fulfilling God's original purpose, and so glorifying God its Maker. And He is proved to be more than its Creator, inasmuch as He sends through it a life over which death has no power, a holiness which shall know no taint of sin, a beauty which shall never be marred again by the finger of corruption.

This is more than creation, and more than creation re-deemed; it is creation glorified; and He who out of the materials of dissolved dust, brings forth creation according to creation's laws, with the superinduced infallibility and glory of God's being impressed upon its face, gathers unto Himself, not only the Divine attributes of the Creator of heaven and earth, but still higher attributes of God, even the complete glory of Godhead, which can in creature be expressed.

Now, because in the reason of man there is no higher measure of Godhead than the bringing forth of all things out of nothing by the word of His power, and because in the Old Testament there is no higher attribute ascribed to God; I do, both from reason and Scripture conclude, that this person who is able to reorganize all creation, and bind it together with the indissoluble cement of holiness, and inform it throughout with the strength, and cover it all over with the beams of the glory of God, is greater than Creator, and not less than the eternal God.

Now, because dignity and honor were much in the thoughts of the angel of this Church, and of his people, and they sought to occupy a high and noble place in the eyes of men, the Lord of glory presents Himself invested with all the power of God, and proffers to him and all his people, and to all the churches, and to the whole audience of the children of men, the fellowship of that super-eminent dignity into which He had been

raised, by the putting forth of the utmost power of God: as much as to say:

“Why dream of earthly honors, which perish in the using, and is the food of worms, and shall be consumed in the fire of the holiness of God, which shall go before the face of My glory?

“Stand up from grovelling thus in the dust of the ground; cast the eye of your ambition upward, and behold the resplendent glory of the New Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God: set your affections upon these things in the heavens, and despise this world reserved for destruction.

“Fight against the temptation of earthly state and splendor. Defile not your touch with these riches of Sodom, O you sons of faithful Abraham, to whom I the great Melchizedek have brought forth bread and wine, the pledges of the inheritance of glory, and of that holy body in which you are to enter in through the gates of the city.

“O pledged Christians, O betrothed bride of Christ, how ill it becoms you to take yourself up with these earthly things, whose proper dwelling-place and habitation is prepared in the heavens!”

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The second part of the Spirit’s promise by the mouth of our glorified Head is expressed in these words:

Revelation 3

⁵ And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.

This is twofold; negative, what He will not do; and positive, what He will do for the valiant and victorious. Let us examine them in order.

The book of life, in which the names of the Church militant are enrolled, and out of which those who draw back shall be erased, is entitled:

Revelation 13

⁸ ...the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And the names inscribed in it are said to have been...

Revelation 17

⁸ ...written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

And one effect of being therein entered, is to preserve us at the day of judgment from the lake of fire, the just desert of our sins; for it is revealed:

Revelation 20

¹⁵ And whosoever was not, found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire; [which] is the second death.

Of this life the seat and habitation is declared to be the New Jerusalem; of which it is said:

Revelation 21

²⁷ And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This life of the New Jerusalem is purchased by the death of the Lamb, slain in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world. These heavenly things are sanctified by better sacrifices than bulls or goats:

Hebrews 9

²³ It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these;

1 Peter 1

¹⁹ ...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

²⁰ Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

And this is the reason for which it is called the "book of

life of the Lamb slain,” because the life, unto the inheritance of which it conveys the title, was by His death purchased: not that life conferred by creation on Adam, nor the mortal life into which we are begotten by generation, but:

- that eternal life, which Christ, the Bread of Life, came down from heaven to give unto the world (*John* 6:51);
- the life which is not otherwise to be had than by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, (*John* 6:53);
- the eternal life of which John speaks, both in the beginning of his Gospel (*John* 1:1-4) and First Epistle (*1 John* 1:2), as having been with the Father, and which Christ takes to Himself, as one of His names, “I am the Life.” *John* 14:6.

The glorious form of that life is not yet manifested; but...

Colossians 3

³ ...is hid with Christ in God.

⁴ And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

1 John 3

² ...it does not yet appear what we shall be; but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.

Concerning the origin of the term “book of life,” I have been able to discover nothing specific in sacred or profane history; and therefore suppose that it is taken from the common, and we may say universal, custom of all kings, to take from time to time a census of the living persons in their dominions, and enroll them in a book. The Jews were very careful to preserve such registers in every family; and the book of *Genesis* is full of such lists, showing us that the custom was coeval with mankind.

When the children of Israel had offended God so grievously, by the idolatry of the golden calf, Moses interceded in these words:

Exodus 32

³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written.

To which God answered:

³³ Whosoever has sinned, him will I blot out of My book.

It is hard to say what book Moses here refers to: a book written by God, in which his own name was entered, and out of which God would blot none but the wicked. There was no book mentioned as yet in the Holy Scriptures, save that book (*Exodus* 24:7) in which were written the words of God's covenant with the people, to give them the inheritance of Canaan. In this book Moses had a place, as well as all the rest of the children of Israel: for they were all parties, and as such sprinkled with the blood of consecration.

Sometimes I have thought that among the originals showed to him in the Mount,—the heavenly things, of which the earthly things he framed were only patterns,—one might be a book, the book of life, the book of the new covenant for the inheritance of the heavenly Jerusalem; the book sprinkled not with blood of bulls and of goats, but with the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

This expression “from the foundation of the world,” twice applied to it, requires that it should have been then in existence; and being one of the heavenly things, it may have been made known to him as the true form of the eternal covenant: after which he should cause a book of his typical covenant to be written, the original according to the pattern of which the children of Israel should be required tribe by tribe, and family by family, to write up their genealogies, for the inheritance of the land of promise, when they should arrive there.

Certain it is, that from this place forward, throughout the Scriptures, allusion is made to this book of God, and once or twice under the name “book of the living.” In *Psalms* 40, Christ

speaks of His body as being written of therein; and in *Psalms* 139, of His members, which I take to be the Church. In *Isaiah* 4:3, the holy remnant who shall inhabit Zion and Jerusalem, are said to be “written among the living [margin: to life] in Jerusalem;” and Daniel uses similar language of all the holy people:

Daniel 12

¹ ...Your people shall be delivered, every one that is found written in the book.

Besides the expressions, “book of life,” “the book of God,” “the book,” there are others which indicate books for particular ends or objects; as, for example:

- “the book of judgment,” wherein are written the actions of every man who has lived (*Daniel* 7:10; *Revelation* 20:12);
- “A book of remembrance” “written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” *Malachi* 3:16.

Laying all these things together, it seems to me as if God would represent by these expressions the various departments of His government of the world, after the similitude of earthly kings, who have books for various ends:

- one for the laws of the kingdom (*Esther* 1:19);
- another for its chronicles (*Esther* 6:1);
- another for its daily occurrences;
- another for persons, according to their various stations and offices, merit or demerit, &c.

Of these books of God, containing the several parts of His administration, the book of life grows out of His purpose to sacrifice His own Son. It was not for nothing that He made so great and precious a sacrifice: many souls were thereby to be brought into glory; by the righteousness of this one man, were many to reign in life. From that death many lives should

come; a city of life, the central life of the world, from which, as from the heart, the whole creation should be supplied with the vital stream.

As the Church in all times, places, and persons subsisting, is only the members of one body, whereof Christ is the quickening Spirit, so when the New Jerusalem shall be revealed, I judge that it shall be the source of light and life to the populous universe.

What office the sun in the firmament now fulfills for this productive earth, being the source of vegetable life, without which all were dark, dead, and desolate as the frozen pole; that office will the New Jerusalem, the globe of spiritual life, fulfill for all creation raised again from the corruption of the tomb. From this, the form of spiritual being, shall the world drink its spiritual blessedness, there see the origin of its spiritual life, and thither trace up the variety of spiritual operations.

At present the spiritual is not manifested, though we know it to be the fountain-head and feeding spring of all corporeal energy. Then it shall be manifested in the New Jerusalem, of whose life, glory, and infinite goodness, the single origin shall be seen in the sacrificed body of the Lamb. As the river of life which followed Israel through the wilderness, and sustained that numerous camp for forty years, flowed all from the rent side of a flinty barren rock; so shall the full river which flows out of the city of God, and waters every corner of the renewed creation, be known and seen to rise in the humble fountain of the sacrificed Lamb.

Death, which threatened creation, is thus made to yield forth the material, and the life, of creation's eternal blessedness. So that the distinction of being enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, I conceive to stand not merely in our being saved from the penalty of the second death, but chiefly in our being raised to be the bride of the Lamb, who has life in Himself, to

be the spiritual living body of that spiritual living Head; and to be looked up to with Him as the parents of that new and everlasting life with which all creation shall be filled in the ages to come.

Now this dignity, the highest in the world that ever shall be, is no man's right, would not have been Adam's right though he had never fallen; nor is it claimed by the Son of man as His by right, but besought from the Father, in consideration of His having glorified Him on the earth, and to the end He might glorify Him for ever.

John 17

⁵ And now, O Father, glorify me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Colossians 1

¹⁹ It pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell.

Least of all, being an honor and an office of so wondrous a height, can it be the desert in any way of poor wretched sinners, whose proper desert is the deepest pit of hell? And though Christ's death has made it a just thing in God to justify the believer; yet is there even in that death, all precious as it is, nothing whatever beyond the purgation of the sin of the world:

John 1

²⁹ Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

Whence, then, does the admission of anyone into the New Jerusalem, and the registry in the book of life for that glory proceed, but from the Divine attribute of grace which would show itself forth in eternal alliance with that Divine glory, which the New Jerusalem will forever hold up in the sight of the world? Grace, must be its floor, if glory be its superstructure; mercy its pedestal if the Shechinah presence, and cherubic powers of God be its form.

It is the free-will and sovereign grace of God which moves Him to take men, and not angels; and of men to take the fallen, and not the unfallen, for that pre-eminence over creation. And in the same purpose of His will, in which He proposes to bring Christ in as the Head and soul of that celestial body, He proposes to bring sinners of mankind in as the members thereof. This eternal purpose or decree of God is that which constitutes a book of life of the Lamb slain; and a New Jerusalem composed of sinners glorified.

The Book of Life and Election

It is not till after much consideration, that I have come to be convinced that inscription in the book of life is one and the same mystery with election. I long doubted, by reason of the threat of blotting out so constantly connected with this book; but a thorough consideration of the matter has satisfied me that this arose from a false way of considering election, which the right study of this symbol of a book may serve among other good purposes to correct.

These are the reasons for which I believe the inscription in this book to be one with election in Christ Jesus:

1. Because both are from the foundation of the world: the election indeed is declared to be before creation (*Ephesians* 1:4); but so is the slaying of the Lamb. *1 Peter* 1:20. There may, however, be a distinction in this: if there be, I have not been able as yet to perceive it.
2. Not to be blotted out of the book of life, that is, to remain inscribed in it, secures for us the end of election, which is to be one with Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem.
3. Twice over in the *Revelation* (13:8, 17:8) is the entry in the book of life held up as the only protection from universal apostasy. Everything fails but this; all save those therein entered fall away. Now this is exactly what in another place (*Matthew* 24:24) is said of “the

elect.”

4. The elect, when the end of their ordination is mentioned, are said “to be ordained to eternal life.” *Acts* 13:48.
5. Finally, the New Jerusalem, to which registry in the book of life is the passport, is the number of the elect accomplished, being in truth the honor to which they are raised, the election manifested; the heavenly calling, the holy calling, the hope of our calling, so often and so variously spoken of in the Holy Scriptures; the inheritance, the reward, the glory, and the consummate blessedness.

These things, if the elect attain unto, it must be through a previous entry in the book of life; for no one who is not entered therein obtains admission into the city, and all the rest are cast into the lake of fire. *Revelation* 20:15. Holding, therefore, that enrollment in the Lamb’s book of life is the figurative way of expressing the decree of election: we are now, by the help of grace, from the way in which the figure is used, to find out the way in which the idea ought to be handled as an essential doctrine of the Christian Church.

As this book, for all the honor, security, and glory connected with enrollment therein, is continually represented as in God’s hand to raze out of it whom He pleases; and as Christ threatens that He will do this in certain conditions, and in certain others will not, it seems to us a clear point, that the elect should be in likewise spoken to, and spoken of, as indeed they are in these words:

Philippians 2

¹² Work out your election with fear and trembling.

2 Peter 1

¹⁰ ...make your calling and election sure.

For the practical conscience of man, to which God always addresses himself, it is necessary to believe, and hold fast both

sides of the truth:

1. That our establishment in Christ Jesus is sure and steadfast as the purpose of God, and not to be shaken by any accidents, occurrences, or conditions of this changeable estate;
2. That God may at any time, for causes which He sees to be good, remove us from that foundation.

The one is necessary, in order to give us some ground of confidence which cannot be shaken; the other is necessary, to make that a moral and not a physical ground, the basis of a spiritual system of obligation, and not of a mechanical system of fatalism.

To take me into the number of His chosen ones is of God's free grace, and to keep me there, is always of the same free grace. To suppose otherwise were to suppose God not to be free, which were to disqualify Him from being the Governor of the world. To behave otherwise, were to overthrow the very basis of morality and responsibility.

While, therefore, we rest upon the constancy of God's will as the ground of our preservation, we rest upon the same constancy of His will as the ground of our holiness. Once knowing what this will is, that it is an undeviating goodness, we feel that, in order to stand with it, we must cleave to goodness; and, in cleaving to goodness, we feel that we have the Eternal on our side, and His arms around us.

When election is looked upon as an act in time, it becomes most destructive to the soul; when it is a continual expression of the sovereign and unchangeable will of God, which we must acknowledge and bow to and obey, and, by obedience, abide in, it is the life of the soul, and its security, and its stability.

John 15

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love,

even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

God is sovereign always: if the sight of His sovereignty comforted you once, it should comfort you always. You should not, as it were, wish to have Him committed to you, but always free to deal with you according to His unchanging and unchangeable mind.

By knowing that His will is to love, to be pitiful and gracious, and, in one word, by seeing His will working in the word and life of Christ Jesus, we fall in with it, and are obsequious to it, and delight to depend upon it always for our salvation, and we desire no securities, but the security of holiness, which is conformity to His will.

The next thing to be gathered from this figure of election is, the prerequisite to, or ground of, election. Seeing that even our name is written in the book of life before the beginning of the world, it cannot be for any worthiness in one man more than another; but for some cause which is wholly anterior and exterior to ourselves, like the cause of our creation. That cause is contained in the name:

Revelation 13

⁸ ...the book of life of the Lamb slain.

It is in the foreview of the Lamb slain, that such a book exists at all; and He is foreseen as slain for the sake of sin, to be taken away by His death, and of life from the dead to be brought in by His righteousness.

Such a book, therefore, exists wholly in virtue of Christ's death; which is the procuring cause of all the benefits flowing either from the enrollment or the permanent abiding therein. Election is a consequence of redemption, made possible only through the previous purpose of redemption. The eternal inheritance cannot be attained until the transgressions done against a holy God be entirely taken out of the way. And

Christ, by accomplishing this as the Lamb slain, becomes the Mediator of the New Testament, the giver of that inheritance, the master and sole proprietor, of that book.

The law, or book of the covenant, the inheritance of Canaan, Jesus of the seed of Abraham, and made under the law, with the whole Levitical system, are, as it were, dramatic persons and things; by the right exhibition of which God teaches the universal principles of creation, bondage, and redemption.

In this dramatic mystery, the law stands for the perfect righteousness which God requires at the creature's hand; Canaan, for the eternal inheritance of the New Jerusalem, with its dependent creation; Jesus, under the law, to bear the transgressions of the whole Jewish nation, represents the Lamb slain, before the foundation of the world, to bear the sins of a creation foreseen as about to fall into sin, through Him to be redeemed, and brought into the condition of eternal glory.

And this is certainly the use made of the whole Levitical ordinance, in *Hebrews* 9, from which we extract the following words, as containing the great truth we are now in quest of; namely, that election is in consequence, and not in precedence, of redemption:

Hebrews 9

¹⁵ And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Be it acknowledged then, that there could be:

- no eternal inheritance otherwise than through a redemption for a fallen world;
- no book of life otherwise than through a Lamb slain;
- no election otherwise than through a previous

reconciliation.

The Work of the Father and Son

But besides this work of Christ in the salvation of any, and of every one, who enters by the gates into the city of the New Jerusalem, there is a work also of the Father; who, as He originates the work of Christ, in giving Him for the whole world, likewise originates the work of applying the benefits of His death to every person who shall eventually come into the eternal inheritance.

This continues the act of giving the Son; and from being an act done once for all, makes it to be an act ever doing, as are all the acts of God. In giving His Son, God takes the attitude of a reconciled and reconciling Father, and that attitude He preserves for ever and ever, in the sight of all creation, who in looking for ever upon the Son as the Lamb slain, do in that look ever behold God as the Father who gave Him.

These two things are inseparable, the acknowledgment of Christ as the Son of God, and the acknowledgment of God as the Father of Christ: the acknowledgment of Christ as the Lamb slain to take away sin from the world, and of God as the Father who of His mere grace gave Him for that most merciful end.

Forasmuch, then, as it is necessary, in looking at the New Jerusalem, containing the complement of those who are blessed with eternal life, to have respect not only unto the Lamb, who purchased it for all, but also to the Father, who gave the Lamb, and who gives persons to the Lamb, ("Yours they were, and You gave them to me," *John* 17:6), we must have in every promise, deed, or document, which concerns that city, the prerogative of both these Divine parties, distinctly yet harmoniously represented. And this is done by the name "Lamb's book of life."

Inasmuch as it is a book it is proper to the Father, whose is

the purpose, the written recorded purpose: inasmuch as it is the Lamb's, the lives of all entered in it were purchased with His blood, and are given to Him for an inheritance by the Father.

Ephesians 1

¹⁸ The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

The Father hereby asserts His right to creation as God who created it, and to every sinful creature as His to punish with eternal death, or freely to forgive and bring into eternal glory. Every advantage which we have, above the corruption of death, or which we hope to have hereafter above hell-fire, He will have us to acknowledge to His own free grace, and not to our own deserving, and if we refer it to Christ, it must be to Christ as the expression of His love.

God the Father will be acknowledged as the principal; His free will, His self-originated grace, as the only cause of every good thing which we enjoy, or hope to attain to: and because "the life" of the New Jerusalem is the best and highest of all things, He will have His hand therein to be above all measure acknowledged; and of such acknowledgment Christ is Himself the brightest example, both as respects Himself personally, and as respects all His people.

As respects Himself, when He has finished His work, He meekly asks from God, to be raised from the dead, and to be re-instated in the glory which He had before He took this low descent into our miserable estate.

And throughout all the *Psalms* He rejoiced mightily in this, that God did not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption; but showed Him the ways of life, and made Him glad with the joys and pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore. *Psalms* 16:10-11. And every one that is given to Him out of the prison-house of sin and death, He most thankfully acknowledged to the Father, and oftentimes de-

clares that for them specially He gave Himself to die.

These types of expressions:

John 10

¹¹ I give my life for the sheep.

John 15

¹³ I lay down my life for my friends.

John 17

⁹ I pray for them, I pray not for the world.

...do not gainsay His other expressions of universal love:

John 3

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 6

⁵¹ ...and the bread is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.

Matthew 23

³⁷ O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you!...but you would not.

But in these exclusive forms of speech, He introduces another idea, besides that of universal love contained in the other; which is the idea of the Father's right to be acknowledged both by Him the Shepherd, and by every one of the sheep, as the originator of their deliverance out of darkness into light, of their being given to the Son, of their being preserved in Him, and of every benefit of Godhead, which through Him they do enjoy.

These two ideas of the universal benefit, and the way of its becoming personal through the acknowledgment of the Father, are beautifully wrought up together in one discourse, both in the 6th and the 17th chapters of *John*.

But the acknowledgment of the Father as the originator and continuer of every blessing in Christ contained, and through Christ received, is no reason for limitation or circumscription

of that benefit to a few, which in itself is designed and fitted and effectual for all. God has, in giving Christ for all, testified the very contrary of a limited or circumscribed love; of an unwillingness or unreadiness to save all: and I consider it little short of blasphemy, to say that there is in Him any unwillingness or slowness to forgive and accept and favor all mankind.

There is no radical difference between the God seen in election and the God seen in redemption. He is the one living and true God, who, see Him as you may, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. What, then, occasions the circumscription and limitation? The rebellious will of man, which either will not acknowledge God as the Lord, depend upon Him for life and breath and being; and, if it acknowledge Christ, will grasp Him as its own, and make its own use of Him, without seeing its own sinfulness and wretchedness in the need of such a gift, and God's grace and goodness in the giving of it. Or, if it acknowledge this, acknowledges it only once for all, or if continually, in words only, but spurns the doctrine of election, which secures for God the Father the continual homage of the will wherein is the power of a spirit, for all which we receive.

As man's wickedness, therefore, made redemption necessary, so man's wilfulness to be rebellious still, though living ensphered with the blessings of redemption, is what prevents the common redemption from becoming universal, and renders election necessary in order to bring anyone, and everyone, to Jerusalem, the throne of glory.

Now, as God, foreseeing that all flesh would sin, did purpose that His eternal Son should come in flesh, and be the Lamb slain to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; so, foreseeing that man's rebellious will would not be melted by that manifestation of His love, but rise up against the Lordship of His Christ, He did, in the foreknowledge of this, purpose to give unto Christ for His reward, and for His use, a certain portion of the grace-despising and love-rejecting world,

in whom He would show forth the power and efficacy of that God and Saviour whom all the rest should reject and cast out, as also His own power to reclaim and restore and glorify that which His hand had originally created.

Thus is election the mystery of the Father's will, as redemption is the manifestation of the Father's love; the former affecting us as persons, the latter affecting us as a community. And because election is addressed to the will, which is a man's personality, its form must necessarily be partial and particular, otherwise it would be altogether unable to produce any effect upon the will of a person.

For, be it observed, of the truth of election, as of all truth, that it works its effect upon a responsible person by a certain adaptation to his being, and not by a brute or physical force. And, being intended to work submission in our will to God's will, it must in its form be particular and personal; representing the power as well as the willingness of God, to reduce our will into obedience to His own, and, through the obedient will, bringing the whole man into the obedience of Christ.

But truth, because it is presented to man considered as a person, is not limited on that account, because man is by his spirit personal, as by his flesh he is common. It becomes limited only by our resistance and rejection of it. And, therefore, I think the doctrine of election to be erroneously stated when it is represented as an exclusive doctrine, and not a doctrine for the edification and conversion of all men; which all men are as blameworthy in rejecting, as in rejecting the doctrine of God's love, whereof election is the form proper to an individual.

When I discover my wickedness in rejecting Christ, the common sacrifice for my sins and the sins of all the world, I would be in utter despair did the doctrine of individuality not come in and tell me:

“Be of good courage, for God deals with men personally, in order to work them into a mind and heart and will for receiving Christ: and this He will do for you and for any man; and has done for every man who ever came to Christ.”

This news is as life from the dead to the poor self-condemned soul, driven to its wit's end by its own obstinate wickedness.

Now of all ways which could be taken for representing this personal work of God the Father upon single persons, and setting forth its vital necessity at all times, towards our attaining unto eternal life, no method that could have been devised is so effectual, as that of fixing upon our names, which distinguish us from one another, and entering them in a book, each with his proper account and remarks, keeping a continual oversight over us, to see how our account stands, and holding it up as the ground of all stability to keep our place there, of all safety to stand well there, and of eternal salvation to be found there at the last.

And this I believe to be the principal reason why the symbol is chosen, and combined into one with the Lamb, in order to combine the two great principles of personality and community; which union, as it is the constituent principle of the Godhead, is also the constituent principle of all truth of manhood, made in the image and likeness of God. This book being given into the hands of the Lamb to keep, signifies that He is not only the unsealer of the book for entering names therein, but that He is also the keeper of the account of every one who is there entered.

Or, in other words, He that is the Redeemer of all, is the Head of the Church; He that is the Saviour of all, is specially so of those that believe: that all judgment is given to Him, and all safe keeping; and everything which concerns the persons of His people, as well as the commonness of their nature.

In flesh, He was the Redeemer of all flesh, because flesh is

the element of our community: in spirit, He is the Saviour of persons, because in the element of spirit stands our personality.

Maintaining Our Place in the Book

But we are to follow the scope of the practical lecturer, and therefore we will conclude this negative part of the blessing by a word or two concerning the way by which we come to know, and ought to preserve, our standing in this book of life.

To know that we are written in this book, is to know that Christ has died for our sins. To know that God has elected us unto everlasting life, is to know that He wills our salvation, and has given His Son to procure it. And to persevere in this knowledge, is to make our calling and election sure, and to retain our place unto the end in this book of God.

To know that the Lamb was given of God to be slain for us, is to know that our name is written in that book; and knowing this, to fall away from the love of God and of Christ, and from the way of holiness, is to cause our names to be blotted out. We cause it not to be entered; God's grace and Christ's work cause it to be entered; but we cause it to be erased when we deny the Lord that bought us, crucify the Son of God afresh, count the blood of the covenant with which we were sanctified an unholy thing, and do despise to the Spirit of grace.

No one has any right to have his name entered therein; God of His grace purposes to save, and Christ of His grace proposes Himself as the Mediator through whom God may be just, and the justifier of him that believes. This grace of God is to all men: this work of Christ is for all men. It becomes mine in particular by having the faith of it wrought in my proud rebellious mind, and the love of the Doers of it shed abroad in my hard and stony heart.

This done, I am an elect person, and ever done I shall never

fall away; because He who has begun this good work in me will carry it on unto the end. But His carrying of it on is by the same means, and with the same effects, as His beginning of it; and I for my part know only this, that I love God and Christ as I did at first, and serve them and depend upon them, and in every way feel towards them as I did at first.

I am supported by them continually, and in the strength they give, prevail mightily against all my enemies. I see no other security but the security of their sameness yesterday, to-day, and forever. I look at them and not at myself. In their light I see light, and in their life I enjoy life.

If I were ever to cease to depend upon the love of that God who gave His Son, upon the redeeming love of that Son who buried Himself in the mortality of my nature, and made it all quick with everlasting life, I would lose my hold and standing, and sink away into the deepest limbo of apostasy.

I feel that the love which wrote my name there is the only thing which cannot change or be broken; it held on towards me through all my backslidings and total death in sin. I rejected God's laws, despised His Son, and was living in open rebellion; yet His love clave to me. I wearied all men, all men forsook me. I was hateful to myself, and ready to abandon all hope and to be swallowed up in atheism; but He loved me, and made me to know His love, and taught me that He had written my name in the Lamb's book of life.

This is the last, the greatest act of constancy which my sin, which perseverance in sin, could not divide from me. When I come to know this, I have a security above all securities; and I say to myself, I shall surely never fail, for I am written in the book of life, God's love was not alienated from me, but continued fixed upon me, and wrote me there. How should it ever fail me? If unworthiness, if sin could have divided me from His love, I should never have been called with this holy calling, or brought to know this precious truth, that my name

was written in heaven.

To be enrolled in the book of life is therefore to be acknowledged as the highest and most perfect grace which God can bestow upon a creature, being no less than the complete fellowship of that estate and dignity which He has appointed for His own eternal Son, the well-beloved and only-begotten of the Father.

And as our admission thereunto is not for any merit of our own, but in spite of our utmost demerit, arising purely out of that purpose of His will which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began, so our continuance therein must ever be referred to the steadfastness of that unbiased will which placed us there;—insomuch that if any man should feel that he needs other securities than the will of God, ever free to do what seems to Him good,—if he should feel desirous to bind God for the future by something which He has done in the past; if, to return to the plain language of the text, he would wish to take away from God the liberty of blotting out of that book whom it pleases Him to blot out; in harboring such a wish, or feeling, or thought, he declares himself to have most insufficient and dishonorable ideas of God, and to be still in the state of one who knows not God's electing love, and has no faith in his own personal election.

God, to be truly appreciated and honored, must be depended on for Himself, and loved in His freedom. We must not wish to have Him pledged to us by any other bonds than His own unchangeable being. We must honor the awfulness of His will, and feel in perfect security, though He be in perfect liberty at any time and at all times to blot us out of His book.

His will is the only security and stability of the world; and because it is free, and not acted upon by anything without or beside itself, I can confide in it. The reason why it is the only safety to be written in that book is this: because God, and

Christ who is one with God, alone have to do with the entries and erasures thereof.

It has oft occurred to me, in writing these things upon the book of life, and upon election, which is the common-place in theology answering thereto, that those who profess to believe in election, the High Calvinists as they are called, are in truth further from the feeling and power of that blessed truth than many who in words deny it, but in heart and life act under its holy influence.

The reason is, that this and every other orthodox truth in our reformation divinity have passed over from being ideas for the responsible will, to become mere conceptions for the abstract understanding; instead of being moral truths, to become mere mechanical and numerical truths, holding not of the reason, but of the faculty which judges by the sense.

Thus systematical Calvinists cannot bear the idea that God should have the power of blotting out a name from the book of life: they think it dishonorable to His steadfastness and unchangeableness that it should be so: they stand up for His liberty before the foundation of the world to take whom He pleased; after that they would give Him no liberty, but bind Him fast. To them I would say, as Paul does to the Galatians:

Galatians 3

³ Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?

You err by bringing that noble idea of God's free and sovereign will under the conditions of time. Keep it always so free; assert for Him free and sovereign will as His unchangeable attribute, and you present to the will of man the firm and fixed center round which to revolve. Do otherwise, and you make God the creature of fate, and your religion becomes a system of fatalism. That man acknowledges a will in God who will at any time say:

“I may not act thus, lest He should blot me out of His book.”

That man believes in election who says:

“I may not do this, because God has chosen me to eternal life, and it is contrary to that will of His which is my only hope and security of salvation.”

If I set light by that will, what have I to trust in? I can only feel what a great strength there is in God’s will according as I stand under it. His will is my confidence of standing, and it is my terror of falling. Would a wife treat her husband nobly if she were to say within herself:

“Ah, now my husband must love me, for I have got marriage-lines?”

Would she be expressing either a noble feeling, in herself, or addressing a noble feeling in him? She confesses uncertainty and doubt of her own standing in his love, and implies that his affection to her is not such as she can depend upon for its own strength and steadfastness. In truth, she both dishonors him and herself as free persons, and honors a thing, an outward action past and done, instead of a will continually willing to love.

So it is with a person, who, from a present God free to love, free to adopt, and free to cast off according to His own mind, begins to think of a God who has passed such and such an act before the foundation of the world, or entered into such and such a contract and covenant in time: not but that God makes contracts and covenants, and keeps by them; but He does this for the end of showing to us the constancy of that will, and the holiness of it,—in one word, the nature and form of it,—that from the covenant we may rise to the Covenant Head, from the creature to the Creator, from the decree of election to the gracious and loving God, who made choice of one so unworthy, and depend upon Him to love us still notwith-

standing our unworthiness.

Much more could we say upon this matter, were we at liberty to use it otherwise than as one topic in the great subject of Jesus Christ; the great Head of the Church.

It appears, therefore, that not only the redemption, but the election also, is under the administration of our blessed Saviour and Elder Brother. The Father has given into His hand the book of those whom He has written for life, and leaves it with Him to blot out whom it pleases Him; thereby teaching the elect to know that their election comes to them from Christ as well as from the Father:

- Christ, the procuring cause of it to any;
- the Father, the chooser of those to whom it shall be given; and
- Christ, the effector of the purpose, by preparing the unworthy outcasts for redemption into the high and holy presence.

If the Father be free to inscribe or to blot out, so is Christ: as the Father is, so is Christ.

John 5

¹⁷ My Father works hitherto, and I work.

²² The Father...has committed all judgment unto the Son:

²³ That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.

Christ is not the mere book-keeper; He is the book-owner, and the subject-matter of the book; for the Spirit of the eternal God is in Him, even the seven Spirits of God: they are in Him for judgment as well as for power; not only as the seven horns but the seven eyes of God which run to and fro over the earth.

The Father's will is in Him. The Father gives to Him the election, and says, "Keep them by My name;" and Christ keeps them by teaching them the name of the Father, which is His

unchangeable being, and this He does by showing them Himself.

In the human will of Christ, a free will and a perfectly good will, the will of man reads and understands the free and perfectly good will of God. God's absolute and incomprehensible will ever expresses itself in form of The Word, which, apprehended of reason, becomes knowledge of God and a rule unto our will; which thereby discovers its own obliquity, and feels its own bondage, and desires the strengthening of the Supreme will, and receives it by the Spirit, and so working outward, brings the members of the body and mind into conformity with the will of God expressed in The Word.

Christ therefore is to the creature the all in all of God, in whom God is seen and known, and through whom God is approached unto, and worshiped, and depended on: and therefore it is that in His hands the book of life rests, to retain whom it pleases Him to retain, and to reject whom it pleases Him to reject.

Overcomers are Retained

In the exercise of this Supreme Administration over those who shall be heirs of salvation, Christ, the Head of the Church, gives us to know, that He will not blot out of the book of life anyone who overcomes, but will confess His name before His Father and before His holy angels.

Upon this word we are required by God to rely, and to go forward in the warfare with the devil, the world, and the flesh; to stand steadfastly, and to fight boldly, as we would not be cast away; as we would continue in the love and favor of Christ, and at the end be presented in the presence of His Father and His holy angels, and be confessed to by Christ as one of those whom He has found worthy to inherit all things.

The language of the last clause of this blessed promise is taken from the charge or commission, which our Lord gave to

the twelve apostles, when He sent them forth to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand:

Matthew 10

³² Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

³³ But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

The corresponding passage in *Luke* (chapter 12:9) has it, “confess before the angels of God;” and both are joined together in the words of the promise before us. In both these passages this blessing is set over against the fear of man, to preserve us from denying His name in the august presence of kings, and rulers, and potentates of the earth, by assuring us, that all such earthly vicegerents have no power, but as it is given them from above “from your Father,” who numbers the hairs of our head, and has a watchful oversight of the sparrows which fly in the midst of heaven.

To neutralize the fear of man, who can only kill the body, He sets before His followers the fearfulness of God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell-fire forever. And to comfort them under the persecutions and castings out by father and mother and brother and sister, and all the world, He assures them, that their dishonored and rejected names He will confess before His Father which is in heaven, and before the holy angels of God.

This throws great light upon the temptation of the Church of Sardis, and brings no small confirmation to the view thereof, which we have entertained and held forth in this lecture; showing that it is the temptation of a name with men, and the fear of reproach, which did most withstand their faithful testimony; and so I feel it to be in this day.

There is certainly a league, amongst all respectable and reputable men, to cast out the name of God and of Christ, and to substitute in their stead a conventional religion, which shall

embrace all that is decent and decorous, moderate and praiseworthy, among men; all that is rational and moral in philosophy, all that is liberal and enlightened in politics; which presents Christ as the great Teacher and Exemplar of the system, God as the great Overseer and Protector of it, and man as its responsible observer and doer. Redemption and regeneration, the new man and the old man, are but the technicalities of the system; and the Holy Spirit is the name for one who is imbued with it; as we say, a poetical and a philosophical spirit.

Such a system as this is the thing, which the ministers of religion are holding up to the faith and obedience of the people; and around this all that is called good, in the system of the world, confederates.

- The country gentleman applauds it, as a very proper doctrine to be taught the people, and very much respects the well-bred and judicious clergyman who teaches it.
- The magistrate of the burgh, burdened with the good order of his townsmen, is full of gratitude, that the pulpit should be such an able auxiliary of the police-office.
- The judges and governors of the land understand and are in perfect sympathy with a religion of this natural and reasonable sort, which none but thieves, and adulterers, and drunkards, and the like enemies of good society, have a right to complain of.
- The minister and the Bible take their place in the great system of worldliness; and religion is of the world, and the Church is the wedded wife of the world.

I declare that this is the religion which I find among Churchmen and Dissenters, from one extremity of this land to the other. It is a system of refined and sanctified worldliness which the world are entirely satisfied with, and will any day turn out to defend.

And, O you ministers of Christ! is this the religion of your Master? and, O you members of Christ! is this the religion of your Head? Is Christ merely the Head Teacher, God the Head Constable, and the Holy Ghost the Spirit of good society? Is this Christian religion, I ask you, you angels, you doctors of the churches, who have a name to live, by sleeking down, and feeding, and courting the dragon spirit of this evil world? Is it for nought that Paul says:

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁸ If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

¹⁹ For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God.

...or that the Lord says:

Mark 4

¹⁹ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

...or that the apostle says:

Romans 12

² Be not conformed unto this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

He identifies the course of this “world” with the “prince of the power of the air” (*Ephesians* 2:2), and calls the devil “its god.” O false and treasonable prophets! Why do you not speak out for the truth:

- that God is in all Christians, working their works and speaking their words,—even that God of whom is nothing in the world;
- that we become fit for His habitation only through Christ uniting us to Himself, and putting in us that life which is contrary to, and the death of, the fleshly or natural man, with his wisdom and his way; and
- that the Holy Ghost works both the life of Christ in us

and the power of the Father; and

- that from first to last the life of a Christian is not natural, but supernatural; not ordinary, but extraordinary; not within the reach of human power, but above it and beyond it, only through the miraculous power of God.

The reason why many do not deliver themselves of the truth of this matter, is that they do not believe it. Such, according to the Word of God, are properly named *unbelievers*, in whom the God of this world has blinded their mind. 2 *Corinthians* 4:4.

Others there are who do not know it, and therefore are not as yet to be classed with unbelievers. And wherefore do they not know it? Because they are not honoring God only in their hearts, but preferring to Him some other object, most frequently the approved system, or the approved persons, or something which man has approved.

And a good many there be who both knowing and believing it, do yet follow flattering courses, because they are afraid of the world's scorn and persecution, nor speak boldly out the truth, which God has made them to know and believe. These are they to whom Christ said:

Matthew 10

²⁸ And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

³² Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

³³ But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Mark 8

³⁸ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Ah me! how many there are who take credit to themselves for being slow of conviction, and cautious of committing themselves by words, which should be their shame.

Why is your chamber dark at noon-day? Because you are slow to open the blinds which let in the light. Is that your honor or your shame?

Why do you not lift up your voice aloud when the thief is entering the house? Is that your honor or your shame?

I also am slow of receiving and uttering truth. And wherefore? Because I am afraid of man. Of this I am ashamed, and I confess it unto my God. Do you likewise, O my brethren, and confess your sin of slowness of belief.

Remember whether it was with approbation, or disapprobation, that Christ spoke, when He said:

Luke 24

²⁵ O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

The truth should be told to these hangers on between Christ and the world, between a God-confessing, and a God-denying church, that their slowness of conviction springs from the lack of entireness in their heart's affection to God. There is another there besides God. Be it man, or be it woman, be it flesh, or be it the world, or be it the devil of hell, there is another in your heart besides God. This know and cast out, or else you shall never know God, nor have Him with you.

I feel it as certain as Scripture and experience can make me that the reason why men are not all filled with the light of Christ, and the power of God, is, because they love the darkness, and will not come to the light, lest their evil deeds should be reproved, which they love, and have not yet made up their mind to part with. What that work of darkness is, I know not: it may be the love of the most beautiful forms of art, of the most perfect forms of reason, of the most finished

works of systematic truth; it may be the love of that power over others, which by these means we have attained, of that place and station to which we have been promoted, and for the well filling of which we labor as a life's work.

Whatever it is, that is a work of darkness wherein God is not first, middle, and ending, which brings ourselves or our usefulness, or our station, or anything that is ours into the question of our duty. And so long as this remains, it will present an effectual barrier to the knowledge and avowal of Christ.

That this is the temptation of the present time, I feel and know, and cannot be mistaken. It is popular applause, the favor of men, the credit of a good name, the genial course of a quiet life, the fear of being branded in public newspapers, the dread of being exposed in religious magazines before the religious world, the love of standing well with those that stand well with the world, of being taken into the sweep and circle of a party.

It is shameful cowardice, mean sacrifice of personal dignity, for the approbation of a multitude. In one word, it is the desire of a name to live with religious and respectable people, though we be dead, that has spell-bound men in the thralldom in which they are so basely held, which is shutting their eyes to the light, and their hearts to the truth, and sealing their lips to the utterance of words, for the lack of which Christ's Church is at her last gasp.

God will bless my witness against this abomination as base as the papacy; therefore I have lifted up my voice boldly and strongly against it, and will now lay out in conclusion the consummate blessedness of standing steadfast and true in the midst of it all,

"The Father and His angels" are the court above, the heavenly King and His heavenly powers, before whom Christ promises to confess the name of every one, who has confessed

Him, before the kings and potentates of the earth, and for that confession is content to lose his name, and have it cast out.

To those who are not afraid of reproaches for God's sake, but give their hearts, as Christ did, to be broken by the reproaches of them who reproach God, He gives the congenial reward of gaining a name of renown in heaven, and having the public entrance into the presence chamber of the great King, and of all the celestial hierarchy. Of whose numbers and glorious array, as they come forth harnessed against these deceivers of the earth, if you would have the account, hear it as it was seen by Daniel the prophet:

Daniel 7

⁹ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire.

¹⁰ A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

To this glorious company, behold how He, who manifested the name of God, and made it glorious in the world, is introduced as the first fruits of our introduction to the same presence chamber of Omnipotence:

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.

¹⁴ And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Again, if we would have the same glorious presentation and acknowledgment as it was in the ascension, the picture of what shall be, when we have our assumption into the cloud of

the Father's glory, it is thus written in *Psalms* 68: first, of the glory of the court and company to which He ascended:

Psalms 68

¹⁷ The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

Then of the triumphant welcome and glorious reward of the ascended Christ:

Psalms 68

¹⁸ You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: You have received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Again, if we would know the respective parts which these angels of the Father will do for the evil and for the good, in the end of the world, or consummation of this age,—they are written severally in *Matthew* chapters 13 and 24.

And if we would behold the honor and glory of their estate, we have it represented in the four living creatures, and the twenty-four crowned elders, in *Revelation* chapters 4 and 5, with the ministry of angels all around.

And if we would have their blessedness and joy in the company of the Lamb, we have it in the white-robed and palm-bearing ones of *Revelation* chapter 7.

And if we would have their glorious action, it is to be found in *Revelation* chapter 19; and their supremacy of the earthly things in *Revelation* chapter 20.

But if we would have the full mystery of their glory and blessedness displayed, it is in the New Jerusalem, at whose gates, the place of service and dispatch, stand twelve angels ready to go forth with orders from the city of the great King.

The present servants and ministers of God are the angels: they wait upon His throne in the heavens, and are by Him employed in their several dignities to carry on the administra-

tion of His government, and they are sent by Him also, on errands of service, to those who shall be the heirs of salvation.

Yet they, even they, were created by Christ, who, when He would take into union with Himself a creature's nature, through which to manifest Himself forever to all the creatures whom He had made, assumed not theirs but ours, as being in the purpose and counsel of God the fittest for that noble end.

And so He stamped the nature of man, to be the royal and supreme form of creature-being; and having perfected that nature, according to the intention of its Creator, He ascended up on high as man, and as man, "in man" (*Psalms* 68:18, margin) received the gifts of the seven Spirits of God and rebellious men also, with which to construct a house and habitation for the Most High,—God determining to have His habitation not in any body of angels, but in a body of men, whom to that end He gives to Christ, like rough unhewn stones from the quarry, that He may quicken them with His own life, and fashion them according to His own mold, and build them into a temple where Jehovah might for ever dwell, and thence put forth the word of His wisdom, and the strength of His power over all things visible and invisible.

When the New Jerusalem is thus built up, the angels take their station at the gates, to go forth on errands from the house and tabernacle of God. And even now, we weak and silly churchmen, do give to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, continual lessons upon the manifold wisdom of God. *Ephesians* chapter 3. And into the things with which we are conversant, they do continually stoop down from heaven to look into them and learn. *1 Peter* 1:12.

But, because the time to glorify the Church is not yet come, albeit she has virtually received her glory in her Head, who is far advanced above every name in heaven and in earth; when Christ would speak to His servants on earth concerning honor, He speaks of mentioning their names before the holy

angels as being the present depositaries of the power of God, and the dignitaries and functionaries of the heavenly region, well worthy to compensate us by their acceptance for the rejection of our names by the dignitaries and functionaries of this world, whose god is the prince of darkness.

Yet this He does without any prejudice to our future elevation above them into the higher dignity of bearing up the throne, containing the presence and putting forth the strength of God; and being the body of Christ, who is the fulness of the Godhead. For as there are “earthly things,” so also are there “heavenly things;” and as there are “earthly bodies,” so are there “heavenly bodies;” and as there is “one glory of the earthly,” so is there “another glory of the heavenly.”

And as it is not to be doubted that the Jews in their regenerate state, having the washing of regeneration, and the law on their hearts written, are to be the royal priesthood over the earthly things; so is it certain that the Church, the body of Christ, will rise in the likeness of His glory, and as His bride, have the supremacy and sovereignty, the royal priesthood over the heavenly things; principalities, powers, and dominions, and every name that is named both in this world and in that which is to come, being put under the feet of that body whereof Christ is the head, and the Church the members.

Yet as Christ’s glory is depicted in the Old Testament by the way in which He is presented and accepted, and rewarded with pre-eminence of place in the glorious assembly of the heavenly host, so also in the New Testament He holds out to His Church the hope of the same preferment and glory.

Now for anyone rightly to apprehend the exceeding grace and excellence of this promise of Christ, he must bear in mind what God is, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity (*Habakkuk* 1:13); in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges His angels with folly; and of what kind we creatures are, whose foundation is in the dust, rebels, enemies of God,

doomed for our sin to the presence chamber of the worm, and the bed of corruption. *Job* 4:17-19.

And we must remember how we have been driven forth of paradise into this fallen and miserable world; and that we are no better than animated clods of the valley, filled with all ungodliness and wickedness; Satan's thralls, hell's victims, God's deceivers, His troublers, the most ungrateful and wicked of all His creatures. His purpose is:

- to obtain for such creatures admission into the heavenly presence,
- to bring them from the banqueting house of the worm and corruption's couch,
- to make them clean, to purify and sanctify them, and bring them into the presence of God and His angels: moreover,
- to take away their heart-hatred, and give them a heart-love of God;
- their mortal darkness and weakness to expel, and to make them sons of light and strength;
- to bend and incline their will,
- to take away their innate rebellion against God and hatred of one another,
- to harmonize them into one,
- to build them up into glorious beauty,
- to furnish them with powers and faculties, and in all ways to qualify them for being Godhead's palace and throne, and chamber councilors, and faithful kings; His royal priesthood over all creation.

Whoever will think of this, and weigh it well, will understand both the grace and the love and the power of Christ, the dignity and honor and superlative preferment of the Church.

These things are too high for me: even now I can go no further. My heart is sick with thought and admiration. O my God! what a prize is this to think for, to act for, to speak for.

Away, away far from me the fear of man: cease, cease forever
from the applause of men, O my soul!

CONCLUSION

AND thus have I done my endeavor to open and unfold to the Church of God, the disease, the peril, and the cure of nominalism, which now threatens to sink the Protestant Church.

I have had upon my mind father, and brothers, and kindred, native country, and mother Church, and whatever is dear to the natural or to the spiritual man. I have written as in the presence of the Heart-Searcher, with much prayer and painful thought; and I have received into my own soul much light and consolation.

And I have been called upon to act the thing which I have written, and to stand for the canons of our Lord, and to deny myself to the love and fellowship of brethren for my faithfulness to Him. And I am prepared to do and to suffer much more for Him who died for me.

Much of what I have written under this epistle I have addressed to the Church of Scotland, whose responsible servant I am, and through her to all the Protestant Churches. The Lord, in the meantime, has enlarged my heart with love, and opened my mouth with intercession for her.

She will have to take the van in the approaching battle, as she did from the seventh till the eleventh century, when no Church in Europe was found to peep or to mutter against the Bishop of Rome; and she will have to beat down the fabric of that infidelity which her Humes and her Smiths have had a chief hand in setting up, as she beat down the fabric of the Papacy, and ground it into powder. When I say she, I mean her children, some ones that have come out of her loins, or rather out of her laver of regeneration.

I wish I could see that the whole Church would hold fast her integrity, and stand up the champion of the faith: but,

whatever I may desire, I have no conviction to this effect, but rather to the contrary. But it is not good “to cast the fashion of uncertain evils.”³

May the Lord fulfill every good work of His servants, and avert all the evil which our sins have deserved. Amen.

³ John Milton, *A Mask*.

SONNETS

I. THE ADVENT

Revelation 1:7

Behold, He comes, with glorious clouds reveal'd,
He who erewhile for man's salvation died
On the accursed tree. Now far and wide
The vault of heav'n, which then in dark was seal'd,
Shines with His glory. Hark! the trumpet peal'd
His near approach! His saints have cast aside
The searchcloth of the grave, and as His bride
Have met Him. The nations all, with fear congeal'd,
Look conscience-stricken on; for they in arms
Confed'rate are against the Lord's Anointed,
Who thus in judgment comes with dread alarms
Upon a world with thunderbolts disjointed.
To those who pierced Him, all abroad His arms
He flings, and Zion owns Him King appointed.

II. THE SEER

Revelation 1:9-10

In Patmos' lonely isle, where Caesar's nod
Sent those he fear'd, in exile from their own,
I, John, your brother, in the churches known
For faithful witness to the word of God,
In patient solitude had my abode:
For Caesar fear'd the truth which I had sown,
And deem'd the Gospel warr'd against his throne;
Nor knew that Shiloh's scepter is a peaceful rod.
There, dwelling all apart with God alone,
In purpose bent to keep our holy day,
On which o'er death the Lord victorious shone,
Rapt in the Spirit's mood from sense away,
I heard behind me, with a trumpet tone,
A mighty voice, which in my ear did say:

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

III. THE ANNUNCIATION

Revelation 1:8,10

I AM the Alpha and the Omega;
The all-informing Word, who does reveal
The unknown God. I am creation's Seal,
End and Beginning; where the Father saw
His purpose all complete. I gave the law
To all creation, and watch o'er its weal,
Hold up its being, and its troubles heal.
Mine is that dreadful name, Jehovah-Jah;
First, Last, Which Is, Which Was, Which is To Come;
The Father's style, the Godhead's proper name.
Almighty, I the Godhead's fulness sum
Within myself. All power in heaven I claim;
Wide o'er the earth I rule the busy hum
Of men; and restless powers of darkness tame.

IV. THE VISION

Revelation 1:13-17

THE trumpet-voice which thus announced my Lord
I turn'd to see, when, lo! the Son of man!
Whose right hand in its grasp seven stars did span;
And from His mouth a sharp two-edged sword
Went forth, meet emblem of His piercing word.
But who those feet of glowing brass might scan,
Those searching eyes, whose beams like lightnings ran,
And face from which meridian splendors pour'd?
Around Him stood seven candlesticks of gold;
His head and hairs were pure as virgin snow;
The High Priest's robe and girdle Him enfold.
His voice was strong, and liquid, as the flow
Of many waters. Death-like fear seized hold
Upon my strength, and much I dreaded woe.

V. THE SEER'S COMMISSION

Revelation 1:17-18

AND at His feet I fell, like one o'ercast
With death's dark shadow; when His gracious hand
He reach'd forth, and strengthen'd me to stand;

And gently said, Fear not I (as in days past
 When on His breast I leant,) The First, The Last,
 Behold in Me, whom hell's confed'rate band
 Could not retain within their gloomy land;
 Death and the grave I spoil'd. and all aghast
 Have led them captive in: wherefore now in heaven
 I reign as God, the Prince of endless life.
 These visions of that glory to me given
 For having vanquish'd in that mortal strife,
 Write you, and send unto the Churches Seven,
 My number'd saints, my death-betrothed wife.

VI. THE UNIVERSAL BISHOP

Revelation 2:1

I AM the One High Priest and only Head
 Of my own Church; the Shepherd of the fold;
 Who walk amidst the candlesticks of gold,
 Their brightness to preserve, their lamps to feed
 With holy oil, and in each time of need
 To tend those lights o' th' world, which high uphold
 Hope's day-star, midst the storms and darkness cold
 Of this lost earth, to save a righteous seed:
 The Universal Bishop, Sovereign Lord
 Of Church dominion; in whose hand
 Lie side by side the angels of the word
 In equal eminence of high command
 And hidden power, by whom in sweet accord
 I teach and rule my Church o'er every land.

VII. THE BISHOP'S SEVEN CHARGES TO HIS ANGELS: FIRST CHARGE OF LOVE

Revelation 2:2-7

HEAR then! you angels of the churches, hear
 My charge. First, last, of all your thoughts, be love
 Unto those sheep, whom I preferr'd above Heaven's state:
 They to my Father's heart are near
 Who Me do love the most, because more dear
 I loved them than life. My turtle-dove
 Oh leave not to the vultures wild, which rove

The heavens; nor to the snare, the pit, the fear.
Aye watch. Your work, your patience, well I know,
And, knowing, well reward. He works for me
Who works for them: who aims at them a blow,
Hail better far been cast into the sea
With millstone round his neck. Still forward go
In love; and to My throne advanced be.

**VIII. THE SPIRIT'S SEVEN BATTLE WORDS:
FIRST BATTLE WORD,
PROMISE OF PARADISE**

Revelation 2:10

THUS speaks the Spirit to the Churches all,
And to each man who has an ear to hear:
“Whoso o’ercometh in this fell career
With Pow’rs of earth and hell, which proudly call
My people to the battle, he shall fall
Unvanquish’d, and to his grave shall bear
The martyr’s crown—victorious rise, and wear
The palm of Jubilee. Let no fears appal
Christ’s fellow-soldiers. Him, your Captain, view
Upon the throne of God; who has on high
Mansions prepared, and wine o’ th’ kingdom new
Upon His table set; where never sigh
Is heard, nor sorrow enters. There shall you
With Him abide, and in His bosom lie.”

**IX. TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REV. SAMUEL MARTIN, D.D.,
MY VENERABLE GRANDFATHER-IN-LAW,
WHO WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM US
IN THE 90TH YEAR OF HIS LIFE,
AND THE 68TH OF HIS MINISTRY.**

FAREWELL on man’s dark journey o’er the deep,
You Sire of Sires! whose bow in strength has stood
These threescore years and ten that you have wooed
Men’s souls to heaven. In Jesus fallen asleep,
Around your couch three generations weep,
Rear’d on your knees with wisdom’s heavenly food,
And by your counsels taught to choose the good;

Who in your footsteps press up Zion's steep,
To reach that temple, which but now did ope
And let their father in. O'er his bier wake
No doleful strain, but high the note of hope
And praise uplift to God, who did him make
A faithful shepherd, of his Church a prop;
And of his seed did faithful shepherds take.

**X. TO THE MEMORY OF MY REVEREND
AND BELOVED FRIEND,
THE REV. EDWARD THOMAS VAUGHAN.**

AND is our Vaughan gone? he who the toil
Of conflict for the truth did fearless bide;
A standard-bearer, who his foot aside
Did never turn to seek ignoble spoil,
But led the way, and taught us how to foil
The serpent's subtle seed? They could not hide
Their wiles from you; but in their wounded pride
Hiss'd envious, and 'gainst you raised turmoil.
You were a churchman of the ancient seed;
A shepherd, who your care did ne'er abate;
A watchman, who the nation's weal did heed;
Which drew upon you sons of Belial's hate.
Now you are ta'en away in time of need,
When darkness thickens round our sinking state!

