

REVELATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

That this book was written by the Apostle and Evangelist John, is clear not only from the express mention of his name, and from his office, a servant of Jesus Christ, (~~600~~ Revelation 1:1); but also from the character this writer gives of himself, (~~600~~ Revelation 1:2); as being an eyewitness of the essential Logos, or Word of God, and who bore a faithful record of him as such, as John did in his Gospel, in a very peculiar and remarkable manner, and from this writer's being in the isle of Patmos when he wrote, (~~600~~ Revelation 1:9); for of what other John can this be said? to which may be added the testimonies of the ancient writers, as Justin Martyr^{f1}, who lived within fifty years of the apostle, and Irenaeus^{f2}, who was the disciple of Polycarp, an hearer of this apostle, and Clemens Alexandrinus^{f3}, Tertullian^{f4}, Origen^{f5}, and others, who ascribe it to him. It was a most monstrously stupid notion of Caius, Dionysius of Alexandria mentions^{f6}, that it was written by Cerinthus the heretic, when his heresies concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ are most strongly refuted in it. What seems to have led to such a thought is, that the account of the thousand years' reign, and the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven, seemed to favour the judaism of this man, and his carnal notions of an earthly paradise, whereas they have no such tendency. And as for its being written by another John, who is said to be presbyter at Ephesus, after the apostle, it is not certain there ever was such a man; and if there was, he must be too late to be the writer of this book; nor to him can the above characters agree. What is observed in favour of him, that the penman of this book is called, in the title, John the divine, and not the evangelist, or apostle, will do him no service; for to whom does this character so well agree, as to the Evangelist John, who wrote of divine things in so divine a manner, and particularly concerning the divinity of Christ? hence this book was sometimes called **ψεολογια**, "Divinity"^{f7}: besides, the title of the book is not original, but is what has been affixed to it by others, and varies; for in the Complutensian edition it runs thus,

“the Revelation of the holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Divine.”

In the Vulgate Latin version it is called the Apocalypse of the blessed John the Apostle; and in the Syriac version, the Revelation which was made to John the Evangelist; and in the Arabic version, the Vision of John, the Apostle and Evangelist, to wit, the Apocalypse. All which acknowledge the Apostle John to be the writer of it, and show the sense of the ancients concerning it. Nor is it of any moment what is alleged, that this writer makes mention of his name several times, whereas it was usual with John, both in his Gospel and epistles, to conceal his name; since there is a wide difference between writing an history and epistles to friends, and prophecy which requires the author's name, on whom the authority and truth of the prophecy greatly depend: and so likewise the disagreement of style observed in this book, with the other writings of John, has no force in it; since the prophetic style is always different from an historical and epistolary one; and yet, after all, in many things, there is an agreement; John in this, as in his other writings, speaks of Christ as the Word and Son of God and under the character of the Lamb; and likewise the following: passages may be compared together, as (~~Revelation~~ Revelation 1:2) with (~~John~~ John 19:35) and (~~1 John~~ 1 John 1:1, 2) (~~Revelation~~ Revelation 1:5) with (~~1 John~~ 1 John 1:7). All which being observed there no room to doubt, neither of the writer nor of the authority of this book; especially when the agreement of the doctrine contained in it with other parts of the Scripture, the majesty of its style, and above all the many prophecies of things to come to pass in it, several of which have been already fulfilled, are considered; and though it was called in question and rejected by some heretical men, because some things in it did not suit with their tenets, yet we have not the least reason to doubt of its being authentic who have lived to see so much of it already accomplished and which could come from no other but God. As for the time of its writing this is not agreed upon on all hands; the place where, seems to be the isle of Patmos, which yet some question. Some think it was written in the times of Claudius Caesar^{f8}, before the destruction of Jerusalem. In the title of the Syriac version, this revelation is said to be made to John in the isle of Patmos, into which he was cast by Nero Caesar. But the more commonly received opinion is, that he had this vision there, at the latter end of Domitian's reign^{f9} by whom he was there banished, about the year 95, or 96. But be this as it will, the book is certainly of divine authority, and exceeding useful and instructive; and contains in it the

most momentous and important doctrines of the Gospel, concerning a trinity of persons in the Godhead, the deity and sonship of Christ, the divinity and personality of the Spirit, the offices of Christ, the state and condition of man by nature, justification, pardon, and reconciliation by the blood of Christ; and it recommends the several duties of religion, and encourages to the exercise of every grace and gives a very particular account of the rise, power, and fall of antichrist, and of the state of the church of Christ in all the periods of time to the end of the world. And though it is written in an uncommon style, yet may be understood, by the use of proper means, as by prayer and meditation, by comparing it with other prophetic writings, and the history of past times, by which many things in it will appear to have had their accomplishment; and it ought to be observed, that it is a revelation, and not a hidden thing; that it is now not a sealed book, but an open one; and that such are pronounced blessed that read and hear it, and observe the things in it, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 1:3); and which is no small encouragement to attempt an explanation of it.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 1

This chapter contains the preface and introduction to the book, and the first vision in it. The preface begins with the title of the book, in which the subject matter of it is pointed at, a Revelation; the author of it, Jesus Christ, who had it from his Father; the minister of it, an angel: the person to whom it was made known, described by his name, office, and the testimony he bore to Christ, his Gospel, and to whatever he saw; and for encouragement to persons to read, hear, and observe it, happiness is pronounced to them ([Revelation 1:1-3](#)); the inscription of the book follows, in which are the name of the writer, and the place where the churches to whom it is inscribed were, with a salutation of them; in which grace and peace are wished for them, from God the Father, from the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ; who is described by characters expressing his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, and by the benefits, favours, and honours bestowed by him on his people, to whom a doxology or ascription of glory is made, ([Revelation 1:4-6](#)); who is further described, first by his future visible coming in the clouds, which will greatly affect the inhabitants of the earth, and then by himself, as the eternal and almighty God, ([Revelation 1:7,8](#)); and in order to introduce the vision, hereafter related in this chapter, he that saw it gives an account of himself, by his name, by his relation to the churches, and by his partnership with them in affliction, and of the place he was in; and for what, and of the time when he had the vision, and the frame he was in, and what awakened his attention to it, ([Revelation 1:9-11](#)); and how, that adverting to it he saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of them one like the son of man, who is described by his clothes and girdle, by his head, hair, and eyes, by his feet and voice, by what he had in his right hand, and by what went out of his mouth, and by his face shining like the sun in its strength, ([Revelation 1:12-16](#)), next is related the effect this vision had on. John, who upon it fell down as one dead, but was comforted by Christ, laying his right hand on him, and telling him who he was, and bidding him write what he had seen, or should see, ([Revelation 1:17-19](#)); and the chapter is concluded with

an interpretation of the mystery of the seven stars, and the seven candlesticks, (ἑπτὰ) Revelation 1:20).

Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, etc.] Either of which he is the author: for it was he that sent and showed it by his angel to John; it was he, the lion of the tribe of Judah, that took the book, and opened the seals of it, and which is a very considerable proof of his deity; since none but God could foreknow and foretell things to come, or declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet, as is done in this book: or of which he is the subject; for it treats much of his person, offices, and grace, and of Christ mystical, of the state of his church, in the several ages of time; or it is that revelation which was first made unto him, to which sense the following words incline:

which God gave unto him; not to him as he is God, for as such he is omniscient, and foreknew whatever would come to pass, and needed no revelation to be made to him, but as he was man and Mediator; and this was given him by God the Father, and put into his hands, to make known as being a part of the administration of his prophetic office: the end of its being given him was,

to show unto his servant things which must shortly come to pass: the Arabic version adds, “in future ages”; things that were to be hereafter, the accomplishment of which was necessary, because of the certain and unalterable decree of God, the good of his people, and his own glory; and these were to come to pass quickly, in a very little time; not that they would all be fulfilled in a short space of time, for there are some things not fulfilled yet, though it is nineteen hundred years ago and more, since this revelation was made; and we are sure there are some things that will not be accomplished till a thousand years hence, and more, for the millennium is not yet begun; and after that is ended, there is to be a second resurrection, and a destruction of the Gog and Magog army; but the sense is, that these things should very quickly begin to be fulfilled, and from thenceforward go on fulfilling till all were accomplished. Now to show, to represent these things, in a clear manner, as the nature of them would admit of, to the servants of Christ, all true believers, read and hear and diligently observe them, and especially to the ministers of the Gospel, whose business is to search into them, and point them out to and particularly to his servant John, was this revelation made by Christ, who immediately answered this end:

and he sent, and signified [it] by his angel unto servant John; he who is the Lord of angels, and to whom they are ministering spirits, sometimes sent one angel and sometimes another; and by various emblems, signs, and visions, represented and set before John, a faithful servant, and a beloved disciple of his, the whole of this revelation.

Ver. 2. *Who bore record of the word of God*, etc.] Of the essential and eternal Word of God, his only begotten Son; as John the apostle did in his Gospel, and in his epistles, and also in this book; and which is a clear evidence of his being the writer of it.

And of the testimony of Jesus Christ; that is, the Gospel, which testifies of the person of Christ, of the truth of his divinity, and reality of his human nature; of the union of the two natures, divine and human, his person: of his several offices, of prophet, priest and King; of what he did and suffered for his people; and of the blessings of grace which they receive by him:

and of all things that he saw; with his bodily eyes, as the human body of Christ, the miracles he wrought in it, the transfiguration of it on the mount, the crucifixion of it, and the piercing of it with a spear, and the resurrection of it from the dead; and also the visions recorded in this book; and such a faithful witness serves greatly to confirm the authority of this book, and to recommend the perusal of it. The Complutensian edition and the Arabic version read, “which are, and which shall”, or “must be hereafter”, as in (~~4019~~ Revelation 1:19).

Ver. 3. *Blessed [is] he that readeth*, etc.] This book the Revelation, privately, in his closet or family, carefully and diligently, with a desire of understanding it; or publicly in the church of God, and endeavours open and explain it to others; and may allude to the reading of the law and the prophets in the synagogues, which were not barely read, but expounded; (see ~~4435~~ Acts 13:15 15:21); and the rather this may be thought to be the sense of the words, since there is a change of number in the next clause,

and they that hear the words of this prophecy; that listen attentively to the reading and exposition of this book, and have ears to hear, so as to understand the prophecies contained in it: for the whole, when delivered to John, was a prophecy of things to come: but some versions read the number alike in both clauses; as either, “blessed is he that readeth, and he that heareth”, as the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions; or “blessed are they that read, and they that hear”, as the Arabic version:

and keep those things which are written therein; the last version adds, “concerning this frail world”; who not only read, and hear, but put in practice what they read and hear; for there are some things in this book which are of a practical nature, especially in the epistles to the seven churches; or the sense is, happy are those persons that observe, and take notice of what is written herein, and meditate upon them, and well weigh them in their minds, and retain them in their memories. Now, though eternal happiness does not depend upon, nor is procured by any of these means, as reading, hearing, and observing; yet there is a real happiness, a true pleasure, that does attend these things, which may stir up to a regard unto them; and for which purpose the following words are added:

for the time [is] at hand; when thee things should begin to be fulfilled.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia*, etc.] In lesser Asia; their names are mentioned in (^{<6011>}Revelation 1:11);

grace [be] unto you, and peace; which is the common salutation of the apostles in all their epistles, and includes all blessings of grace, and all prosperity, inward and outward: (see Gill on “^{<6007>}Romans 1:7”). The persons from whom they are wished are very particularly described,

from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; which some understand of the whole Trinity; the Father by him “which is”, being the I am that I am; the Son by him “which was”, which was with God the Father, and was God; and the Spirit by him “which is to come”, who was promised to come from the Father and the Son, as a Comforter, and the Spirit of truth: others think Christ is here only intended, as he is in (^{<6008>}Revelation 1:8) by the same expressions; and is he “which is”, since before Abraham he was the “I am”; and he “which was”, the eternal Logos or Word; and “is to come”, as the Judge of quick and dead. But rather this is to be understood of the first Person, of God the Father; and the phrases are expressive both of his eternity, he being God from everlasting to everlasting; and of his immutability, he being now what he always was, and will be what he now is, and ever was, without any variableness, or shadow of turning: they are a periphrasis, and an explanation of the word “Jehovah”, which includes all tenses, past, present, and to come. So the Jews explain this name in (^{<0014>}Exodus 3:14);

“Says R. Isaac ^{f10}, the holy blessed God said to Moses, Say unto them, I am he that was, and I am he that now is, and I am he that is to come, wherefore *hyha* is written three times.”

And such a periphrasis of God is frequent in their writings ^{f11}.

And from the seven spirits which are before his throne; either before the throne of God the Father; or, as the Ethiopic version reads, “before the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ”; by whom are meant not angels, though these are spirits, and stand before the throne of God, and are ready to do his will: this is the sense of some interpreters, who think such a number of them is mentioned with reference to the seven angels of the churches; or to the seven last “Sephivot”, or numbers in the Cabalistic tree of the Jews; the three first they suppose design the three Persons in the Godhead, expressed in the preceding clause, and the seven last the whole company of angels: or to the seven principal angels the Jews speak of. Indeed, in the Apocrypha,

“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.” (Tobit 12:15)

Raphael is said to be one of the seven angels; but it does not appear to be a generally received notion of theirs that there were seven principal angels. The Chaldee paraphrase on (~~Gen~~ Genesis 11:7) is misunderstood by Mr. Mede, for not “seven”, but “seventy angels” are there addressed. It was usual with the Jews only to speak of four principal angels, who stand round about the throne of God; and their names are Michael, Uriel, Gabriel, and Raphael; according to them, Michael stands at his right hand, Uriel at his left, Gabriel before him, and Raphael behind him ^{f12}. However, it does not seem likely that angels should be placed in such a situation between the divine Persons, the Father and the Son; and still less that grace and peace should be wished for from them, as from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; and that any countenance should be given to angel worship, in a book in which angels are so often represented as worshippers, and in which worship is more than once forbidden them, and that by themselves: but by these seven spirits are intended the Holy Spirit of God, who is one in his person, but his gifts and graces are various; and therefore he is signified by this number, because of the fulness and perfection of them, and with respect to the seven churches, over whom he presided, whom he influenced, and sanctified, and filled, and enriched with his gifts and graces.

Ver. 5. *And from Jesus Christ*, etc.] Who, though the second Person in the Trinity, is mentioned last, because many things were to be said of him; and who is described in all his offices: in his prophetic office,

the faithful witness; as he is of his Father, of his mind and will, with respect to doctrine and worship; of his truth and faithfulness in his promises; and of his love, grace, and mercy, to his chosen; and of himself, of his true deity, proper sonship, and perfect equality with the Father; of his Messiahship, and of salvation through his obedience, sufferings, and death; and of all truth in general, to which he has bore a faithful testimony several ways, in his ministry, by his miracles, at his death, and by the shedding of his blood to seal it; by his Spirit since, and by the ministers of his word: he is described in his priestly office by

the first begotten of the dead: being the first that rose from the dead by his own power, and to an immortal life; for though some few were raised before him, yet not by themselves, nor to live for ever, but to die again. Moreover, he is the firstfruits of the resurrection, the pledge and earnest of it, as well as the efficient cause and exemplar of it. This character supposes that he died, as he did, for the sins of his people; and that he rose again from the dead, as he did, for their justification; and that he rose first as their head and representative, and opened the way of life for them. And he is described in his kingly office, for it follows,

and the Prince of the kings of the earth: which is not to be understood figuratively of the saints, who have power over sin, Satan, and the world, through the efficacious grace of Christ, and of whom he is Prince or King; but literally of the kings and princes of this world, over whom Christ is King and Lord, who receive their crowns and kingdoms from him, and rule by him, and are accountable to him, as they one day must be. Next follows a doxology, or an ascription of glory to him,

unto him that hath loved us; his own, his people, his church, his chosen, and who are given him by his Father; these he has loved with an everlasting and unchangeable love, with a love of complacency and delight, which passes knowledge, and will never end: and which he has shown in espousing their persons, undertaking their cause, assuming their nature, and in nothing more than in giving himself for them as a propitiatory sacrifice, or in dying and shedding his precious blood for them, as is next expressed:

and washed us from our sins in his own blood; which shows that these persons were loved before washed; they were not first washed, and then loved, but first loved, and then washed. Love was the cause of washing, and not washing the cause of love; hence it appears that they were in themselves filthy, and unclean through sin; and that they could not cleanse themselves by anything they could do; and that such was the love of Christ to them, that he shed his precious blood for them, which is a fountain opened, to wash in for sin, and which cleanses from all sin. This is to be understood, not of the sanctification of their natures, which is the work of the Spirit, but of atonement for their sins, and justification from them by the blood of Christ, whereby they are so removed, that they are all fair, and without spot. It is afterwards said, that these same persons are made priests; and it may be observed, that the priests were always washed, before they performed their service, as such ^{f13}. The Alexandrian copy and the Syriac and Arabic versions read, “and hath loosed us from our sins in”, or “by his blood”; that is, from the guilt of them, which was bound upon them.

Ver. 6. *And hath made us kings and priests*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy, and Complutensian edition, read, “a kingdom, priests”; and the Vulgate Latin version, “a kingdom and priests”; and the Arabic version, “a kingdom of priesthood”; reference seems to be had to (^{<D956>}Exodus 19:6): “and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests”; which the Jerusalem Targum renders, “ye shall be unto me”, ^ˆynhkw ^ˆykl m, “kings and priests”; and so the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel paraphrases it thus, “and ye shall be before me”, ^ˆykl m, “kings” crowned with a crown, ^ˆynhkw, “and priests” ministering. Hence it is a common saying with the Jews, that all Israelites are the sons of kings ^{f14}; and sometimes their doctors are called ^{hrwt} ^{ykl} m, “kings of the law” ^{f15}: and they ascribe the same thing to the word of the Lord as is here attributed to Jesus Christ: so the Targum of Jonathan on (^{<D983>}Deuteronomy 28:13) paraphrases the words;

“the word of the Lord shall appoint or constitute you kings, and not private persons.”

Likewise they say ^{f16}

“that even a Gentile, if he studies in the law, is ^{l wdg} ^ˆhkk, “as an high priest”.”

All which may serve to show to what the reference is had in the text, and from whence the language is taken. But the words are used in a higher and greater sense. The saints are made “kings” by Christ; they are so now; they have received a kingdom of grace, which cannot be taken away; and they have the power of kings over sin, Satan, and the world, and all their enemies; and they live and fare like kings, and are clothed like them, in rich apparel, the righteousness of Christ; and are attended as kings, angels being their lifeguards; and they will appear much more so hereafter, when they shall reign on earth with Christ a thousand years, shall sit upon the same throne, and have a crown of life and righteousness given them, and at last be introduced into the kingdom of glory. And they become such by being the sons of God, which power and privilege they receive from Christ, and so are heirs of God, and joint heirs with him, and by being united to him. And he also makes them “priests” to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and those of a broken heart, and of a contrite spirit, and even their souls and bodies, as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice unto God, by anointing and sanctifying them by his Spirit: and they are made such by him

to God, and his Father; not to men, nor to angels. Now to him that has shown so much love, and bestowed such high favours and honours, is the following ascription made,

to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen. The glory of his deity, and of all his offices; of his being the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth; and of all the benefits and blessings, favours and honours, received from him by his people: and “dominion”; over all creatures, and over all his saints, and especially in his kingdom, in the last days, which will be an everlasting one; and which is continually to be wished and prayed for, that it would come, and come quickly. “Amen”; so let it be, and so it shall be.

Ver. 7. *Behold he cometh with clouds*, etc.] John carries on the account of Christ in his kingly office, one branch of which is to execute judgment; and describes him by a future coming of his, which cannot be understood of his coming to take vengeance on the Jews, at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, though that is sometimes expressed in such language, and with such circumstances, as here; (see ^{<ABF>} Matthew 24:30 26:64); because if this revelation was made to John, in the latter end of Domitian's reign, as is commonly reported by the ancients, and in the year 95 or 96, as

chronologers generally place it, it must be upwards of twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore cannot relate to that; nor to his coming in a spiritual sense to convert the Jews in the latter day; for this coming is personal, and with clouds, when he will be seen by every eye; all which circumstances do not so well agree with that; besides, all the kindreds of the earth will not lament on that account: the wicked will take little notice of it, the tribes of the Jews will rejoice at it, and so will all the converted Gentiles: it is better therefore to understand this of Christ's second coming to judge the quick and dead, which is represented as just at hand, to denote the certainty of it; and a "behold" is prefixed to it, to excite attention, and to denote the importance of it: things of great moment, and very surprising, will then be done; Christ will appear in great glory and majesty, the dead in Christ will be raised, Christ's personal kingdom will take place, and the general judgment come on. The manner of his coming will be "with clouds"; either figuratively, with angels, who will attend him both for grandeur and service, or literally, in the clouds of heaven; he shall descend in like manner as he ascended, and as Daniel prophesied he should, (²⁰¹³Daniel 7:13). Hence, one of the names of the Messiah, with the Jews, is, *ynn* [, "Anani"^{f17}], which signifies "clouds"; and his coming is so described, both to denote the grand and magnificent manner, in which he will come, making the clouds his chariots; and to strike terror into his enemies, clouds and darkness being about him, thunder and lightning breaking out of them, as tokens of that vengeance he comes to take upon them; as also the visibility of his coming, he shall descend from the third heaven, where he now is, into the airy heaven, and sit upon the clouds, as on his throne, and be visible to all: hence it follows,

and every eye shall see him; that is, everyone that has eyes shall see him, or all men shall see him; the righteous shall see him, and be glad; they shall see him in his glory, as he is, and for themselves, and be satisfied; they shall rejoice at the sight of him; they will be filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: but the wicked will see him and tremble; they will be filled with the utmost consternation and astonishment; they will not be able to bear the sight of him; they will flee from him, and call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his face.

And they [also] which pierced him; his hands, feet, and side, when they crucified him; both the Roman soldiers, who actually did it, and the body of the Jewish nation, the rulers and common people, who consented to it, and

at whose instigation it was done; these, being raised from the dead, shall see him with their bodily eyes, whom they so used.

And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him; all the wicked, in the several parts of the world, will lament, and wring their hands, and express the inward terror and horror of their minds, at his appearing; they will fear his resentment of all their wicked words and actions; will dread his wrath, and tremble at his righteous judgment:

even so, Amen, says John, and so say all true believers; what the wicked lament, they rejoice at; they desire the coming of Christ, they love it, look and long for it; they believe it shall be, and wish it may be quickly, as in (⁶²²Revelation 22:20); This expression of faith in, and desire after the coming of Christ, is signified by two words, the one Greek and the other Hebrew; suggesting, that this is an article of faith among all the saints of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, and is what they are wishing and waiting for.

Ver. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega*, etc.] These are the words of Christ himself, appearing at once, and confirming what John had said of him, concerning his person, offices, and future coming: Alpha is the first letter, and Omega the last in the Greek alphabet, and signifies that Christ is the first and the last, as it is interpreted in (⁶¹¹Revelation 1:11,17), and is a character often given to the divine Being in prophetic writings; (see ³⁴⁰Isaiah 41:4 44:6 48:12); and is no small proof of the proper deity of Christ. Alpha is used by the Jews for the chief of persons or things;

“Macmas and Mezonicha (names of places) are **tl sl apl a**,
“Alpha for fine flour”;

that is, the best fine flour is there, they are the chief places for it: and again,

“Tekoah is **ˆmçl apl a**, “Alpha for oil”;

or the chief place for oil; the best oil was to be had there ^{f18}: so Christ, he is the Alpha, the chief as to his divine nature, being God over all, blessed for ever; and in his divine sonship, none, angels or men, are in such sense the Son of God as he is; and in all his offices, of prophet, priest, and King; he is the prophet, the great prophet of the church, never man spake like him, or taught as he did; he is the most excellent priest, that exceeds Aaron and all his sons, having an unchangeable priesthood; and he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; he has the chief place in the church, he is the head of it, and has in all things the preeminence; he is the chief in honour and

dignity, is at the right hand of God, and has a name above every name: he also in some sense may be said to be the Omega, the last and the lowest; as in his state of humiliation, he was not only made lower than the angels, but than man; he was despised and rejected of men, and scarcely reckoned a man, a worm, and no man; and he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Moreover, these letters, Alpha and Omega, being the first and the last in the alphabet, may stand for the whole; and it seems to be a proverbial expression taken from the Jews, who use the phrase, from Aleph to Tau, for the whole of any thing, which two letters in the Hebrew alphabet stand in the same place as these; accordingly the Syriac version renders it Olaph and Tau; and the Arabic version Aleph and Ye. It is said in (²⁰⁰⁶Ezekiel 9:6), “begin at my sanctuary”;

“R. Joseph taught, do not read “my sanctuary”, but “sanctified ones”, these are the children of men who confirm “the whole law”,
 wyt d[w Pl am, “from Aleph to Tau”;

the same as from Alpha to Omega, or from one end to the other: and a little after,

“says R. Levi, Tau is the end of the seal of the holy blessed God, for says R. Chanina, the seal of the holy blessed God is tma,
 “truth”: says R. Samuel bar Nachmani, these are the children of men who confirm the whole law “from Aleph to Tau”^{f19}.”

So Christ, he is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the chief, the whole of things; as of the covenant of grace, he is the first and last of it, he is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of it, and the ratifier and confirmer of it, he is the covenant itself, all its blessings and promises are in him; he is the sum and substance of the Scriptures, both of the law and of the Gospel; he is the fulfilling end of the law, and he is the subject matter of the Gospel; he stands in the first verse in Genesis, and in the last of the Revelation; he is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the whole and all in the business of salvation, in the affair of justification before God, in the sanctification of his people, in their adoption, and eternal glorification; he stands first and last in the book of God's purposes and decrees, in the book of the covenant, in the book of the creatures, or creation, being the first cause, and last end of all things, in the book of Providence, and in the book of the Scriptures: likewise, as these two letters include all the rest, this phrase

may be expressive of the perfection of Christ, who as God has the fulness of the Godhead, all the perfections of the divine nature in him; and, as man, is in all things made like unto his brethren; and, as Mediator, has all fulness of power, wisdom, grace, and righteousness in him, in whom all the saints are complete; and this may also denote his eternity, he having none before him, nor any after him; and which also is signified by some other following expressions:

the beginning and the ending; the Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, leave out this; which seems to be explanative of the former clause, Alpha being the beginning of the alphabet, and Omega the ending of it; and properly belongs to Christ, who knows no beginning, nor will he have any end with respect to time, being from everlasting to everlasting; and agrees with him as the first cause of all things, both of the old and new creation, and the last end to which they are all referred, being made for his pleasure, honour, and glory: these things now

saith the Lord; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ; the Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, read, “the Lord God”; and the Ethiopic version only God:

which is, and which was, and which is to come; who is God over all, “was” God from all eternity, and is to come as such; which he will show by: his omniscience and omnipotence, displayed in the judgment of the world: who “is” now a Saviour of all that come to God by him; “was” so under the Old Testament dispensation, being the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and “is to come”, as such, and shall appear a second time unto salvation to them that look for him: particularly this phrase is expressive of the eternity of Christ, who is, was, and ever will be; and of his immutability, who is the same he was, and will be for ever the same he is, and was, unchangeable in his person, in his love, and in the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; he is the same today, yesterday, and for ever. This same phrase is used of God the Father in (~~Rev~~ Revelation 1:4); and is a further proof of the deity of Christ; and which is still more confirmed by the following character,

the Almighty; as he appears to be, by creating all things but of nothing; by upholding all creatures in their beings; by the miracles he wrought on earth; by the resurrection of himself from the dead; by obtaining eternal redemption for his people; and by his having the care and government of

them upon him, whom he keeps, upholds, bears, and carries to the end, through all their infirmities, afflictions, temptations, and trials.

Ver. 9. I, John, who also am your brother, etc.] Here begins the narrative of the visions and prophecies of this book, the former verses containing a general preface to the whole; and this, and the two following verses, are the introduction to the first vision, which John saw; who describes himself by his name, “I John”, the evangelist and apostle, a servant of Christ, and a beloved disciple of his; one that was well known to the seven churches to whom he writes, and who had no reason to doubt of his fidelity in the account he gives them; and also by his relation to them as a “brother”, not in a natural, but in a spiritual sense, they and he belonging to that family that is named of Christ, to the household of God, and of faith, and having one and the same Father, even God: thus, though he was an elder, an evangelist, yea, an apostle by office, yet he puts himself on a level with the several members of these churches, as he was a believer in Christ:

and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ; many are the afflictions and tribulations of the saints; these lie in the way to the kingdom; and they are companions and partners with one another in them, both by enduring the same, and by their sympathy and compassion with each other; and as they go sharers in the troubles of this life, so they do, and shall in the kingdom; in the kingdom of grace now, being all of them made kings and priests unto God, and in the kingdom of Christ on earth, where they will all reign with him a thousand years, and in the kingdom of glory, where they shall reign together to all eternity; and in the mean while, they join in the exercise of the grace of patience, of which Christ is the author, exemplar, and object; they are directed by the Spirit of God into a patient waiting for Christ, or a patient expectation of his coming, kingdom, and glory: the Alexandrian copy reads, “patience in Christ”; and the Complutensian edition, “patience in Christ Jesus”: this same person John, who gives this account of himself,

was in the isle that is called Patmos; but now “Palmosa”; it is one of the islands of the Cyclades, in the Archipelago, or Icarian sea, and sometimes called the Aegean sea, and had its name from the turpentine trees in it; it is, as Pliny^{f20} says, about thirty miles in circumference; and it lay next to the churches on the continent, and is said to be about forty miles southwest of Ephesus, from whence John came thither, and to which church he writes first; how he came here he does not say, concealing, through modesty, his

sufferings; he did not come here of his own accord; Ignatius says ^{f21}, John **εφυγαδευετο**, “was banished to Patmos”: by Domitian emperor of Rome, as Irenaeus says ^{f22}, at the latter end of his reign, about the year 95 or 96; and, as Tertullian ^{f23} after he had been cast into a vessel of flaming oil, where he got no hurt: and this banishment was not for any immorality, and capital sin he had committed, but

for the word of God; for believing in Christ, the essential Word of God, and for professing and bearing record of him, both in preaching and writing:

and for the testimony of Jesus; for the Gospel of Christ, (see ~~<4100>~~ Revelation 1:2); for embracing it, adhering to it, and publishing it: it is generally thought that John wrote his Revelation in this isle, though some think it is not to be concluded from these words, but the contrary that he had been here, but now was not, but at Ephesus, where he wrote what he had a vision of there.

Ver. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, etc.] Not on the Jewish sabbath, which was now abolished, nor was that ever called the Lord's day, and had John meant that, he would have said on the sabbath day; much less the Jewish passover, but the first day of the week is designed; so the Ethiopic version renders it “on the first day”; and is so called just as the ordinance of the supper is called the Lord's supper, being instituted by the Lord, and the Lord's table, (~~<4101>~~ 1 Corinthians 10:21 11:20), and that because it was the day in which our Lord rose from the dead, (~~<4102>~~ Mark 16:9); and in which he appeared at different times to his disciples, (~~<4103>~~ John 20:19,26), and which the primitive churches set apart for his worship and service, and on which they met together to hear the word, and attend on ordinances, (~~<4104>~~ Acts 20:7 ~~<4105>~~ 1 Corinthians 16:1); and Justin Martyr ^{f24} tells us, who lived within about fifty years after this time, that on the day called **τη του ηλιου ημερα**, “Sunday”, (by the Greeks,) the Christians met together in one place, and read the Scriptures, and prayed together, and administered the ordinance of the supper; and this, he adds, was the first day in which God created the World, and our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead; yea, Barnabas ^{f25}, the companion of the Apostle Paul, calls this day the eighth day, in distinction from the seventh day sabbath of the Jews, and which he says is the beginning of another world; and therefore we keep the eighth day, adds he, joyfully, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and being manifested, ascended unto heaven: and this day was

known by the ancients by the name of “the Lord's day”; as by Ignatius ^{f26}, Irenaeus ^{f27}, Tertullian ^{f28}, Origen ^{f29}, and others; for it must be some day that was known by this name, otherwise it is mentioned to no purpose, because it would not be distinctive from others; for which reason it cannot merely design the day in which John saw this vision, because the Lord appeared on it to him, for this would not distinguish it from any other day. Some have conjectured that this was not the weekly Lord's day observed by the Christians, but the anniversary of Christ's resurrection; and so the Ethiopians still call Easter “Schambatah Crostos”, the sabbath of Christ: to understand it of the former is best. Now, though John was driven from the house and worship of God, and could not join with the saints in the public worship of that day; yet he was employed in spiritual contemplations and exercises, and was under a more than ordinary influence of the Spirit of God; and his spirit or soul was wholly intent upon, and taken up with divine and spiritual things, with visions and representations that were made unto his mind, which he perceived in his spirit, and not with the organs of his body; he was in an ecstasy of spirit, and knew not scarcely whether he was in the body or out of it:

and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet; which was the voice of the Son of God, as appears by what it uttered, (⁶⁰¹¹Revelation 1:11); and is afterwards said to be as the sound of many waters; and it was behind him, as in (²³¹¹Isaiah 30:21), it came to him at an unawares, and surprised him, while he was in deep meditation on spiritual things: and it was a very “great” one; it was the voice of a great person, of the Son of God, and expressed great things, and was very sonorous and loud, it was like the sound of a trumpet; and this was partly to awaken the attention of John to it, and partly to express the certainty of the relation he gives of what it said; had it been a low muttering voice, it might be questioned whether John rightly understood it, and whether he might not be mistaken in the account of what he heard; but it being so loud and clear, there is no room for such a doubt.

Ver. 11. *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*, etc.] These characters, which are repeated here, (see Gill on “⁶⁰⁰⁸Revelation 1:8”); are left out in the Alexandrian copy, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; but are very fitly retained, to point out the person that speaks; to express his dignity, deity, and eternity; to excite the attention of John, and to give weight to what he said:

and, what thou seest, write in a book; that it might remain, and be read of all men, and be profitable to the churches in the then present age, and in all future ones:

and send [it] unto the seven churches which are in Asia; from whence it appears, that not only the seven following epistles were sent to the churches, but that after John had written in a book the account of all the visions that he saw, the whole was sent unto them, for their use and benefit; and who are particularly named:

unto Ephesus; which was a city of Ionia, and which Pliny calls ^{f30} the work of the Amazons, and the light of Asia; it was famous for the temple of Diana, but more so for having a church of Christ in it: hither the Apostle Paul came and preached, and continued for the space of two years; where a very famous church was planted by him, and proper officers appointed, to whom he wrote a very excellent epistle: this is now a miserable desolate place, not a city, but a village; and is called by the Turks, Aiasalik: of this place and church; (see Gill on “~~4189~~ Acts 18:19”), (see Gill on “~~4017~~ Acts 20:17”);

and unto Smyrna; another city of Ionia, so called from Smyrna, the wife of Theseus ^{f31}, the builder of it; or from Smyrna, an Amazon ^{f32}, the relics of whose marble bust are to be seen there to this day: it lies about forty six miles from Ephesus, and is by the Turks now called Esmir, and is still a place famous, not for pompous buildings, but for number of inhabitants, riches, and commerce:

and unto Pergamos; this was a city of Mysia, situated by the river Caicus, formerly the seat of the kings of Attalia, and was bequeathed by Attalus, their last king, to the Romans: it is famous for being the native place of Galen the physician, and of Apollodorus the rhetorician, master to Augustus Caesar, and for the invention of parchment in it, from whence it seems to have its name: it is now called by the Turks Bergamo, and is almost sixty four miles from Smyrna:

and unto Thyatira; a city of Lydia, near the river Lycus, formerly called Pelopia, and Ehippia, and now, by the Turks, Ak Hissar, or “the white camp”, and is distant from Pergamos about forty eight miles; (see Gill on “~~4164~~ Acts 16:14”);

and unto Sardis; this was another city of Lydia, situated at the side of Mount Tmolus, it was the metropolis of Lydia, and the seat of King

Croesus, and is now called, by the Turks, Sart; and instead of a famous city, it is now an obscure little village, of mean houses, and scarce any other inhabitants in it than shepherds and cow keepers, and is thirty three miles from Thyatira:

and unto Philadelphia; another city of Lydia, situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus; it had its name from Attalus Philadelphus, the builder of it; it is now called, by the Turks, Alah Shahr, or “the fair city”, though there is nothing beautiful or magnificent in it; it is distant from Thyatira about twenty seven miles:

and unto Laodicea; another city of Lydia, near the river Lycus, first named Diospolis, afterwards Rhoas, and is now, by the Turks, called Eski Hissar, or “the old camp”; and is inhabited by none, unless it be in the night, by wolves, foxes, and jackals, as our countryman Dr. Smith affirms, in his “Notitia” of the seven churches of Asia; from whom I have taken the account of these cities as they now are, and the rest from Pliny and Ptolomy chiefly.

Ver. 12. *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me*, etc.] The Complutensian edition reads, “and there I turned”: and so the Arabic version; that is, to see who it was that spoke, from whom the voice came, and by whom it was uttered; (see ^{1210} Exodus 20:18);

and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; which represented the seven churches, (^{1210} Revelation 1:20); in allusion to the seven lamps in the candlestick of the sanctuary, (^{1257} Exodus 25:37 ^{3012} Zechariah 4:2); compared to “candlesticks”, for the use of them, which is to hold forth light; these have none of themselves, but what is put into them, and being put into them, they hold it forth; so the churches of Christ have no light of themselves, but what is put into them; and the light which is put into them, is not the mere light of nature, nor the law of Moses, but the Gospel of Christ; which dispels darkness, and is the means of enlightening sinners, and gives light to saints, by which they walk and work; and this light is put into the churches by Christ, whose the Gospel is, and who is himself come a light into the world; and being put here by him, it is held forth by them, especially by the ministers of it, who are the lights of the world, both by their ministry, and in their lives and conversations: and they are compared to “golden” candlesticks, because of their excellency, preciousness, and value, in the esteem of Christ; and for their brightness and purity in doctrine, discipline, and life; and for their splendour, glory, and beauty; and

for their stability and duration; and though they are liable to corruption and taint, yet may be melted, refined, and purified as gold.

Ver. 13. *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [one] like unto the son of man*, etc.] By whom is meant not an angel, for he speaks of himself as a divine Person, as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, phrases not applicable to any created beings; and of himself also as having been dead, which angels are not capable of, and of living again, and of living for evermore, and having power over death and the grave, which no creature has; yea, he calls himself expressly the Son of God, (^{6611b}Revelation 1:11,17,18 2:18); so that Christ is manifestly designed, who, as a divine Person, appeared in a form like that individual human nature which was at his Father's right hand; for that human nature of his, or he as the son of man, was not in the midst of these candlesticks, or churches, but he the Son of God was in a form like to his human nature in heaven; so before his incarnation, he is said to be like unto the son of man, in (²⁰⁷³Daniel 7:13); to which there is a reference here, and not only in this, but in some other parts of the description; so after his ascension, he in a visionary way appears, not in that real human nature he assumed, but in a form like unto it, that being in heaven; but when he was here on earth he is called the son of man, and not like to one; though even such a phrase may express the truth and reality of his humanity, for who more like to the son of man than he who is so? (see ⁸⁰¹⁴John 1:14 ⁸²⁰⁷Philippians 2:7); now Christ was seen by John in the midst of the candlesticks or churches, and among whom he walked, as in (⁶⁶⁰¹Revelation 2:1); which is expressive of his presence in his churches, and which he has promised unto the end of the world; and of the gracious visits he makes them, and the sweet communion and conversation he indulges them with, to their joy and comfort; as well as the walks he takes among them for his own delight and pleasure; and where he is, abides and takes his turns, particularly as a priest, in which form he now appeared, as the antitype of Aaron the high priest, to him the lamps or candles in the candlesticks, to cause them to burn more brightly and clearly:

clothed with a garment down to the foot; which some understand of the righteousness of Christ; this is called a garment, a wedding garment, the best or first robe, the robe of righteousness; and is fitly compared to one, it being unto, and upon believers, put upon them, and which covers their persons, keeps them warm and comfortable, and beautifies and adorns them; and is a very beautiful, pure, and spotless robe; and reaches to the feet, covers all the members of Christ's mystical body, the meanest and

lowest, as well as the more excellent; the weakest believer as well, and as much, as the strongest: but not Christ mystical, but personal, is here represented; others therefore think that this long garment is a sign of gravity and wisdom, it being usual for men of power and authority, and learning, as the Jewish sanhedrim, Scribes and Pharisees, to wear long garments; but it seems rather to design a priestly robe; the robe of the ephod wore by the high priest is called by this name in the Septuagint version of (^{<D230>}Exodus 28:4,31); and so it is by Josephus ^{f33}, who speaking of the hyacinthine tunic, or robe of blue, says, this is *ποδηρης*, “a garment down to the foot”, which in our language is called “Meeir”; rather it should be *ly[m]*, “Meil”, which is its Hebrew name; and so this robe is expressed by the same word here, used by Philo the Jew ^{f34}, and by Jerom ^{f35}; so Maimonides ^{f36} says, the length of his garment was to the top of his heel: and in the habit of a priest did Christ now appear; and so he is described in his priestly office, in the midst of his churches, having made atonement for their sins by the sacrifice of himself; and now as their high priest had entered into the holiest of all with his own blood and righteousness; bore their names on his breastplate, appeared in the presence of God on their account, and ever lived to make intercession for them:

and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; as the high priest was with the girdle of the ephod, which was made of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, (^{<D238>}Exodus 28:8); and with which the priests were girt about the paps, or breast, as Christ is here described: it is said of the priests in (^{<26418>}Ezekiel 44:18), “they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat”; which some render “in sweating places”: and so some Jewish writers interpret it, which will serve to illustrate the present place;

“says R. Abai ^{f37}, (upon citing (^{<26418>}Ezekiel 44:18)) they do not gird themselves in the place in which they sweat; according to the tradition, when they gird themselves they do not gird neither below their loins, nor above their arm holes, but over against their arm holes;”

the gloss says, upon their ribs, against their arm pit, that is, about their breast, or paps; and which is still more plainly expressed by the Targum on the above place, which paraphrases it thus,

“they shall not gird about their loins, but they shall gird *whbbli*
l [, “about their heart” .”

So Josephus^{f38} says, the high priest's garment was girt about the breast, a little below the arm holes. Christ's girdle, as a King, is the girdle of faithfulness and righteousness, which is about his loins; and his girdle, as a prophet, is the girdle of truth; but, as a priest, it is the girdle of love; it is that which has constrained him to put himself in the room and stead of his people, to assume their nature, give himself a sacrifice for them, and intercede on their behalf: this is like a girdle, round from everlasting to everlasting; is said to be "golden", because of the excellency, purity, glory, and duration of it; and because it is very strong, affectionate, and hearty, it is hid to be a girdle about the paps, near where is the heart, the seat of love; and this may also denote the power, strength, and readiness of Christ to assist and help his churches in every time of need.

Ver. 14. *His head and [his] hairs [were] white like wool, as white as snow*, etc.] In allusion to the white head and hairs of old men, said to be hoary, or like the hoar frost, and compared to an almond tree in bloom, (²⁰⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 12:5); and here to wool and snow for whiteness; (see ³²⁷⁸Ezekiel 27:18); and according to the Jews^{f39}, *bl rmx*, "white wool", is the wool of a lamb just born, about which a cloth is bound, that it may not be defiled; now these metaphors are expressive of the antiquity of Christ, who is the everlasting Father, and whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting; and of his senile gravity and prudence, for with the Ancient is wisdom; he is the wisdom of God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid; and also of his glory and majesty, being the brightness of his Father's glory; and likewise of his true and proper deity, since this description is the same with that of the Ancient of days in (²⁰⁰⁹Daniel 7:9); for by his head is not here meant either God the Father, who is sometimes called the head of Christ, (⁴⁰⁰⁸1 Corinthians 11:3), nor his divine nature, which is the chief and principal in him, nor his headship over the church; nor do his hairs intend his elect, which grow upon him, and are nourished by him, and are so called for their number, weakness, and purity:

and his eyes [were] as a flame of fire: (see ²⁰⁰⁶Daniel 10:6); which may design the omniscience of Christ, which reaches to all persons, and things, and is very searching and penetrating, and discovers and brings to light things the most dark and obscure; and also Christ's eyes of love upon his own people, which have both heat and light; Christ's love never waxes cold, and, being shed abroad in the hearts of his people, warms theirs; and in the light of his gracious countenance do they see light; and his love, like

flames of fire, melts their souls into a true and genuine repentance for sin: or else, rather his eyes of wrath and vengeance, as set upon his enemies, are here meant: which will be fierce and furious, bring swift and sudden destruction on them, before which there is no standing, and from which there is no fleeing. It is said of Augustus Caesar, that he had fiery eyes ^{f40}.

Ver. 15. *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,* etc.] By which is meant, not his human nature in a suffering state; or his people, the meaner and lower parts of his mystical body, in a like state; or his apostles and ministers, who are supporters of his church, and run to and fro with spiritual knowledge, for which, though they suffer much, are permanent and glorious; but either the power of Christ in bearing up and supporting his people, in the care and government and defence of them; or his ways, works, and walks in his churches, and all his providential administrations towards them, which are holy, just, and righteous, and will be manifest; or his wrath and vengeance in treading down and trampling upon his enemies:

and his voice as the sound of many waters; meaning his Gospel, as preached by his apostles and ministers, which was heard far and near; (see ~~508~~Romans 10:18); and which made a great noise in the world; or his voice of vengeance on his enemies, which will be very terrible and irresistible.

Ver. 16. *And he had in his right hand seven stars,* etc.] The angels or pastors of the seven churches, (~~602~~Revelation 1:20). The ministers of the Gospel are compared to stars, because of their efficient cause, God, who has made them, and fixed them in their proper place, and for his glory; and because of the matter of them, being the same with the heavens, so ministers are of the same nature with the churches; and because of their form, light, which they receive from the sun, so preachers of the Gospel receive their light from Christ; and because of their multitude and variety, so the ministers of the Gospel are many, and their gifts different; and chiefly for their usefulness, to give light to others, to direct to Christ, and point out the way of salvation, and to rule over the churches: nor was it unusual with the Jews to compare good men to stars, and to the seven stars. The Targumist ^{f41} says, the seven lamps in the candlestick answer to the seven stars to which the righteous are like. These are led and held in Christ's right hand; which shows that they are dear unto him, and highly valued by him; that they are his, in his possession, at his dispose, whom he uses as his instruments to do his work; and whom he upholds and sustains,

that they shall not sink under their burdens; and whom he preserves from failing, and so holds them that they shall stand fast in the faith, and not be carried away with the error of the wicked:

and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword; which designs the word of God; (see ^{<4017>}Ephesians 6:17 ^{<8012>}Hebrews 4:12); This comes out of the mouth of Christ, it is the word of God, and not of man; and is a sharp sword, contains sharp reproofs for sin, severe threatenings against it, and gives cutting convictions of it, and is a twoedged one; and by its two edges may be meant law and Gospel; the law lays open the sins of men, fills with grief and anguish for them, yea, not only wounds, but kills; and the Gospel cuts down the best in man, his wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and carnal privileges, in which he trusts; and the worst in man, teaching him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts: or the word of God may be so called, because it is a means both of saving and of destroying; it is the savour of life unto life to some, and the savour of death unto death to others; and is both an offensive and defensive weapon; it is for the defence of the saints, against Satan, false teachers, and every other enemy; and an offensive one to them, which cuts them down, and destroys them and their principles: or this may mean the judiciary sentence of Christ upon the wicked, which will be a fighting against them, and a smiting of the nations of the world; (see ^{<4026>}Revelation 2:16 19:15 ^{<4306>}Psalms 149:6); which the Jews interpret of the law ^{f42}:

and his countenance [was] as the sun shineth in his strength; at noonday; such was the countenance of Christ at his transfiguration, (^{<4012>}Matthew 17:2); and designs here the manifestation of himself in the glories of his person, and in the riches of his grace; who is the sun of righteousness that arises upon his people with light, heat, joy, and comfort; see the phrase in (^{<4023>}Judges 5:31), which the Jewish writers understand of the strength of the sun both in the summer solstice, and in the middle of the day, or at noon, at which time its heat is strongest, and it usually shines brightest; the design of the metaphor is to set forth the glory and majesty of Christ.

Ver. 17. *And when I saw him*, etc.] The glorious person here described, who was just behind him, and of whom he had a full view, being so near him:

I fell at his feet as dead; through consternation and fear, the sight was so amazing and terrible; the appearance of a divine person in any degree of majesty and glory, has had some considerable effect upon men, even upon

the best of men; but John seems to be more affected with it than any, as the vision was the more grand and illustrious: Manoah was afraid he should die, but did not fall down as dead; Ezekiel fell upon his face, but had his senses; Daniel's comeliness turned into corruption, and he retained no strength, he fainted, and fell into a deep sleep; (see ^{<07132>}Judges 13:22 ^{<30128>}Ezekiel 1:28) (^{<27108>}Daniel 10:8,9); but John fell down at once, as dead. This panic which good men were seized with, at any more than ordinary appearance of God, or apprehension of his presence, arose from a notion that present death ensues a sight of him; hence Jacob wonders, and is thankful, that he had seen God face to face, and yet his life was preserved, (^{<03230>}Genesis 32:30); and such an effect as here, upon the body, any uncommon discovery of the divine Being has, partly through the weakness of human nature, which in its present circumstances is not able to bear the rays and glories of a divine person; hence the resurrection of the body in power, glory, and immortality, incorruption and spirituality, is necessary to the enjoyment of God and Christ in a state of bliss and happiness to all eternity; and partly through a consciousness of sin, which ever since the fall of Adam has occasioned fear and perturbation of mind, even in the best of saints, when they have had any sense of the divine Majesty being near, in an unusual form of glory:

and he laid his right hand upon me; even the same in which he had, and held the seven stars; and which showed what an affection he had for him, in what esteem he had him, what care he took of him, and what power he would exert in lifting up, strengthening, and supporting him; for he laid not his hand on him in wrath and angers, but in love; and in order to raise him up and revive his spirits, and remove his fears; hence the Ethiopic version renders it, “and he took hold on me with his right hand, and lifted me up”; as he does all who in a spiritual sense fall at his feet; it is always safe and comfortable falling there:

saying unto me, fear not; language which John had heard from him in the days of his flesh, and might therefore be chose now on purpose that he might the sooner know who he was and be comforted; (see ^{<04127>}Matthew 14:27 ^{<21232>}Luke 12:32).

I am the first and the last; a way of speaking used by God when he is about to comfort his people, and remove their fears; (see ^{<23104>}Isaiah 41:4 44:6 48:12); and is used by Christ for the same purpose here; and so is a proof of his true and proper deity, and is expressive of his eternity, and also

of his dignity and excellency: he is the first and last in divine predestination, in the covenant of grace, in creation, in the business of salvation, and in his church, by whom, and for whom, are all things in it; he is the head of the body, the Son over his own house, and the firstborn among many brethren; and so the Alexandrian copy read, here, “the firstborn and the last”.

ⲱϥⲁⲣ, “the first”, is a name of the Messiah with the Jews^{f43}; (see Gill on “ⲁⲓⲃⲁ Revelation 1:8”).

Ver. 18. *I [am] he that liveth*, etc.] As the eternal God, who has life in himself, originally, essentially, and inderivatively, and is the fountain and author of life to others; and who ever lived as the Mediator and Redeemer, and still does, and ever will, yea, even when he was dead as man:

and was dead; he died the death of the cross, for the sins of his people, in due time, and but once; and it was but a short time he was held under the power of death, and will never die any more:

and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; he was always alive as God, or he was always the living God, and ever will be; and he is now alive as man, and will for ever continue so; and he is alive to God, he lives by him, with him, and to his glory; and he is alive to the benefit and advantage of his redeemed ones, for whom he died; he ever lives to make intercession for them; he rose again from the dead for their justification; their being quickened together with him, and their being begotten again to a lively hope, are owing to his being alive; and as their reconciliation is by his death, so their salvation, or the application of it to them, is by his interceding life; and his resurrection is the cause of theirs: this is very fitly said to John, who was fallen as dead at the feet of Christ, and might be to animate him against the fears of death, or whatever he was to meet with on account of Christ; as well as to make himself known unto him, who had before known him, living, dying, and risen again. The word “Amen” is left out in the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; but is in others, and is rightly retained, either as an asseveration of Christ to the truth of what is before said, or as an assent of John's unto it, who was a proper witness both of the death and resurrection of Christ:

and have the keys of hell and death; or “of death and hell”; as the words are transposed in the Alexandrian copy and Complutensian edition, in the Vulgate Latin and in all the Oriental versions, agreeably to (ⲁⲓⲃⲁ Revelation 6:8 20:13,14), by which phrase is expressed the power of Christ over both:

his power over death is seen in taking away persons by death when he pleases, the instances of Ananias and Sapphira are proofs of this; and in delivering persons from death when near it, as the centurion's servant, Peter's wife's mother, and the nobleman's son of Capernaum; and in raising persons from the dead, as Jairus's daughter, the widow of Naam's son, and Lazarus, when he was here on earth; and in his raising up his own body when dead, and which will also appear in raising all the dead at the last day: and his power over "hell", by which may be meant the grave, or the place of the departed, and separate souls, or the place of the damned and of the devils which are there, will be seen in opening the graves at the time of the resurrection, when death and hell, or the grave, will deliver up the dead in them, at his command; and in retaining or sending out the separate souls "in hades"; and in opening the doors of hell, and casting in the wicked, and destroying them, soul and body, there; and in shutting them up, that they cannot come out from thence who are once in; and in binding Satan, and casting him into the bottomless pit, and shutting him up there, the key of which he has in his hand; and in preserving his church and people from his power and malice, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against them. This is an expression of the sovereignty, power, and authority of Christ; and is designed to encourage and support John under his present concern and anxiety of mind about the person he saw in this vision: *hrwbq l ç j tpm*, "the key of the grave", and of the resurrection of the dead, is frequently said by the Jews to be one of the keys which are in the hands of the holy blessed God, and his only; not in the hands of an angel or a seraph, or any other^{f44}.

Ver. 19. *Write the things which thou hast seen*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy and some others, and the Complutensian edition, read, "write therefore the things", etc. meaning what he had now seen, the vision of one like to the son of man, amidst the golden candlesticks, with seven stars in his right hand, and as above described; this was what he had seen (~~and~~ Revelation 1:12,13,16); for it does not refer to what he had seen of Christ in the days of his flesh, but to what he had now seen in this representation of him:

and the things which are; the state of the churches of Christ in the apostolic age, and at that time signified by the Ephesian church, and that part of the Smyranean which John lived to see:

and the things which shall be hereafter; from hence unto the end of the world, in successive generations, signified by the rest of the churches, and in the visions of the seals, trumpets, and vials.

Ver. 20. *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand*, etc.] The sense is, that John was to write the mystery of these stars, or the mystical sense of them:

and the seven golden candlesticks; the mystery, or mysterious sense of them also; for the words are in a continued connection with (^{<ref>19</ref>}Revelation 1:19), and have respect to the following interpretation of them, and to the epistles in the following chapter, which are mystical, and prophetic of the state of the churches in all succeeding ages:

the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; that is, the seven stars which John saw in Christ's right hand, represent the angels, or pastors of the seven churches of Asia, and in them all the pastors and ministers of the churches in all the periods of time until Christ's second coming. Here it may be observed, that the ministers of the Gospel are not only compared to "stars", for which (see Gill on "^{<ref>16</ref>}Revelation 1:16"); but likewise to "angels", which signifies "messengers", as ministers are sent forth by Christ with the message of the Gospel to publish to the sons of men; and as the angels are Christ's ministering spirits, so are the preachers of the Gospel the ministers of Christ, that wait upon him and serve him in the ministry of the word, and in the administration of ordinances; and there is some agreement between them in holiness, knowledge, zeal, diligence, and watchfulness, in their work; as also they may be so called for the honour and esteem in which they are, both with Christ and his churches; and who like the angels rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and the enlargement of the interest of Christ:

and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches; represent the seven churches, of Asia, and in them all the churches of Christ, in successive ages, to the end of time; the reasons why these are signified by "candlesticks", (see Gill on "^{<ref>12</ref>}Revelation 1:12"); and that they are prophetic of the churches of Christ in the several periods of time, until he comes again, will appear from the following considerations: the whole book is called a prophecy, and a revelation of things that were shortly to come to pass, and it would be very strange, and very unsuitable to its title, should the three first chapters contain nothing prophetic in them; the characters of the divine Person under which these seven churches

are saluted, as he which is, and was, and is to come, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, show that the things written to them belong to the Gospel church state, from the beginning to the end of it, for what other reason can be given for such a peculiar use of them? the very grand and illustrious appearance of Christ, antecedent to these epistles, when compared with the appearance of God, previous to the opening of the sealed book, and the seven seals of it, may induce one to conclude, that as the latter introduces the book prophecy in this revelation, so the former introduces the church prophecy; nor does it seem that such a magnificent appearance is necessary to the bare sending of some letters of advice to some particular churches: moreover, as there are some things in these epistles too common to all the churches and ministers to be restrained to some particular ones, such as Christ's affording his presence among them, signified by his walking amidst the candlesticks, and his care of, and respect unto the ministers of the Gospel, expressed by holding seven stars in his right hand; for can it be thought that Christ only granted his presence to the seven churches in Asia? or that the pastors of those churches were the only ones Christ holds in his right hand? so there are others too particular to certain periods to belong to those churches, as that Smyrna should have a crown of life, Pergamos hidden manna and a white stone, Thyatira the morning star, and Philadelphia be delivered from a temptation that would reach all the world, and is not yet come; for which no reason can be given in the literal sense of these epistles; and it is strange that only seven churches should be sent to, and these only in Asia; why not to the churches in Africa and Europe? and these churches also, all but Ephesus, very obscure ones; why not to the churches at Antioch, Corinth, Rome, etc. and it is stranger still, if, as Epiphanius says^{f45}, there was no church at Thyatira till after the writing of these letters: nothing can account for all this but their being prophetic, there being something in the number, names, situation, and case of these churches, which were emblematical of the state of the church in successive periods of time; to which may be added, that the epiphonema at the close of every epistle, "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches", shows that each epistle to every church is not designed for that church only, but for churches; and for what churches but for those who are represented in that period of time, since they must be unsuitable to one another? and besides, this concluding sentence shows, that what is contained in each epistle is something intricate, abstruse, and parabolical, it being only used when some such thing is delivered; (see ~~4015~~ Matthew 11:15 13:9,43). There is one

observation more to be made, and which runs through all the epistles, and that is, that the names of the several churches, and the titles which Christ assumes in writing to each, as well as the subject matter of the epistles, have respect to the several distinct periods of the church; all which will more clearly appear in the following notes upon them.