&c.).—**The seven stars are** (signify) [the]  
**angels of the seven churches: and the  
seven candlesticks are seven churches**(the import of the **angels** has been much  
disputed. Very many both ancient and  
modern Commentators take them for the  
*presiding presbyters*, or *bishops*, of the  
churches. This view is variously supported.  
It derives probability from the  
analogy of the vision itself, in which, seeing  
that the candelabra represent the  
churches themselves, existing vessels containing  
much light, the stars, concentrated  
sparks of light, should represent some  
actually existing persons in or connected  
with the churches. Again it is supported  
by our finding that throughout the seven  
Epistles the angel is treated as representing  
and responsible for the particular  
church. But before we pass on to the  
other great section of interpretation, we  
may at once dismiss those forms of this one  
which make the *angel* the *ideal representative*  
of the governing body, or an *ideal  
messenger* from the church, or an anticipatory  
idea of the office of Bishop, not yet  
instituted : or, in short, any idealism at all.  
As the *church* is an objective reality, so  
must the *angel* be, of whatever kind. This  
consideration will also affect the current of  
interpretation which takes the angels to be  
*the churches themselves*. The second line  
of interpretation is that which regards  
them as *angels*, in some way representing  
the churches. In favour of this is 1) the  
constant usage of this book, in which the  
word **angel** occurs only in this sense: 2)  
the further usage of this book, in which we  
have, ch. xvi. 4, the *angel of the waters*  
introduced without any explanation, who  
can be none other than the angel presiding  
over the waters: 3) the expression of our  
Lord Himself, Matt. xviii. 10, *“their angels  
in heaven do always behold the face  
of my Father which is in heaven,”* coupled  
with that expressed by the church in the  
house of Mary the mother of John Mark,  
Acts xii. 15, with regard to their disbelief  
of Peter standing at the door, *“it is his  
angel :”* both asserting the doctrine that  
angels are allotted to persons, and are  
regarded as representing them: a subject  
full of mystery, and requiring circumspect  
treatment, but by no means to be put aside,  
as is commonly done. 4) The extension of  
this from individuals to nations in the book  
of Daniel, which is so often the key to  
apocalyptic interpretation. See Dan. x. 21,  
xii. 1: an analogy according to which there  
might well be angels not only of individuals,  
but of churches. 5) The fact that  
throughout these Epistles, nothing is ever  
addressed individually as to a teacher, but  
as to some one person reflecting as it were  
the complexion and fortunes of the church  
ina way in which no mere human teacher  
or ruler could. That there is no exception  
to this in ch. ii. 20, see maintained in note  
there. 6) To the objection advanced in  
the comment of Arethas, that “*the presiding  
angel had not sinned*, so as to want  
exhorting to repent, &c.,” the reply may be  
made, with advantage to this interpretation,  
that there evidently is revealed to us  
a mysterious connexion between ministering  
angels and those to whom they minister,  
by which the former in some way are  
tinged by the fates and fortunes of the  
latter. E. g. in our Lord’s saying cited  
above, the place of dignity there asserted  
of the angels of the little children is unquestionably  
connected with the character  
of those whose angels they are: and it  
cannot be following out such a revelation  
too far to say that, if some of the holy  
angels are thus and for this reason advanced  
to honour, others may be similarly,  
and for the opposite reason, placed in less  
honour and relatively disgraced. That  
this idea is found expressed in the Rabbinical  
writings is a mark of the further  
development of the truth, which seems to  
have been first revealed to Daniel. 7) It  
will be perceived that this interpretation  
does not lie under any of the objections  
stated above as idealizing that which ought  
to be an objective reality. For it contemplates  
the angels of the churches as really  
existent, not as ideal beings. It is only  
when this latter is the case, that those objections  
can apply. 8) It will also be perceived,  
that both the circumstances, which  
were cited as making for the former interpretation,  
tell equally for this: viz. a) that  
just noticed, the actual existence of these  
persons in or belonging to the churches,  
and b) the fact that in the Epistles the  
angel is treated as representing and responsible  
for the particular church.

So that I cannot but regard this second