§vJ SYSTEMS OF INTERPRETATION. [ivrropvction.   
   
 41. f) In accordance with the analogy just pointed ont, I conecive   
 that the opening seetion of the book (after the vision in the introdue-   
 tion), containing the Epistles to the Churches, is an expansion of our   
 Lord's brief notes of comfort, reproof, and admonition addressed to His   
 own iu the prophecy on the Mount of Olives and elsewhere in His   
 prophetic discour   
 42, “Tt reveals to us our Lord as present with His people evermore   
 in the fulness of His divine Majesty as the Incaruate and glorified Son   
 of God: present with them by His Spirit to sympathize, to sustain, to   
 comfort, to reprove, to admonish, as their need requires: his eye ever-   
 more on every heart, his love ever ready to supply all their need. ‘The   
 Epistles are no other than the expression of that special message of   
 rebuke or encouragement which day by day in all ages the Lord sees to   
 be needed, in one or other of its parts, by every Church, and ever   
 Christian, on earth. Every body of Christians, we are reminded, like   
 every individual, has at each moment, its own definite religious   
 character and condition: like Ephesus, sound, but with declining love   
 and faith: like Smyrna, faithful in tribulation and rich in good works:   
 like Pergamum, stedfast under open trial, but too tolerant of com-   
 promises with the world’s ways: like Thyatira, diligent in well-doing,   
 and with many signs of spiritual progress, yet allowing false teaching   
 and corrupt practice to go unchecked : like Sardis, retaining the form   
 of sound doctrine, but in practice sunk into a deep slumber threatening   
 spiritual death: like Philadelphia, faithful to the Lord’s word and name,   
 loving Him though in weakness, and therefore kept in safety: or finally,   
 like Laodicea, ‘lukewarm, and neither eold nor hot: self-satisfied,   
 because sunk too deep in spiritual sloth and indifference to be con-   
 seions of her poverty, and ready therefore to lose all without struggle   
 or regret \*.”   
 43, This first seetion has set before us the Lord present with His   
 church on earth: the next introduces us at once to His presence in   
 heaven, and to the celestial seenery of the whole eoming prophecy. It   
 is to be noted that this revelation of God is as the God of His Church,   
 ‘The Father, seated on the ‘Throne: the Lamb in the midst of the throne,   
 bearing the marks of His atoning sacrifice: the sevenfold Spirit with His   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 1 T borrow the words of a MS. Lecture on the Apocalypse by an old and valued   
 friend.   
 2 It has been supposed by some (the first of whom apparently was the Abbot   
 Joachim) that these Epistles are in themselves prophetic of various states of the church   
 from the time of the Apocalypse to the final clase of the dispensation. One of the   
 principal among these is Vitringa, in whose Commentary, pp. 27 ff, will be found a   
 full account, and elaborate defence of the view. I need not say that I myself cannot   
 subseribe to it.   
 357