

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION 2

This chapter contains the epistles to the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira. It begins with that to Ephesus, in which the sender of it describes himself by some of his characters mentioned in the preceding chapter; takes notice of some things commendable in this church, ([Revelation 2:1-3](#)), reproves her for leaving her first love; gives some advice upon it; threatens her in case of non-repentance; yet notwithstanding commends her for her detestation of some bad practices; and concludes the epistle with a phrase exciting to attention to what is written, and with a promise to them that are constant and conquering, ([Revelation 2:4-7](#)), next follows the epistle to the church at Smyrna, in which the sender assumes some of his former titles; takes notice of her works in general, and of her afflictions in particular, and of the blasphemy of others, ([Revelation 2:8,9](#)), fortifies her against a great affliction to be endured, described by its author, kind, use, and duration; and exhorts to faithfulness and constancy, with a promise of a crown of life, ([Revelation 2:10](#)), and closes the epistle in the same form as the preceding, promising security from the second death to the persevering and conquering Christian, ([Revelation 2:11](#)), and next in order is the epistle to the church at Pergamos, in which the sender takes to him one of the above characters in the description of him; observes her works and place of abode, and commends her faithfulness to him in the worst of times and places, ([Revelation 2:12,13](#)), yet exhibits a complaint against her for having, and conniving at persons of bad principles and practice, called Balaamites and Nicolaitans, ([Revelation 2:14,15](#)), exhorts to repentance, and in failure of it threatens to come and fight against them; and closes the epistle in the same manner as the two former, with a promise of hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name to him that overcomes, ([Revelation 2:16,17](#)), and the last epistle in this chapter is that to the church at Thyatira, in which the sender makes use of some other titles and characters of his before mentioned; takes notice of her good works, and yet signifies he had a controversy with her, for permitting a false prophetess to teach in her, who seduced men to fornication and idolatry, ([Revelation](#)

2:18-20), whose impenitence is complained of, and which was aggravated by having space for repentance given her, (<sup>4021</sup>Revelation 2:21), wherefore, in case of continuance in impenitence, he threatens both her and her followers with tribulation and death, whereby the omniscience and justice of Christ would be manifest to all the churches, (<sup>4022</sup>Revelation 2:22,23), and then another and better sort of men in this church are addressed, who are described as not having imbibed the doctrine of the false prophetess, and as not approving the depths of Satan, or her doctrines of devils; and these are told that no other burden should be laid on them than was, and are exhorted to hold fast what they had, until the coming of Christ, (<sup>4023</sup>Revelation 2:24,25), and for their encouragement to hold on to the end, many promises are made unto them respecting their power and rule over their enemies, and the happy days that they should enjoy, (<sup>4025</sup>Revelation 2:26-28), and the epistle is concluded with the usual epiphonema, (<sup>4029</sup>Revelation 2:29).

**Ver. 1.** *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write*, etc.] Of the city of Ephesus, (see Gill on “<sup>4011</sup>Revelation 1:11”) and (see Gill on “<sup>4189</sup>Acts 18:19”). The church here seems to have been founded by the Apostle Paul, who continued here two years, by which means all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, (<sup>4190</sup>Acts 19:10); of this church, (see Gill on “<sup>4107</sup>Acts 20:17”); it is named first, because it was the largest, most populous, and famous, and was nearest to Patmos, where John now was, and most known to him, it being the place where he had resided; and it was the place from whence the Gospel came to others, and spread itself in lesser Asia; but especially it is first written to, because it represented the church in the apostolic age; so that this letter contains the things which are, (<sup>4019</sup>Revelation 1:19); and in its very name, to the state of this church in Ephesus, there may be an allusion; either to **εφεσις**, “ephe-sis”, which signifies “desire”, and may be expressive of the fervent love of that pure and apostolic church to Jesus Christ at the beginning of it; their eager desire after more knowledge of him, and communion with him; after his word and ordinances, and the maintaining of the purity of them; after the spread of his Gospel, and the enlargement of his kingdom in the world; as well as after fellowship with the saints, and the spiritual welfare of each other: the allusion may be also to **αφεσις**, “aphesis”, which signifies “remission”, or an abatement; and so may point out the remissness and decay of the first love of these primitive Christians, towards the close of this state; of the abatement of the fervency of it, of which complaint is

made in this epistle, and not without cause. This epistle is inscribed to the angel of this church, or the pastor of it; why ministers are called angels, (see Gill on “<sup>f40</sup>Revelation 1:20”); some think this was Timothy, whom the Apostle Paul sent thither, and desired him to continue there, (<sup>f50B-1</sup> Timothy 1:3), there was one Onesimus bishop of Ephesus, when Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, of whom he makes mention in his epistle <sup>f46</sup> to the Ephesians, and bids fair to be this angel; though if any credit could be given to the Apostolic Constitutions <sup>f47</sup> the bishop of this place was one John, who is said to be ordained by the Apostle John, and is thought to be the same with John the elder <sup>f48</sup>, the master of Papias; but though only one is mentioned, yet all the elders of this church, for there were more than one, (see <sup>f40</sup> Acts 20:17); are included; and not they only, but the whole church over whom they presided; for what was written was ordered to be sent to the church, and was sent by John, (see <sup>f40</sup> Revelation 1:4,11); the letter was sent to the pastor or pastors, to the whole body of ministers, by them to be communicated to the church; and not only to this particular church did this letter and the contents of it belong, but to all the churches of Christ within the period of the apostolic age, as may be concluded from (<sup>f40</sup> Revelation 2:7).

*These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand*; the Syriac version reads, “that holds all things, and these seven stars in his right hand”; for the explanation of this character of Christ, (see Gill on “<sup>f40</sup>Revelation 1:16”); only let it be observed how suitably this is prefixed to the church at Ephesus, and which represents the state of the churches in the times of the apostles; in which place, and during which interval, our Lord remarkably held his ministering: servants as stars in his right hand; he held and protected the Apostle Paul for two years in this place, and preserved him and his companions safe amidst the uproar raised by Demetrius the silversmith about them; here also he protected Timothy at a time when there were many adversaries, and kept the elders of this church pure, notwithstanding the erroneous persons that rose up among them; and last of all the Apostle John, who here resided, and died in peace, notwithstanding the rage and fury of his persecutors: likewise Christ in a very visible manner held all his faithful ministers during this period in his right hand, safe and secure, until they had done the work they were sent about, and preserved them in purity of doctrine and conversation; so that their light in both respects shone brightly before men. Moreover, as this title of Christ is prefixed to the epistle to the first of the churches, and its

pastor or pastors, it may be considered as relating to, and holding good of all the ministers of the Gospel and pastors of the other churches; and likewise of all the churches in successive ages to the end of the world, as the following one also refers to all the churches themselves:

*who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*; (see Gill on “~~6012~~ Revelation 1:12”); (see Gill on “~~6013~~ Revelation 1:13”); Christ was not only present with, and took his walks in this church at Ephesus, but in all the churches of that period, comparable to candlesticks, which held forth the light of the Gospel, and that in order as the antitype of Aaron, to him these lamps, and likewise in all his churches to the end of the world; see (~~6014~~ Matthew 28:20).

**Ver. 2.** *I know thy works*, etc.] The good works, both of ministers and churches; no evil works are mentioned, nor anything complained of in this church but an abatement of the fervour of her first love. Christ, as the omniscient God, knows all the works of his people, and the springs, and principles, and ends, and views of them, whether they are done in obedience to him, and spring from love to him, and are performed in his strength, and by his grace, and are directed to his glory; and such he takes notice of, approves of, and is well pleased with, not as the ground of his delight in their persons, but as the fruits of his own grace; and during the apostolic age, churches and ministers were very diligent in working; yea, they were laborious, as follows:

*and thy labour*: particularly the labour of ministers of the Gospel, in these times, in the frequent preaching of it, in season and out of season; and in the constant administration of the ordinances; and in the diligent exercise of church discipline. The work of the ministry is a laborious work to the mind in studying, and to the body in the outward discharge of it; and it becomes more so, through the malice and opposition of enemies, and the weakness of friends; and such as are diligent and laborious deserve respect, even double honour; and though they may not have it from men, yet Christ takes notice of them and their labours, and commends them for them, and will reward them.

*And thy patience*; as this may refer to the ministers of the word, it may denote their patience in suffering reproaches and persecutions for the sake of the Gospel, which they bore patiently, cheerfully, and constantly; and in bearing the infirmities of weak saints, in their several communities; and in reclaiming and restoring persons out of the way; and in waiting for the

success of their ministry, and their continuance and perseverance in it. And as this may respect members of churches, it may point at their patience under afflictions from the hand of God, and under reproach and persecution from men, for their embracing and professing the Gospel; and their patient waiting for the heavenly glory, and their firm expectation of it, and their perseverance unto it.

*And how thou canst not bear them that are evil;* that were so either in their principles or in their practices, or both; men that lived immoral lives, and held erroneous doctrines, these the primitive ministers and churches could not bear; they had an inward abhorrence and detestation of them in their minds; they could not bear them in communion with them; they admonished them according to the nature of their offence, and cast out such as were obstinate and incorrigible; they withdrew from such as were disorderly, and rejected heretics after the first and second admonition; their zeal for church discipline is here taken notice of to their commendation.

*And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars;* this doubtless was done in the church at Ephesus, where, after the Apostle Paul's departure, grievous wolves, in sheep's clothing, entered, and men arose from among themselves, speaking perverse things, (~~4RE~~ Acts 20:29,30); yet it was not peculiar to that church, though it was to the apostolic age; for in no other could men with any face pretend to be the apostles of Christ; and such there were, who sprung up in the several churches at Jerusalem, Corinth, Galatia, and elsewhere, who called themselves the apostles of Christ, but were false apostles, deceitful workers; they pretended to have their doctrine, call, mission, and commission, immediately from Christ, as the true apostles had, and a power to work miracles, and talked of inspirations and revelations by the Spirit of God. Now the apostles, ministers, and churches of those times, tried their pretensions and doctrines by the word of God, and by the fruits which they produced in themselves and others; and through that discerning of spirits which they had, they found them to be liars; that they were not, nor had they what they pretended to be, and have, and exposed them as such.

**Ver. 3.** *And hast borne*, etc.] Not evil men, nor false apostles, but “burdens”, as the Ethiopic version reads, and as the word signifies; meaning afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, which pressed sore, and lay heavy on these ministers and churches; and yet they bore them with

constancy and cheerfulness, and were not moved by them. The Arabic version reads, “and thou hast borne me”; my name and Gospel, among the Gentiles, and carried it from place to place; (see <sup><4495></sup>Acts 9:15);

*and hast patience*; which they had from God, as his gift, and which they had in their hearts, and in exercise, and found it useful to them. It was in exercise in a suitable time, and it continued with them; it was not worn out through the length and greatness of their trials.

*And for my name's sake hast laboured*: which may refer either to enduring sufferings for Christ's name's sake, for his Gospel's sake, for righteousness sake, for the sake of the elect, and for the sake of the honour, glory, and interest of Christ; or to labouring in the ministry, not for filthy lucre sake, nor for party sake, but for the honour of Christ, and the good of souls; and there never was an interval in which this was more true:

*and hast not fainted*: so as to sink under the burden borne; to have patience quite tired out; to, be weary of labouring for Christ's name's sake; and so as to give out, and quit the service of Christ.

**Ver. 4.** *Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee*, etc.] So the Jews represent God saying, concerning their fathers, “Abraham”, etc. **μϕυλ [ϑυ] ϑυ**, “I have something against them”<sup>f49</sup>. Christ has nothing against his people, his faithful ministers, and true churches, in a judicial way, or to their condemnation, for there is none to them that are in him; but he has often many things to complain of in them, and to rebuke and chastise them for, in a way of providence: and what he had against the church at Ephesus, and against the churches in the period which that represents, follows,

*because thou hast left thy first love*: by which is meant, not hospitality to strangers, or an affectionate care of the poor of the church, or a zealous concern to feed the flock, and maintain church discipline; but the love of the saints to God, and Christ, and one another, which appeared at the beginning of this church state, when they were all of one heart and one soul, as generally at first conversion love is the warmest; and so it was at the first planting of Gospel churches, and therefore here called first love. Now this, though it was not lost, for the true grace of love can never be lost, yet it was left; it abated in its heat and fervour; there was a remissness in the exercise of it; what our Lord had foretold should be before the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in this period of time, the love of

many waxed cold, (<sup>4012</sup>Matthew 24:12); through the prevalence of corruption in some; and through an over love to the world, as in Demas, and others; and through a desire of ease and freedom from reproach and persecution; and through the introduction of errors, which damp the heat of love, and spirit of religion; and through the contentions and divisions among themselves, as at Corinth, Galatia, and elsewhere, which greatly weakened their love to one another, and to divine things; and which was very displeasing to Christ, who, for the restoring of them, gives the following advice. Compare with this (<sup>5015</sup>2 Timothy 1:15).

**Ver. 5.** *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen*, etc.] Believers cannot totally and finally fall away from the grace which they have received; but they may fall into sin, and from a degree of grace, and the exercise of it, as these first and pure churches did, from some degree of their love to God, and Christ, and one another; and therefore are called upon to remember, mind, and observe from what degree of it they were fallen; in order to bring them under a conviction and acknowledgment of their evil, and a sense of their present state, and to quicken their desires after a restoration to their former one:

*and repent*; of their coldness and lukewarmness, of the remissness of their love, and of those evils which brought it upon them:

*and do the first works*; of faith and love, with the like zeal and fervour, which will show the repentance to be sincere and genuine; so the Arabic version reads, “and exercise the former works, to wit, charity” or “love”. The Jews have a saying <sup>f50</sup>,

“if a man repents, do not say to him, “remember” μννωϑαρj  
Æyϑ [ m, “thy first works”;”

which they seem to understand of evil works; but former good works are to be remembered and done, to show the truth of repentance for evil ones.

*Or else I will come unto thee quickly*; not in a spiritual way, to pay a love visit, nor in a judicial way, to take vengeance or inflict punishment, but in a providential way, to rebuke and chastise:

*and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*; or thee out of the candlestick, the pastor from the church, either by persecution or by death; or else the church, and church state itself, signified by a candlestick; (see Gill on “<sup>4012</sup>Revelation 1:12”); and may design a



shaking and an unsettling of it, which is sometimes done by violent persecutions, and by false teachers and their doctrines, and by the divisions and contentions of saints among themselves; and by the former particularly was there a change made in the state of this apostolic church, when it passed into the Smyranean one, which was a period of great persecution and distress; for this cannot be understood of the total removing of the church state itself quickly, no, not of Ephesus itself; for though there is not now indeed, nor has there been for many hundred years, a church of Christ in that place, yet there was one till the times of Constantine, when there was none in any of the other seven cities, and a long time after; (see Gill on “<del>407</del> Acts 20:17”); which shows, that this was not a commination or threatening of divine vengeance to that church literally, but to the state of the church, which that represented; nor does it intend the utter abolition of that church, for the apostolic church still continued, though it ceased to be in the circumstances it was before.

**Ver. 6.** *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans,* etc.] Though these Christians had left their first love, yet they bore an hatred to the filthy and impure practices of some men, who were called “Nicolaitans”; who committed fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness, and had their wives in common, and also ate things offered to idols; who were so called, as some think <sup>f51</sup>, from Nicolas of Antioch, one of the seven deacons in (<del>406</del> Acts 6:5); though as to Nicolas himself, it is said <sup>f52</sup>, that he lived with his own lawful married wife, and no other, and that his daughters continued virgins all their days, and his son incorrupt; and that these men, so called, only shrouded themselves under his name, and abused a saying or action of his, or both, to patronize their wicked deeds: he had used to advise *παραχρησσαι τη σαρκι*, by which he meant a restraining of all carnal and unlawful lusts; but these men interpreted it of an indulgence in them, and so gave themselves up to all uncleanness; and whereas, he having a beautiful wife, and being charged with jealousy, in order to clear himself of it, he brought her forth, and gave free liberty to any person to marry her as would; which indiscreet action of his these men chose to understand as allowing of community of wives. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that these Nicolaitans were not called so from any man, but from the word *hl ykn*, “Nicolah”, “let us eat”, which they often used to encourage each other to eat things offered to idols. However this be, it is certain that there were such a set of men, whose deeds were hateful; but neither their principles nor their practices obtained much in this period of



time, though they afterwards did; (see <sup><4015></sup> Revelation 2:15). Professors of the Christian religion in general abhorred such impure notions and deeds, as they were by Christ:

*which also I hate*; all sin is hateful to Christ, being contrary to his nature, to his will, and to his Gospel; and whatever is hateful to him should be to his people; and where grace is, sin will be hateful, both in themselves and others; and men's deeds may be hated when their persons are not; and hatred of sin is taken notice of by Christ, with a commendation.

**Ver. 7.** *He that hath an ear*, etc.] Such who have new ears given them, as all have who are made new creatures; such who have their ears circumcised, and opened by the Spirit of God; who hear with understanding, affection, and faith; who try what they hear, and approve, embrace, and retain that which is good.

*Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*; let such hearken, and listen with attention to what is said by the Spirit, in what goes before, and follows after, in this epistle, designed for the use of all the churches; from whence it appears, that this epistle was endited by the Spirit of God, and is of divine inspiration; that it was not intended for the single use of the church at Ephesus, but of all the churches; and not of the seven churches only, though the Alexandrian copy reads, "to the seven churches": but of all the churches in that period of time, which the Ephesine church represents; and which may also be useful to the churches of Christ in all other ages and periods of time. And moreover, it may be concluded from hence, that there are in this epistle, and so in all the rest, for the same words are subjoined to them all, some things which are parabolical and prophetic, and not obvious to everyone's understanding and view; for a like expression is used by our Lord, when he had delivered anything in a parabolical way, or was obscure; (see <sup><4015></sup> Matthew 11:15 13:9).

*To him that overcometh*: the false apostles, false teachers, and their doctrines; coldness, lukewarmness, and remissness in love; the impure tenets and practices of the Nicolaitans:

*will I give to eat of the tree of life*; by which is meant Jesus Christ himself, in allusion to the tree of life in the garden of Eden; and is so called, because he is the author of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal; and because of his fruit, the blessings of life and grace, that are in him, of which believers may eat by faith, and which they find to be soul quickening, comforting,

strengthening, and satisfying; and which are Christ's gift to them, even both the food they eat, and the faith by which they eat, are his gifts. So Christ, under the name of Wisdom, is called the Tree of life, in (~~1188~~ Proverbs 3:18); and this is a name which is sometimes given by the Jews to the Messiah <sup>f53</sup>:

*which is in the midst of the paradise of God*; as the tree of life was in the garden of Eden, (~~0000~~ Genesis 2:9). The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read, “the paradise of my God”; the God of Christ, as well as of his people; and by which may be meant, either the church on earth, which is as a paradise, (~~2042~~ Song of Solomon 4:12); in the midst of which Christ is, affording his gracious presence, and reaching forth his grace, and the benefits of it, to his people; or heaven, (see Gill on “~~4724~~ 2 Corinthians 12:4”), said to be of God, because it is of his preparing, and where he dwells, and in the midst of which Christ, the Tree of life, is; and this shows, that he is to be come at by faith, and his fruit to be eaten, and lived upon; and he is to be beheld and enjoyed by all his saints, as he is now, and will be more perfectly hereafter.

**Ver. 8.** *And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write*, etc.] Of the city of Smyrna, (see Gill on “~~6011~~ Revelation 1:11”). That there was a church of Christ here is not to be doubted, though by whom it was founded is not certain; very likely by the Apostle Paul, who was in those parts, and by whose means all Asia heard the Gospel of Christ, (~~490~~ Acts 19:10). Some think the present angel or pastor of this church, was Polycarp, the disciple of John. Irenaeus <sup>f54</sup>, who knew him, says he was appointed bishop of Smyrna by the apostles. Here he suffered martyrdom, and was buried: the large amphitheatre, in which he was put to death, is still to be seen, and his sepulchre is yet preserved in this place <sup>f55</sup>: a very famous epistle, sent by this church at Smyrna to the churches at Pontus, giving an account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, and others, is extant in Eusebius <sup>f56</sup>. According to the Apostolical Constitutions <sup>f57</sup>, the first bishops of Smyrna were Aristo Strataeas and Aristo the second, and Apelles, of whom mention is made in (~~560~~ Romans 16:10); and who is reckoned among the seventy disciples; (see Gill on “~~2011~~ Luke 10:1”); and is said to be bishop of Smyrna before Polycarp; who succeeded Polycarp, I do not find; but it is said there was a church at Smyrna in the “third” century; and so there was in the beginning of the “fourth”, since there was a bishop from hence in the council at Nice: and in the “fifth” century, mention is made of several bishops of this place; as of Cyrus, a native of Constantinople; and Protherius, who, it is thought, succeeded him, and was present in the synod at Chalcedon; and Aethericus,

who assisted at three synods in this century, at Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon: and in the “sixth” century, there was a bishop of Smyrna in the fifth synod held at Rome and Constantinople: and even in the “eighth” century, one Antony, a monk, supplied the place of the bishop of Smyrna in the Nicene synod<sup>f58</sup>. The Turks have in this place now thirteen mosques, the Jews two synagogues, and of the Christians there are two churches belonging to the Greeks, and one to the Armenians<sup>f59</sup>. This church, and its pastor, represent the state of the church under the persecutions of the Roman emperors. Smyrna signifies “myrrh”, which being bitter of taste, is expressive of the bitter afflictions, and persecutions, and deaths, the people of God in this interval endured; and yet, as myrrh is of a sweet smell, so were those saints, in their sufferings for Christ, exceeding grateful and well pleasing to him; wherefore nothing is said by way of complaint to this church; not that she was without fault, but it was proper to use her tenderly in her afflicted state: and, as Dr. More observes, as myrrh was used in the embalming of dead bodies, it may point to the many deaths and martyrdoms of the saints in this period, whereby their names and memories are perpetuated and eternized.

*These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.* Of these characters of Christ, (see Gill on “<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Revelation 1:8”), (see Gill on “<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Revelation 1:11”), (see Gill on “<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Revelation 1:17-18”); and they are very appropriately mentioned, to encourage the saints under their sufferings of death; since Christ, who is the eternal God, had in human nature tasted of the bitterness of death for them, and was risen again; suggesting, that though they were called to undergo the bitterest deaths for his sake, they should be raised again as he was, and live with him for ever. The Ethiopic version reads, “thus saith the holy Spirit”; but it cannot be said of him that “he was dead”.

**Ver. 9.** *I know thy works,* etc.] Good works, as before in (<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Revelation 2:2);

*and tribulation;* this is Christ's legacy to his people, and which lies in their way to heaven; and never was the way of any to heaven more strewn with it than was the way of the saints in this period. But Christ took notice of it, and of them in it; he knew their souls in adversity, and remarked their patience under it, and their constancy, and close adherence to him:

*and poverty;* which was true in a literal sense, through the spoiling of their goods, to which they were exposed for the profession of Christ: nothing is

more contemptible among men than poverty, yet Christ takes notice of it, and owns his people in it; for this poverty came not by sin, but by sufferings for his sake:

*but thou art rich*; they were rich, in faith, and heirs of a kingdom, though poor in this world; they were rich with the riches of Christ, with the blessings of the covenant, with the graces of the Spirit, and in good works; they were kings and priests unto God, had a kingdom of grace here, and a right to the kingdom of glory hereafter; and were heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

*And [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not*; who asserted themselves to be the true Israel of God, Jews that were so inwardly, regenerate persons, or truly Christians; for the Christians, baptized persons<sup>f60</sup>, were by the Heathens called Jews; but these were not, they professed Christianity in words, but in works denied it; they were men of bad principles and practices, and both blasphemed the ways and doctrines of Christ themselves, and caused them to be blasphemed by others also; they were false Christians, nominal professors, and shunned persecution for the Gospel; who were not what they would be thought to be: these were the broachers of heresies in this period of time, in which there was a multitude of them, and which chiefly respected the doctrine of the Trinity, and the person of Christ; and they were introducers of Pagan and Jewish rites into the church, and were men of flagitious lives and conversations, and paved the way for the man of sin:

*but [are] the synagogue of Satan*: were the children of the devil, imitated him, and were influenced by him, and were the forerunners of antichrist, whose coming was after the working of Satan.

**Ver. 10.** *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer*, etc.] God's people undergo sufferings of various sorts, as the Christians of those times did, scourgings, imprisonment, confiscation of goods, and death itself in various shapes; and these are certain, they shall suffer them; they are all known beforehand to Christ, and he sometimes gives his people previous notice of them, nor should they indulge a slavish fear about them. It is reported of Polycarp, bishop of this church at Smyrna, in a letter written by the church itself<sup>f61</sup> that three days before he suffered, he dreamed his pillow, on which he laid his head, was on fire; upon which, awaking, he said to those that were by him, that he should be burnt for Christ; and

when he came to suffer, as he was led along, a voice was heard by the bystanders, Polycarp, be strong, and play the man.

*Behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison;* which has been the lot of many of the saints, and was of some, even of the faithful ministers of the word in this interval; in which Satan had an hand, instigating their enemies to prevent and stop the progress of the Gospel, and deter others both from preaching and professing it: the end was in the permission of it,

*that ye may be tried;* that their graces might be tried, their faith, love, zeal, courage, faithfulness, and constancy. Suffering times are trying times, whether men are real Christians or not; whether they have the true grace of God or not; and whether the principles they hold are right and true, and are worth, and will bear suffering for:

*and ye shall have tribulation ten days:* meaning it may be the ten persecutions under the Roman emperors; the “first” was under Nero, in the year 64 or 66; the “second” was under Domitian, about the year 93; the “third” was under Trojan, in the year 104; the “fourth” was under Hadrian, in the year 125; the “fifth” was under Marcus Antoninus, in the year 151; the “sixth” was under Septimius Severus, in the year 197; the “seventh” was under Maximinus, in the years 235, 236, 237; the “eighth” was under Decius, in the year 250; the “ninth” was under Valerianus, in the year 257; and the “tenth” was under Dioclesian, in the year 303. Austin <sup>f62</sup> reckons the ten persecutions thus: the first by Nero, the second by Domitian, the third by Trojan, the fourth by Antoninus, the fifth by Severus, the sixth by Maximus, the seventh by Decius, the eighth by Valerianus, the ninth by Aurelianus, the tenth by Dioclesian and Maximianus. Others, inasmuch as Nero's persecution was before this vision, reckon the ten persecutions thus: Domitian, Trojan, M. Antoninus, Verus and Lucius, Severus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerianus, Aurelianus, Dioclesianus, Licinius: the Dioclesian persecution lasted ten years almost throughout: and some think that this last persecution, which held ten years, is here particularly meant, and not without some good reason; since it is usual in prophetic writings, and in this book of the Revelation, to put days for years; so that these ten days may be the ten years the last persecution held, and at which time the period of this church state ended, and that of Pergamos took place.

*Be thou faithful unto death:* which is an address to the ministers in this interval, to be faithful in preaching the pure and unmixed Gospel of Christ; in a constant administration of the ordinances, as they were delivered; in

watching over the souls of men under their care, reproof, exhorting, etc. with all longsuffering; continuing in the discharge of duty, though in continual danger of death, and though it issued in it. And also to the churches and the members of them, to continue believing in Christ, professing his name, striving for his Gospel, attending on his ordinances, and following him whithersoever he went; though this should expose them to sufferings, even unto death, which it became them cheerfully to undergo: and to which they are encouraged by what follows,

*and I will give thee a crown of life*; which may refer not only to eternal life, which is so called, (<sup>3012</sup>James 1:12); because of the glory of that state, and its everlasting continuance, and is in the possession and gift of Christ; but to the deliverance of the Christians from persecution, by Constantine; who coming to the imperial crown, that became not only a crown of glory to him, but of life to the church, and was as life from the dead unto the saints: to dead men is promised a crown of life, in allusion to the Gentiles, who crowned their dead <sup>f63</sup>.

**Ver. 11.** *He that hath an ear, let him hear*, etc.] (See Gill on “~~4117~~ Revelation 2:7”);

*he that overcometh*; and is not intimidated by poverty, confiscation of goods, tribulation, persecution, and death itself, but through Christ is a conqueror, and more than a conqueror over all these things:

*shall not be hurt of the second death*; by which is meant eternal death, in distinction from a corporeal and temporal one; and lies in a destruction of both body and soul in hell, and in an everlasting separation from God, and a continual sense of divine wrath; but of this the saints shall never be hurt, they are ordained to eternal life; this is secured for them in Christ, and he has it in his hands for them, and will give it to them. The phrase is Jewish, and is opposed to the first death, or the death of the body; which is the effect of sin, and is appointed of God, and which the people of God die as well as others; but the second death is peculiar to wicked men. So the Jerusalem Targum on (<sup>6316</sup>Deuteronomy 33:6); paraphrases those words, “let Reuben live, and not die”, thus;

“let Reuben live in this world, and not die *anyynt a twmb*, “by the second death”, with which the wicked die in the world to come.”

Of which sense of the text and phrase Epiphanius makes mention <sup>f64</sup>. See the same phrase in the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, in (<sup>2324</sup>Isaiah 22:14 65:6,15); and in (<sup>2613</sup>Jeremiah 51:39,57); and in Philo the Jew <sup>f65</sup>.

**Ver. 12.** *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write*, etc.] Of the city of Pergamos, (see Gill on “<sup>6011</sup>Revelation 1:11”). In it was a church of Christ, but when it begun, and how long it lasted, is not certain. Antipas, who is mentioned, (<sup>6023</sup>Revelation 2:13); is thought, by some, to have been the pastor of it. Though, according to the Apostolical Constitutions <sup>f66</sup>, Caius was the first bishop of it; and it appears, that in the “second” century there were several in this place that suffered martyrdom for Christ, as Carpus, Papulus, and a woman whose name was Agathonice <sup>f67</sup>. Attalus, the martyr, who suffered in the same century, was also a native of this place <sup>f68</sup>. In the “fifth” century there was a bishop of Pergamos in the council at Ephesus; and in the “sixth” century, there was one in the “fifth” synod at Constantinople; and in the “seventh” century, Theodorus, bishop of the church here, was in the sixth synod held at the same place; and in the “eighth” century one Pastilas was bishop of Pergamos; and in the same age, Basil, bishop of this place, was in the Nicene synod <sup>f69</sup>; and the Christian name now is not wholly, though almost extinct; for when our countryman, Dr. Smith <sup>f70</sup>, was there, there was a little church called St. Theodore's, whither a priest was frequently sent from Smyrna, to perform divine service, there being but a very few Christian families in it. This church represents the church from the time of Constantine, and onward, rising up to, and enjoying great power, riches, and honour Pergamos signifies high and lofty; things that were sublime and lofty, were, by the Greeks, called *τα περιγυμνα*, and also all high and lofty towers <sup>f71</sup>. It was built under a very high and steep mountain, upon the top of which a tower was erected, by the lords of the lesser Asia, which still continues <sup>f72</sup>. The church it represents had its principal seat at Rome, where Satan dwelt, (<sup>6023</sup>Revelation 2:13); which signifies exalted likewise; and it introduces the man of sin, antichrist, the popes of Rome, who exalted themselves above all that is called God, princes, kings, and emperors; whom they excommunicated, dethroned, trod upon their necks, kicked off their crowns, and obliged them to hold their stirrups while they mounted their horses, with other haughty action, too many to name.

*These things, saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges:* of which (see Gill on “<sup>6016</sup>Revelation 1:16”); This title is used partly to show, that the only weapon this church, and the true ministers and members of it



had, to defend themselves against the growing corruptions of antichrist, who in this interval rose up by degrees, and was revealed, and came to the height of his power, was the word of God, the Scriptures of truth; and partly to show, that in process of time, though not in this period, the man of sin should be destroyed, with the breath of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming; of which his fighting against the Nicolaitans, with the sword of his mouth, (<sup>¶126</sup>Revelation 2:16); is an emblem.

**Ver. 13.** *I know thy works*, etc.] Both good and bad, and which in that pure part of this church, which opposed the growing corruptions of antichrist, were for the most part good.

*And where thou dwellest, [even] where Satan's seat [is].* Pergamos was a city very much given to idolatry, here Satan reigned while it was Pagan, and so was a fit emblem of the idolatrous church of Rome. Pausanias says <sup>f73</sup>, the country the Pergamenes inhabited was sacred to the Cabiri, the chief gods of the Heathens. And the same writer <sup>f74</sup> observes, that Aesculapius particularly was worshipped at Pergamos; and hence he is called by Martial <sup>f75</sup> the Pergamean god; to his temple here, men used to go from different parts of the world for cure of diseases; hither Antoninus the emperor went for such a purpose, as Herodian <sup>f76</sup> relates; and this being a common thing, hence Lucian <sup>f77</sup> scoffingly says, that Aesculapius had an apothecary's shop at Pergamos. As Rome, and its dominions, were the principal seat of the church in this period of time, it may well be called Satan's seat or throne; not only because it had been the seat of the Roman emperors, the ten horned and seven headed beast, (<sup>¶127</sup>Revelation 13:2); but because it was the seat of antichrist, which the great dragon Satan gave him, whose coming was after the working of Satan, and he was influenced by him; and who, like Satan, exalted himself above all that is called God; yea, placed himself in the temple of God, the church, as God, showing himself to be God, assuming that power to himself which only belonged to God. Moreover, he may be called so for his enmity and malice against the saints, and for his art and subtlety, and insidious methods to ensnare and destroy them. Now to dwell where such an one has his seat, his throne, has a kingdom, power, and authority, must be very uncomfortable, as well as dangerous; and required great care, circumspection, and prudence how to behave: and yet to the commendation of this church it is said,

*and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith:* the pure members of this church are the two witnesses, which rose up at the

beginning of the apostasy of Rome, and bore their testimony against it, and for the truth; and continued to do so amidst all the corruptions and persecutions of that state: these are the two olive trees, that, through the golden pipes of the word and ordinances, emptied the golden oil of Gospel truths out, of themselves, pure and incorrupt, and the two candlesticks that held forth the light of the Gospel in the darkest times of Popery; these held fast the name of Christ, or the Gospel, and denied not, but confessed the doctrine of faith in the worst of times. They had the truths of the Gospel in their possession, which were dear and valuable to them; and whereas there was danger of losing them, they held them fast, with great courage, magnanimity, and strength, though the greater number was against them, and they were attended with reproach and persecution:

*even in those days wherein Antipas [was] my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* Antipas is the proper name of a man; so a son of Herod was called <sup>f78</sup>, even he that beheaded John, and mocked Christ: and there might be a man of this name at Pergamos, that might suffer martyrdom for the Gospel of Christ; and who was an emblem of the confessors, witnesses, and martyrs, that suffered for Christ, in this period of time, through their opposition to the popes of Rome; for Antipas is the contraction of Antipater, and is the same with Antipapas, or Antipappas, which signifies one that is against the pope, an opposer of that holy father; and so intends all those that made head against him, upon his rising and revelation, and when he assumed the power he did to himself; such as the Waldenses and Albigenses particularly, who set themselves against him, openly declared that the pope was antichrist, and that his government was tyrannical, and his doctrines the doctrines of devils, abominable and fabulous. They bore a faithful testimony against all his corruptions and innovations, and became martyrs in the cause of Christ, many thousands of them being slain for his sake within the dominions of this firstborn of Satan. The Alexandrian copy reads “Anteipas”; and his name is left out in the Syriac and Arabic versions.

**Ver. 14.** *But I have a few things against thee,* etc.] The members of this church before their open separation from the apostasy; who still continued in the communion of the corrupt church of Rome, though they remonstrated against the errors and evil practices that crept in; and so were a stumbling block, and a snare to others to join in their idolatry and superstition:

*because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication:* which latter was in order to the former: the instruction Balaam gave to Balak, which is here called his doctrine, was, that Balak should get some of the most beautiful women in his kingdom to ply the men of Israel, and draw them into uncleanness, and so to idolatry; by which means, God being angry with them, he might get an advantage over them: that the Israelites did commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and eat things sacrificed to idols, and bowed down to Baal Peor, is certain, (<sup><0E201></sup>Numbers 25:1-3); but that this was brought about through the counsel of Balaam is not so plainly expressed, though it is hinted at in (<sup><0E115></sup>Numbers 31:15,16); but the Jewish writers are very express about this matter. Jonathan ben Uzziel, one of their Targumists on (<sup><0E144></sup>Numbers 24:14), has these words of Balaam;

“Come, and I will counsel thee, (speaking to Balak,) go and set up inns, and place in them whorish women, to sell food and drink at a low price: and this people will come and eat and drink, and be drunken, and will lie with them, and deny their God; and they will be quickly delivered into thine hands, and many of them shall fall.”

This now was the stumbling block he taught Balak to lay before them. And elsewhere <sup>f79</sup> it is said,

“that Balaam, the wicked, gave counsel to Balak, the son of Zippor, to cause the Israelites to fall by the sword; he said to him, the God of this people hates whoredom, cause thy daughters to commit whoredom with them, and ye shall rule over them.”

And then they go on to relate how they built shops, and placed an old woman without, and a young woman within; and when the Israelites came to buy, how well they used them, and what familiarity they admitted them to; how they made them drink of Ammonitish wine, which inclined to lust and when the signified their desire, oblige them to worship Baal Peor, and renounce the law of Moses. Both Philo <sup>f80</sup> and Josephus <sup>f81</sup> speak of this counsel of Balaam, much to the same purpose. The Samaritan Chronicle says <sup>f82</sup> that this counsel pleased the king, and he sent into the camp of Israel, on a sabbath day, twenty four thousand young women, by whom the Israelites were so seduced, that they did everything they desired them, which was just the number of those that were slain, (<sup><0E209></sup>Numbers 25:9). By Balaam may be meant the pope of Rome, for that name signifies, “the lord

of the people”; and is very appropriate to him, who in this interval took upon him to be universal bishop, and lorded it over both church and state, in a most haughty and tyrannical manner; and the Balaamites were those who submitted to his power and authority, and received his doctrines; and by Balak, king of Moab, may be intended the secular powers, the emperors, kings, and princes of the earth, who were instructed by the popes of Rome, to draw their subjects into idolatry, which is spiritual fornication, to eat the bread of God, to worship the host, images, and saints departed; and which proved a snare, and a stumbling to some of this church, as to the Israelites of old, to do the same things.

**Ver. 15.** *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans,* etc.] These impure heretics sprung up in the time of the apostolic church, but their doctrines were not received, and their deeds were hated, (see [Revelation 2:6](#)). This seems to design the doctrines of the church of Rome, which in this period took place; which forbid marriage to the priests, and recommended celibacy and virginity to others also; which were the source of all uncleanness and abominable lusts; for which pardons and indulgences were given, and, in process of time, brothel houses were set up, and licensed and encouraged by authority.

*Which thing I hate;* the doctrine of these men, as well as their deeds.

**Ver. 16.** *Repent,* etc.] This is said to those who were truly godly in those times, but still retained their communion with these corrupt men, and had not, as yet, separated from them; nor had they protested against these evil doctrines and practices, at least but very coldly, and had too much connived at them; and therefore are called upon to repent of their lukewarmness, negligence, and sinful compliances:

*or else I will come unto thee quickly:* in a providential way, to rebuke and chastise for such remissness, indifference, and evil communication:

*and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth;* of this sword, (see Gill on [“Revelation 1:16”](#)). And it is observable, that Christ does not say, “I will fight against thee”; the true members of his mystical body, though lax and supine, for Christ does not fight against his people, but for them; but he says, “and will fight against them”; the Balaamites and Nicolaitans, for their idolatry and uncleanness.

**Ver. 17.** *He that hath an ear, let him hear,* etc.] (See Gill on [“Revelation 2:7”](#)).

*To him that overcometh*; the Balaamites and Nicolaitans, and do not give in to the doctrines and practices of the one, or of the other, whatever persecution and trouble he meets with, and endures on that account:

*will I give to eat of the hidden manna*; in opposition to eating things sacrificed to idols, refused by him. The allusion is to the manna which the Israelites ate of in the wilderness, which may be called “hidden”: either because they knew not what it was, when they first saw it; or because it was laid up in a golden pot, and put in the most holy place, where it was secret, and none but the high priest could see it, and who entered there but once a year: or rather, because it was at first, hidden under the dew; for according to the account the Jews give of it, a dew first fell upon the ground, then the manna upon that, and then another dew upon the manna; so that there was a dew under it, and a dew over it; insomuch that it was as if it was laid up, they say, in a box or chests<sup>f83</sup>; and they supposed the manna had respect to things future<sup>f84</sup> and do expect it in the times of the Messiah. They say<sup>f85</sup>, as the first, so the last Redeemer will cause manna to descend from heaven; and the clouds are by them reckoned the mills which will grind manna for the righteous in the world to come<sup>f86</sup>: yea, they speak<sup>f87</sup> of *amts anm*, “hidden manna”, as the food of the righteous, the very phrase here used. Now this being the food of the children of Israel in the wilderness, is very fitly mentioned here; since the church, in this period of time, in which antichrist arose, was obliged to flee into the wilderness, and there abide during his reign, and where she is nourished with this hidden manna; by which may be meant the Gospel, which is soul quickening, comforting, strengthening, and satisfying food, by which the saints are nourished up unto everlasting life, and which is hid to the world, which the men of it know nothing of; and especially Jesus Christ, the sum and substance of it, may be meant, and that secret spiritual consolation enjoyed in communion with him, and by eating him, or feeding by faith upon him; in what respects Christ may be compared to manna, (see Gill on “~~John~~ John 6:32”). And he may be said to be “hidden”, because he is unknown to men, until revealed; and is wholly hidden from carnal and unregenerate men, and is enjoyed only by believers; and it may denote the private way, in which the true church of Christ had communion with him in his word and ordinances in the wilderness, and during the dark times of Popery. Philo the Jew<sup>f88</sup> often interprets the manna by the “Logos”, the Word of God, the most ancient Word of God.

*And will give him a white stone.* The phrase, “to add a white stone”, with the Latins, is used to give one's approbation of anything; and could it be applied here, might signify the approbation Christ gives of his church and people here, amidst the testimonies they bear, and the persecutions they endure for his name's sake, and that which he will give of them before his Father, angels, and men, at the last day: white stones were used on various accounts. The Grecians used them to mark good or lucky days with them, as they called them; and could the allusion be thought to be to this custom, the sense would be, that Christ promises, to his people that overcome, happy days, after the times of Popish darkness and persecution were over: white stones were also given to the conquerors in the Olympic games, with their names upon them, and the value of the prize they won; and, here applied, may respect the crown of life and glory given to them who are more than conquerors through Christ, with their right and title to it, and the excellency of it. The Romans in judgment used to give their suffrages for condemnation by casting black stones into the urn, and for absolution white stones; to which Ovid has respect, when he says <sup>f89</sup>,

“Mos erat antiquis, niveis atrisque lapillis, His damnare reos, illis  
absolvere culpa.”

And this is thought by many to be referred to here, and may denote, that though the pure members of Christ, and who abhorred and protested against the abominations of the church of Rome, were charged with heresy and schism, and what not, yet Christ would absolve them, and justify them from all those charges. But rather the allusion is to a custom among the Jews, who used to examine the priests and Levites before they went to their service, or to the sanhedrim, to judge and pass sentence, whether their ways and works were right; and if they were as they should be, they gave them *açdqmd armwj*, “the stone of the sanctuary”: if not, they might not enter on business, as it is said; “and of Levi he said, thy Urim and thy Thummim be with thy Holy One”, (~~<f89>~~Deuteronomy 33:8) <sup>f90</sup>. Now on the Urim and Thummim, the stones in the high priest's breastplate, were engraven the names of the children of Israel; and, as the Jews say, the name Jehovah, to which reference may be had in the following clause; and may denote that the church, though in the wilderness, is regarded by Christ, is bore upon his heart and cared for by him; and also its spotless purity in him, and justification by him.

*And in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth [it]*; by this name may be meant, either the name of “Jehovah” our righteousness, which is the name both of Christ, and of his church, (<sup><2216></sup>Jeremiah 23:6 33:16), or the name of a child of God, sometimes called a new name; (see <sup><2365></sup>Isaiah 56:5 62:2); and so designs the blessing of adoption; this may be said to be a new name, because renewed, manifested to, and put upon the people of God, when they are made new creatures, though provided in predestination, and in the covenant of grace from eternity; and because a renowned and excellent one, better than that of the sons and daughters of the greatest prince on earth; and because a wonderful one, being an instance of amazing love and grace; and is what “no man knoweth”, but the receiver of it; the Father of these adopted ones is unknown to natural men; and so is Christ, through whom this blessing is bestowed; and the Spirit of God also, who witnesses to it; and the persons that enjoy it, and the blessing itself, and the inheritance to which they are adopted: and this new name being on the white stone, may show that the blessings of justification and adoption, though they are two distinct ones, yet they are inseparable: they go together, and both give a right to the heavenly inheritance; and they are also, as well as the hidden manna, gifts of free grace, and not owing to the works and merit of men, and are given by Christ, and in and through him. At Rome, some white stones have been dug up, some lesser, some greater, with names and letters, and other engravings upon them, which Pignorius <sup>f91</sup> has given the figures of; and to such some have thought the allusion here is, and may serve to illustrate this passage. The Ethiopic version, instead of a “white stone”, reads, a “famous book”.

**Ver. 18.** *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write*, etc.] Of the city of Thyatira, (see Gill on “<sup><6011></sup>Revelation 1:11”); a church was formed here very likely by the Apostle Paul; Lydia was a native of this place, who, and her household were converted and baptized by him at Philippi, (<sup><4164></sup>Acts 16:14); though Epiphanius <sup>f92</sup> seems to grant, what some heretics objected to the authority of this book, that there was no church at Thyatira when this letter was written; however, it is certain, there was one in the “second” century, as the same writer observes, since, as he relates, it was overrun with the Cataphrygian heresy; and in the “fourth” century there was a bishop from Thyatira in the council of Nice; and even in the “eighth” century there was one Esaias a presbyter, who supplied the place of the bishop of Thyatira in another council at Nice <sup>f93</sup>: the Turks have now eight



mosques in it, but there is not one Christian church or place of worship to be found in it<sup>f94</sup>. Who was the angel, or pastor of this church at the writing of this epistle, is not certain; however, it is designed for all the ministers and churches in the interval this church represents; and this period takes in the darkest and most superstitious times of Popery, until the Reformation. Thyatira is the same as Thygatira, which signifies a “daughter”; and it had its name, as Stephanus Byzantius says<sup>f95</sup>, from hence: Seleucus, the son of Nicanor, being at war with Lysimachus, and hearing that he had a daughter born, called this city Thygatira, which was before called Pelopia, and Semiramis; which is a very fit name for this church, and expresses the effeminacy of it, when the virgin Mary, whom the Romanists call the daughter of God, was more worshipped than her son; and was not only made a partner with him in the business of salvation, but even set above him; when there were such swarms of monks and friars, and religious orders of several sorts, as Franciscans and Dominicans, who claimed her as their patroness; when such numbers of them clad themselves in cowls and long garments, that they looked more like women in hoods and petticoats, than really men; hence also the corrupt part of this church is signified by the woman Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal the Zidonian; and it should not be forgot that there was once a she pope, a woman that sat in the papal chair, a whore in a literal sense; wherefore antichrist, or the popes of Rome, are filly called the great whore, the mother of harlots. Mr. Daubuz observes, that the first Christian of Thyatira was a woman, and that the false prophets which first enticed the Christians to apostasy in this church were women, as Maximilia, Quintilia, and Priscilla; to which I would add, that according to Epiphanius, that among those heretics, and which swallowed up this church, their bishops were women, and so were their presbyters, or elders; and Dr. Smith<sup>f96</sup> is of opinion, that the inhabitants of this place, when Heathen, were worshippers of the goddess Diana; so that, upon all accounts, the church here was a fit symbol of the effeminate Church of Rome.

*These things saith the Son of God*; he who is truly, properly, naturally, and essentially the Son of God: this character Christ makes use of to assert his proper deity, as being of the same nature, and having the same perfections with his Father, as well as to command the greater regard to what he ordered to be written to the churches; and chiefly in opposition to the effeminate state of this church; it was time for him to take to him his highest name, as expressive of his highest nature, and to assert himself the

Son of God, when Mary, his mother according to the flesh, and who was but a mere creature, was called the daughter of God, and set upon a level with him, and even preferred unto him:

*who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire*; quick and sharp, and penetrating through the darkness of this state; seeing into, discovering, and exposing the horrid actions and wickednesses of men done in the dark; expressing fury, wrath, and vengeance against the Romish antichrist and his followers; and may also design the light of Gospel doctrine, which broke out in those times at certain seasons, to the dispelling of Popish darkness in some measure; (see Gill on “<sup>(114)</sup>Revelation 1:14”);

*and his feet [are] like fine brass*; in the description of Christ in (<sup>(114)</sup>Revelation 1:14); it is added, as if they burned in a furnace; (see Gill on “<sup>(114)</sup>Revelation 1:14”); and may denote the strength, stability, and support Christ gave his people while suffering for his sake, when in the furnace and burning for him, which kind of death was much used in those times: hence Dr. More, to whom I am much obliged for many hints in this exposition of the epistles to the churches, thinks that Thyatira is an allusion to *ψυητρια*, which signify “altars” for the burning of sweet odours; and so may be expressive of the burning of the saints, those sweet odours, as they are to God and Christ, with fire and faggot; which was now practised, as in the other period killing with the sword was chiefly used; in the midst of which Christ was present, supporting his people.

**Ver. 19.** *I know thy works*, etc.] Good works, as appears from the particular enumeration of them afterwards, and the commendation of proficiency in them, the last being more than the first, and the distinction from the evil ones in (<sup>(121)</sup>Revelation 2:20); this is said to the faithful followers and professors of Christ in this interval:

*and charity*; by which is meant not a relieving the wants of the poor; much less such a charity as connives at the errors and heresies of men; but the divine grace of love to God and Christ, and the saints, without which a profession of religion is a vain thing; and, generally speaking, this grace is most in exercise in a time of trouble and persecution:

*and service*; or “ministry”, meaning either the ministry of the word, which was exercised by many with great zeal, diligence, and faithfulness, as by Wickliff, John Huss, Jerom of Prague, and others; or the ministering to the necessities of the poor saints, as an evidence of their charity or love; or else

the service of God is here intended, which is but reasonable, and is his due, and ought to be performed to him only, and that with fear and fervency, in faith, and with a pure conscience, with humility, and without mercenary views, and in righteousness and true holiness; or the service of love which the saints perform to one another, as praying for one another, bearing one another's burdens, admonishing and reproving for sin, restoring such as are gone astray, comforting the distressed, building up one another in their most holy faith, and exhorting and stirring up each other to the duties of religion:

*and faith*; not the doctrine of faith, as preached by the ministers of the word, and held and maintained by the true professors of it; but either the grace of faith, or the profession of both; or rather the faithfulness, both of the ministers and private believers of those times, as the Waldenses and Albigenses, the Lollards and Wickliffites, who abode by, and were faithful to the light which they had received:

*and thy patience*; in suffering for the sake of Christ and the Gospel: and very much it was they did endure, and yet held out to the end:

*and thy works, and the last [to be] more than the first*; that is, that their works or acts of love to God and Christ and one another, and of service to God and to the saints, and of faith and faithfulness in the cause of God, and of patience in suffering for the Gospel of Christ, were more in quantity, and greater in quality, toward the close of this period, which brought on the Reformation, than at the beginning of it; and which were done by the persons before mentioned, and by others.

**Ver. 20.** *Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee*, etc.] By way of complaint; so the Arabic version renders it, “I have a certain complaint against thee”. The impartiality of Christ may be observed in taking notice of the bad deeds, as well as of the good ones of his people, and his tenderness in representing them as few; and these things he had against them not in a judicial way to their condemnation, but in a providential way, in order to chastise them for them, for their good; and they are as follow:

*because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel*; or “thy wife Jezebel”, as the Complutensian edition and Syriac version read; the name of King Ahab's wife, who seduced him, in the Hebrew language is “Izebel”, but is read by the Septuagint in (<sup><1165></sup>1 Kings 16:31), Jezebel, as here; and by Josephus <sup>f97</sup> Jezabela; she had her name from **I bz**, “Zebel”, “dung”, to which Elijah has

reference in (~~12087~~2 Kings 9:37); the Ethiopic version calls her “Elzabel”. By her is meant the apostate church of Rome, comparable to Jezebel, the wife of Ahab; as she was the daughter of an Heathen, so is Rome Papal the daughter of Rome Pagan; and as she was the wife of Ahab, and therefore a queen, so the whore of Babylon calls herself; and as Jezebel was famous for her paintings, so the church of Rome for her pretensions to religion and holiness, and for the gaudiness of her worship; and as she was remarkable for her idolatry, whoredoms, witchcrafts, and cruel persecution of the prophets of the Lord, and for murder, and innocent blood she shed; so the church of Rome, for her idolatrous worship of images, for her whoredoms, both in a literal and spiritual sense, and for the witchcrafts, magic, and devilish arts many of her popes have been addicted to, and especially for her barbarities and cruelties exercised upon the true professors of Christ, and for the blood of the martyrs, with which she has been drunk; and as Jezebel stirred up Ahab against good and faithful men, is has this church stirred up the secular powers, emperors, kings, and princes, against the true followers of Christ: and the end of both of them is much alike; as scarce anything was left of Jezebel, so Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, shall be cast into the sea, and be found no more at all: compare (~~12087~~2 Kings 9:7,22,30,31,33,37) with (~~6170~~Revelation 17:1,2,4-6,17,18 18:3,7,21,23);

*which calleth herself a prophetess*; as perhaps Jezebel might do, since she was such a favourer of the prophets of Baal, and so familiarly conversed with them, and kept them, even a hundred of them, at her table: and certain it is, that the antitype of her pretends to an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures, and to have a bulk of unwritten traditions; and which interpretations and traditions are to be regarded as an infallible rule of faith and practice. Now what is complained of in the true members and followers of Christ is, that they suffered this woman

*to teach*; when it was insufferable for a woman to teach, and especially such a strumpet:

*and to seduce my servants to commit fornication*; to deceive such who called themselves the servants of Christ, and draw them into the commission of spiritual fornication, which is idolatry; as the idolatrous worship of the Mass, and of images and saints departed:

*and to eat things sacrificed unto idols*; as Balaam, or the pope, before had done, (~~6124~~Revelation 2:14). This may have respect to the latter part of this

period, when the eyes of many began to be opened to see these false doctrines and idolatrous practices, and yet had not courage enough to oppose them as they should.

**Ver. 21.** *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication*, etc.] Of idolatry. This may have respect to the time of the witnesses, the Waldenses, and others, who bore a testimony against the Romish idolatry, and reprov'd for it, and denounced the judgment of God in case of impenitence; and as these things were repeated time after time, this may be called a space given to repent in; just as Jezebel had a space given her to repent in, from the time that Elijah declared the word of the Lord, that the dogs should eat her: so the Jews <sup>f98</sup> say of the old world, that God gave them **בְּיָצֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצִּיּוֹן**, “space to repent”, but they repented not, as here:

*and she repented not*; (see <sup>cfm</sup> Revelation 9:20,21); for the time for, and means leading to repentance may be given, yet if the grace of repentance itself is not given, men, either particular persons, or whole bodies of men, will never repent of their sins. The Alexandrian copy, Complutensian, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, read, “and she would not repent”.

**Ver. 22.** *Behold, I will cast her into a bed*, etc.] Of sickness and languishing; and which denotes the sickly, pining, and languishing state of the church of Rome, as a just retaliation for her bed of luxury and deliciousness, adultery and idolatry, she had indulged herself in; this was threatened, and was yet to come, and began at the time of the Reformation, signified by the next church state; and, ever since, the whore of Rome has been visibly sickening and decaying. The Alexandrian copy reads, “into a prison”:

*and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation*: the kings of the earth, and their subjects, who have joined in the idolatries and corruptions of the Romish church, (<sup>cfm</sup> Revelation 17:2 18:3), which may be understood either of that distress and uneasiness the Reformation in some countries gave them; or those outward troubles, wars, and desolations they have been since attended with, particularly the empire of Germany; which has been in great tribulation, formerly by the Turks, and of late by internal broils among themselves, and by the armies of other princes entering into it; or it may regard that eternal vengeance that will be recompensed to all such persons:

*except they repent of their deeds*; their spiritual fornication or idolatry, and all the abominations the members of that apostate church are guilty of. There seems to be an allusion in this verse to Ahaziah and Joram, sons of Ahab and Jezebel, who followed their mother's idolatrous practices, and were cast upon a bed of sickness, (<sup>1102</sup>2 Kings 1:2 8:29).

**Ver. 23.** *And I will kill her children with death*, etc.] Her popes, cardinals, priests, Jesuits, monks, friars, and all that join in the Romish apostasy, they shall be killed with death; there shall be an utter extirpation of them in God's own time; or they shall be killed with the second death: *antwm*, when used alone, or as distinct from any other kind of death, signifies the plague; compare with this (<sup>1103</sup>2 Kings 9:24 10:1,7);

*and all the churches*: that shall be in being at the time of Rome's destruction:

*shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and heart*; or am the omniscient God; which will be known by inflicting punishment on the followers of antichrist; when their hidden things of darkness will be brought to light, and exposed by him; and they shall receive the righteous reward of their evil practices, which they have coloured over, and glossed with specious pretences of religion and holiness, and a zeal for God and his glory, when they only meant themselves, the gratifying their carnal lusts, and securing their worldly interests, and amassing riches and honours to themselves:

*and I will give unto everyone of you according to your works*; who have connived at, and joined with them in their evil deeds; as many as were seduced by the false prophetess to commit spiritual fornication with her: as Christ is omniscient, and does not judge according to the outward appearance of things, but knows the principles and ends of all actions, however covert they may be; so he is righteous in judging and in punishing, which will be according as men's works are; and not one shall escape his righteous judgment, nor the due desert of their sins, though the punishment of some may be greater than that of others.

**Ver. 24.** *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira*, etc.] The copulative and is left out in the Alexandrian copy and Complutensian edition, and if retained, it may be rendered thus, "even unto the rest"; the persons spoken to are the same, the pastor of this church, with his colleagues, and all the rest of the faithful in it; which shows that this

epistle, and so the rest, were not written to the pastors only, but to the churches; and that the pastor and his colleagues, with others, were free from the abominable errors and corruptions before spoken of; and that, in the worst of times, God does, and will reserve a people for himself, who are described as follows:

*as many as have not this doctrine*; who had not given into, and embraced this doctrine of the antichristian church of Rome, concerning infallibility, the worshipping of images, transubstantiation, etc. the Arabic version reads, “this new doctrine”; for notwithstanding the large pretensions of the Romish church to antiquity, her doctrine is but a novel doctrine:

*and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak*; that is, had not approved of the doctrines of antichrist, which though his followers called deep things and mysteries of their holy religion, such as transubstantiation, etc. yet, to speak in the language of the pure and faithful professors of the Gospel, they are no other than the depths of Satan, or doctrines of devils; or else the sense is, as Jezebel and her followers say, to the contempt of the faithful, arrogating knowledge to themselves, and upbraiding them with simplicity and ignorance, as not knowing Satan's devices, nor how to rescue souls out of them, as they did; but the former sense seems best:

*I will put upon you none other burden*; meaning not any affliction or tribulation than the present one; nor any other errors and heresies than what were broached; but no other precept or command than what follows; (see ~~1~~<sup>2</sup> Kings 9:25).

**Ver. 25.** *But that which ye have [already]*, etc.] Which was something good, even the faithful word, the form of sound words, the mystery and doctrine of faith; this they had received from Christ and his apostles; they had it in their hearts, and a comfortable experience of the truth and power of it, and had made a profession of it, which they now held, and are here exhorted to hold fast:

*hold fast till I come*; meaning the coming of Christ, either at the Reformation by Luther, Calvin, and others, which began at the close of this church state, when the hands and hearts of those professors would be more strengthened, which seems to be the first sense of the words; or to judge Jezebel, destroy antichrist, which will be by the brightness of his coming; till which time the doctrine of the Gospel is to be held fast: and such an



exhortation will be always necessary, since, till then, there will be always more or less an opposition to it, and attempts made to wrest it out of the hands of its professors, to cause them to hesitate about it, and to intimidate them in the profession of it, by loading them with reproaches, calumnies, and persecution.

**Ver. 26.** *And he that overcometh*, etc.] Jezebel and her idolatries, her children, and all that commit adultery with her; such as are not drawn into the same evil practices with them, but bravely stand their ground against the Romish antichrist and his followers, and bear their testimony against his impious doctrines and idolatrous practices:

*and keepeth my works unto the end*; either of life, or of this church state, or of time, when Christ will personally appear, even at the end of the world; and by his works are meant, not the works which were done by him, as his miracles and works of mercy to the souls and bodies of men, and works of righteousness in obedience to the law, and the work of redemption and salvation; though these are works to be observed, and kept in view, and to be preserved in memory, and for the encouragement of faith and hope; but the works which are commanded, and required by Christ to be done by his people; as the public work of the ministry, by the preachers of the Gospel; and every private work, both internal and external, as the work of faith, the labour of love, and every act of obedience, which is constantly to be discharged. The Arabic version reads, “and keepeth my words and my works”; things both relating to doctrine and practice:

*to him will I give power over the nations*; or Gentiles, the Papists; so called because of the Pagan notions and worship introduced by them; and because they consist of many nations, tongues, and people, who are deceived, and drawn into idolatry by them: and this power over them may be understood in a spiritual sense, through the preaching of the Gospel, which being attended with the power of God, is the means of converting sinners, and so of weakening the kingdom of Satan, and of antichrist; and which had its fulfilment, at least in part, at the time of the Reformation, and onward, and will have still a greater accomplishment in the spiritual reign of Christ and his people, under the Philadelphian church state; and it may also design the temporal power which the saints shall have over antichrist, when they shall take away his dominion, and consume and destroy it, and the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the most High; (<sup>2175</sup>Daniel 7:25-27).

**Ver. 27.** *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron*, etc.] Either with the Gospel, which is the rod of Christ's strength, and is the power of God unto salvation, and by which the kingdom of Christ is enlarged, and the power of the church of Christ over the antichristian party is increased; or it may design great strictness and severity, with which the man of sin will be used by the saints of the most High, when they shall take away his dominion from him:

*as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers*; which may be expressive either of the breaking of rocky hearts in pieces at conversion, and of making souls humble and contrite; or of the irreparable ruin and destruction of antichrist, when the saints shall consume and destroy him:

*even as I received of my Father*; Christ, as God, has an underived power and government; but, as Mediator, his rule and power over the nations are asked by him, given to him, and received by him, (<sup>411B</sup>Psalm 2:8,9). This “as” does not intend equality, but similitude; and denotes the participation the saints will have with Christ in the judgment and destruction of antichrist, and in his kingdom and power.

**Ver. 28.** *And I will give him the morning star*.] So Christ is called, (<sup>6226</sup>Revelation 22:16); and here it designs an illustrious appearance of Christ at the close of this church state, and a communication of much light and grace from him, which introduced the Sardian church state, or the reformation by Luther, Calvin, etc. which is the phosphorus, or morning star, to the spiritual reign of Christ under the Philadelphian church state; which will be the bright, clear, day of the Gospel, when the present twilight, which is between the appearance of the morning star and that glorious day, will be removed: for by this morning star is not meant the glory that shall be put upon the bodies of the saints in the resurrection morn; nor the heavenly glory itself, or the hope of it; but the dawning of the latter day glory, which began at the Reformation, and is promised the faithful professors in the Thyatirian church state, who lived in the darkness of Popery.

**Ver. 29.** *He that hath an ear, let him hear*, etc.] (See Gill on <sup>4117</sup>Revelation 2:7”).