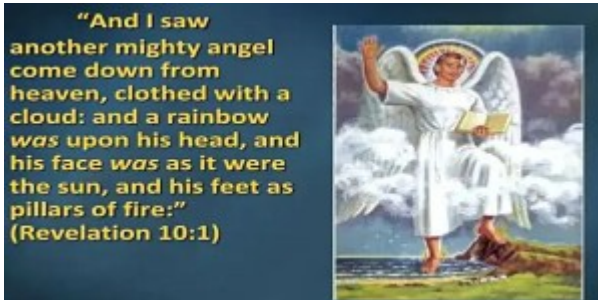


The Seventh Vial Chapter V. Vision Of The Mighty Angel



Continued from [chapter IV. The Rider on the White Horse](#)

VISIONS of terror, symbolizing events yet more terrible, which were to desolate a wretched world, had passed before the eyes of John;—tempests of hail mingled with blood— burning mountains forcibly projected into the sea—baleful (portending evil; ominous) meteors, whose course might be tracked in ashes—the obscuration and fall of the heavenly luminaries—the smoke from the pit, by which the sun and the air were darkened; and the terrible ranks of the Euphratean horsemen, which overran the eastern world, ravaging its fair fields, and leaving them strewn with the corpses of their inhabitants. But now, like the dawn breaking upon a night of thick darkness, there comes, after these symbols of woe, a vision of transcendent glory.

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon His head, and His face as it were the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire.” – Revelation 10:1

“I saw another mighty angel.” He is contrasted with others whom John had seen, but whom He far excelled— even the angels of the trumpets. The point in which the contrast is here made to lie is His power—a “mighty angel.” The angels of the trumpets had great power over the earth: they had broken in pieces the iron kingdom of Rome, both in the west and in the east; but that power was not their own; it was derived from the “mighty angel” who now stood before John. Who this mighty angel was does not admit of doubt. He was plainly the Church’s King and the world’s King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Elliot (Edward Bishop Elliott, the author of [Horae Apocalypticæ](#)), who has brought to the exposition of the Apocalypse a rare erudition, great candor of mind, and an admirable sobriety and sagacity of judgment, gives it as his opinion, that Christ here appears in a symbolic character, as the Angel of the REFORMATION. To this opinion we demur (voice opposition). It appears to us that it is liable to the objection of confounding the Administrator with His acts of administration. We further submit that it is in plain violation of the first law of Apocalyptic interpretation to make a person symbolise an event, as is done when Christ’s appearance is made the symbolization of the Reformation.

This opinion, moreover, appears untenable on the ground of time. The vision

is seen by John, it is true, after the sounding of the sixth trumpet; but there is here an undoubted retrogression, inasmuch as the events included under this vision date their commencement from the sounding of the fourth trumpet, and, starting with the rise of Antichrist, run on in symbolic narrative till the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when Antichrist, having reached the summit of his power, begins to be brought down.

Now, seeing the vision of the "mighty angel" occupies the foreground in that symbolic representation which was made to John of the troubles of the twelve hundred and sixty days, what more natural than to conceive that this vision was meant to prefigure the manifestation which Christ would make to the Church, of His power and faithfulness as her King, both before the commencement of these sad events, and during their continuance? Antichrist was to lay claim to the sovereignty of the world; he was to exact the homage of all who dwelt upon it, and deny to every one who should refuse to fall down and worship him a spot where to dwell while living, or rest when dead. How consolatory to the Church, in these circumstances, to reflect that her Saviour had set His right foot on the sea, and His left on the earth, in token of His being Lord of all, and that He should yet assuredly wrest the dominion that was His own, out of the hand of the usurper! She knew that while Antichrist was laying both sea and land under tribute, and while both were groaning under his oppressions and his crimes, the "mighty angel" was standing over him, ready, at the proper time, to deal the blow which would utterly destroy him.

The Apocalypse contains two great subjects, and divides itself, in fact, into two great histories. The subject of the first history is the destruction of Imperial Rome. It begins with the sixth chapter, and ends with the ninth, and comprehends the Seven Seals and the first Six Trumpets. The subject of the second history is the destruction of Papal Rome. It begins with the Vision of the "Mighty Angel," Revelation X., and runs on to the end of the book, or rather to the twentieth chapter. The tenth chapter is the preface to the grand subject of the second history—the Papacy. It is further remarkable that all the grand epochs in the Apocalypse are introduced by a personal appearance of Christ.

That which relates to the Seven Churches is introduced by His appearance in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Revelation i. that which relates to Imperial Rome, by His appearance as the Lamb, Revelation v. 5 and that which relates to the Papacy, by His appearance as a mighty angel, Revelation x. These appearances do not symbolize events, they teach doctrines. They form, taken together, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," in His threefold character—*first*, as the Prophet of His Church, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; *second*, as the Priest of His Church— —the Lamb slain, and, by His death, obtaining power to assume the administration of Providence; and, *third*, as the King of His Church, standing on the sea and the dry land, possessing universal dominion, and exercising it in the Church's behalf, first, by defending her from her enemies during the twelve hundred and sixty days; second, by destroying those enemies at the end of these days; and, third, by conferring upon her at last the kingdom.

Mr. Elliot would not hold that the first two appearances symbolize *primitive*

Christianity. Why, then, should he hold that the third appearance symbolizes *revived Christianity*? Does it not strongly contravene all our ideas of regularity of plan, to find the symbolization of the Reformation from the apostasy coming before the apostasy itself—the cleansing of the Church before her defilement, and the Papal bulls before the Papacy?

All the appearances of Christ are suitable to the dispensations He comes to usher in; and how suitable His present appearance to the dispensation about to commence, we shall see when we explain—which we now proceed to do briefly—the particulars of the vision.

Power is the attribute by which this Angel is mainly characterized. He is the Mighty One. As God, He laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the workmanship of His hands. As Mediator, on “one that is mighty,” even on Him, was laid the burden of a world’s redemption; and, now resting from that work, in which He travelled in “the greatness of His strength,” he sits on the right hand of power in the heavens, and has all power in earth and heaven committed to Him. There is not a being in the world of mind, nor an element in the world of matter, over which He does not exercise control. The angels that excel in strength do His commandments throughout His vast dominions. Equally supreme is His sovereignty over our lower world. The lights of the sky shine at His command, the tempests of the air gather and burst at His bidding, the waves of the sea rise or are stilled at His voice, the armies of earth are His, and, even when acting against Him, are in reality acting for Him. It is His to give stability and glory to thrones, or to overturn them; to crown hosts with victory, or to break them in pieces; and He wills their success or defeat, according as He sees it will subserve (serve to promote) the great ends of His reign and government. Greater still is His power, and wider still is His dominion. Even the spirits of the pit are not exempt from that tribute of service under which He lays the whole of creation. He displays His power over them, by restraining, directing, and overruling them, so that, with intentions the most opposite to His, they assist in the accomplishment of His everlasting and holy purposes. How many displays has He given of His great power in “the ancient days”—in “the generations of old.” These the Church has commemorated in her songs. He it was, when she dwelt in the house of bondage, who “cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon.” He it was, when she was in captivity, who “sent to Babylon,” and “brought down all their nobles.” But among all the great acts which have marked the course of His administration, there is not one equal to that which He has reserved for its close. This shall eclipse all that went before it.

Egypt and Babylon were great oppressors; Rome, pagan in her latter days, was a greater oppressor than either; and the deliverance of the Church from their yoke was a signal mercy; but when did there arise an enemy like Antichrist? When before had the universe beheld such a fearful combination of policy and power, of hypocrisy and craft, of impiety and blasphemy?—an enemy who spake great words against the Most High, and did wear out the saints of the Most High, and thought to change times and laws; who waxed great even to the host of heaven, and did cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. And as the world never before beheld so formidable an enemy, so never before has it witnessed so tremendous an overthrow— an

overthrow so signal, so unexpected, and so terrible, that the whole earth shall hear of it, and glorify the power and the holiness of Him who will inflict it.

“Clothed with a cloud.” This forms a beautiful connection between His appearances to the Church of the Old Testament, and the appearance He now symbolically made to the Church of the New Dispensation. Veiled in a cloud, He marched before His people through the wilderness. When He descended on Sinai, to receive the homage of that nation whose Sovereign He condescended to become, He said, “Lo! I come unto thee in a thick cloud.” When He signified that He would be present in His Church, He said that He would dwell in the “thick darkness.” Was that “darkness” symbolic? There can be little question that it was. It shadowed forth the nature of that dispensation which was one of type and shadow; revealing yet obscurely the work of Christ and the way of salvation. So the clouds that veiled the form of the “mighty angel” may be held as symbolising the character of the dispensation now to commence—a period of judgment to the world, and of trial to the Church.

As at a former period of judgment, so now, “He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.” How often should the Church, during this part of Christ’s administration—of all others the most mysterious, —have occasion to say, “Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.” “Clouds and darkness are round about Thee.”

“And a rainbow was upon His head.” With regard to this symbol, since the era of the Flood it has been used as the sign of a covenant. After the waters were assuaged, and the mountains and valleys had again looked forth, God said, “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth,” that “the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy the earth.” In the dark cloud now gathering above the Church, God had set His bow—the token of the covenant between Him and the Church, that the waters of wrath which were to roll over the world should not become a flood to destroy the Church. Under the shadow of that cloud, and in sight of those desolating torrents that were to fall from it, and to grow into a deluge that should sweep away empires and dynasties, the Church, undismayed, fixing her eye upon the Sign of the covenant, might sing, “God is our refuge and strength—a very pleasant help in trouble: therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” This sign, displayed on the bosom of the cloud, was as if God had said to her, “Fear not, little flock. In awful judgment am I come forth against the world; but the arm now stretched forth against it to destroy it is around thee, to protect thee. Though I should make a full end of all nations, I will not make a full end of thee.”

“His face was as it were the sun.” Throughout the whole of that dark night, whose twilight shadows were already falling, His face was to be hidden to the world, but His own should see it, and be refreshed and cheered thereby. The Church was to dwell in light, while the world should be shrouded in darkness. When the Church passed through the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud that followed her was a pillar of light to her, but of darkness to the Egyptians. That pillar was to take its stand once more between the sealed Church and the

anti-christian world, and to perform its functions, as of old, in shedding light upon the one and darkness upon the other. The glory of Christ was seen, and His love enjoyed, even during the night of the Papacy, by His chosen witnesses. Though hidden from the world, yet not from Christ, some dwelt in the inaccessible cliffs, or in the deep valleys of Piedmont, covered by the friendly shadows of the overhanging mountains; others retired to the remote and uninhabitable wilds of the Hebrides; others found shelter in the convents of England and Germany; others lay hid in the caverns of Bohemia. But wherever their retreat, the Word of God lay open before them; and through its instrumentality they held communion with Christ. Thus the promise was fulfilled, as it has often been in days of darkness to the world—"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings."

"And His feet as pillars of fire." The "steps" of God are uniformly employed in the Old Testament to denote His dispensations of providence. Such is the undoubted meaning of the symbol here. It implies that the providential procedure of Christ, during the period now commencing, should combine, in no ordinary degree, power, glory, and terror. His feet were as pillars of fire—strong to carry forward His work, maugre (in spite of) all opposition, and to fulfil His own purposes amid the ruin of the plans and purposes of all others.

In the government of the world, as in its creation, He fainteth not, neither is weary. On He goes, conquering and treading into the dust all His enemies. His feet were as pillars of *fire*. Fire scorches and burns up: so would the judgments now to be introduced. They were in due time to scorch and burn up the Papacy, and to refine and purify the Church. She should be unmoved while the earth was trembling and its pillars giving way beneath the feet of this mighty angel. She should be built up by the same events which would break in pieces the world and its inhabitants.

Continued in [Chapter VI. The Little Book](#)

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