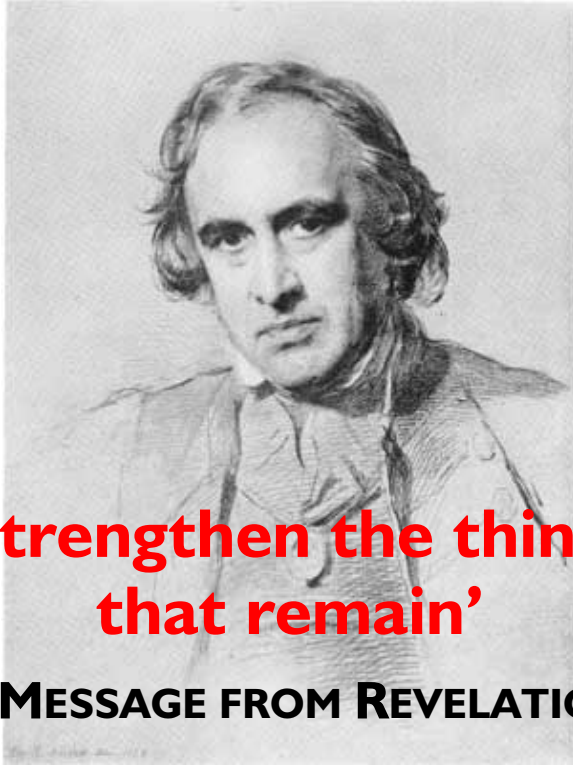


# APOLOGIA

... always be ready to give a defense [Greek, *apologia*]  
to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ... 1 PETER 3:15

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Richard Chenevix Trench



**‘Strengthen the things  
that remain’**

## **A MESSAGE FROM REVELATION**

### **A CONFESSION BY DAVID ASPINALL**

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When in 1993 Vivian and I first moved to Streetsville the last place we would have chosen to worship and fellowship would have been Streetsville United Church – even though we had no car at the time and SUC was a 5 minute walk, one of 5 churches within

walking distance. What we had heard about the United Church of Canada hardly recommended SUC to people like us, whose exposure to Christianity so far – 5 years removed from The Watchtower – consisted of periodic attendance at several stalwart conservative churches, Brethren, Baptist and Presbyterian. The reputation of the United Church as a theologically radical institution would have kept us far away.

But there was a yet more important factor. We were victims of a condition some diagnose as ‘supermarket spirituality’ – the ‘perfect church’ syndrome. If you don’t like the product, pick another. This was the common view of the evangelical Christians we had met, and most of them, despite or perhaps *because of* their considerable ‘zeal for the Lord’, lacked deep roots in either tradition or local church fellowship.

But something happened in the winter of 1992-93 which caused us to ask ourselves a question: How often is our choice of church fellowship governed by the spirit of the world? Namely, the modern world’s governing principle: *Minimize pain and discomfort, maximize pleasure and convenience*. When Christians have deeply drunk of this spirit, they may well reason *If you don’t like what your church is doing, move on*.

Our media bombard us with this seductive message: *Happiness is having what you don’t have!* (= thou shalt covet). This ‘grass is greener’ mentality generates in Christians the attitude which asks first: *What can this church do for me and mine?* We are frequently reminded even by the very same media that John F. Kennedy suggested we ask another question, *Ask NOT what your country can do for you, but rather ...* . But do we Christians remember the motive for our gathering together – *Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together...* (Heb. 10:24,25)? So that the first question changes from *What am I getting here?* to *What am I bringing here?*

Let me confess that when we came to Streetsville this was not our attitude. But over that winter of 1992-93 our views underwent a rapid transformation. It was the study of Revelation chapters 1-3 that completely overturned our *What’s in this for us?* attitude to

the local church. The great Church of England scholar and Bishop of Dublin Richard Trench knew something of church controversy himself, helping navigate the English church through the time of its greatest crisis, the massive defections to the Roman Catholic Church and Darwin in the middle of the Victorian era, 150 years ago. Yet Trench, who also found (or is that *made*?) time to become a major contributor to the first edition of the massive Oxford English dictionary, wrote a famous commentary on Revelation's seven churches. Here is his summation of these chapters:

For one who has undertaken the awful ministry of souls, I know almost nothing in Scripture so searching, no threatenings so alarming, no promises so comfortable, as are some which these Epistles contain. [Trench 10]

For Vivian and me the study of Revelation 1-3 brought something into clear focus immediately: *There was no 'perfect church', even in the first century! Even under the Apostles!* Now this is a major problem among evangelicals (even as with cults) – the myth of the pure church, nostalgia for a non-existent golden age when all was well with the Lord's people. Of Revelation's 7 churches at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, 2 get Christ's undiluted praise, 2 get pass or borderline – but with ominous warnings – and 3 fail, one with seemingly no redeeming features. Yet, as imperfect, heretical or even – by conservative standards – apostate as these churches appear,

It is of the utmost importance for John's theology that the first statement he makes about the heavenly Christ is that he saw him among the lamps. He is no absentee ... he is present among the earthly congregations of his people ... [Caird 25]

John sees Christ walking among the lampstands of ALL seven churches. Do we? Read about the 7 churches in Revelation ch..2 and 3 and ask which description best fits your church? If you happen to attend the United Church of Canada, as we did from 1993 to 2013, you may find at least 4 with parallels to our situation. But much can be gained by examining the admonition to all seven. John Wesley, the father of Methodism and therefore

the spiritual father of the UCC, saw this clearly:

There can be no state, either of any pastor, church, or single person, which has not here suitable instructions. All ... may draw hence necessary self-knowledge, reproof, commendation, warning, or confirmation. [Wesley 944]

## **WHY DO YOU ATTEND YOUR CHURCH?**

We all need to ask ourselves the same searching question: Why do *I* attend my church? For the great majority of us, the reason is simply that we grew up in “our” church. Or came to faith there. For a great many of us, often in addition to the familiarity factor, we attend “our” church because we like the type of worship, the “liveliness”. Many believers are attracted to churches “alive” in a different sense: communities of Christians which are busy with activities, groups, social outreach, or other community-related busy-ness. On the other hand, some of us, especially older believers, attend specific churches just because “our” church is NOT lively, but sedate, quiet, calming after a hard week. These reasons, let's face it, have more to do with culture and disposition of character than with theology or the Bible. That is, our reasons are more subjective than objective. Less to do with truth than peace, certainly more to do with pleasure and comfort than discipline and correction. But if we are in a normal North American church environment, whether attending “alive” church, or attending what too many evangelicals call “dead” churches, we might do well to consider the messages Christ Himself sent to the 7 churches of West Asia (Turkey) at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. We will not travel far into Revelation chapters 2 and 3 before we discover that Christ is not encouraging local Christians to measure themselves by themselves, i.e. to sit comfortably as possible in the church environment to which they were accustomed. No, He who searches all things, Whose eyes are like a flame of fire, was exhorting His churches to judge themselves by a far higher standard. Where correction is necessary, we must

*hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.* The Christ of the Apocalypse pulls no punches. Although He praises that which deserves praise, Christ has, for these 7 churches, more chastisement than comfort.

There are, among the seven churches, 5 which get mixed or condemnatory messages. It is far more likely we would have been attending those assemblies than the two who received Christ's undiluted praise, Smyrna and Philadelphia. Let us start, therefore, with one of the churches which received a "mixed review".

## **WOULD YOU ATTEND CHURCH IN SARDIS?**

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**How would we have handled the situation had we been attending the church in Sardis? Christ sees straight through their "Christian busy-ness". He says to them, *You have the name of being alive, and you are dead.* (Rev.3:1-5)**

The people of the city were widely known for their luxurious, loose way of life. It is significant that nothing is said in the letter about Jewish hostility, about open persecution, or about heretical teaching. The main problem is that of a deep spiritual apathy, which may have resulted from the softness and love of luxury which characterized the secular society ... it was well known as an active, vigorous congregation, characterized by good works and charitable activities. But in the sight of God, all of these religious activities were a failure, because they were only formal and external, and not infused with the life-giving Holy Spirit. Here is a perfect example of purely nominal Christianity ... [Ladd 55-56]

They were the works of a church which had become the incarnation of mediocrity. [Beasley-Murray 95]

This Church had nothing of the spirit of the Two Witnesses, of whom we read that they "*tormented* them that dwelt on the earth" (Rev.11:10), tormented them, that is, by their witness for a God of truth and holiness and love, whom the

dwellers on the earth were determined not to know. [Trench 211]

Sardis is lively, yet not holy – not visibly distinct from the culture around it, certainly not *tormenting* the pagan or Jewish communities around it with its separation unto God. What options would we have if we lived in Sardis? Only seven churches within a 100 mile radius -- could we move? The saints in Sardis, though they be few, have no locomotion, nor have they instruction to move. There remains some hope, however. *Yet you still have a few names in Sardis*, the Lord says, *who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* The saints in Sardis, therefore, are commanded, *Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death.*

Still, the supermarket mentality, or the more puritan saint in Sardis, might have reasoned, "Why not pack up the family and move into a *really* solid, orthodox Christian community – the church in Ephesus?" If any church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century deserved the title "super church", surely it was Ephesus. Founded by one apostle – Paul himself; ministered to by Paul's personal pastoral pick, Timothy; now led by the Apostle John, and first among the 7 destinations of John's pastoral letter, the Book of Revelation. Already 2 generations of solid, orthodox, safe Christian teaching. Surely Ephesus is the place to be for a serious Christian – and his family.

## **HOW ABOUT MOVING TO EPHEBUS?**

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**EPHEBUS: DOCTRINALLY SOUND – BUT HARDENING INTO LOVELESSNESS**

Yet not *everything* in Ephesus was ideal for the Christian family. If any place in the world offered a safe space option to the "patriarchal religions" of Judaism and Christianity, Ephesus was

**not** that place. If there was a religious centre in the ancient world that deserved the title ***Mecca of the sacred feminine***, it was Ephesus.

The third temple, the temple which was standing in the time of John, was one of the seven wonders of the world. The Greek saying ran: "The sun sees nothing finer in his course than Diana's temple.". It was the pride of Ephesus. When it was being built, women gladly offered their jewels and their ornaments that it might be beautified. Alexander the Great had offered all the magnificent spoils of his eastern campaigns if only his name might be inscribed upon it; but his offer was refused, for none but the name of Ephesus might be connected with the Temple of Diana ... to millions this strange image [of Diana/Artemis, ed.] was the most sacred thing in the world. Behind the image there was a still inner shrine. To it people came to deposit their valuables for safekeeping. The Temple of Diana was in fact the Bank of England of the ancient world. In a world of wars and civil wars a temple was always a safe deposit, for seldom would a temple be violated, and the Temple of Diana was the safest of all. [Barclay 14-15]

Therefore by the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, Christianity had had time to adjust to the reality of Ephesus; not only the chief "politically correct" option – the pre-"patriarchal" worship of the nature goddess – but the "safest" economic bet for someone dwelling in the Roman province of Asia: the bank of Ephesus.

Knowing the temptations even orthodox believers faced in such a city, we can perhaps better understand what had happened by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

They had fallen from the early heights of their devotion and had descended to the plains of mediocrity. In a word, they were backsliders. [Stott 21]

**Compare Jer.2:2 -- *I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown ...***

It is significant that the Apostle [Paul] had ended his letter to

the Ephesians with a special prayer for all those 'who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying' (Ephesians 6:24). Some thirty years had passed since then. A new generation had arisen in the Ephesian church, which did not heed this warning. Their love was faltering, weakening, dying ... They toiled with vigour, but not with love ... They tested the message of their teachers, but had no love in their hearts. [Stott 23]

What would be the future of a church – perhaps the greatest church in the world – if it failed to keep truth and love in proper balance? Was it not to the Ephesians Paul had written that a Christian must develop the habit of "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15)? Where was Ephesus going if it failed to keep kindled the burning love of its betrothal?



John Stott

No church has a secure and permanent place in the world. It is continuously on trial. If we can judge from the letter which Bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Ephesian church at the beginning of the second century, it rallied after Christ's appeal. But later it lapsed again, and by the Middle Ages its Christian testimony had been obliterated. [Stott 26]

Though 3 of the 7 great Christian councils of the first millennium were hosted by the Ephesian church, by the Middle Ages her candlestick had disappeared:

The candlestick has been removed, but the candle has not been quenched; and what the East has lost the West has gained. How awful the fulfilment of the threat has been in regard of Ephesus every modern traveller thither has borne witness. One who lately [ca. 1860, ed.] visited the place found only three Christians there, and these sunk in such ignorance and apathy as scarcely to have heard of the

names of St Paul or St John. [Trench 112]

But if Ephesus is not the ideal place to raise a Christian family, what about Pergamum? Haven't we heard that Pergamum doesn't have the same problem as Ephesus? They aren't hard and intolerant. In Pergamum *love* is the main thing.

## **WHERE TOLERATION IS THE PRIORITY**

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### **PERGAMUM: PRESTIGIOUS, EMBRACING -- BUT SACRIFICING TRUTH IN THE NAME OF LOVE**

Just who were these Nicolaitans, and why were they having such success at misleading the church in Pergamum?

The sum total of the Nicolaitans' offence, then, is that they took a laxer attitude than John to pagan society and religion ... The fault of Pergamum is the opposite of the fault of Ephesus; and how narrow is the safe path between the sin of tolerance and the sin of intolerance! [Caird 39,41]

Satan, then, as *the* Tempter is the great placer of "scandals," "stumbling blocks," or "offences," in the path of men; his sworn servants, a Balaam or a Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:16), are the same consciously. All of us unconsciously, by careless walking, by seeking what shall please ourselves rather than edify others (1 Cor.8:10), are in danger of being the same; all are deeply concerned with the warning of Matt.18:7 [Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!] [Trench 160]

Pergamos was a place where the anti-God forces of the universe were at their most authoritative and most powerful. It is there that the church of Pergamos dwells. When the New Testament speaks of the Christian dwelling anywhere in this world, it ordinarily uses the Greek word *paroikein* (1 Pet.1:17; Heb.11:9). *Paroikein* is the word which is characteristically used of a *stranger* and *sojourner* ... But the significant thing about this passage is that it is not the word

*paroikein* which is used; it is *katoikein*, and *katoikein* is the word that is regularly used for *residence in a permanent and settled place*. What the risen Christ is saying to the Christians in Pergamos is this: "You are living in a city where the influence and the power of Satan are rampant – and you have to go on living there ..." You cannot pack your baggage and move off to some place where it is easier to be a Christian. [Barclay 47-48]

So not only might it NOT be wise to move your family to Pergamum, it would also not be wise for Christians in Pergamum to move. Christians in Pergamum – despite the fact that Satan dwells there! – are to stay where they are. They are to view Satan's kingdom as an opportunity for service. But, of course, to serve in such a place will demand extraordinary vigilance. Apparently vigilance is an even better protection for the Christian family than a "spiritually safe" environment! Where tolerance is the highest virtue, truth must be sacrificed – in the name of *love*! Can Christians thrive in such an environment? Only if they stand steadfast in truth – in the name of Christ.

### **THYATIRA: ACTIVE, ENDURING -- BUT WINKING AT IMMORALITY & COMPROMISE**

Thyatira, like Pergamum, celebrated the spirit of toleration. Unfortunately what Thyatira tolerated – materialism and spiritual compromise – would undermine both her spiritual health and her witness to Christ.

The problem which faced every Christian in Thyatira was whether he was to make money or to be a Christian. [Barclay 60]

In that healthy body a malignant cancer had begun to form ... The church of Thyatira displayed love and faith, service and endurance, but holiness is not included among its qualities. It permitted one of its female members to teach outrageous licence, and it apparently made no attempt to restrain her. In this too the church of Thyatira was the opposite of the church of Ephesus. Ephesus could not bear

evil, self-styled apostles, but had no love (Rev.2:2,4). Thyatira had love, but tolerated an evil, self-styled prophetess. [Stott 60]

It is John's role to play Elijah to this woman's Jezebel. Just as Elijah on Mount Carmel accused Israel of limping on two opinions, in their attempt to combine the worship of Yahweh with that of Baal, and compelled them to decide which of the two was truly God, so John demands that the church shall choose between Christ and Caesar. [Caird 45]

So we see that the Thyatiran church had two issues before it, tensions which had not yet been resolved: first, the love of luxury had relaxed the standard of holiness in the body, till the morality and materialism of the church was not markedly different from the surrounding pagan culture; second, the church of Thyatira had compromised its doctrine of authority to the point where a self-styled "prophetess" was now the de facto leader of the congregation.

So would we choose Thyatira as a spiritual home? If this congregation seems as undesirable as Pergamum and Sardis, let us compare it with the church in Laodicea.

## **LAODICEA – A MILD CASE OF CHRISTIANITY**

### **LAODICEA: RICH, BUT LUKEWARM -- KNOWS NOT THAT IT IS POOR, BLIND AND NAKED**

What an awful place to be spiritually – vaccinated, as it were, against the full strength of the gospel; immunized by the very name of Christ! The reason why the Laodiceans were *not* Christians in any real sense is that they had caught "a mild case of Christianity". In short, they were Churchians rather than Christians.

Perhaps none of the 7 letters is more appropriate to the church at the end of the twentieth century than this. It describes vividly the respectable, nominal, rather sentimental,

skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anaemic ... Jesus Christ would prefer us to boil or freeze, rather than that we should simmer down into a tasteless tepidity. [Stott 114]

The Laodiceans do not reject the gospel of Christ, nor do they affirm it with joy. They maintain it without conviction, without enthusiasm, without reflection on its implications for life. Paul's language about the world being crucified to him and he to the world (Gal.6:14), or of his being dominated by the one aim of pressing forward to win God's prize of life in his kingdom (Phil.3:12f.) would have sounded to the Laodiceans like another religion, which in fact it was ... Would that you were cold or hot! To have enough religion to disguise one's need of a living faith is to be in a worse condition than having no faith at all ... The road to the cross has always been easier for the publican than for the Pharisee. [Beasley-Murray 104-105]

The ordinary historian would probably not condemn the spirit of Laodicea so strenuously as St. John did. In the tendency of the Laodiceans towards a policy of compromise he would probably see a tendency towards toleration and allowance, which indicated a certain sound practical sense, and showed that the various constituents of the population of Laodicea were well mixed and evenly balanced ... There is only one way open to it. It must cease to trust to itself. It must recognize that it is poor ... but the Author can sell it "gold refined by fire". He does not give this gold for nothing: it must be bought with a price, the price of suffering and truth, fidelity and martyrdom. [Ramsay 425,428]

*Gold purified in the fire* -- True, living faith, which is purified in the furnace of affliction. [Wesley 953]

Can it be that there is no church on earth where a Christian family is not compromised, nor surrounded by the pollutions of paganism, as in Ephesus? Well, there are 2 churches to which Christ gives wholly favourable reviews, the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia. But do these churches offer the *other* advantages we modern Christians of the west cherish, namely security and economic opportunity?

## **HOW ABOUT SMYRNA, OR PHILADELPHIA?**

### **SMYRNA: WHERE THE ONLY CERTAINTY IS PERSECUTION**

#### **Is this counter-intuitive? Be persecuted ... or perish!**

Is it possible for a rich church to be pure, to be *holy*? Who, of all the 7 churches of Revelation, did Christ honour with even *earthly* permanence?

In Smyrna above all places, for a man to enter the Christian church was literally to take his life in his hands. In Smyrna the church was a place for heroes ... In verse 10 we see the honesty of Jesus Christ. He never offered his people an easy way; he offered them suffering, imprisonment, and trial. No one can ever say that he was induced to follow Christ on false pretenses. W.R. Maltby once said that Christ promised his people three things -- that they would be in constant trouble, that they would be completely fearless, and that they would be absurdly happy. [Barclay 31,38]

... the Christian element has always been strong and at the present time [ca. 1900, ed.] outnumbers the Mohammedan in the proportion of three to one; and the city is called by the Turks Infidel Smyrna, Giaour Ismir ... history has justified the prophetic vision of the writer. Smyrna, the recipient of the most laudatory of all the Seven Letters, is the greatest of all the cities of Anatolia ... The persecution and poverty which had been the lot of its Church from the beginning ... kept it pure. There was nothing in it to tempt the unworthy or the half-hearted ... [Ramsay 267,279-280]

### **PHILADELPHIA: MAXIMUM ECONOMIC RISK – BUT MAXIMUM SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITY**

#### **Not a good place for the dream house, but a good place to raise missionary children**

... its people lived always in dread of a disaster, “the day of

trial” ... [Ramsay 398]

Not only is every individual Christian called to be a witness, but every local Christian community is called to mobilize its membership for mission. This will involve a careful training programme, the regular visitation of the whole neighbourhood, the development of home evangelism and the arrangement of special events at which the gospel is shared. These are some of the doors which Christ has opened. We must make sure we go through them. [Stott 108]

## **OUR MAIN PROBLEM – TOO MANY OPTIONS**

We all know the blessing of locomotion, the capacity our forefathers did not enjoy, to travel widely, to experience ‘the good life’. But do we also appreciate the *curse* of locomotion -- that it is now **too easy** to flee discomfort for ‘greener pastures’?

A majority of Revelation’s 7 churches would not make the grade as ‘greener pastures’. Yet despite their grades, Christ is seen walking in the MIDST of the 7 lampstands, and holding the 7 stars in His hand -- they are HIS -- ALL of them. Where 2 or 3 are He is!

What could be done for a dead church like the one in Sardis? ... Here are 5 staccato imperatives: Wake up! Strengthen what remains! Remember! Obey! Repent! These orders fall into two parts. The church of Sardis is instructed first to wake up and strengthen what remains, and then to remember its heritage, obey it and repent. [Stott 83]

A dynamic minority of awakened and responsible Christians is able by prayer, love and witness both to preserve a dying church from extinction and to fan its flame into a fire. [Stott 85]

Living where they did, in the most materially prosperous part of Asia, it was easy to be seduced by the message of Baal and Jezebel his prophetess. That ‘gospel’ amounted to, *you can have God AND*

*this world too.* Yet it was to the church of Ephesus that Paul had given that precious word of the Lord – ‘it is more blessed to give than receive’ (Acts 20:35).

It was also from their comforting presence that Paul had to tear himself, facing instead the imprisonment and persecutions that awaited him back in Israel (Acts 20:22-24,37,38).

Paul knew already the principle *we must enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations* (Acts 14:22). He had his personal ‘thorn in the flesh’ which the Lord had refused to remove, saying only ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Cor. 12:9).

It is therefore doubly ironic that one ‘Revelation teaching’ taken for granted today is that we CAN enter the kingdom of God without tribulation. Actually, the gospel as preached by almost all TV evangelists has this eschatology as, if you will forgive me, an **escape clause**. That is, the church – you and me and all living believers – will NOT be on earth during the Great Tribulation. According to this eschatology, officially known as Dispensationalism, all the warnings of Revelation regarding the persecutions of the Beast only apply to Jewish remnant, the 144,000 converted during the future Tribulation. Only these Jewish believers and their converts will be on earth to witness the return of Christ. So all the warnings, exhortations, and consolations of the Revelation were NOT written for believers from the 1<sup>st</sup> century till today. Such is the ‘gospel’ being proclaimed by virtually all TV ‘ministries’!

But in Revelation a pound of persecution is worth a ton of tranquillity. Less colloquially, the prayers of the martyrs go up like frankincense before the Lord (but frankincense is fragrant **only** when crushed – Rev 5:8; 8:3,4).

[on 2:9] The message begins with an assurance of the Lord’s knowledge of the Smyrnaeans’ difficulties -- their tribulation, poverty and the slander ... but he refrains from intervening. He does not remove the poverty, he does not vindicate his followers in face of the Jewish slanders ... He simply encourages them to endure. Why no more than this?

The author of the book of Job wrestled with the problem, and so have the saints of God ever since. John provides no answer, but his whole book is written in the conviction that the Church of Christ has the vocation of suffering with its Lord, that it may share his glory in the kingdom he has won for mankind. [Beasley-Murray 81]

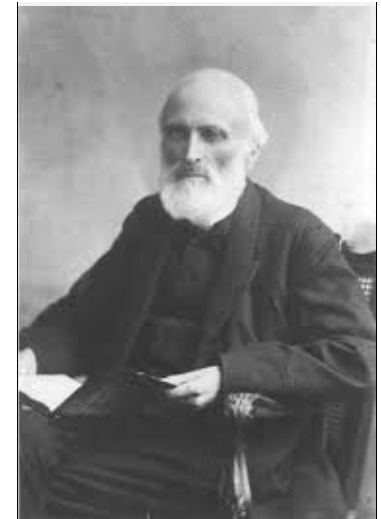
If we would reign with Christ, our ‘conquest’ must be His conquest; it is the supreme irony that the same night He ‘sweated as it were blood’, He left disciples peace, joy and told them before leaving for Gethsemane, ‘take courage for I have conquered the world’ (John 14:27; 15:11; 16:16-33).

Contrasting starkly with the persecuted church in Smyrna was the church in Sardis:

The church of Sardis was completely untroubled from without and from within. The church of Sardis was at peace -- but it was the peace of the dead. [Barclay 72]

Why do we not see what the book of Hebrews so plainly reveals about our Lord’s way to the throne? ... *He learned obedience from the things He SUFFERED* (Heb 5:8). The Lord also un-learned **self-reliance**: *In the days of His flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death’ – Heb 5:7*

The most common designation of Jesus in Revelation – by far – is **not** Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, even Christ, but LAMB. When the saints come forth from their tribulation on earth and eternally praise Him before the



**Fenton J.A. Hort**

Revelation – “emphatically the book of martyrdom”



heavenly throne, it is NOT as the Lord of Glory with blazing eyes and voice of thunder, but as **the lamb in the midst of the throne** (Rev 7:17). They meet Him, and we see Him too, as the LAMB, in Whose blood their robes were washed. We have, in Revelation chapter 7 and again in the final chapters 21 and 22, the perfect pictorial expression of the supreme paradox of the CROSS. As Leviticus, the book of sacrifice, is the central book of the Torah, so in Revelation, in the image of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, we are taught that sacrifice, struggle and suffering are at the centre of the creation and are the secret of true conquest:

A history of the world in cipher (which some believe the Revelation to be) is cold comfort in comparison with a vision of the exalted Christ. The whole book concerns him. Nobody can read it without gaining a clearer view of him. [Stott 10]

It is emphatically the book of martyrdom ... The cry of the souls of the slaughtered under the altar (6:9f), "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood of them that dwell on the earth?" is the undertone throughout. [Hort xx]

**PRAYER: Lord of Glory, Lamb of God, give us grace to see that is by sacrifice and suffering – not by success, not by the sword – that we conquer the world. We offer therefore ourselves a living sacrifice to thee. Amen.**

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## Titles of Christ in the Apocalypse

Jesus Christ	1:1,2,5
Word of God	1:2 (?); 19:13
Faithful (& true) Witness	1:5; 3:14
Firstborn from the dead	1:5
Prince of the kings of the earth	1:5
Jesus	1:9(2); 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10(2); 20:4; 22:16
(our) Lord	1:10; 11:8,(15?); 14:13
Son of man	1:13; 14:14
First and the Last	1:17; 2:8
Living One	1:18; 22:13
Son of God	2:18
He who searches minds & hearts	2:23
He who has the 7 spirits of God & the 7 stars	3:1
Amen	3:14
Beginning of the creation of God	3:14
Lion of the tribe of Judah	5:5
Root (& Offspring) of David	5:5; 22:16
Lamb	5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,3,5,7,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4(2),10; 15:3; 17:14(2); 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3
Christ	11:15; 12:10; 20:4,6
Lord of Lords	17:14; 19:16
King of Kings	17:14; 19:16
Faithful and True	19:11
Beginning and the End	22:13
Alpha and the Omega	22:13
Morning Star	22:16
Lord Jesus	22:20,21

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## Unbeliever Gibbon vindicates the Apocalypse ... mosques where great churches once stood!

In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana or the church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy, or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect – a column in a scene of ruins – a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same. [**Edward Gibbon** *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* chapter lxiv]

Life for Smyrna, honour and dignity for Philadelphia, are promised -- not for a residue amid the unfaithful, as at Thyatira or Sardis, but for the church in both cities. It is an interesting coincidence that those are the two cities which have been the bulwark and the glory of Christian power in the country since it became Mohammedan; they are the two places where a Christian flag floated latest over a free and powerful city, and where even in slavery the Christians preserved cohesion among themselves and real influence among the Turkish conquerors. [**Ramsay** 402-403]