there. For the history, &c., see Introduction).  
{7} **And to the angel of the church  
in Philadelphia write; These things saith  
the holy One** (as opposed to the *synagogue  
of Satan* below; not with reference to  
Christ’s High-priesthood, but expressive of  
moral attribute), **the true One** (this title  
would appear as if it were chosen to declare  
an attribute of our Lord, opposed to *“those  
who say...and are not, but do lie”*below), **he that hath the key of David**(i.e. He that is the Heir and Lord of the  
abiding theocracy. In Isa. xxii. 22, it is  
said of Eliakim son of Hilkiah, *“The key  
of the house of David will I lay upon his  
shoulder ; so he shall open, and none shall  
shut; and he shall shut, and none shall  
open:”* which is manifestly the passage  
here incorporated into the Lord’s message:  
and the sense is that whatever  
inferior degrees there may be of this  
power of opening and shutting the church  
[*the house of David*, with reference to  
the false Jews below], the supreme power,  
the one true key, belongs to the Lord  
Christ alone. It is hardly justified, and  
serves but little purpose, to attempt to  
set up a distinction between “the key *of  
David*” here, and “the key of *the house  
of David*” in Isaiah. The key is the  
same in both cases: but the One possesses,  
it as his own by right, the other has it  
merely entrusted to him; laid on his  
shoulder. See on the whole sense, Matt.  
xvi. 19), **who openeth, and no one shall  
shut; and shutteth, and no one shall open**  
(these words are to be taken not merely of  
the power of Christ to forgive sins, but  
generally, as indeed the next ver. requires.  
Christ only has power to admit into and  
exclude from His kingdom; to enlarge  
the work and opportunities of His church,  
and to contract them): {8} **I know thy works**  
(these words stand by themselves; not as  
connected with what follows below, the  
intervening sentence, “*behold, ... shut,*”  
being considered parenthetical.

They  
are words of comfort and support to the  
Philadelphian church): **behold, I have  
given before thee a door opened** (i.e. have  
granted, in my possession and administration  
of the key of David, that a door  
should stand opened. The door is variously  
understood: but most Expositors  
take it to mean, as in 1 Cor. xvi. 9;  
2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3 [otherwise in  
Acts xiv. 27], an opportunity for the  
mission work of the church. And this  
appears to be the true sense here, by  
what follows in ver. 9, promising conversion  
of those who were now foes.

**before thee,** because the course is naturally  
*forward*), **which no one is able to shut:  
because** (gives the reason of what preceded;  
the Lord will confer this great  
advantage on the Philadelphian church,  
*because...*) **thou hast little power** (not  
as A.V. *“a little strength,”* thereby virtually  
reversing the sense of the words:  
the original importing *“thy strength is  
but small,”* and the A. V. importing  
*“thou hast some strength,”* the fact of its  
smallness vanishing under the indefinite  
term *“a little.”*

This smallness of  
strength must not be attributed to a  
scanty bestowal of miraculous powers on  
the Philadelphian church, but to the fact  
of the fewness of the congregation of  
Christians there: possibly *also* to their  
poverty as contrasted with the wealth  
of their Jewish adversaries), **and** (using  
that little well) **didst keep my word, and  
didst not deny my name** (the past tenses  
perhaps refer to some time of especial trial  
when both these temptations, to break  
Christ’s word and deny His name, were