

ing of his person and life became through fellowship dimly intelligible to the disciples, his words would become full of the significance that made them the last and most perfect revelation of God.

We here touch a great subject, the relation of the person and words of Christ to each other. These are indeed inseparable. The words are, as it were, the expressed essence of the person ; the person, the cause or source of the words. But the person is the greater ; the cause must ever transcend the effect, the thinker be more and mightier than his thoughts. Without Jesus, the teaching of Jesus had been comparatively impotent. If his sayings had fallen from heaven like the great Ephesian goddess, they had never made for man a new faith and a diviner religion. The truths his words embodied his person incarnated, and without the life lived the words preached had been but spoken into the air. This subtle essential relation of speaker and speech, experienced all along the Christian ages, was most deeply and resultfully experienced by the men Jesus found fishermen of Galilee, but made into apostles of a new faith, founders of the new and universal and absolute religion.

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

THE CANDLESTICK AND THE STAR.

REVELATION i. 20.

IN endeavouring to explain the figures employed in this verse to set forth the glory of the "churches" and their "angels," it may be at once assumed, as a point which no one in the present state of Biblical exposition will dispute, that the "seven" Churches spoken of represent

not so much the seven Churches of the seven individual cities mentioned in the same chapter, as the one Church of Christ, in all countries and in all ages, down to the very end of time. It is the catholic, the universal Church, in all its varied but still united parts, that spreads itself out in the vision here recorded before the eye of the enraptured seer ; and in the midst of it, knowing all its members, watching over them, caring for them, and Himself loved, worshipped, and obeyed, he beholds the Son of Man, the great Priest and King of his people, the first and the last, that liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore, the one ground of faith and hope and love. The number *seven* is, in this connection at least, the number of the covenant, and it is used in its sacred, not its numerical, form.

But if the seven Churches be thus the one Church, it seems clear that a similar principle of interpretation must be applied to the other objects also spoken of in the same passage as seven in number—the seven golden candlesticks, the seven stars, and the seven angels. They too are severally one, and they are only viewed as seven in order to bring out, in the symbolism so much loved by the Hebrew mind, that their unity was not a unity of sameness, but one in which many different gifts and graces were combined together in a well-ordered and harmonious whole.

What, then, we have now to ask, is meant by the seven “angels” of the Churches, or the seven “stars”? for both names evidently refer to the same object: “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Keeping in view what has been said with regard to the meaning of the number seven, a host of interpretations

is at once set aside by the simple fact that, whatever they are, they must be capable of being considered as a unity.

They cannot be actual messengers of the different Churches, sent with messages to St. John, and now addressed by him in return; for, apart from all that may be urged against such a view, and allowing that any individual Church may have its messenger, we cannot speak of the messenger of the Church when she is looked at as a whole. For the same reason they cannot be subordinate officials, occupying the position and known by the name of those who were called the angels or messengers of the synagogue. They cannot be guardian angels of the several Churches; for, even supposing that the existence of an angelic guardianship of this kind could be established, a universal guardianship can be predicated of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, alone. Nor, finally, can they be bishops of the several Churches, or moderators of their presbyteries. Favoured as this interpretation is, in one or other of these two forms, by not a few Episcopalian and Presbyterian writers of distinction, it is to be rejected on many grounds; but the consideration with which we are now dealing must suffice. If the seven Churches are representative of one Church, the seven angels of one angel, and if the latter is to have a positive existence as well as the former, we should, on this interpretation, be compelled to admit, what neither Episcopalian nor Presbyterian will readily contend for, a universal bishop, the moderator of a universal presbytery! Whether the idea might be tolerated or not is not the question. Enough that the present would indeed be a new passage in

which to find the government of the whole Church culminating in a single official, whether presbyter or priest.

Such interpretations of the word "angel," and any others like them, may without hesitation be set aside. So far as we know, there is only one interpretation consistent with the view that we have been taking of that essential unity which is to mark the "angels" not less than the "Churches" of our passage. It has been adopted in modern times by D \ddot{u} sterdieck, though it is by no means adequately defended by him; and it sees in the angel of each Church its ideal representative, that in which the Church, when contemplated as *acting*, finds expression. There is much in the general modes of thought by which the Apocalypse is marked to commend the view. It is to be noticed that "angels" are constantly referred to in this Book as the instruments by which both living beings and the different departments of nature utter themselves, and take part in what is passing. God proclaims and executes his will by angels (Chaps. vii. 2; viii. 2; xiv. 6, 8, 9; xv. 1, 6; xvii. 1; and xviii. 1, 21). He addresses even the Son by an angel (Chap. xiv. 15). The Son acts and reveals his truth by an angel (Chaps. i, 1; xx. 1; and xxii. 6, 16). The waters have an angel (Chap. xvi. 5). Fire has an angel (Chap. xiv. 18). The winds have an angel (Chap. vii. 1). The abyss has an angel (Chap. ix. 11). In all these cases it will be observed that the "angel" is interposed when the persons or the things spoken of are represented as coming out of their condition in themselves, and as taking their part in intercourse or action. In like manner the "angels" of the Churches are the Churches

themselves, just as the angel of the waters or the winds is the waters or the winds themselves; only that, when the Churches are thus spoken of, they are viewed as not merely in possession of inward vigour, but as exercising it on things without.

It will be at once seen how much this interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the "angels" are the same thing as the "stars;" for it is precisely the province of the star not to hide itself in some secret chamber, but to shine, to shed forth from its place in the firmament light upon the earth. The uniformity of treatment, too, which we have claimed for the "*seven Churches*" and the "*seven stars*" is at once made possible, the former representing the one Church as she *is*, the latter representing no official connected with her, but the same one Church in what she *does*.

Thus then we find, in the verse before us, a double picture of the Church. She is a golden candlestick: she is a star. But the figures of the Apocalyptist are never chosen at random, or in the mere exuberance of a rich imagination. They have a purpose and a meaning; and when two of them are employed with reference to the same object, they must be intended to express different aspects of the manner in which the object is to be viewed. In the verse with which we deal, this difference is determined by that between the "golden candlestick" and a "star;" but the point to be particularly observed at present is that the Church is both. She has a double aspect. Viewed as in herself, she is a golden candlestick; viewed in her action upon others, she is a star. The two aspects are entirely different; and both, taken together, fill out the idea of the Church's position in the world.

1. *The Church is a Golden Candlestick.*—It is not possible to hesitate a moment as to the interpretation of the figure, nor is it necessary to say more than a single word upon the object which supplies it. The arrangements connected with the golden candlestick are familiar to every one, and all can easily enter into the conception of the whole as a symbol of the priestly nation in communion and fellowship with Him who dwelt within the Tabernacle. It stood in the "holy place," entered only by the priests. No common, certainly no heathen, eye ever beheld it. In an apartment which, being without windows, would otherwise have been completely dark, separated from the outer world by the first thick veil, it burned continually by day, possibly also the whole night through. Its practical value could not have been great. To the priests, no doubt, it would be useful as they ministered at the golden altar of incense, or at the table with the shewbread. But these services demanded so little time that it is impossible to explain the continuousness of the burning by the use it was of to them alone. Other considerations than those of immediate practical utility must be resorted to; and when we ask, therefore, Why the candlestick burned as it did? one answer only can be given: it burned for the sake of burning. It burned primarily for God, and not for man; burned that there might be always a light in the place which God had chosen to dwell in; burned that its light might be to the people, gathered in their tents around the Tabernacle, a symbol of the holy flame which they were to be always sending up for the glory of God, for their own and each other's good; and, finally, burned that men, even when they did not see it, might yet know that it was there,

lamp shining with lamp, and all of them throwing their beams of light, not upon any outer world, but, with as it were a loving fondness, upon the stem around which they were set, and upon one another.

Surely there is here a great lesson for the Church—and that especially in these distracted days when, having lost the consciousness of her unity, she has also necessarily lost that of her own separate and independent existence as a spiritual body, to be loved and cherished by her for its own sake, and for the mere joy of living ; when she cannot think of her different members without pain ; when, in no small degree to drown the pain, she throws her whole vigour into outward activity in all its varied forms ; and when she seems not unfrequently to forget that inner life, that quiet fellowship with God, that secret nourishing of *herself* in prayer and praise, which the world is not to see, for which the world cares not, which is seen and cared for only by Him who seeth in secret, and whose reward is reserved for another and a distant day. No one can complain that our different Churches are wanting in a certain kind of vigour, in persistent and varied efforts to spread the glad tidings committed to their care, in unwearied exertions for the world's good. Their places of worship spring up in every corner ; their missions are planted in almost every lane ; their ambassadors are sent to every land ; their ministers are heard in every public assembly : " her sound is gone into all the earth, and her words unto the end of the world." What a contrast to past days of remissness, of carelessness, of ease in Zion ! We may be most thankful for the change. It is nothing less than a resurrection of Christian power that had been supposed to have

vanished from the earth. She whom her enemies thought dead, who had been bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and her face bound about with a napkin, has come forth at the command of her Lord, loosened, and let go, in the freshness of recovered youth.

Yet is there not a danger of too exclusive activity, of forgetting those springs far away from the busy world where the waters rise with which alone it is possible to fill the true channel of Christian life? May not our conception of the Church's function be too much limited by the thought of her direct action upon those who are beyond her pale? May we not come to regard her as a mere busy institution, in which every one of her members has some sphere of outward activity assigned him, which he fails to fill aright unless he is incessantly employed in it? There is no doubt a service in work, but "they also serve who stand and wait."

There are in this loud stunning tide
 Of human care and crime,
 With whom the melodies abide
 Of the everlasting chime;
 Who carry music in their heart
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
 Plying their daily task with busier feet,
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

Of her of the Mary, not the Martha, spirit, our Lord Himself said that she had chosen the "good part."

But this loss of the true idea of the Church, as set forth in the figure of St. John with which we are now dealing, is not to be seen only in the substitution of outward activity for inward nourishing of the soul: it is to be seen not less in the spirit of much of our Christian worship. That worship is regulated by the

idea of converting men. This, however, is the idea of a mission to the heathen. Were we all still heathen, were the minister of the gospel simply a missionary to the heathen, the conception would be just ; but we are not the one, and he is not the other, only. Both are a part of the body of Christ ; and the main function of the Christian congregation is to nourish itself as such, to gain as such more strength, to reflect as such more light, to exhibit as such more of that beauty of holiness which was exhibited by its Lord. Christian men meeting in the sanctuary have a higher charge than that of simply saving, in the ordinary acceptation of the words, either their own souls or those of others. They have a charge, in fulfilling which aright they best accomplish both these great ends. In the very carrying out of the idea for which they meet they are already saved ; and the commission entrusted to them by their Lord is that, as thus saved, they make manifest the glory of Divine sonship, of the grace in which they stand, and of the privileges which they enjoy. The world ought not to behold in them a multitude pricked to the heart, and crying out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It ought to behold in them a witness that God is with them, that his tabernacle is again with men, that He dwells in them, and walks in them—He their God, and they his people. All powerful emotions of the soul seek utterance, not for the sake of impressing others only, but for the sake of relieving the soul itself ; and in the utterance the soul finds relief and strengthening and reward. It cannot be otherwise with the powerful emotions of Christ's believing people ; and the services of the sanctuary give these an utterance, to the joy of the congre-

gation, and the praise of its Redeemer and King. While it is musing the fire burns; then it speaks with its tongue, and is at rest.

The lesson, then, taught us by the fact that the Church of Christ is presented to us as the "golden candlestick" of the Sanctuary, of high value at all times, is even of peculiar value at the present time. It reminds Christian men that they have to *be* as well as *do*; that, as Christians, they do not exist only for the sake of the world without, or to be a centre of missionary effort. They are to burn for the sake of burning. Now that their great Head has gone away to his Father, they are to present a visible manifestation of his glory; and there can be no object of greater concern to them than to do this in an appropriate and worthy manner. Whatever sin still stains them, whatever shortcoming marks them, whatever deficiency they exhibit in the gathering together and blending of all Christian graces, helps to mar the picture of Jesus which they are to set before men; while, on the other hand, their joyful communion with the Father, their fellowship with one another, their songs of praise, and their united prayers, testify to the power and beauty of the new life to which they have been called, of the new world into which they have been brought. As those, therefore, who feel themselves to be in a chamber alone with God, let them forget the world, and let them devote no small part of their Christian efforts simply to trimming their own and each other's lamps; so that, simply in the blessed consciousness of unity with Christ, they may send an ever larger, purer, brighter, flame from that oil of the Divine Spirit which they, day by day, and night by night, renew.

2. *The Church is a Star.*—Yet not exactly when considered in herself, in what she internally and in her own secret nature is, is she a star; but in her “angel,” in her messenger, in her outward expression, in her utterance to men. The metaphor is a very beautiful one, especially when we apply a rule of interpretation for which there is constant occasion in the Apocalypse—that the figure partially depicted in one passage is to be filled out by the other details given us in other passages where it is again employed. For, applying this rule, we have here to take along with us Chapter ii. Verse 28, “I will give him the morning star,” and Chapter xxii. Verse 16, where Jesus says of Himself, “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” So that that star which represents the Church when united to her Lord, is not any star, but the bright morning star, the harbinger of day. Nor can we doubt the meaning of the figure. Other passages of Scripture sufficiently explain it. The proclamation of Divine truth is associated with a star in Daniel xii. 3: “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever;” while again the proclamation of Messiah’s truth *to the ends of the earth* belongs to the same conception alike in the prophecy of Balaam and in the song of Zacharias. “I shall see him,” says the former, “but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth” (Numb. xxiv. 17); and to a similar effect the latter: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his

people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; . . . whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke i. 68, 69, 78, 79).

It is in this figure, then, that the activities of the Church come out. As a "golden candlestick" she burns in the secret place of the Most High, feeding the lamp of her Divine life with sacred oil. She abides in the tabernacle of the Almighty, expressing herself in prayer and praise and holy living, careless though no human eye behold her, satisfied to have communion and fellowship with Him who is Light, and with whom there is no darkness at all. As a "star" she comes forth by her "angel" into the world, acknowledging that she has a mission to mankind, that she is to lighten the dark places of the earth, that she is to usher in the coming day; and that she is so to let her light shine before men, that they may turn their eyes to it with joy, and may behold in it the presage of the time when darkness shall no more cover the earth, nor gross darkness the people; but when the Lord shall arise upon her, and his glory shall be seen upon her, and the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising (Isaiah lx. 2, 3).

For this is one of the very points of the figure of the "star," that it sets forth not merely the outward shining, but the universality with which the light is spread abroad. The figure of the golden candlestick is, strictly speaking, a Jewish one; only when transfigured in the Church of Christ has it to do with Gentiles. The figure of the star goes directly to the latter. As we have seen in the prophecies of Balaam

and Zacharias, the Gentile element is essentially involved in the "star." All local distinctions are overcome, all temporary middle walls of partition are broken down, when the star is spoken of. We are introduced to the universal Church by Him who hath made both Jew and Gentile one, "who came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father; in whom each several building (not, as in English Version, 'all the building') groweth unto an holy temple to the Lord" (Eph. ii. 17, 18, 21).

This consideration also shews us the *order* in which the two different functions of the Church of which we have been speaking are to be realized. The Jewish Church preceded the universal Church, the "golden candlestick" the "star." It was in quietness and secrecy that, during long ages, the Almighty nourished a people to Himself, before He fully made known the fact that the Gentile was as precious to Him as the Jew. His law of grace was like his law of nature—first the seed buried in the ground, then the little stem, and then the tree, beneath whose spreading branches the whole world shall rest. In like manner, the life within is to precede activity without. The Church must realize as far as possible her own ideal before she can hope to act successfully on the world; and, the more she realizes it, the more successful may she hope to be. It is true that outward activity reacts upon her inward life. Without action she must languish and die, just as communities of religious devotees, who have separated themselves from the world for the purpose of cultivating nothing but a quiet piety, have too often, in not blessing the world, lost the blessing

which they sought for themselves. But true as this may be, it is not less true that that activity, which is not the pure shining of a lamp fed by the finest oil of Divine grace, may either be destitute of influence upon others, or may make them only proselytes to an outward system, instead of friends and followers of Jesus. But when the true order is attended to, success will assuredly be given. When the kingdom of God and his righteousness is *first* sought, all other things will be added unto us.

Thus, then, is the true idea of the Church of Christ presented to us in the double figure of St. John. In herself she is a golden candlestick; in her "angel," in her outward activity and expression, she is a star. Would only that the Churches of our own day would endeavour to grasp, more than they are doing, the meaning of the figures. Many a labour now fruitless would be fruitful, many a disappointment now experienced be escaped, many a blessing now unknown be enjoyed. May the Lord hasten it in his time!

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THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

CHAPTER iii.

THE grace of God bringeth salvation. St. Paul has shewn that in the case of bondslaves, and of young men in the heyday of their passions, and of the elders who may imagine themselves beyond effective criticism, SALVATION means *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* He tells Titus that the grace of God in bringing salvation teaches the whole art and inflames the sacred genius of godliness.