**saith He that hath the seven spirits of  
God** (this designation of our Lord has not  
before occurred: but it is new rather in  
form than in substance. We have mention  
in ch. i. 4 of the seven spirits which  
are before God's throne: and we there  
found occasion to interpret them of the  
plenitude of the Godhead in its attributes  
and energies. See, for further elucidation,  
ch. iv. 5, v. 6. These spirits, this plenitude,  
Christ, the Lord of the Church, possesses,  
is clothed and invested with, in all  
fulness. From Him the spiritual life of  
his churches comes as its source, in all its  
elements of vitality. He searches all the  
depths both of our depravity and of His  
own applications of grace. He has in his  
hand all the Spirit’s power of conviction.  
He wields the fire of purification and the  
fire of destruction. Whether the Spirit  
informs, or rebukes, or warns, or comforts,  
or promises, whether He softens or hardens  
men’s hearts, it is Christ who, searching  
the hearts as Son of God and feeling  
their feelings as Son of man, wields and  
applies the one and manifold Spirit.

The designation here has its appropriateness  
in the whole character of this solemn  
Epistle. The Lord of the Church comes,  
armed with all the powers of the Spirit;  
searching the depths of hypocrisy, judging  
of the worthlessness of works not done in  
faith. The difficulty of this general attribute  
of Christ, and not any one selected  
specially as applying to Sardis being here  
introduced, seems to be best accounted for,  
not, as Ebrard, by the general prophetic  
import of the Epistle, but by the fact that.  
the minatory strain of the Epistle justities  
the alleging the whole weight and majesty  
of the divine character of our Lord, to  
create alarm and bring about repentance),  
**and the seven stars** (the former symbolism  
[ch i. 16, 20] still holds in all its strictness.  
Nor have we the least right here,  
as some do, to suppose that the stars and  
the spirits are identical. The motive mentioned  
above would fully account for this  
designation also: The Lord of all the  
churches: He who appoints them their  
ministering angels, and has them, and all  
that is theirs, in His hand): **I know thy  
works, that thou hast a name that thou  
livest** (I need only mention for warning  
the childish fancy, that the Bishop of  
Sardis was named Zosimus or Vitalis (*living*).  
The expression explains itself: thou  
hast a repute that thou livest: art *nominally*,  
as we commonly now say, Christian),  
**and** (the mere copula carries the contrast  
far more vividly and pathetically than when  
it is made rhetorically complete by inserting  
“yet”) **art dead** (spiritually dead:  
void of vitality and fruitfulness: sunk in  
that deep deadly sleep which, if not broken  
in upon and roused up, is death itself: so  
St. Paul, Eph. v. 14). **Be** (literally,  
**become**: because a change is involved: become  
what thou art not) **watchful** (we can  
hardly help in English substituting the  
adjective for the participle “watching;”  
thereby losing objective vividness, and  
getting instead a subjective attribute of  
character. “Awake and watch” would be,  
in paraphrase, tantamount to the text),  
**and strengthen the remaining things,  
which were** (the time is transferred to that  
indicated by the fulfilment of the command:  
which were, when thou shalt apply thyself  
to strengthen them) **about to die** (there is  
a question whether these *remaining matters*are to be understood as *things*, matters  
in which the Sardian church was not yet  
totally without spiritual vitality, or as  
*persons*, who were not yet passed into the  
almost universal death-slumber of hypocrisy.  
The latter view is taken by very  
many Commentators. And there is nothing  
in the construction to preclude it. But if  
I mistake not, there is in the context.  
For to assume that the *persons remaining*could be thus described, would surely be to  
leave no room for those mentioned with  
so much praise below in ver. 4. **Had the  
things which remain** not occurred, we  
might have well understood *“strengthen  
those that were ready to die,”* of confirming  
those thy weak members who ow account  
of the general deadness were near  
losing their spiritual life altogether: but