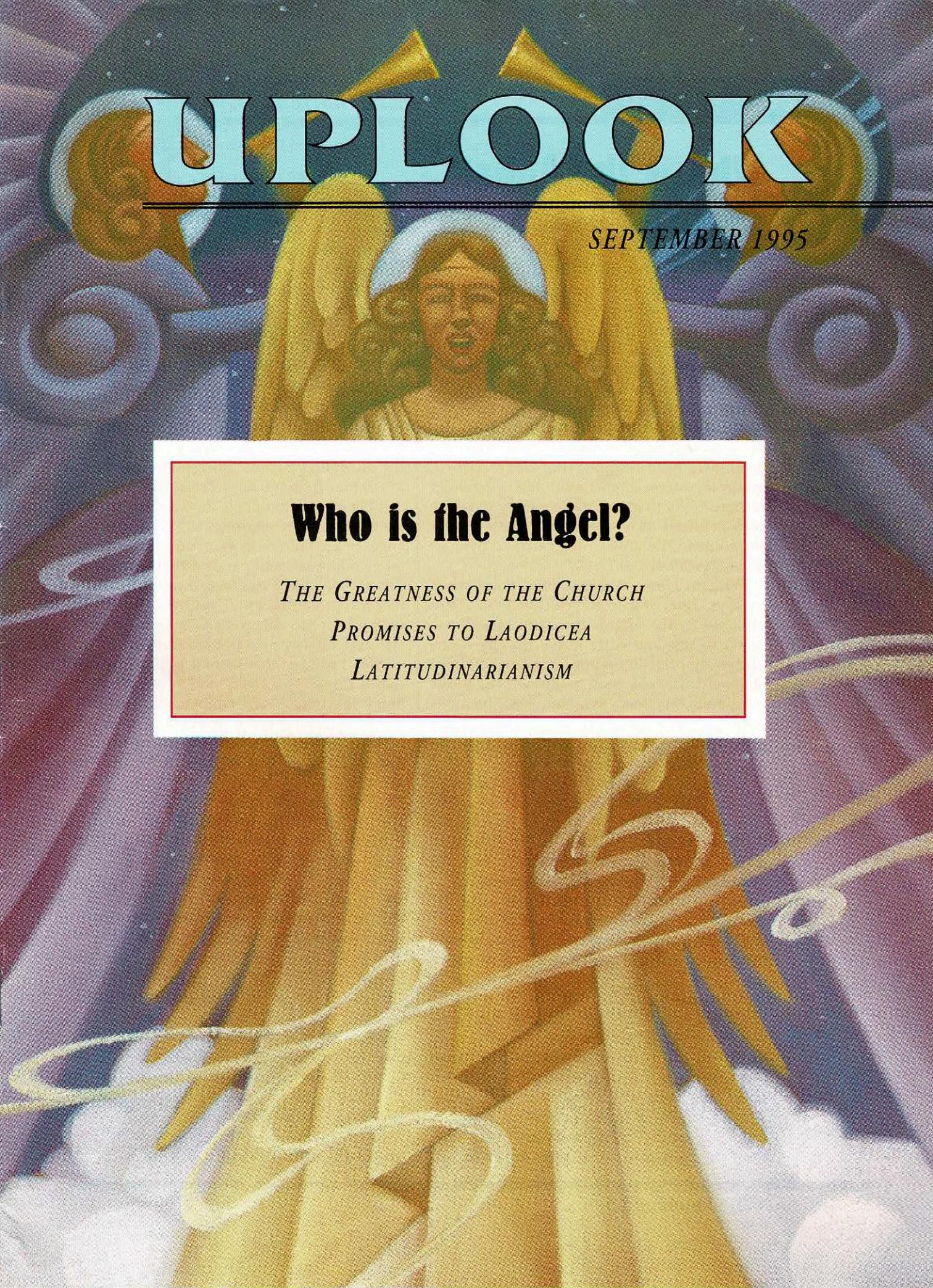

UPLOOK

SEPTEMBER 1995

Who is the Angel?

THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH

PROMISES TO LAODICEA

LATITUDINARIANISM

J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

Who is the Angel?

When the exalted and glorified Lord Jesus assesses the seven churches of Asia Minor (central Turkey today), He seems to speak to them indirectly. Who is this angel to whom He speaks?

John the Beloved is the amanuensis in the Revelation, writing what he heard on Patmos. But the letters are addressed in each case to "the angel of the church" in the cities mentioned. Elsewhere in this issue, articles discuss the subject of those letters. But my question is: What does the Lord mean when He speaks to "the angel" of the various churches cited?

There is no shortage of views by Bible students (which ought to warn us not to be too dogmatic here). Some, like Dean Alford, argue for literal angels who have particular responsibility to guard the assembly to which each is linked. It is suggested to be a similar situation to the angels delegated to oversee nations (see Dan. 10:13, 20).

William Hoste makes a good point when he says, referring to Revelation 1:20: "Others...see in the angels the symbol of those gifted to rule and edify in the churches—the under-shepherds responsible to the Great Shepherd. The objection to this, which I judge insuperable, is that a symbol cannot be interpreted by a symbol. The lampstands are symbolic of literal churches, and the stars can only represent literal angelic beings."

While we recognize the special ministry of angels to those "who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14), it would seem unusual for the Lord to address such a being if His concern is with those in the church. To each the Lord begins: "Unto the angel of the church...I know thy works." Is it some literal angel He holds responsible for these works of men?

Others have suggested that *aggelos* should be understood as "messenger," speaking of the men who were to take these missives to their intended readers. It is used in this way of John the Baptizer (Mt. 11:10), of the "messenger of Satan" sent to buffet Paul (2 Cor. 12:7), and of the two spies protected by Rahab (Jas. 2:25). There is no question that these angels are in some way involved in these heart-stirring messages from the Saviour, but they seem, strangely, to be more the recipients than the transmitters. It would be like addressing the Roman epistle to Phoebe or the Philemon letter to Onesimus.

Of course, some looking for divine endorsement of a clerical system within the church find the symbolism virtually beyond question. It is, to them, a descriptive picture of the pastor or clergyman held accountable for that local church and its condition.

William Lincoln assesses this view: "How blinded men must be to quote a term like this in defense either of modern episcopacy, or of the dissenting pastor!" Such human positions are unknown in the New Testament.

I believe Walter Scott draws nearer to the answer when he comments: "We regard the angel of the church as symbolically representative of the assembly in its actual moral state. *Representation* is the thought...not official but moral representation..." Yet even this brings us back to the dilemma of a symbol (star) standing for a symbol (representation).

May I suggest that there is a direct link between the seven earthly and seven heavenly lights (Rev. 1:20). The lampstands, evaluated in these letters, are a mixture of true and false—Christendom, the professing Church. But the stars, shining brightly in the heavens, are the true spirit of Christianity in the Church—the light of the world. Angels are spirits (Heb. 1:7, 14). When Peter escaped from prison, the believers, thinking Rhoda had "seen a ghost," said, "It is his angel (spirit)" (Acts 12:15). If this is so, then the angel of the church is that which is truly spiritual in the Church and only that which will respond to the words of Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:9-16).

Why belabor the point? Because the dire needs, failures, and sins of the Church are charged to all such. As Robert McClurkin writes: "The true Church must bear the responsibility for the inroads of evil that come into the churches. Who let Jezebel in...? Surely the watchmen must have been asleep."

It is no good to point fingers, although evaluations must be made (Rev. 2:2). Are we willing to "hear what the Spirit says" and act upon it? Could it be He is talking to *you*? U

UPLOOK
(USPS 620-640)
Founded in 1927 as *Look on the Fields,*
is published eleven times per year by

GOSPEL FOLIO PRESS
P. O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
UPLOOK
P. O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041

Founding Publisher
WILLIAM J. PELL

Editor
J. B. NICHOLSON, JR.

Managing Editor
SCOTT A. TUCKER

Circulation Manager
PAUL GOODSON

UPLOOK magazine is intended to encourage the people of God in fidelity to His Word, fervency in intercessory prayer, labors more abundant and love to the Lord. Believing in the practical Headship of Christ and the local autonomy of each assembly, this is not intended to be an official organ of any group or federation of local churches. The editor and authors take responsibility for materials published. For any blessing which accrues from this publication, to God be the glory.

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Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all unsolicited material.

ISSN #1055-2642
Printed in the U. S. A.
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Gospel Folio Press is a tax-exempt corporation looking to the Lord to provide for the needs of this ministry. This magazine is sent freely to those who request it, but evidently is not freely produced. Donations should be made payable to "UPLOOK" and sent to:

U.S. donors:	Canadian donors:
P.O. Box 2041 Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041	P. O. Box 427 St. Catharines, ON L2R 6V9

Contributions may also be made using your *Visa* or *Mastercard.* When you write, please include your card number and expiry date and the amount in US currency that you wish to donate.

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John W. Bramhall

Latitudinarianism

A recent writer to the editor of U.S. News *wrote: "I don't want to be so open-minded that my brain falls out." William Kelly says Latitudinarianism is Laodicean.*

A spiritual disease of Latitudinarianism prevails among the saints today, even among those who in the past have maintained the truth of God. This name emerged in the 17th and 18th Centuries within the Church of England, when certain religious leaders tended to minimize Christian doctrines. Its continuance to the 19th Century produced a liberal theology. Following it, the Spirit of God manifested the greatest revival of divine truth ever known since the early history of the Church.

Webster's dictionary defines *Latitudinarianism* as "deviations from a standard of belief and opinion, especially in matters of religion; tolerant of deviation in opinion and doctrine." A person who is a "latitudinarian," the same source describes as "one who is broad and liberal in his standard of belief and conduct." William Kelly, in his exposition of Revelation, describes this as Laodicean in character: "'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.' This is Latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that works the deadly mischief, but the heart remaining indifferent to the truth, after it has fully been brought before it."

The apostle Paul admonished Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). The spirit of indifference to Pauline truth is in strong evidence today. One has said, "Evangelicalism without being followed by teaching will lead to the abandonment of Pauline truth" (J. N. Darby). Let us analyze the words of 2 Timothy 1:13.

What to do: "Hold fast." The truth of God is to be firmly held. "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23). There is always someone else bidding for it against the Lord's people—the devil!

What to hold: "The form of sound words." We quote from the footnote of JND's Translation: "Timothy had heard words or doctrines. Hence he was to have a summary or outline, so as to state clearly and definitely what he did hold."

What are sound words? The word "sound" is linked with doctrine four times (in 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1). It is also linked with "words" two times (1 Tim. 6:3, "wholesome words; 2 Tim. 1:13). It is also linked with "in the faith" in Titus 1:13 and 2:2. The word "sound" is a semi-medical one, referring to the spiritual health of the believer. Health-giving teaching is to produce healthy saints. The remedy for the absence of spiritual growth is to be the beneficial nourishment of healthy teaching.

What is the source of sound words? "Which thou hast heard of me," writes Paul. If Paul could speak today regarding church conditions, would he not quote his own words in Acts 27:21? Eliminate the Pauline epistles and spiritual tragedy follows in the testimony. Under God, we are indebted to His servant Paul for church guidance in truth and practice. Through him God completed the divine revelation of truth (see Col. 1:25-28), the mystery of the Church.

What is the evidence of sound words? It is possible to hold sound doctrine and still remain in an unhealthy state of soul. The genuine proof is that it is assimilated into personal experience. In 2 Timothy 1:12, the effective experience of practiced truth in Paul's life is recorded (also in 2 Tim. 3:10-12). You find in the pastoral letters two great principles emphasized: sound doctrine and sound living. Paul could never be accused of "mentally trafficking in unfelt truth" as some of our preachers of the past often said. His life supported his admonition to Timothy to "hold fast" in the midst of departure from the truth that had already set in, many having defected (2 Tim. 1:15). If Timothy faced this danger in his day, what shall we say of it now?

The danger of being like so much dead driftwood, carried about by winds of doctrine and waves of circumstances, is strong today (Eph. 4:14-15). Hence the importance of faithfulness to God's Word and constant spiritual growth. In relation to the truth of God, in 2

Latitudinarian: "one who is broad and liberal in his standard of belief and conduct."

Timothy we are admonished to hold it (2 Tim 1:13); to teach it (2 Tim. 2:2); to abide in it (2 Tim. 3:14); and to preach it (2 Tim. 4:2). Let us search our hearts and ask: "Am I heeding Paul's admonition to hold fast?" Or am I a Latitudinarian?

In these days of spiritual declension, this exhortation is necessary. The phrase "hold fast" occurs twelve times in Scripture, for however dark and difficult the path, we ought to have a strong grip on God's truth. If we are inclined to let it go, we should repent and tighten our grip. Consider some important truths we should "hold fast."

1. *The gospel* (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul delighted in the declaration of the gospel, which we have believed and by which we are saved. Many preach on moral problems, current questions, and give sermonettes on topics innumerable, instead of preaching the "death, burial, and resurrection" of Christ as the message of salvation. All need to hear the glorious tidings in simplicity and power (note Gal. 1:9). Let us hold fast the gospel.

2. *Assurance of salvation* (Jn. 3:36; 5:24; 1 Jn. 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:12). Take God at His Word. The believer is not only saved but safe! He can "never perish" (Jn. 10:28, etc.). The Scripture was given "that ye may know that ye have eternal life." How unfortunate that so many believers think their salvation can be lost. You cannot lose anything God gives that is eternal. Let us hold fast to our blessed assurance.

3. *Inspiration of the Scriptures* (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21). Probably the longest and greatest theological battle rages over the fallibility or infallibility of the Bible. Prominent ecclesiastical leaders openly deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible in its inerrancy. Yet godly men in the past century whose hearts the Lord touched, after much prayer and study of God's Word, repudiated all creeds, catechisms, and confessions, and took the Bible for their complete guide in all matters relating to the Church and Christian life. The Bible stands; hold it fast.

4. *The gathering name of Christ* (Mt. 18:20). One precious Name alone expresses the unity of the Church—"My name," said the Lord Jesus. Paul stated it in 1 Corinthians 1:2, yet even in his day some were not satisfied with this (see 1 Cor. 1:12). The only church which Scripture gives us authority to belong to, is called the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). All true believers are in this "Body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:13) and united to the risen Head in heaven (Eph. 1:22-23). If you are one, practice this truth and hold it fast.

5. *The priesthood of all believers* (1 Pet. 2:1-10). Note we are a "holy priesthood" and a "royal priesthood" (vv. 5, 9). Every believer, young or old, is a priest in God's spiritual house. There are no distinctions—such as clergy or laity—for each one is called and ordained by God to enjoy immediate access into God's presence at all times and in all circumstances (Heb. 10:19). We may have different functions to perform as God reveals, but we are equally the same in the priesthood (read Rev. 1:5-6; 5:10). How precious to recognize the whole priesthood is under the authority of the great High Priest above (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25). Hold it fast!

6. *Separation to God* (2 Cor. 6:14-18). In the spiritual realm we are to walk separate from the world (Jn. 15:19; 1 Jn. 2:15). We are to be separate from the "disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:6); separate from those with unsound doctrine (2 Jn. 8-10); and from immorality (1 Cor. 5:11, 13). But above all, we are to be separated unto God. Remember that separation from true believers, sound in faith and godly in life, is not taught in the New Testament. God's children are to be a separated people, not from each other but from those influences that would keep us from each other! This is greatly neglected. We need to hold it fast.

7. *The coming of the Lord* (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). The premillennial return of the Saviour is our blessed hope. This doctrine has been abused and emasculated by some, bringing confusion to many saints. But let us be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Keep saying: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And in the meantime, hold fast!

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Front Lines

NATIONAL WORKERS' & ELDERS' CONFERENCE

The dates of October 3-5 have been set for this year's National Workers' and Elders' Conference. The conference, Lord willing, will be held at the Kenilworth Gospel Chapel (Kenilworth, NJ). For lodging or information:

Don Dunkerton
c/o Kenilworth Gospel Chapel
103 South 23 Street
Kenilworth, NJ 07033
(908) 709-1373

CONFERENCES ARE BIG IN TEXAS

The 1995 Houston Conference will be held, D.V., on October 6-8; hosted by Colonial Hills, Manvel, and Pineview Bible Chapels. Speakers this year are William MacDonald (CA) and Steve Hulshizer (PA). Contact:

Dale Peters
10507 Glenway Drive
Houston, TX 77070
(713) 469-3601
or
Frank Martin
21411 Tophill
Spring, TX 77388
(713) 353-0354

MEN'S CONFERENCE

Southwest Bible Camp (Glenwood, NM) announces their 25th Anniversary Men's Conference on October 6-8, 1995. Gary Thompson, administrative director of Rawhide, Inc., will be the speaker. Send registrations to:

Dr. James Leeman
Southwest Bible Camp
9929 N. Black Mesa Trail
Tucson, AZ 85742
(520) 744-8564

WOMEN'S MISSION CONFERENCE

North Ridge Bible Chapel (Raleigh, NC) will be hosting the Southeastern Women's Regional Missions Conference on October 7. Expected speakers are Christine Schneider (Austria) and June Peck (Zaire). Contact:

Diane Weber
(919) 876-5671

THE MAINE ATTRACTION

The Spring Hill Gospel Hall will be hosting their Annual Bible Conference October 7-8. Roy Hill (UK) and David Adams (ON) will be the speakers. For more information, contact:

Dan Chick
95 Maple Street
Westbrook, ME 04092
(207) 854-4968

PRAY FOR THE GOSPEL

The Westmount assembly (Peterborough, ON) anticipates a week of gospel meetings with brother Joe Reese (ON), Oct. 8-13. With prayer, you can be there!

COLORAMA

Greenwood Hills Bible Conference & Camps will be hosting their annual Fall conference experience—Colorama I and II on October 9-13 and 16-20. Speakers Jim Harvey (NH) and Bob Gessner (PA) are expected. Contact:

Greenwood Hills
7062 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 17222
(717) 352-2150

OTTAWA VALLEY YOUTH

Ottawa Valley assemblies will be holding their Fourth Annual Fall Youth Conference, October 13-14, at the Bridlewood Bible Chapel in Kanata, ON. Bruce Langevin (PEI) will be speaking.

Shawn Abigail
(613) 820-9720
or E-mail to:
ad873@freenet.carleton.ca

LAND OF THE SKY

The Asheville Gospel Chapel (Asheville, NC) will be hosting the Land of the Sky Bible Conference on October 21, 1995. Herman Luhm (VA) and Dr. Harold Wells will be speaking. Contact:

Walter Peck
15 Bent Tree Road
Asheville, NC 28804

UNDER THE PALMS

The Annual Women's Missionary Conference at Park of the Palms (Keystone Heights, FL) will be held October 27-28, 1995. Lord willing, Doris Pitman (Angola), Janet Anderson (Papua New Guinea) and Christine Schneider (Austria) will be speaking. Contact:

Park of the Palms
c/o Marion Barr
706 Palms Circle
Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(904) 473-4926

INTENSIVE STUDY ON WORSHIP

Come and share an intensive study on worship at Turkey Hill Ranch and Bible Camp, October 27-29. Keith Trevolt and John Heller will be the speakers. Children's meetings will be available. Cost $30.00 per person, $60.00 per family. Contact:

Turkey Hill Ranch

Rt. 71, Box 190
Vienna, MO 65582
(314) 744-5843

MISSIONS—WESTERN STYLE

The Tucson Bible Chapel (Tucson, AZ) will be holding their Annual Missions Conference on November 3-5. Speakers expected are Bill Clark (Guatemala) and Joe Reese (ON) who will be ministering on the theme *Doors and Barriers to Church Planting*. Accommodations are available:

Jim Yencarelli
2324 N. Norton Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85719
(520) 795-3194

CALLING ALL FATHERS AND SONS

Come one, come all! Sons, fathers, and father's fathers for a Father and Son Retreat at Camp Iroquoina (NY) on November 10-12. Randy Amos is the scheduled speaker. For further information, contact:

Jim Weisbecker
(717) 967-2577

THANKSGIVING IN FLORIDA

The Carrollwood Bible Chapel (Tampa, FL) will be hosting a Thanksgiving Bible Conference on November 17-18, 1995. The theme for this year's conference is *The Lordship of Christ* with Jean Gibson (CA) and James Naismith (ON). Meal and nursery. Contact:

John Bromfield
16202 Pebblebrook Drive
Tampa, FL 33624
(813) 960-1302

THANKSGIVING AT—WHERE ELSE?

Can you think of a better place to spend Thanksgiving weekend (November 23-26) than Turkey Hill Ranch? Join Craig Rollinger and other believers in fellowship, and giving thanks to the Lord. Registration fee and other information available:

Turkey Hill Ranch
Rt. 71, Box 190
Vienna, MO 65582
(314) 744-5843

PART OF THE PARK

James Harvey (FL) will be the speaker at a Thanksgiving Conference November 23-26 at Park of the Palms (FL). Send your reservations to:

Park of the Palms
706 Palms Circle
Keystone Heights, FL 32656
(904) 473-4926

CALIFORNIA YP

The Verdugo Pines Bible Camp (Wrightwood, CA) will be the host for a Young Adults' Conference on November 24-26. Speaker expected is J. B. Nicholson (MI). For more information:

Stephanie Stratton
9312 Rancho Street
Alta Loma, CA 91737
(909) 987-6421

HOMECALL

On August 6, 1995, the Lord called Robert S. Pile, 83, of Cleveland Heights, OH, home to be with Himself. Mr. Pile passed away at his residence at the Holly Hill Nursing Home where he had lived for the past two years after suffering a series of strokes. Mr. Pile was a trustee and president of Emmaus Bible College (IA) and also an elder of Gracemount Chapel (OH).

"Robbie" as he was known by many, was in charge of the catering division of Hough Caterers and though he presided over masterpiece dinners in area mansions and such events as the induction ceremony of the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, OH, many of the Lord's people will remember him for his gracious hospitality and generous provisions of baked goods for special occasions. Remember his family in your prayers.

MORE LIGHT

In last year's issue of *Uplook* we focussed on retirement homes and their particular needs. At the time of publication, Light Haven Christian Home in Bruce Mines, ON was breaking ground for a ten-room addition. The Lord brought many Nehemiahs and Bezaleels to help in the construction efforts for which the saints at Light Haven are thankful.

Continue to pray for the work at Light Haven Home, especially for the staff as the addition is completed. There is a need for Christians in administration, programming, medical and other areas. If you are interested in serving the Lord in this capacity, contact:

Light Haven Home
P.O. Box 87
Bruce Mines, ON P0R 1C0

DON'T FORGET!

In last month's issue we included an application form for Lexington95 to be held December 26-29 in Lexington, KY.

Don't procrastinate! Fill out your application and send it in today. If you need further information, the conference hotline is (616) 456-5123.

R. Scott Thomson

The City of Brotherly Love

The biblical Philadelphia received the encouraging promise that the Lord is the One who opens doors that no one can shut. Here's an open door; who wants to go through it?

Julia's Palm & Tarot Card Reading and Hats in the Belfry, The Gap, Occult Supplies and The Tie Rack, plus restaurants of all tastes and budgets, nightclubs with music blaring, and numerous bars and novelty shops. Needless to say, on Philadelphia's crowded South Street one can expect to see almost anything. Not surprisingly, this uncommon atmosphere attracts many from the surrounding areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. While the crowd is usually a young one, people of all ages can be found here exploring what this thoroughfare has to offer. And their dress is as diverse as the stores, ranging from punk to preppy. Yet each and every one of them needs to hear the story of Calvary. They are those for whom our Saviour died. Who will carry the message of Christ's love to them?

Over the last year a number of concerned believers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland have been burdened about the spiritual needs of those who frequent this street. Through this exercise of heart, the Lord has brought together a skeletal team to begin this monumental task of taking the light of the gospel back to the streets. This team has been going into the city on a monthly basis for evangelistic work, making use of tracts and an eye-catching paint board. Passersby will often stop and listen to the gospel message when they see the paint board being used.

While the response has been minimal thus far, there have been a number of encouraging incidents. On one occasion, during a lull in foot traffic, one of the team members prayed that the Lord would bring more passersby. Just as he finished praying, a tour bus pulled to the curb—three feet from where he was standing! He quickly stepped up to the door of the tour bus and began handing out gospel tracts to the tourists as they disembarked.

Another time, a group of teenage girls kept coming back to see the paint board. They were fascinated by the style of lettering being used. After a good conversation about their need of salvation, one of the young girls asked if she could keep a painting. Gladly we gave her the painting, but first we made her promise that she would read the third chapter of John.

There have been many other Christ-centered conversations with people the Lord brought to our street meetings. Over the month more than a thousand tracts have been distributed. How has the Lord used these tracts? Where are they now? Only the Lord knows.

The group would like to see more believers from the Philadelphia area involved, get a follow-up program off the ground, and have greater prayer support from the area assemblies. There are numerous assemblies within one hour's drive of South Street.

In time the group hopes to increase their visits to South Street. Open air evangelism isn't for everyone; however, it is amazing to see what the Lord can do through the weakest saint who makes himself/herself available to Him.

If you or your assembly would like to help out in this gospel outreach, contact:

R. Scott Thomson
1420 - 18th Ave, Apt# 70E
Wall, NJ 07719
(908) 280-8328
or E-mail at NahumOne7@aol.com.

What's Going On?

SPEAKING OUT

In a March 12 broadcast, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan challenged any Jewish or Christian leader to prove to him that his beliefs are wrong. In response to the challenge representatives of World Outreach Vision Ministry (San Diego, CA) have challenged Farrakhan to a debate on his historical and theological beliefs.

In a letter to Farrakhan the World Outreach Vision Ministry calls the Nation of Islam's teachings "the product of misinformation, misapplication, fabrication and ignorance of the truths contained in the Bible." Farrakhan has not said whether he would accept the challenge.

VISA ANYONE?

Aside from their Bible, the most important document for many missionaries is their visa. Without one, they cannot enter or remain in their countries of service. This year powerful world trends have made getting new visas—or renewing old ones—a questionable exercise at best. Muslim countries seem to be leading the forefront on this issue. Please pray for these countries, and include secularized Europe, that the door may remain open to the Lord's servants.

COLOMBIAN REQUEST

Pray for Colombia. Marcia Vanderlaan has recently informed *Uplook* that current events in this South American country have escalated. Although we aren't exactly sure what this cryptic expression of concern means, we can bring the matter before our heavenly Father who knows all about it.

ON THE RISE

The number of people practicing Druidism, an ancient religion that emphasizes nature and the solar calendar, is on the rise in England. There are approximately 5,000 Britons who regularly practice Druid ceremonies and nearly 40,000 who attend big events, such as the Solstice Celebration. People are drawn to modern druidism because it doesn't ask much of them.

—*The Economist*

GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY

Carl Knott and his family serve the Lord in Huesca, Spain. In 1989 gospel literature was distributed throughout the entire province of Huesca. With continued prayers and support from the local assembly, once again the province has received good news.

It has been estimated that some 812 pueblos were visited between January and June 1995. Huesca's population is approximately 210,000 inhabitants. Beginning in January of this year a team of believers began canvassing the province with 100,000 copies of a gospel magazine, *Good News for All*, thousands of tracts and leaflets like, *Buenas Noticias*, as well as booklets provided by Everyday Publications and the Gospel of John published by the Spanish Bible Society.

Please pray for the many contacts that were made during this campaign, and for the follow-up work that lies ahead. To Him be all the glory!

BRAZILIAN DEPARTURE

Floyd and Helen Pierce have been serving the Lord in Curitiba, Brazil and recently informed *Uplook* of their intention to return to the States permanently.

Floyd has experienced health problems in recent years and they feel the need to be closer to their family.

If all goes well they plan to move out as early as January 1996, if their landlord decides to move back into their rented house. If not they will still plan on returning to the US in April.

They intend on continuing their literature work and translations from their home in Springfield, IL.

Please remember them before the throne of grace.

CONTINUING PEACE?

Israelis told pollsters they would give the Likud party's Binyamin Netanyahu 60% of the vote. Aware that terrorists killed 85 percent more people in

Israel proper during the 18 months of the Labor government's peace process than before, only 36% of Israelis want to continue the process as it is. Most favor instead a stronger Israeli military to prevent war and ensure personal safety.

150-YEAR-OLD APOLOGY

The Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Atlanta, GA in June, chose its 150th anniversary to apologize for condoning racism. The SBC was formed in 1845 after a split in the American Baptist Convention over whether slaveholders could serve as missionaries.

The SBC resolution in part states: "We apologize to all African Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systematic racism in our lifetime, and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously."

The resolution received a standing ovation from the 20,000 members in attendance.

—*Christianity Today*

CHRISTIANS REPENT

If the Southern Baptists can apologize for 150 years of racism, so can Japanese Christians repent of their country's WWII atrocities. Japanese evangelicals have joined other church groups in issuing a forthright apology. "We Japanese Christians must repent from the bottom of our hearts for these sins." A majority of the country's churches have backed the joint declaration.

SHROUDED BY MICROBES

Leoncio GarzaValdes and Steven Mattingly of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in San Antonio say that the carbon dating of the Shroud of Turin may have been thrown off by a coating created by microbes. Their findings will certainly reopen the possibility that the shroud may date back to the time of Christ.

Researchers are now purifying the glucose that is created when the cellulose in the shroud is broken down, and believe that radiocarbon tests on the glucose will provide the true date of the cellulose in the shroud. But what is that image of the face doing in the shroud? The Bible says the Saviour's face was covered by a separate napkin.

REWRITING HISTORY

There has been a growing number of critics from both the entertainment community and the Church concerning Walt Disney's latest animated feature film, *Pocahontas*. Several facts are obviously absent from the film, a study of history will show that:

1) Pocahontas was not a grown-up. She was 11 or 12-years-old. While the film features a romantic relationship between Captain John Smith and the Indian princess, in Smith's own journal, *The True Travels—Adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith*, he never mentions such a relationship with Pocahontas.

2) John Smith did not succumb to the influence of Pocahontas' tribe's nature-centered spiritual beliefs, as the movie implies. On the contrary, Pocahontas converted to Christianity. She was renamed, Rebecca before marrying colonist, John Rolfe at age 19 (a painting of their wedding hangs in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.). The following year, the Rolfes visited England where she was presented to King James and Queen Anne.

GETTING READY

English, already the world's language for business and science, also dominates the Internet, the worldwide electronic network of networks used by 20 million to 40 million people. But this may change. A team of American companies has produced a universal digital code called the Unicode that enables computers to represent the letters and characters of almost all the world's languages—or at least the major ones. "The widespread use of English will eventually be contested and Internet itself will become multicultural," asserts Singapore's minister for information and the arts. —*Pulse*

WHO DO VOODOO

Haitian President Jean-Bertrande Aristide received 500 voodoo priests and priestesses at the National Palace in July. Aristide's guests presented a "wish list" for a bigger role in Haiti's democracy, including a school for children and training for the religion's doctors and midwives. "The past government's plots against voodoo—that's finished, finished, finished completely," the former Roman Catholic priest told his guests. "If Haiti hasn't disappeared over the last 200 years, it's because of you."

Intercepted Letters

It is evident that these messages must have a peculiar voice to us, who live in the same dispensation of the Spirit, and are part of "the things that are." This whole message has a wide application. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!"

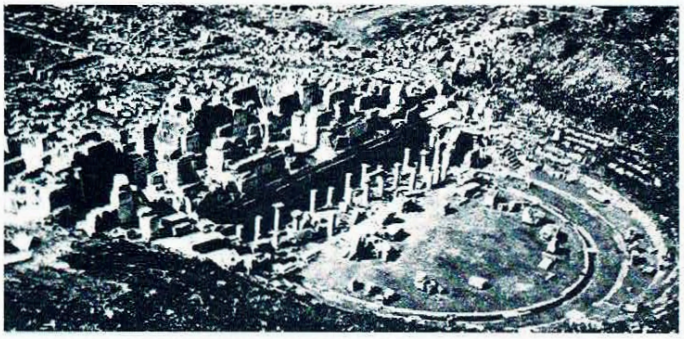
How these epistles speak to us of our Lord's tender solicitude for the welfare of His assemblies! In them we learn too the holy judgment of Him "who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire," as He views the churches in the place of public testimony and responsibility. Judgment has begun at the House of God.

The primary object of the Lord is to warn the seven churches, and through them Christians in all times, of the dangers of declension and apostasy, so that giving heed to what "the Spirit saith unto the churches," they might prove overcomers through faith in Jesus as the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:5).

Ephesus

Declension early set into the primitive churches. Paul's epistle had revealed to the Ephesians how high they had been raised; the Lord's message now declares they were already fallen. But first He commends what He can—their patient continuance in well-doing (see 1 Thess. 1:3); their intolerance of evil men; and their careful testing of professors. Did this service have no value in His eyes? But love loves love, and the Lord loves His people too much to be satisfied with anything short of their love. No activity, even "for His name's sake," can make up for its lack.

This declension must lead to a removal of their lamp, except they repent. Before closing, the Lord adds one more word of commendation. Though they had left their first love for Him, they had not lost their first hate of evil practices. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate," and so far they had fellowship with Him. Today it seems to be thought by some to be a mark of Christian charity to hate nothing, but to take up a neutral attitude under guise of impartiality, when evil has to be dealt with. But not so the Lord.



The ancient theater at Ephesus

The Lord closes His address with a promise to the overcomer, who, by grace, proves himself to the end to be in truth a living member of the Church: "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." What can the fruit of the tree be but Christ's perfections ministered to His own?

Smyrna

Smyrna's circumstances correspond with the persecutions under the Roman Emperors from Nero's to Maximin's (308-14), ten in number. The Lord's words, "Ye shall have tribulation *ten days*," may point to this.

Thus did the Lord deal with His church who had left her first love, allowing her to pass through the fires of persecution. He tells them plainly who is against them. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." The Lord has no reproof for Smyrna. Affliction was doing its work. The word means "myrrh." As piercing the tree allows the fragrant resin to exude, so trial brings out sweet graces from the saints.

The Lord presents Himself as the Eternal One, "the first and the last," He embraces all time and circumstance. As He who "was dead and is alive," He had tasted in full the experience that threatened them, and He had triumphed. He knows their works and tribulation. They are poor in one sense but rich in a better, unlike Laodicea, who thought herself rich, but was bereft of true wealth.

He sustains His people by encouragement, "Fear none of those things, which thou shalt suffer," and by the offer of a reward, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a

crown of life." It is only to Smyrna and Philadelphia, where there was nothing to blame, that the Lord speaks of a crown.

Pergamos

This message is succeeded by that to Pergamos. The condition of things here is widely different. They dwell "where Satan's seat is." He is no longer as "a roaring lion" but "an angel of light," seducing the saints from Christ, as Balaam did Israel, by conformity to worldly religion and the indulgence of the flesh. Here the deeds of the Nicolaitanes have become stereotyped into doctrine. How often evil practice and evil doctrine go hand in hand. The early persecutions gave place to patronage. When Constantine adopted Christianity as the state religion, mixed with paganism, the latter is said by some to have fallen before Christianity; really it was the church which fell: Christianity became Christendom. The Lord addresses, however, words of encouragement to His true people. He knows their surroundings and their experiences, and commends them for holding fast His name and not denying His faith. No wonder the Lord presents Himself in the character He does, and threatens the seducers with judgment. "Repent or else I will come unto *thee* quickly, and will fight against *them* with the sword of My mouth." The overcomer is promised a three-fold reward: heavenly sustenance—"the hidden manna," the Lord's open recognition—"a white stone," and His secret appreciation—"a new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Thyatira

Here things are worse even than at Pergamos, for what is *held is* sure to be *taught* publicly or privately and so we read, "I have against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to *teach* and to seduce my servants to commit fornication," etc.—the very doctrine of Balaam *held* at Pergamos. But even in Jezebel's day God had a remnant who "had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." So here, there was a remnant (v. 24).

It is difficult to conceive an apostolic church as described here, though I am not calling in question its literal character, but any difficulty disappears if we remember the prophetic character of these messages. The one now before us points to Christendom in the dark ages of Papal supremacy, to be surpassed still later when full ecumenism is realized. Then she will be seen as "Mystery, Babylon the Great," in unholy alliance with the great world rulers of "the last hour"—the woman seated on the beast but soon to be devoured by it. The faithfulness of the remnant at Thyatira was doubtless very acceptable to Him in the presence of such terrible inroads of evil. No wonder for such He appears as the Son of God—object of faith for all who would overcome the world (1 Jn. 5:5), but also whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and His feet as fine brass. He stands at the door as Judge.

He commends the faithful ones for their works, love, faith, and service, for their "last works more than the first." To the overcomer He promises a share in the future kingdom. The appeal to the hearers comes last, and in the three succeeding messages, as though now only overcomers are addressed.

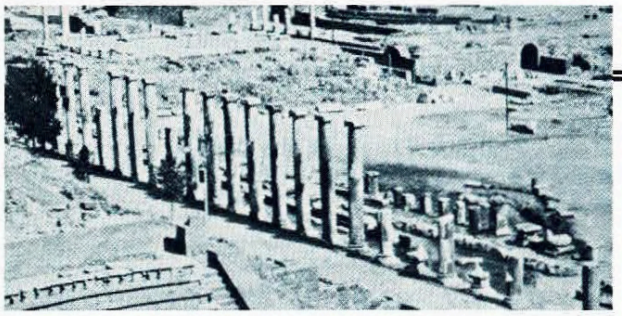
Sardis

Sardis has the worst state so far. The Lord has nothing to commend in the church as a whole: "Thou hast a name to live and art dead." This describes Protestantism, not in its initial stages, but when stereotyped in its national and political phases. It is not for us to belittle the Reformation—but the Luthers, Calvins, Farrels, Knoxes, Wycliffes, the Waldenses and Albigenses even, would be included rather in the faithful remnant of Thyatira. They did not go far enough, but to rescue from the mortuary of Rome what they did was a mighty work.

Sardis is exhorted to be watchful and to "strengthen the things, which remain that are ready to die." There are "remnant" things *(ta loipa,* 3:2), as well as the remnant *(hoi loipoi,* 2:24). It is for us to strengthen them and not to "despise the day of small things"—the remnant testimony. There were a few even in Sardis undefiled—and "they will walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy." And if names had had to be erased from the ill-kept registers of the church in Sardis, the names of overcomers will never be from the book of life; nor indeed will any name, once written there. The Lord will confess all His own before His Father and His angels. He will not be ashamed of them there.

Philadelphia

As with Smyrna, no blame attaches to Philadelphia. If God was to have a testimony suited to Himself, *He* must raise it up. Philadelphia represents the



Ruins of the Asclepieum (pagan health center) at Pergamos

true revival. Here the Lord finds a place in the affections of His people. It was no mere negative protest against evil, but a positive devotion to His Word and Person. No doubt the evils against which Protestantism takes her stand are serious enough but man cannot live on negations. This is the danger of all controversy if it stops short of Christ.

It is not fitting for any company of saints to claim to be Philadelphia, much less to monopolize such a claim. We cannot afford to ignore the Spirit's work down the post-Reformation centuries. No doubt the Puritan, Quaker, and Methodist movements, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (and these were far from being the only works) were lacking in scriptural intelligence, did not go far enough, and have sadly degenerated, but who can doubt that in each case God did raise up a faithful remnant, who "kept His Word and did not deny His Name"?

Nor has the Lord ceased to work in grace. What gracious revivings He has given! What a re-digging of apostolic wells! It might be said that this revival has gone back further and deeper than any before it. "Other men labored and we are entered into their labors." Let us be thankful to have any part in it; not puffed up with a sense of superior grace or knowledge, but rather humbled at the degree in which Satan and the flesh have marred so divine a testimony. To Philadelphia comes the word, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

He will save these out from "the hour of temptation" (which shows that this goes on to the end). The overcomers will be pillars in the temple of God, witnesses to His grace, and will have on them the names of God, of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ Himself, speaking of relationship, citizenship, and fellowships.

Laodicea

Laodicea's privileges had been great: she had been the object of Paul's solicitude (Col. 2:1; 4:15); the recipient of an epistle (Col. 4:16); the subject of the prayers of Epaphras (Col. 4:13); and most probably, the scene of John's labors. But so low had she fallen that the Lord had to say, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot...I will spue thee out of My mouth." Indifference and self-satisfaction—is not this the attitude today?

The Lord presents Himself to them as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Here I think the Lord would emphasize His character as the One who stands for God, justifies all His purposes, promises, and verdicts, and sees they are made good. He is not only the entirely trustworthy One, but fully qualified to bear witness by His personal knowledge and competence; and then, if all that pertains to the old creation, God starts afresh in Christ, for He is "the beginning of the creation of God."

To what does the Laodicean condition correspond in the present era? The usual reply is to Modernism, and such like. But there is not a hint in this message of evil doctrine, nor yet of moral lapse. Laodicea had no Balaams or Jezebels among them and there was apparently no departure from scriptural order.

Perhaps as far as outward things they would compare quite well with Philadelphia, but the temperature of the two churches was different. Laodicea was Philadelphia cooled down from boiling to lukewarm; it was Philadelphia with Christ outside the door. The Lord wished they were boiling or cold; then they either would not need His reproof, or needing it, would be brought to repentance. But, alas, they had no inkling of their true condition.

Was there any hope? Yes, but only in the Lord's personal dealings. "I counsel thee to buy of Me..." The Lord's counsel can only be rightly understood in the light of verse 19: "As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent." His unchanging love to His people is the secret of restoration, so He assures them of it.

Will we pay the price? Shall we submit to the refiner, and, humbling ourselves under His chastening hand, "buy" of Him? Laodicea was being dealt with governmentally, "that she might not be condemned with the world." But after all the appeal is individual. It is not for us to say that the mass of the people of God will not hear, but if they do hear, it will be as individuals. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if *any man* hear My voice and open the door, I will come in *to him*, and will sup with him and he with Me." Shall not the response be, "Come in, O Lord, wherefore standest Thou without?" The overcomer is promised to sit with the Lord on His throne. Could there be a higher place? **u**

Church Under Construction

Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came to Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it. But no! they immediately were silenced. Then I turned to the great editors who in days gone by proclaimed their love of freedom, but they too were silenced in a few weeks. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for the suppression of truth. What I once despised—the Church—I now praise unreservedly. **—Albert Einstein**

There are lonely hearts to cherish
While the days are going by;
There are weary souls who perish,
While the days are going by.
If a smile we can renew,
As our journey we pursue,
Oh, the good that we may do,
While the days are going by.

There's no time for idle scorning,
While the days are going by;
Let your face be like the morning,
While the days are going by.
Oh, the world is full of sighs,
Full of sad and weeping eyes;
Help your fallen brothers rise,
While the days are going by.

All the loving links that bind us
While the days are going by;
One by one we leave behind us,
While the days are going by;
But the seeds of good we sow,
Both in shade and shine will grow,
And will keep our hearts aglow,
While the days are going by.
—George Cooper

The church that compromises on truth today will be tempted to compromise on morals tomorrow.
—*H. D. Bruce*

If there is one thing required in the Church of God today, it is that we present a united front to the enemy. There is a great need of aggressive unity. Just before the battle of Trafalgar, Admiral Horatio Nelson inquired of Admiral Collingwood where his captain was, and learned that he and Captain Rotherham were not on good terms. Sending a boat for the captain, he placed the hands of Collingwood and Rotherham together, pointed to the combined French and Spanish fleets, and uttered the simple words: "Look, yonder is the enemy." It was enough; disagreements were forgotten, and victory was gained. —*Hy. Pickering*

Troubles in the local church? Whine less; pray more.

[God] hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. **Ephesians 1:22-23**

The world will not take the Church seriously if the Church is not serious. —*Paul Calvin Payne*

Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
Ephesians 5:25-27

One holy Church of God appears
Through every age and race,
Unwasted by the lapse of years,
Unchanged by changing place.

From oldest time, on farthest shores,
Beneath the pine of palm,
One Unseen Presence she adores,
With silence or with psalm.

Her priests are all God's faithful sons
To serve the world raised up;
The pure in heart her baptized ones;
Love, her communion-cup.

The truth is her prophetic gift,
The soul her sacred page;
And feet on mercy's errand swift
Do make her pilgrimage.

O living Church! thine errand speed,
Fulfill thy task sublime;
With bread of life earth's hunger feed,
Redeem the evil time!
—Samuel Longfellow

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. **1 Timothy 3:15**

Nevertheless

However great or ignominious the fall, it is not too late to rise. No matter how flickering the light, the Lord can help us fan it into flame.

To this eye of Asia, as Ephesus was proudly called, the first of these seven inspired messages was sent by the Great Bishop of souls. He enjoins John to put on record the grounds of His commendation. He begins with the lights of the picture before filling in the contrasting background. "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." All this bespeaks a prolonged struggle, just as we might have looked for in that city where cultured Greek and subtle Oriental and libertine Roman and intolerant Jew combined with the native and bigoted votaries of Diana in uncompromising hostility to the faith of Jesus.

And yet this well-earned praise is followed with a "nevertheless." The first ardor of their early love had cooled. Does not this righteous upbraiding come home in solemn, searching truth to many hearts? Where is the fervor and devotion of first love? Has the love of the world, or the love of sin dulled and deadened spiritual life so that there are no kindlings of soul as once there were at the mention of the name of Jesus? Has a mechanical, formal orthodoxy taken the place of the life of faith and devotion? What is to be done? Is the lamp to be allowed to sputter in the darkness without an effort to resuscitate it? No! the Lord's fidelity in rebuke is only to prepare the way for a gracious remonstrance: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works." Turn, not by rekindling a mere fitful glow of ardent emotion, but by doing "the first works"—the true test of a genuine revival of that love which has suffered so sad a decay.

Be this our reply, in the might of Him who walks amid the candlesticks, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts: cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved!" u

SOME GROUP TRAVEL CONTACTS FOR LEXINGTON95

This is a partial list of contacts arranging group travel as needed. If your area has a contact, let us know and we can include this information in the next UPLOOK.

Burlington, ON	Wm. Burnett	(905) 634-6345
St. Catharines, ON	Brian Gunning	(905) 685-5090
Sault Ste. Marie, ON	Joe Reese	(705) 946-0289
NY/New Jersey	Mark Kolchin	(609) 693-9252
Wilmington, DE	Sid Bhatt	(302) 633-8060
Detroit, MI	Ken Hampton	(313) 533-6518
Greensboro, NC	Jeff Kimell	(910) 274-0431
Augusta, GA	Jon Reimer	(706) 863-6006
Florida	Larry Price	(904) 365-9561
Mpls/St. Paul, MN	Jim Upton	(612) 633-7488
Chicago, IL	Bob Fiebig	(708) 448-2552
New Orleans, LA	Bob Brown	(504) 641-4028
Wichita, KS	Russell Horn	(316) 755-0991
Vancouver, BC	Harold Summers	(604) 736-7668
Seattle, WA	Doug Kazen	(206) 823-9017

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are

A BACKSLIDDEN CHURCH

EPHESUS

"Desirable" or "Permitted"

Revelation of the Lord:
Holds the seven stars; walks in the midst of the 7 golden lampstands (2:1).

Commendation:
They cannot bear them which are evil; tried false prophets and found them to be liars; have labored and been faithful and not fainted (2:2-3).

Condemnation:
Although they had done many things for His "name's sake," they had left their first love (2:4-5). He tells them to remember, repent, and return.

Promise to the Overcomers:
Regains what was lost by the Fall: the tree of life—**eternal growth** (2:7).

Historical Perspective:
Late apostolic period. Also see Acts 18-20. Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor, 40 mi. SE of Smyrna (Izmir, Turkey).

A PERSECUTED CHURCH

SMYRNA

"Bitter" from "Myrrh"

Revelation of the Lord:
The First and Last, who was dead, is alive (2:8); the Eternal One.

Commendation:
Persecution without—answer: just "for a season"; poverty around—answer: "thou art rich"; perils within—answer: "that ye may be tried." Finding nothing to blame, He offers a crown of life for remaining faithful.

Condemnation:
None.

Promise to the Overcomers:
Shall not be hurt of the second death—**eternal security** (2:11).

Historical Perspective:
Ten persecutors from Nero to Diocletian. Two centuries of oppression till 312 AD. Smyrna, a city of Ionia, is present-day Izmir, Turkey. John's friend, Polycarp, martyred there.

A LICENTIOUS CHURCH

PERGAMOS

"Fortified"

Revelation of the Lord:
Wields the sharp sword (2:12)—the Word of God on the offensive.

Commendation:
Being where Satan dwells, they held fast the name of the Lord and did not deny the faith (2:13).

Condemnation:
Serious doctrinal error rears its ugly head. Conformity to a worldly religion and the indulgences of the flesh begin to take hold (2:14-15).

Promise to the Overcomers:
Partakers of the hidden manna and given a white stone with a new name—**eternal intimacy** (2:17).

Historical Perspective:
Reign of Constantine. An educational center; its library had 200,000 vols. Aesculapius, god of medicine, worshipped in this illustrious city of Mysia.

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THY

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Revelation of t
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Commendation
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Historical Pers
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of God. Eve
invitation: "
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The last four churches are distinguished from the first three in the following ways:

1. A faithful remnant is distinguished from the corrupt mass of Christendom.
2. The one who hears is only among the overcomers.
3. The coming of the Lord is set before the last four as a motivation.

Remember that
Ephesus; the Tri
to Sardis; the So

OF REVELATION 2 & 3

vritten therein: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3). Remember! Repent! Return or Removal! Reward!

HURCH

TIRA
sacrifice"

e Lord:
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of fire, and
rass (2:18).

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first (2:19).

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Overcomers:
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A DEAD CHURCH

SARDIS
Uncer., perhaps "Escaped"

Revelation of the Lord:
Has 7 spirits of God, and 7 stars (3:1), the Giver of life and gifts to the Church.

Commendation:
A few names in Sardis have not defiled their garments; shall walk with the Lord in white (3:4).

Condemnation:
They appear to be alive, but in fact are dead; their works were not found perfect before God (3:1-2). They needed to "hold fast" to the gospel (v. 3).

Promise to the Overcomers:
Clothed in white raiment; will not have name blotted out of the book of life; his name confessed before His Father and angels—**eternal righteousness** (3:5).

Historical Perspective:
Reformation; state churches that resulted. Came out but not far enough: "works not perfect."

A MODEL CHURCH

PHILADELPHIA
"Brotherly love"

Revelation of the Lord:
Holy and the Truth; opens God's treasury (3:7)—in Him are hid the treasures.

Commendation:
Although they had "little strength," they proved what God could do with people who were willing to devote their lives to the study of His Word (3:8). The only church to which He says, "I have loved thee" (v. 9).

Condemnation:
None.

Promise to the Overcomers:
A pillar in the temple of God, he shall not go out; he will have written on him the name of God, of the city of God, and a new name from God—**eternal identity** (3:12).

Historical Perspective:
Eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals. Danger of legalism (v. 9) present.

AN INDIFFERENT CHURCH

LAODICEA
"The voice of the people"

Revelation of the Lord:
The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God (3:14)—affirms purpose, promises and plan of God.

Commendation:
This is the only church that receives no commendation. They had benefitted from those that had preceded them, but refused to profit from it. Apathetic to their true condition.

Condemnation:
Lukewarm; they thought they had it all and didn't need the Lord; instead they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (3:15-17).

Promise to the Overcomers:
Will be granted to sit with Christ in His throne—**eternal rule** (3:21).

Historical Perspective:
The careless, carnal days of the ecumenical spirit.

he Revelation is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ." In these two chapters He is seen as: the Lord of the Churches to
mphant Conqueror to Smyrna; the Word of God to Pergamos; the Refiner of Faith to Thyatira; the Revealer of Secrets
ereign God to Philadelphia; and the Author and Finisher of Faith to Laodicea. No wonder we should love Him!

Prepared by J. B. Nicholson Jr. & Scott Tucker

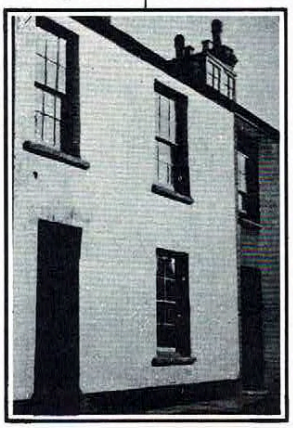
John Bjorlie

William Hake

If for no other reason than that he was a close friend to so many outstanding Christians, we should want to meet a man like William Hake (1795-1890). Hake certainly never flourished in a steady beam of limelight. His self-effacing manner has deflected the attention from him, so that he appeared as a wallflower alongside those he influenced, such as George and Mary Muller, Robert Chapman, and Anthony Norris Groves whose dramatic exploits seem to set the stride in the vanguard of God's special forces.

The rewards to a life spent seeking God were not theoretical but tangible to William Hake. "It is for us now to be content," he wrote, "to know in part, only let us evermore bear in mind that by feeding upon Christ, and remembering His sufferings and His glory, we live a life worth living, as He said, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

Born in Exeter, England, Hake often told how, as a boy of five, he heard the message of the Saviour from his oldest brother. "Through the lovely green fields of Ede, the summer sun was setting, and all seemed lovely and bright to the little child, as his brother spoke to him of the Saviour; and he has told us what a lasting impression this made on his mind—for he was conscious at this early age that the Lord was blessing him, and spoke of this time as being the beginning of the work of grace in his heart." He dated his conversion to his fifteenth year, and embarked on a pilgrimage of special service for Christ when he was twenty-five.



The Hake home in Barnstaple

An eagerness to obey God characterized his long life. As a young husband and father, William consulted with a dentist he knew by the name of Groves about a conflict of conscience that he faced. Anthony Groves recorded how these difficulties possibly involved "his leaving his wife and children penniless, so far as he knew, or following a course that his conscience disapproved. I gave my opinion clearly; and he, with that holy simplicity which has ever characterized him, acted out what his conscience dictated."

Anthony Norris Groves also acknowledged a debt to brother Hake. It was Hake's challenge to Anthony about whether it was right for a Christian to bear arms that caused Groves to leave the Anglican Church.

In Hake's innocent manner, he asked Groves how he could subscribe to that article of the Anglican Church which declared, "It is lawful for Christian men to take up arms at the command of the civil magistrate." In Groves' diary, he recorded this momentous decision, "It had till that moment never occurred to me. I read it; and replied, 'I never would sign it'; and thus ended my connection with the Church of England, as one about to be ordained in her communion."

Groves and Hake respected and learned from each other. And when Hake's wife was incapacitated, Groves' sister Mary went to help the family. It was Mary whom George Muller then met and married in October of 1830. Muller was leaving London for Devonshire; he had been given the address of Miss Paget of Exeter, the friend and mentor of Groves. She invited him to preach in a place outside Exeter. It was arranged that during Muller's visits he would stay at William Hake's, who at that time managed a boarding-school in Northernhay House where Groves had formerly lived. There Muller met Mary Groves while she worked in the Hake home serving the invalid Mrs. Hake. The marriage was the model of simplicity.

Muller spoke at Mary's funeral on February 11, 1870, telling how "in the afternoon [we] had a meeting of Christian friends in Mr. Hake's house, and commemorated the Lord's death; and then I drove off in the stage-coach, with my beloved bride, to Teignmouth, and the next day we went to work for the Lord."

This simplicity that George and Mary Muller displayed throughout their Christian lives was something that they had first heard

and seen in the home of William Hake.

Married young, five of Hake's children grew up to adulthood, the others being taken in infancy. His example as a father and husband was outstanding, so that the Christians urged him to write down some basic instruction. Hake's little booklet, which is now quite scarce, was entitled *How Shall We Order the Child.* He lifted the title from the request of Manoah and his wife to the angel, when they were told that they would receive the child Samson (Jud. 13:12).

In 1831, Robert Chapman met this friend of George Muller, Henry Craik, and Anthony Norris Groves. Thereafter Chapman began to pray that he and Hake would some day be able to labor side by side.

In the Exeter assembly, William toiled alongside Sir Alexander Campbell, H. W. Soltau, Col. Stafford, the evangelist George Brealey, Samuel Wreford, and Henry Dyer.

Moving from Exeter to a community next to where Chapman worked, Frank Holmes tells about those fruitful middle years:

> For many years Hake labored in Bideford, and the influence of the Hake family can still be traced in the town today. At first there were family gatherings in the house on Lord's Day. One of his sons, writing of these meetings, said: "I remember, when I was quite young, his 'keeping the feast' on the Lord's Day morning with my mother, two or three friends, and the servants who were also in the Lord. Evidently, as he pondered the death of the Son of God, solemnity, worship, peace, praise, were in his heart." Later a building in North Road was rented and converted into a meeting place. So the years passed, and it seemed that Hake would end his days in Bideford. In fact, in 1860 the end seemed near. His brain was overtaxed and a serious illness ensued. He was sixty-five, and a doctor gave him only three months to live. But earnest prayer was offered and he recovered. And it was soon after this that the Lord gave Chapman the desire of his heart.

After William renounced his denominational affiliation, his mother-in-law scolded him saying, "William, you are cracked!" "Yes, Mother," was his instant reply. "The crack lets in the light!"

After Chapman's confidant and co-worker, Miss Bessie Paget, went to be with Christ in 1863, her house, No. 9, New Buildings, was vacated. Then an exhausted and feeble William Hake took the opening as the guidance of God, and moved in. Besides the many years of caring for his disabled wife, William had been exhausted in his work at the school he had run. Chapman had never given up his desire to have William Hake as his fellow-laborer, but now when Hake was finally freed up, it appeared that he would lose him to illness. Chapman considered such a man all too rare, and too valuable to lose.

The saints joined in prayer, and a curious thing happened. The worn-out widower revived.

Thereafter Hake's most fruitful work began as he made prime use of his experiences as a teacher, father, and caregiver. Heartily "given to hospitality," his humble residence at Barnstaple, No. 9, across the lane from Chapman's home, was an oasis for weary pilgrims from around the world, who came there for counsel in spiritual things.

It was also a rendezvous for workers. Visits were paid by Alexander Marshall, George Brealey, David Rea, Abigail Townsend, and Hudson Taylor, to mention a few.

The weekly Bible readings were held there. On one occasion, he paused at the seventh verse of John 15, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." His eyes connected with one of the young men present and he inquired: "Brother, would you like always to have your own way?"

There was stiff silence. The brother made no attempt to reply. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. Perhaps qualms of conscience disturbed him.

"Well, I would!" exclaimed Mr. Hake frankly. "And this is how we can have it: 'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'"

It was a house of rest for the servants of God, and a resort for young disciples. In those two austere houses, 6 and 9 New Buildings, Barnstaple, Robert

Chapman and William Hake lived in unbroken fellowship for twenty-seven years.

Mr. Hake often opened the Word of God at Grosvenor Street Hall along with Robert Chapman and Henry Heath. David Beattie said that "the able ministry of these gifted brethren drew together a large number of people, several coming in from various denominations in the town and district. Thus many conversions took place, and believers were added from the Established Church, with the result that a membership of about four hundred continued for some years."

On Lord's day morning they met for the teaching of the Word of God and gospel testimony and the building was often filled to capacity. In the afternoon, Sunday School and Bible Class work was carried on, and in the evening believers gathered to remember the Lord in the "Breaking of Bread." The meeting lasted from six-thirty to eight o'clock. One eyewitness, E. S. Pearce, said, "On those memorable occasions, the hall was generally crowded, and the power and presence of God deeply felt."

Hake's own deep bass voice often set the cadence as the saints raised their voices to God. He was musically gifted and ventured to write hymns such as this one:

Thy sorrows are my song, O Lord,
Thy bonds have set me free;
Forever be Thy Name adored!
Thy death is life to me.

Like his co-worker, brother Chapman, Hake was quick to seize on an evangelistic opportunity. The lean, tall gentleman was returning home when he met a friend's son who was searching for his little brother. Calling aloud, "A child lost! Lost!" faces appeared in doors and windows, and passersby offered to help William find the lad. Later when the prodigal five-year-old was found, William hoisted him on his shoulders and returned to the same neighborhood with the message, "Found! Found!" A crowd soon met and William preached to them out of Luke 15. He was a thorough gospel preacher who counted on the work of God to drive his words home. "When the Spirit of God plows up the heart of the sinner, he embraces the Rock for want of a shelter; he cannot build on the sand."

As to doctrine, William Hake held a strictly non-denominational position. Like his co-worker, R. C. Chapman, Hake refused to recognize denominational affiliations as valid. He took the Bible at face value and avoided extra-biblical reading. He would say, "I carry my library—66 volumes—in my pocket," and "Let us be ever drinking the milk of the Word, the sincere milk, without any printer's ink." As to prophecy, he was simple enough to believe that the Lord Jesus' coming again for His own was imminent, and he lived in the daily, happy expectation of that event—an event that we still await.

William enjoyed a peaceful departure at the ripe age of 95, after 80 years of life in Christ and 70 years spent ministering the Word. As his devoted daughter sat by William's bedside, the room was strangely calm. After a last loving embrace, she leaned close to hear his dying words: "Home, home, rest, rest." The peaceful departure of this man of God characterized his life of quiet consecration to his Master's service.

A Hake Sampler

William's sayings were like the well-crafted fishing lure—the barbed hook was soon discovered.

- If we would do much *for* God, we must be much *with* God.
- Believe not your eyes if they contradict your ears, provided it be God that speaks.
- There is no willow on which to hang your harp in the holiest of all, and that is our proper dwelling-place.
- If our circumstances find us in God, we shall find God in all our circumstances.
- When considering your faults and inclined to dejection concerning them, don't talk with yourself—don't keep bad company. Talk with the Lord.

MATERIAL FOR THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN GATHERED FROM:

W. H. Bennet, *Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple*
Frank Holmes, *Brother Indeed: The Life of Robert Cleaver Chapman* , John Ritchie
David J. Beattie, *Brethren: the Story of a Great Recovery*, John Ritchie
Roger Steer, *George Muller: Delighted in God* , Harold Shaw
G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves: Saint and Pioneer*, Schoettle Publishing
R. C. Chapman, *Seventy Years of Pilgrimage: being a memorial of William Hake*

R. E. Harlow

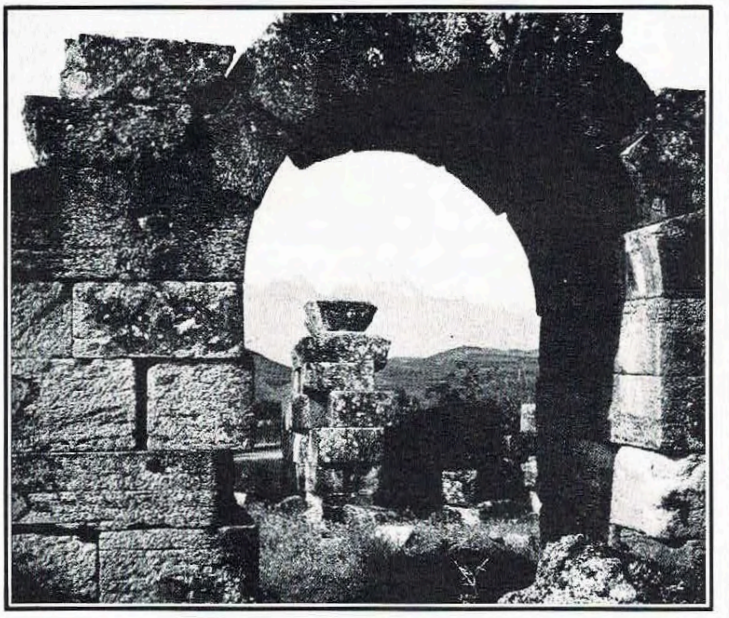
Promises to Laodicea

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

The epistle to the Laodiceans is not pure reproof. Against the backdrop of dismal decline the Lord proffers two superlative promises to individuals.

Laodicea was about 15 miles north by northwest of Colosse, and the two churches received and interchanged Paul's letters. Colossians contains the apex of the apostle's teaching on the Person of Christ, unless we are assured that he also wrote to the Hebrews. Laodicea had this ministry also.

It seems clear that the failure in Laodicea was not primarily doctrinal. The Ephesians also had Christ-exalting ministry from the pen of Paul, but 35 years later they had left their original love. They were at risk of losing their testimony (Rev. 2:5). The Laodiceans were lukewarm in their love for Christ. Their peril was to be spued out of His mouth.



The remains of the gymnasium at Laodicea

Laodicea may have been quite orthodox. In Pergamos there were fraudulent teachers, disseminating the doctrine of Balaam. In Thyatira, they tolerated that woman Jezebel, to teach and seduce God's servants to fornication and idolatry. Laodicea was not dead, as Sardis. Nothing is said about doctrinal error in Laodicea. It was a matter of the heart. A person can be both orthodox and lukewarm. The Lord has a message for all such.

The seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 correspond to existing churches today. We believe they also portray epochs of Church history. Broadly speaking, we are in the Laodicean period.

Your assembly and mine might be appraised as Philadelphian by the Bishop of souls and the Monitor of the seven churches. If so, thank the Lord! But, chronologically, we are at the terminus of the Church Age. It is naive to presume that we are immune from its contagion. We are swayed, even brainwashed, by what we see and hear in life around us, and view on the screen. Coldness is the result of iniquity abounding (Mt. 24:12).

How many believers do you know who are hot, boiling hot? Or "on fire for God"? Apollos was fervent in spirit ("fervent" from the same root as "hot," Thayer).

Ever hear of anyone declining a promotion in business because he or she preferred to assist in the local assembly? Or turning off the football game to devote an hour to Bible study? Or refusing to take sleeping pills so he or she could have more time during the night in intercessory prayer? Or exchanging a game of golf for tract distribution? Perhaps a few, but scarcely typical of Christians today. Some assemblies of men highly successful in business are declining, closing down, or employing a "full-time elder" to do the work.

Neither cold nor hot. Either is better than being lukewarm. This word is not found except here in the New Testament or the Septuagint, but is common enough in early Church writings. In classical Greek it was used of foul-tasting water, which would cause vomiting (Arndt and Gingrich).

Could we say that for most of us there are four kinds of motivation: business, family, pleasure, Christ? I heard it said in a quite

spiritual setting, that one's first responsibility is to the family. What did the Lord mean, the One who gave His all, when He said only family-haters could be His disciples (Lk. 14:26)? The family decidedly should be ahead of business or pleasure. May the Lord help us all in assessing our responsibilities!

Laodiceans are rich and getting richer, with no perceived needs, but still coveting more things (Rev. 3:17). The man in the parable was planning to lay up much goods for many years. He would take it easy, eat, drink and be merry. I saw a bit of folk philosophy displayed in a store window on Broadway, New York City: "Money is not the only thing in life, but it's far ahead of whatever comes in second place."

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Head of all God's creation, has a different evaluation: miserable (not at all happy); pitiable (not leaders in the community); poor (in eternal wealth); blind (to heaven's glories and the beauties of Christ); naked (should be ashamed in their purple and fine linen).

So He had words of admonition. The *sumbouleuo*, literally *to counsel together*, suggests mutual consultation rather than a divine command. But how do poor people buy anything, especially fine gold? Our only real asset is time, and we all have the same amount every day. It is a sin to waste it on temporary pleasures. You can get real gold and become rich in heaven's securities. Fine white linen can be gained by righteous acts (Rev. 19:8). What kind of eyesalve will heal blindness? To the Jews there was no beauty that they should desire Him. He can open our eyes to appreciate His glories.

This stinging rebuke is evidence of His magnificent love (Rev. 3:19). Chastening is never joyous but grievous. Love leads to scolding and chastening to zeal and repentance. (Zeal is from the same root as hot, vv. 15-16.)

A sorrowful scene? Against this backdrop the Lord of the churches made two of the most exalted promises of Scripture:

1. *I will come in and sup with you.* The Son was invited to sit at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1). After His resurrection, He did just that (Mk. 16:19). Yet He stood up in indignation when the ferocious rabble gnashed on His dedicated servant with their teeth (but He did not prevent them from murdering Stephen). Again in Revelation 3:20 He is standing, and knocking. What does He want?

On the mountain He promised His disciples that God would answer their prayers if they would ask, seek, and knock. Two of these words are used of the Father and the Son. First, the Father *seeks* (present continuous tense) worship from true worshippers. This is extraordinary: the Father, eternal, omnipotent, the infinite Source of all universes, is *seeking* for something which I can provide: true worship in the spirit! Not on Lord's Day only, but daily, hourly. I would love to know more of this. The Father seeks it.

What are Christ's current joys?

In our verse, His knocking is just as marvelous. The Son came from heaven to save us (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 5:43; 16:28). Sinners are invited to come to Him (Mt. 11:28; Jn. 6:37; 7:37). It is normal for us to come to Him in prayer. Here He comes to us, and stands!

You knock at a door when you want something (Lk. 13:25; Acts 12:13). What does He want? You will concur that this verse has far wider application than to the unsaved. The Son undoubtedly wants to come into the believer's life in a more abundant way. Positionally He is in us (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27), but in daily life, Laodiceans are altogether self-satisfied.

So this is the situation: Christ standing and knocking. There are also two conditions. One must hear His voice, and open the door to Him. But the promise is threefold: i) I will come in; ii) I will sup with him; iii) he will sup with Me.

Consider this word "sup," found 20 times, noun and verb. It is used of feasts (Mt. 23:6); the main meal of the day (Lk. 17:8); of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20); of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). Here it is not the Lord in resurrection eating literal food, nor His supplying our needs. It is *mutuality:* I with him, he with Me. He craves fellowship, communion, sharing His joys with one who loves Him. And it is to be reciprocal.

What are His current joys? His delight and meat is still to do His Father's will (Ps. 40:8; Jn. 4:34). He

rejoices over each contrite sinner (Lk. 15:5-6). The celestial Bridegroom must look forward with joyous anticipation to the wedding day. I asked a young man, recently engaged, "When is the wedding?" He said, "In ninety-three days." The Son said He did not know the day or the hour, but He is surely anticipating it with joy.

When we meet with friends for a meal, we talk about each others' joys and difficulties. We can share with the Son concerning His vast work today. The Son is interceding for perhaps a hundred million believers in the world. He is purifying and perfecting His Bride to present her to Himself without spot or blemish. He is yearning for the fullness of the Gentiles when the number of believers will make His Church complete. We can share in these things, and manifest our concern when we commune with Him.

The Lord is called the Man of Sorrows, especially when He was bearing our griefs. He still has cause for sorrow, at the unbelief of His people (Mk. 3:5; 9:19; 16:14; Lk. 24:25; Heb. 3:10). It is written that He feels with His people in their troubles (Isa. 63:9). Can we share with empathy in His present sorrows?

He is interested in our joys.

He is interested in our joys and problems. Keep telling Him what you have been doing, both good and bad. He wants to sup with you, to share your ordeals and triumphs every day. He asks, "What can I do for you?" (Jn. 15:7). We ask Him the same (Jn. 2:5). The disciples told the Lord everything they had done and taught (Mk. 6:30; Lk. 9:10). Remember it was at supper that John leaned on Jesus' breast.

This concept of mutuality may be seen also in His command and promise, "Abide in Me and I (will abide) in you." He who sows and he who reaps will rejoice together.

> *He and I in that bright glory*
> *One deep joy shall share;*
> *Mine to be forever with Him,*
> *His that I am there."* —Tersteegen

Why not start now?

2. *The overcomer will sit with Me.* The second preeminent promise to those who live in the Laodicean age is in verse 21. The Victor-Son is no longer standing, He is sitting with His Father on the throne. Lucifer wanted to exalt his throne above the stars of God. Mrs. Zebedee's ambition was that her two sons would sit one of each side of the King. The Lord explained that the privilege of proximity to Him was reserved for those chosen by the Father. He did promise the apostles that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel (Lk. 22:30). They will also eat and drink at His table in His kingdom. We can sup with Him right now!

In the hours of His trial, the Lord was sustained by Jehovah's guarantee that He would sit at God's right hand. The apostles underscored this position in their writings: God displayed the exceeding greatness of His power when He set Christ at His own right hand in heaven (Eph. 1:19-20). He still sits there (Col. 3:1). After making purgation for sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). Our High Priest endured the cross, despised the shame, offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and sat on the right hand of God (Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Angels and all spiritual powers are subject to Him.

This His most lofty honor He will share with some mortals. These are the ones who overcome the tendencies which typify the present Laodicean age: such as apathy, self-love, and complacency. Christ overcame the world (Jn. 16:33). He prevailed (same word) to open the seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 5:5). Young men are strong and overcome the Wicked One (1 Jn. 2:13). The brethren, not loving their lives unto the death, overcome the Accuser (Rev. 12:11).

It is a long jump from Laodicean smugness to martyrdom. Perhaps it is not so far from the Ephesian loss of first love to Laodicean half-and-half. The Lord contemplates here that some will overcome. His promise to us is more sharing, mutuality—eternally!

We should hear and heed what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The Son is speaking in these messages. If we hear His voice, and open to Him, we will sup with Him in close intimacy. If we overcome, we will sit with Him on the throne. Present reward: daily fellowship with the Son. Future reward: eternal nearness to the Son.

Where Are They Now?

The present land of Turkey was once the fertile field of New Testament Christianity. What happened?

The solemn "Repent—or else" tolls repeatedly through the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. Today the almost 60 million Turks are 99.5% Muslim. Where the gospel first took root among Gentiles, the land where Paul, John, Aquilla and Priscilla labored, there are perhaps 400-600 believers. What happened?

It seems these lampstands were "removed" as the encroaching darkness swept the land. Whether before or during the Ottoman conquest in the ninth century AD, the land settled into a long night with little gospel light. The modern Turks are no descendants of the people who heard the gospel which swept across its towns and cities in the first century. They are distant relatives of the Mongols of Central Asia.

The pride of Islam, Turkish nationalism, dark memories of crusades against their people in the name of Christ—all bear strong influence in making it difficult to reach these followers of Mohammed today with the liberating News from Heaven.

Nonetheless, a few lights flicker once again in the darkness. In Izmir (New Testament Smyrna—fittingly the persecuted church) there is a small fellowship of believers. There is another at Ankara, the capital, and one in Adana (near Tarsus, Paul's hometown). Most of the Christians in Istanbul (more than seven million) could meet in a single room. Only 10% of the country's provinces have any local witness at all.

But it is a start! In spite of frequent harassment and persecution, people are being saved. Media ministries include literature, cassettes, video, and radio, which are all touching lives for God. Newspaper and magazine ads for free New Testaments and correspondence courses have brought a significant response: nearly five thousand respondents in one year.

Efforts are going slowly to plant new works in a handful of cities in the country in spite of great opposition.

What can we do to help? Of course we know the answer—we must pray, give, and go. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest fields (Of course, He may send you!). Today you can't go to Turkey as a traditional missionary. But the land is not entirely closed to dedicated believers who enter as students, teachers, businessmen, or even long-term tourists. Many Christian workers teach English as a second language to Turkish people (as is done in China and other restricted countries).

A worker presently serving in Turkey writes in *Missions* magazine: "A determined effort is needed to see the lampstands of Asia Minor and other Muslim lands burning for Christ again. We badly need to refocus our aim on those places where Christ is not named, without ceasing to strengthen other works. More than anything else we need a united prayer assault on Satan's kingdom of darkness. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds' (2 Cor. 10:4)."

Muslims pray five times a day to a god that is no god. We worship the true God. Will some covenant (not slavishly but joyfully) to beseech Him five times a day for His help in Turkey?

Jim McKendrick

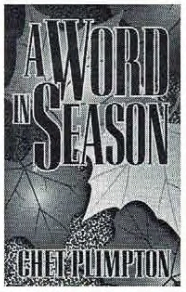
Encouraging Reading

An unknown apostle hiding behind the greatness of the Lord Jesus pens these words in Hebrews 12:3 "...lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

The Jewish believers of the first century found themselves in the middle of a storm. To leave Judaism with all its rituals and sacrifices, its temple and feast days, to seemingly turn their backs on Moses and the law, was to their contemporaries unthinkable. But they had done all this to turn to the Lord Jesus—the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament anticipated. The struggle was long and hard and it cost them much: imprisonment, loss of property, public ridicule. This took its toll on the minds and hearts of these believers.

So he took up his pen and pointed them to Christ. This One is greater than angels, has more honor than Moses, will lead us into a rest better than Joshua, a high priest after a better order than Aaron—based upon a better sacrifice and on a better covenant and who has made the way into the holiest possible.

While we may not be Jewish and we don't live in the first century, it still costs to a) resist sin and b) to come to a maturity which yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. And we still become weary and faint in our minds. So we still need those who will take pen in hand and point our hearts in the right direction—to the Lord Jesus Christ.



I have just finished reading a little book that does just that. It is called *A Word in Season* by Chet Plimpton. Chet and his wife Anita have spent several years helping men and women prepare for the challenges of the mission field. And when they return, battle weary, he and his wife have offered the support and encouragement they need. This encouragement is now available to us who may be weary from the battles we also face daily. This book arms us for the battles that come through interpersonal relationships, discouragement, and our own sinful flesh. The author gives solid, scriptural help.

Each chapter is self-contained so the book can be read a little at a time. Its 24 chapters cover many aspects of Christian life. You will not only be instructed but encouraged.

Another way in which we can be encouraged is to read a good biography. In this we see how the Lord worked in others lives and thus we are helped to see the Lord's work in our own lives. One that I have read recently is the history of Oliver Smith. He lived in northeast Iowa, near Waterloo. During the middle part of the 20th century, up and down this rural part of the Midwest, God used this man mightly. Towns like Hitesville, Stout, Clayton, Aplington, none of them more than a few thousand in population, were visited by a unique man with his "gospel car" and an unusual style of personal witness. And in these towns groups of Christians (many of them led to the Lord by Oliver) met to remember the Lord, teach His Word, and preach the gospel. In his lifetime as many as 20 assemblies were formed in which he had some part. Many of them are still going on and growing today.

His style was unique. Painting rocks with gospel texts along the road, throwing tracts onto driveways wrapped around pieces of garden hose, door-to-door visitation and gospel tents were all a part of his spreading the good news of eternal life to all who believed.

The book is filled with pictures that, to all who knew him, will bring back memories. But to those who never met him, the book is an introduction to a life that will inspire and encourage gospel effort. Titled *A Man Called Oliver*, the volume was compiled by two young men from that area, Steve Walvatne and Dave Reiss. It is obviously a labor of love. It must be ordered from Mr. Val Brandt, PO Box 107, Garnavillo, IA 52049. Please enclose $12 (US Funds) and he will mail the book to you.

"Lest you be wearied and faint in your mind"—we have a great cloud of witnesses to whom we can look, but most importantly we look to "Jesus the author and finisher of faith." May you be encouraged as you read these books to look to the One who is the "God of all comfort." u

An Open Door

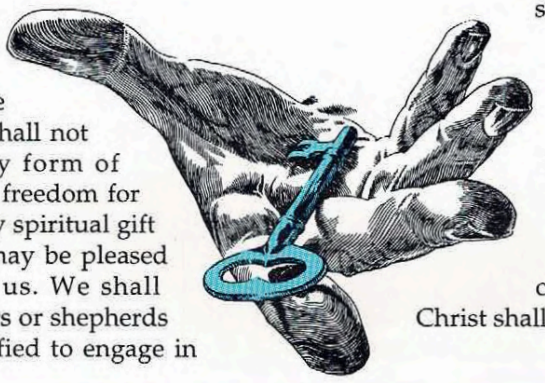
Have we availed ourselves of that open door? Is a scriptural position a guarantee of a scriptural condition?

In the prophetic outline of church history given us in chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation, we see that after the Protestant apostasy depicted in the message to Sardis, it was said to Philadelphia: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." In the nineteenth century many of the Lord's people availed themselves of that open door, returning to the simplicity of the New Testament practice by abandoning all human names, to be gathered to the precious name of Christ alone.

That door is open still, and will remain open till the Lord shall come, so that we, as they, having but a little strength, may avail ourselves of it. It is not the door into another fold or enclosure. Rather it is a door that opens outwards, to enable us to escape from the confusion and restricting influences of organized Christendom. It is a door that leads outside the camp to Christ Himself. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

If it be asked: What are we to do? the answer is plain. We must surrender every name, system or practice that is unauthorized by the Word of God, and return to the simplicity of New Testament teaching.

In doing so, we shall meet with fellow-believers as Christians, gathered only to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the purpose of carrying out His mind regarding worship, ministry, prayer, and evangelistic service, in dependence on the Holy Spirit. We shall not countenance any form of clerisy, but allow freedom for the exercise of any spiritual gift which the Lord may be pleased to vouchsafe to us. We shall recognize as elders or shepherds all who are qualified to engage in that service according to the requirements of Scripture.



If, however, we do take scriptural ground, and are determined to practice all that the Word of God enjoins, we must take heed lest we be found boasting in the very scripturalness of our position or harboring a censorious spirit toward those who remain in the place from which we came out. For it is only too possible to be scriptural in our position and yet sectarian in our attitude.

It is also possible to be in a scriptural position and be greatly lacking in other respects. For, as has been often said, a scriptural position is no guarantee of a scriptural condition, and no assembly can function satisfactorily if there is a condition of carnality, pride, or worldliness. So we must ever be dependent upon the Holy Spirit for guidance and power.

The question, then, reduces itself to this: Is there such a thing today as being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, in recognition of His Lordship, and in complete subjection to His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Is it possible for believers to be gathered simply as Christians and in recognition of the essential unity that links them together as members of Christ's body, as all Christians were in the first century? And is it the mind of God that they should renounce all man-made religious associations and parties, in order so to meet according to the Word of God?

To ask the question is to answer it. Even if no other Christians in modern times had recognized the possibility and necessity of it, it would still be our duty and privilege to do that which God's Word reveals to have been His mind for all His people from the beginning of the church's history, and till Christ shall come.

u

But Thou Art Rich

Not a word of commendation did He speak to the church in Smyrna; but a great silence as they passed through the fire proved His approval of the rightness of their spirit.

From the silence to Smyrna, just one word, one gleam of light, is given: "But thou art rich." It is as though He bent over them and whispered the great truth. Smyrna counts thee poor. I count thee rich. The blasphemy of the Jews and the persecution of pagans have robbed thee of everything, but thou hast lost nothing. "I know thy poverty (but thou art rich)."

The words recall to our mind the Lord's conception of riches as revealed in His parable concerning the rich fool. The farmer said to himself, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." As though a soul could be fed with goods! At the close of the parable Jesus said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Again one calls to mind the word of James, the practical, far-seeing apostle. "Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world, rich in faith?" So the world might take everything from you, but you are rich in faith, in the principle that possesses the unseen and imperishable things.

Paul's conception of his own position harmonizes with the Lord's estimate of Smyrna. "As poor"—so poor that he had to make tents to live, so poor that when someone is coming to see him, he has to ask them to bring that old cloak to protect him from the cold, and to keep him warm—"yet making many rich"—so rich that he is able to minister through tent-making without cost, so rich that he is more anxious about the parchments than about the cloak: "especially the parchments." "As having nothing and yet possessing all things." "I know thy poverty," says Christ, you are poor, you have nothing, but you are rich, enriching others, possessing all things.

All this is intensely interesting, but we have not yet touched the deepest note of exposition. Read again the old familiar words concerning the Master from the writings of Paul. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." The words used are exactly the same for "rich" and for "poverty." "He became poor," "I know thy poverty." "He was rich," "but thou art rich." "I know, *I* know your poverty. I have been poor with the actual poverty of beggary, but you are rich, for through that poverty of Mine, you have entered into that wealth of Mine, and even in the midst of all your poverty, you possess the abiding wealth. I know your poverty, for I have shared it. I know your wealth, for I have given it."

It is well to remember that the word "rich" in all these cases is the actual word which we use of the world's wealth. It is the root word from which we derive our word *plutocrat.* According to Christ then, wealth is enrichment of character, not possession of gold. He said in effect to these suffering people in Smyrna, You are the poorest people in Smyrna. Yet you are the plutocrats of Smyrna. Others have the wealth of the world, the fullness of material things, but you have the true fullness.

I love to think of this estimate of Christ, and to remember that the saints of God are the true aristocrats and plutocrats of every age. An aristocrat is a man of best strength. A plutocrat is a full man. The best strength of the nation is ever to be found in the saints of Christ. The true fullness of the nation is to be reckoned by the number of its men and women who are living in fellowship with God. The riches of the saints are the riches that abide. The things the Christians of Smyrna had lost, they must have left behind them ere long, when they had passed from the stage of earth. The things that they possessed became theirs in fullest measure only through that passing. True wealth is the wealth that never tarnishes, never decays, never fades. Oh, glorious parenthesis of Jesus—a great silence of commendation, and a parenthesis of approbation.

Three Views of the Church

Are the seven churches in Asia not only historic churches descriptive of recurring church problems in every age, but also portraits of the stages in church history? If so, then Christ is seen as the answer to our need as well!

God gives us three views of Church truth, as we shall see in our study of the seven church letters. *First*, they were seven literal churches at the time when John wrote. *Second*, they show us conditions that exist at any point in history. *Third*, the word "mystery" would lead us to see the main thrust of their meaning, namely, seven successive stages of Church history from Pentecost to the Advent.

Thus Ephesus represents the apostolic age of the Church; Smyrna, the age of Roman persecution; Pergamos, the Church married to the world by Constantine; Thyatira, the religious domination of the Roman church; Sardis, the Reformation period; Philadelphia, revival of truth and effort; and Laodicea, the great apostasy of the last days.

In this respect, their history follows the history of religion in the Old Testament. Paradise and the tree of life, mentioned in Ephesus, links this church with Eden and the fall of man. Smyrna in the fires of persecution may align with Israel in the brick-kilns of Egypt. Pergamos, fed with manna and opposed by Balaam, points to Israel in the wilderness. Thyatira, with her Jezebel, is linked to Israel in the land. Sardis, with its register of names, brings us to Israel in Babylon. When tested, some of these could not find "their names written." In Philadelphia we have the return of the remnant. Laodicea, with its mixture of good and bad, is well mirrored in the book of Malachi. It is a picture of religious deterioration until it goes beyond recovery. But "they that feared the Lord" opened the door, and with them He supped.

There is also a parallel between the seven parables of Matthew 13 and the seven churches. The beginning of declension is seen in the first parable and the first church. Because the enemy sowed tares among the wheat, the Lord permitted persecution to come, as seen in Smyrna. The mustard seed is like Pergamos, where the worldly church becomes the nesting place of every unclean bird. In the parable of the leaven, we see a woman corrupting the meal, and in Thyatira, we see a woman corrupting the church. The treasure hid in the field corresponds to the few names in Sardis which had not defiled their garments. The pearl of great price and Philadelphia are linked where the truth of the Church is recovered. The dragnet is like Laodicea with its mixture of good and bad (the bad are cast away, spued out of the mouth of the Son of God).

As we study the letters to these churches, we note that every church stands on its own base, responsible to the Lord alone. No amalgamation of assemblies is ever hinted at, neither here nor anywhere in the New Testament. The autonomy of each assembly is clearly taught in the Word. God in His wisdom planned this so that the enemy could not destroy the Church with one blow. The Church's unity is invisible, bound by seven bonds (Eph. 4). This is what we are to endeavor to keep in view.

The prerogative for removing a lampstand is in the hand of Him who walks in the midst. He alone could say, "I will remove thy lampstand unless..." Had these principles of Church truth been obeyed, what heartaches the assemblies would have been saved!

In this religious deterioration, we may discern the losses the Church sustained. The loss of the first love was the beginning of other losses. The divine idea of the Church was lost: we read of "synagogue." This was a gathering with no obligation to authority. A church is a gathering, too, but in His Name, that is, subject to His authority (Mt. 18:20).

The divine superintendency of the Holy Spirit was lost; we read of a clerical cast called "the Nicolaitanes" and the "Balaamites." The first denied the headship of Christ over the Church, while the second denied the supremacy of the Spirit over the members of the Church. The first led to ritualism, in which "the clergy conquered the people"; the second led to spiritual adultery with the

world. The truth of separation was lost. Pergamos means marriage, for the church became married to the world, and aimed to be great in the world, no longer content to be God's "little flock."

The voice of God was lost to the voice of the Church. Jezebel becomes the teacher, instead of the Church interpreting what God says. There is a fixed inflexibility about God's truth which ill suits the designs of those who need pliant principles, principles that please and amuse the declining church.

One significant thing may be noticed: in the first three churches no mention is made of the Second Advent, but it is mentioned in the last four. Would this suggest that the apostasy seen in the last four churches develops rapidly at the end of the age and paves the way for the manifestation of Antichrist? Certainly what is left of Laodicea when the Church is taken up will merge into Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, who will ride the Beast until he turns and destroys her (Rev. 17).

The portrait of Christ in chapter 1 with its ten beautiful colors is broken down in chapters 2 and 3, and according to the need of each church, the truth about Christ is applied. This means that the ministry of Christ is God's remedy for any condition among the saints to the present day. U

Citizens of Heaven

Mrs. Frances Bevan

Who are these whose faces are irradiate
With eternal joy?
With the calm the tempest may not trouble
Nor the grave destroy?

Glad are those who hear a glorious singing
From the golden street,
Moving to the measure of the music
That is passing sweet.

They have been within the inner chamber
None can tread beside,
Where the Bridegroom, radiant in His glory,
Waiteth for the Bride.

Therefore tread they in Earth's darkest places,
Through all grief and sin,
For they know the home that waits the weary,
Know the love within.

Therefore sad and strange to them the splendors
Of the world must be,
"O forgotten and rejected Jesus,
We have looked on Thee!

"We have seen Thee in the Father's glory,
Shared the Father's kiss;
Strange henceforward to the world our sadness,
Stranger yet our bliss.

"Sadness for the eyes that cannot see Thee,
Whom to see is Heaven;
Bliss that flows mysterious as the River
When the Rock was riven.

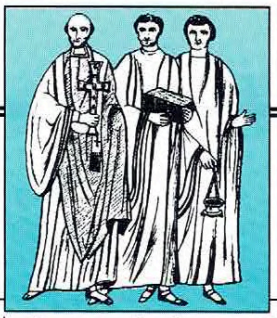
"Oh, might some sweet song Thy lips have taught us,
Some glad song and sweet,
Guide amidst the mists and through the darkness
Lost ones at Thy feet.

"Not our joy, but Thy divine rejoicing
Fills that palace fair,
For the wonder past our heart's conceiving
Is the welcome there."

Is it strange that from the golden chamber,
From the secret place,
Come they forth with everlasting radiance
Of His glorious face?

Telling mysteries that to babes are simple,
Hidden from the wise,
Fragrant with the odors of the lilies
Of God's Paradise?

Changed—transformed; forever and forever;
Thine alone to be;
Knowing none on earth, O Lord, beside Thee,
None in heaven but Thee.



F. W. Grant

The Nicolaitans?

How shall we interpret this? I answer that the word itself, "Nicolaitans," is the only thing which really we have to interpret it by.

In the letter to Ephesus the Lord says: "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." But in the letter to Pergamos it is more than the "deeds" of the Nicolaitans. It is now their "doctrine," and the church, instead of repudiating it, was going along with it.

People have tried very hard to show that there was historically a sect of the Nicolaitans, but it is admitted by most writers now to be very uncertain. And it is difficult to conceive why, in epistles of a prophetic character such as these, there should be a repeated and emphatic mention of an obscure sect about which people can tell us little or nothing. The Lord solemnly denounces it: "which thing I hate." It must have a special importance with Him and be of significance in church history.

Besides, it is the way in Scripture, especially in passages of a symbolic character, for the names to be significant. Here, if we are left simply to the name, I think it alone is sufficiently instructive. Of course, to those who spoke the language, the meaning would be no hidden thing, as apparent as the names in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* are to us.

Nicolaitan means, "conquering the people." The last part of the word (*laos*) is the Greek for "people," from which the term "laity" is derived. The Nicolaitans were those "subjecting, putting down the laity," the mass of Christian people, lording it over them.

So we have here the development of the so-called clergy —a spiritual class, a set of people having officially a right to leadership in spiritual things, a nearness to God derived from official place, not spiritual power. In contrast to these, the rest of Christians are but the laity, the seculars, degraded from the spiritual priesthood Peter spoke of (1 Pet. 2:5) into mere "lay members." This is true Nicolaitanism—the "subjection of the people."

For instance, the Lord's Supper is the fullest expression of Christian thankfulness and adoration. But what Protestant minister does not look upon it as his official right to administer this? What "layman" would not shrink from administering it? This is one of the evils of the system, that the mass of Christian people are thus distinctly secularized. Occupied with worldly things, they cannot be expected to be spiritually what the clergy are.

But never could this distinction have taken root so rapidly and universally if it had not been well adapted to the tastes of even those whom it degraded. As spiritual decline sets in, the heart that is turning to the world readily barters, Esau-like, its spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. It exchanges the need for caring too much for spiritual things with those who accept the responsibility.

Worldliness is well covered with a layman's cloak. And as the church at large dropped out of first love, as it did rapidly, the world began to come in through the loosely guarded gates, and it became more and more impossible for the rank and file of Christendom to take the blessed and wonderful place which belonged to Christians. The step downward only made each succeeding step easier, until in less than 300 years from the beginning, a priesthood and a ritualistic religion were everywhere installed.

Alas, Nicolaitanism is no obscure doctrine of past ages, but a widespread system of error, fruitful in evil results. That there are good men entangled in it, all must admit. There are godly men and true ministers ignorantly wearing the livery of men. May God deliver them. May they cast aside their fetters and be free! May they rise up to the true dignity of their calling, responsible to God, and walking before Him alone.

On the other hand, it is of immense importance that all His people realize, however diverse their places in the body of Christ may be, that they are all as truly ministers as they are priests. It is the privilege of each one to contribute his share to the common treasury of gifts with which Christ has endowed His church.

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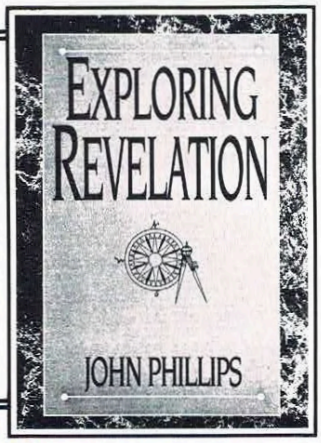

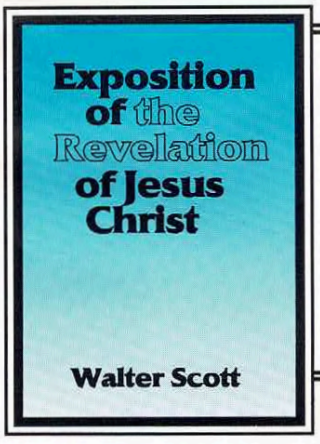

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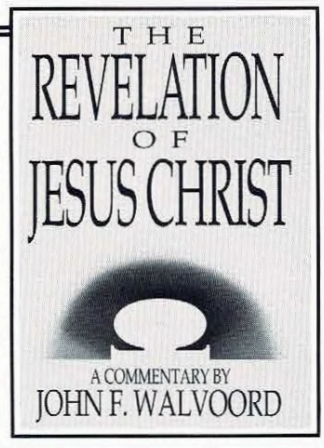

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