



# Foundation Papers

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For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:11

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## Some Forgotten Truths Lost Along the Road to Laodicea by Grant Kaufmann

### Introduction

Having lately returned from a second visit among some of God's people in North America, after an absence of a decade, it has come to me to share some observations and mention some Scripture teaching which, although once well known, seems to have somewhere fallen by the wayside. I visited principally among the more conservative elements of the Quakers and Anabaptists, so I will not even presume to speak regarding the situation in the "worldly churches." The panorama which I observed reminded me more than anything of what we read of the last years of the Mennonites in Russia, before the outbreak of the civil war. The churches there were full; the Gospel was being preached (at least to their own, if no longer, to any great extent, to the world); many godly customs were maintained, even preserved with pride; but at the same time many had grown wealthy through their businesses and the appreciation of their lands; their children were going to the cities, attending the universities and learning the ways of the "better" classes of the country. A good deal of secret unbelief lay hidden under the smooth surface of pious habits, early learned. After several generations of hard work, under the rule of a generally benign government, there was an atmosphere of prosperity, comfort and self-satisfaction. A people who came as immigrants and refugees at last felt they could enjoy the

benefits which the world accords to the successful. And when, in the end, the time of testing came, they were not ready. Their descendants are my neighbors here in South America, and they still bear, as a people, the psychological scars of that time. Now America, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is not the same place as was Russia at the beginning of the twentieth, so I do not necessarily propose that a similar cataclysm awaits our brothers in North America as befell those in Europe, but it is well to remember that "our God is a consuming fire" and "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth" (Heb 12:6, 29).

### **Strangers and Pilgrims?**

The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews gives us a beautiful panorama of the people of faith. It begins "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We are told (v.6) "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." How diligently are we seeking God? Are we seeking Him for earthly reward? Are we content with an earthly country, when the apostle plainly says (v.16), "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city." What city is that? I once heard a Cuban pastor say, "When I was young we always heard that paradise is in heaven, but now the young people are telling me it is in Miami." I have been in Miami, and believe me, it is no paradise, although for one recently arrived from the cane fields of Communist Cuba, perhaps it may appear so for a while. Is the same dynamic at work among our people? Are we deluded by the glitter and ease of modern America, instead of pressing on toward that Heavenly City? Is God ashamed to be called our God? Are we now content to be called the sons of Pharaoh's daughter or will we like Moses (v.25-26) choose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Now no one likes that business of "sheepskins and goatskins" and "dens and caves in the earth" (v.37-38), but it has not been so many years since our brethren in Christ suffered these things, and in some parts of the world still do. Surely we pray for them, but are we willing to join them in their afflictions if God so ordains? Are we so intent on becoming "worthies" in this world that we shrink from taking our place among those "of whom the world was not worthy"(v.38)?

### **Serving Two Masters?**

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Which master will we serve? Jesus says we can't serve both. We live in a very different world than that of the first century. In today's world, basically no one lives without money. I know people who try and people who come a

lot closer than I do, but I don't think anybody in our world can exist altogether outside the money economy. Do we throw up our hands then and say Jesus was wrong? Let's be honest with ourselves. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be. Is our heart with God, our treasure laid up in heaven, and our earthly wealth simply to meet the needs of our families for "food and raiment"? Or do we, perhaps, take some pride in our heap of dust or think that it offers us security? To what lengths will we go to defend it? Do we trust in God or in "uncertain riches," and have we forgotten just how uncertain those riches really are? Will we repent of our idolatry, or will we wait for God to show us (1Tim. 6:17)? Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; Do we enjoy the world in which we live as God's gift or do we chew it up and spit it out to gain the things of this age (1 Cor. 7:31)? And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. We know the fashion of this world passes away, and more rapidly all the time. So why do we pay it any mind? Why do we spend our money for that which is not bread and our labour for that which satisfieth not (see Isa.55)?

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Let these things be our daily bread and we need not fear that God will call us fools on the day that our life is required of us. But godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6-11; also see Luke 12:16-21; 1 Tim. 6:6).

### **At Home in Babylon?**

The figure of “Babylon” is used in Scripture to represent a lot more than simply the ancient kingdom of Chaldea. Babylon, the kingdom of this world, is the antithesis of Jerusalem, the kingdom of God. It is the land of captivity, the seat of Antichrist.

Where did it all begin? Consider Gen. 11:1-6, 9:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Do you see what they did that so displeased God? It is the same old deception which the serpent pulled on Eve: "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods (Gen. 3:5). Be as gods; build a tower that reaches to heaven; make a name for ourselves; snatch at equality with God! The created in the place of the Creator! The ancient dream of Lucifer! "...This they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (v.6).

Learn to burn brick and mortar it with bitumen? Hardly a technology that should worry the One who created the universe out of nothing. The problem is not the technology, but what men intended to do with it: set their own agenda; cooperate and work their own program! Human technology has come a long way since the tower of Babel. Today we can split atoms and splice genes: a big jump from bricks and slime. But our heart-problem remains the same. Technology is not evil in itself. God made us creative beings after His own image. Our problem is that while our technological capacity has advanced enormously, our moral capacity has advanced not one iota. When we come to think that the works of our own hands and minds can make us autonomous beings without need of our Creator, that we can build societies and systems that will provide for our needs, without God in the center, we are right back at Babel. And God doesn't like it any better now than He did then.

So now let us jump from the beginning of time to the end; from Genesis to Revelation; and see what that Babylonian mindset looks like when it is full blown and has become a world system, and what God intends to do about it:

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine;

and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchant-dise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate (Rev. 18:1-19).

So, a society which has glorified itself and lived luxuriously; where all the good things of this world are available for a price, even to men's souls; which possesses all things dainty and goodly, fine clothes and great buildings; which made all the world rich through her trade. Sounds like a modern economist's idea of paradise, doesn't it, and yet God says He will destroy it. The first century Christians identified this prophesy with Rome. My Russian friends insist that it represents the USA. Perhaps it is an empire yet to rise. In the end it is not so important, I think, that we identify the place as that we identify the ideology, the mind-set of Babylon, wherever and whenever it appears. For God says "come out of her, my people". "Be not part-takers of her sins, lest you share in her plagues"(see v.4).

"Come out" where have we heard those words before? 2 Corinthians 6:17? Let's look at the whole section:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

This is the Apostle Paul talking to the Church, to us. Where will we take our stand? Yoked with unbelievers building the great new society of this world, or separated to God, living in love with one another and modeling the values of the Kingdom for the world to see? Do we put our trust in “Great Babylon” with her promise of prosperity here and now, or with our Heavenly Father who calls us as sons and daughters into His heavenly kingdom?

### **Gain the Whole World?**

“And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:34-37)

I am a businessman. I have spent my life thinking in terms of cost/benefit/risk. Here Jesus lays those issues on the line in their ultimate sense. What does it cost to follow Jesus? What can we expect from Him if we do? Suppose His offer seems too costly to us. The world makes its offer too. What do we gain? What do we lose? And with what will we buy back our soul if we make the wrong choice?

The worldly churches say we can have both. Can we believe them? Jesus said a man cannot serve two masters. Our forefathers said He was right and separated themselves from the worldly churches. Did they make a mistake? The world has upped its offer considerably since the days of Menno and Fox. The sheer volume of stuff which the world now offers us staggers the imagination, and there is no end in sight, except for the inconvenient fact of our own death.

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun” (Eccl.9:5-6).

Jesus' offer remains the same as it has always been: follow Me; take up the cross, and inherit the Kingdom; life eternal in the presence of God, now and forever. I believe it was Jim Elliot who, when criticized for leaving behind education and promise in America to carry the gospel to some stone age Indians in South America said, “He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Jim Elliot died a young martyr under a hail of arrows before those Indians understood anything of why he came there. I suppose many today would say

he was indeed a fool for making the choice he did. What do we say? What does the Scripture say?

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (1 Cor. 1:27-30).

“Great Babylon” rolls on, flesh glorying in his sight, always a-building. Bigger, better, higher, faster - always holding out the promise of the golden age, just beyond the horizon. The schools teach it; the media parrots it; the people repeat it to one another. The young must catch the vision! Every child can be President, or at least CEO of a great corporation! How does it find its way among us, who eschew TV and public schools? It circulates in the air like a miasmatic vapor, oozes under the door, and seeps in the cracks: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”( Eph. 6:12). The World claims life is a game, and money is the score-card; A man’s life consists in the multitude of the things which he possesses.

The rats run and the wheel turns until they are too old to run anymore and then are given a nice comfortable retirement (if the stock market doesn't crash in the mean time). And if there are problems - nuclear melt downs, drugs, terrorists, multi-drug resistant bacteria, dead seas and poisoned air, and on and on: well these are just isolated situations and with a few billion more dollars we'll have them fixed up. And people think religion is "pie in the sky"! Not many people are still around who remember "the war which will end all war," but I am old enough to remember the "light at the end of the tunnel" in Vietnam, and when nuclear energy was going to give us "electricity too cheap to meter," and we were going to live in "the leisure society" where efficiencies of scale and specialization were going to reduce the hours needed for work to the point where we could all take it easy and "fulfill our potential." Does anyone else remember "supply side economics" (aka voodoo economics, aka borrow and spend)? I doubt if the world is done paying the bill on that one yet. Isn't it about time someone spoke the truth about this scam? Surprise: Someone already has:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal.6:7-8).

God will not give His glory to another. Let’s put it in plain language: Materialism is a

fraud. Man was not made to be a "consumer"; that's what a locust is. We were made the image and likeness of God and really can't "live by bread alone"(see Matt. 4:4). Who should know this better than the church of Jesus Christ? Let's preach it good and loud so the world can hear. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19). "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Bondage or freedom? Flesh or Spirit? Life or Death? These are the issues we must keep before the world and before one another. Jesus is not offering "window dressing" to a life lived according to the values of this world; He is offering a whole new reality which is fundamentally at odds with this world.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:6-9; 14-18).

"Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ! If we suffer with Him, then we are glorified together! He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:32)? OK, Babylon; I don't think you can top that offer; and anyway - you lie. Don't call me, I'll call you (or not). Adios.

### **Where Now the Promise?**

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 13:31-33; 24:44-46).

For 20 centuries the promise of Christ's return to gather His own from the four winds.

energized and gave hope to God's people. It is still that way here in Bolivia. Mention the Lord's return in any group of believers and people will eagerly ask for the details. Do it in North America and you can just about hear the snickering.

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:1, 3-4).

Are perhaps those who are so comfortable in this world no longer interested in a "new heaven and a new earth"? James tells us that the love of the world is enmity to God (4:4)? Have we become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4)? If so, it is no surprise that we would like to push away the day when Christ will "reward every one according to his works" (Matthew 16:27) as far into the future as possible, or spiritualize it out of existence altogether. Certainly Christ is here among us today by His spirit, according to His promise: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20) and we should never stop preaching this - it is what gives us the light to live today. But for the poor, the persecuted, the oppressed, and even the simply spiritually downcast, nothing quickens the blood and infuses hope to the soul like those wonderful prophecies of Christ's triumphant return. Jesus is coming!

When He comes, in what state will He find us?

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

Are we making ready for the wedding supper of the Lamb? We are supposed to be His bride - remember? Will we be without "spot or wrinkle" or do we think we can cover our blemishes with cosmetics at the last minute?

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:8-10).

When the door is shut, it is shut for eternity. Let's be honest, brothers; are we ready? Are our churches ready? Will we be counted with the wise or the foolish?

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of

darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thes. 5:1-6).

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

### **Disciples of All Nations?**

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

We think of ourselves, among all those who carry the name of Christians, as those who most scrupulously try to keep the commands of Christ and live by a Biblical standard, and yet how many of our churches have simply lost this clear commandment of our Lord? How did it happen? No one was more zealous to proclaim the gospel to any and all than the early Quakers and Anabaptists. Yet today most feel like if they can communicate the truths of the faith to their own children, and perhaps the occasional seeker who gets up his nerve to seek us out, then surely we have done all that can be expected of us. Is it so?

Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:12-13).

But sinners are so messy, so disagreeable. And worse yet, they often speak other languages and eat disgusting things. They are a bad influence on our children, too. Well, how do you think Peter, an observant Jew, felt when God showed him all those unclean beasts and told him to eat? And then to go to the house of a Gentile, a Roman, a centurion, for heaven sake. You can't get more disgusting than that! God had to show him three times before he got the message, but at least he got it, because if he hadn't, no one of Gentile blood (You? Me?) would be in the Kingdom today. How many times will we make God show us before we get the point? The world is sick; sick unto death. Who has the Great Physician commanded to bring the healing balm of the Gospel? His Church. Us.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:19-20).

There it is again, in case you missed it the first time. Us; to all nations; with Christ; until the end of the world. Can't get much plainer than that. God wouldn't have had to do it that way. He could have called everyone He wanted supernaturally, just as he called Paul

on the road to Damascus. But that is not the way He chose to do it.

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:21-24).

Are we wiser than God or is it for us to instruct the Almighty? Maybe He didn't think of these problems? And what is more, because we, who (with this one glaring exception), do a pretty good job of teaching the observance of Christ's commands have been slack in our calling, others, who ignore every command of Christ except this one, have filled the world with their "cheap grace" teachings and left millions farther from the Kingdom than they were when they simply lived in ignorance.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt.10:16-20).

Buck up, brothers. It's hard work, but it can be done. You will have to give up a lot of your illusions and learn to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." We're pretty good at the "harmless as doves" part, but the "wise as serpents" part will cost you to learn. At a meeting I attended with a group of Bolivian elders, we discussed that verse. These guys know about snakes. Bolivia has a lot of them. I imagine Palestine did too. A snake is not very smart, so what quality was Jesus trying to bring out here? A snake always keeps his eyes open (he has no eyelids) - no one puts anything over on him. Interesting, no? Go. Don't be afraid or easily discouraged. Learn to walk by faith, and the Spirit of our Father will speak and work in you.

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord" (Matthew 10:24-25).

### **Philadelphia or Laodicea?**

In the second and third chapters of Revelation, Christ showed the Apostle John the

condition of the churches of Asia - not as they saw themselves, but as God saw them. God sees us too, and has given us these "thumbnail sketches" as models to compare ourselves.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

It is a good exercise: after all, none of us wants to be found reprobates! The whole discourse is full of meat. Study it in detail and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you measure up.

For the moment, Let's just look at a few descriptive verses from the last two: Philadelphia and Laodicea, in their way the best and the worst.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name (Rev. 3:7-8).

We may have only a little strength, certainly compared to the great institutions of our day. Have we kept His word and not denied His Name? How can it be done? (2 Cor. 12:9) And he said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Christ did it for Paul. Remember all he went through for the sake of the Gospel? No comfy life he had! Christ can do it for you too. Trust Him.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev.3:10-11).

Remember the hour of temptation? Remember the brothers in Russia? Remember the three Hebrew children in the court of the king of Babylon? Remember Joseph in the Egyptian prison? Remember the 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai? This is a promise worth claiming! Will it be ours? Hold fast till He comes. Keep His patience. Count the present sufferings (whatever they may be) nothing compared to the glory which will be revealed in us! (see Rom 8:18)

OK, now let's consider Laodicea:

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:14-16).

Lukewarm? Christ says He would rather see you cold, dead. At least then your death would

be obvious and you would not bring dishonor to His name. Let God kindle the refiner's fire in your life. It will burn off the dross. It may not feel good, but in the end you will shine like the morning star and Christ will not spew you out of His mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:17-18).

This description is for you in North America. Take it to heart. The riches of this world perish. The riches of Christ's Kingdom do not. Where is your treasure? Where is your heart?

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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" (Rev.3:19-20).

Ever heard this scripture quoted as an invitation for unbelievers? It's not. It is for the church. Not walking anymore as Jesus walked? Cold? Formal? Meetinghouse full and Jesus locked outside? Feeling His rebuke and chastening? Open the door! Then you'll have a real communion!

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev.3:21-22).

Which will it be then: Philadelphia or Laodicea? Most of the churches of this age have chosen the latter. Jesus is knocking; calling for His bride. Have we lost our first love? Repent, return and do the first works. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain.... Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent" (Rev. 3).

### Conclusion

Well there is my little sermon. I hope I have stirred you up to think about some important issues. If I have offended anyone or said anything which does not accord with the doctrines of your particular church, please forgive me, or better still, show me scripture if you think I am wrong. I want to follow Jesus 100 percent. I hope we all do. Let "iron sharpen iron" (Prov. 27:17). Let's be honest. Things are not as they ought to be with the Lord's people. My own people (the Conservative Quakers) have dithered around for so long, halting between two opinions, that they have withered away to just about nothing. Many of you who receive this perhaps still have full meetinghouses and younger generations coming on. Well, "prophesy to those bones, and say unto them, O

dry bones, hear the word of the Lord" (Ezek. 37:4). Don't squander what you have. Empty tradition is not going to stand up much longer. It is time to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Thes. 5:21). God is moving in the earth. Things will be shaken to their roots. Let Christ show you what is good and hold it fast, and what is not, let it go, so your light may shine as noonday. For too long we have "strained at gnats" of doctrine and practice, while far too many of God's people have swallowed whole the "camel" of a Babylonian world-view. I urge you, brothers, in the strongest terms, and especially those of you in the ministry: administer the emetic while there is still time. I have given you here a sample dose. There is plenty more where that came from. God, too, has His world-view. Jesus modeled it for us. All the scriptures, both old and new testaments make it clear, also the writings of the reformers and the Church fathers, and the histories of the saints. In fact, almost any Christian writings prior to about 1910 work from these assumptions. If you can't see it, ask Jesus for some of that "eye salve." The whole complex of thought which we, today, have come to accept as "normal" is, in fact, a thing of yesterday: the product of the explosion of wealth which occurred in the twentieth century; a skyscraper built on a foundation of sand. But that is another sermon for another day and audience. To you, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, suffice it to say: See that you build on the foundation of Christ "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11), and see too to how you are building, for "every man's work shall be made manifest...and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is"(1 Cor.3:13). It is my prayer that, when all the straw and stubble of this age has been consumed, we each may find, gleaming among the ashes of our works, at least a few precious stones to cast down before the Eternal Throne. May God bless you all. Farewell.

## **WHEN YOU'VE BEEN OBEDIENT AND THE DARKNESS DESCENDS by Rebecca Hein**

When darkness descends, and you've been obedient and therefore have done nothing to bring it on, there may be nothing you can do to dispel it. Some trials hit us out of nowhere, and the only way to get through them is by inward waiting and prayer.

Yet, at other times, when we are beset by trails and temptations, there is something we can do about it. Asking God for direction and then doing what we're told can wipe away the problem.

Recently I've struggled with both the darkness that nothing can dispel and the trials that yield to obedience. The most important outcome of the latter was a moment of insight where God showed me that a decades-old loss had led me to significant gain.

Furthermore, that particular gain could not have occurred without the prior major loss. In this moment of communion with the Lord, I realized that the same was probably true of current problems. Somehow, in a way that I could neither imagine nor predict, I saw that ongoing major losses will produce an outcome I'll both need and want.

Seeing this has helped me deal with my circumstances and has also made me grateful for that which God is in the process of arranging. I've seen from His past work in my life that future blessings can flow from stressful events that I can't possibly understand at the time.

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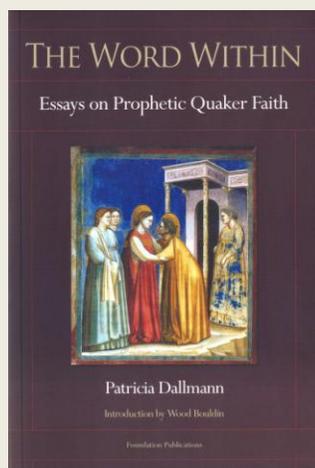
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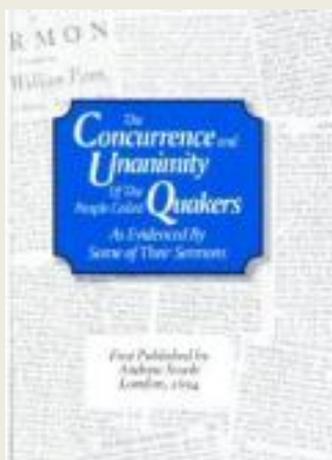


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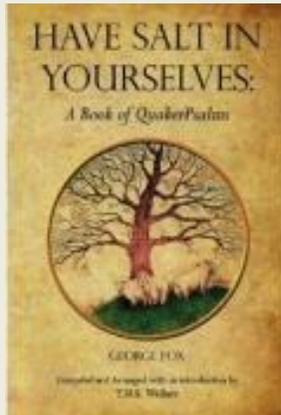
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Mind that which is eternal, which gathers your hearts together up to the Lord and lets you see that you are written in one another's heart.

– George Fox