

## The Church at Ephesus, Revelation 2. 1-7 – Part 2.

### PICKING UP THE THREADS

This is the second part of my comments on the letter to the church in Ephesus in the Book of Revelation chapter 2.

In the opening section of 'Part 1', I said our study would be structured 'around the following seven headings:

- (i) **the Church addressed through its angel;**
- (ii) **the Charity of the Lord Jesus**
- (iii) **the Commendation given;**
- (iv) **the Criticism levelled;**
- (v) **the Counsel provided;**
- (vi) **the Call for attention; and**
- (vii) **the Compensation promised'.**



In Part 1, we considered the first three headings. Now, therefore, we come to heading number 4.

### 4. THE CRITICISM LEVELLED

#### A serious heart complaint.

From an external standpoint, the Ephesian church had come through its spiritual medical examination with a clean bill of health. 'From an external standpoint', I say, because, alas, unknown to itself, this seemingly model church was suffering from *an extremely serious heart disease*.



This was a condition so serious that the heavenly Physician warned the church bluntly that this condition endangered its very life – that, unless they did something about it quickly,<sup>1</sup> it would prove fatal: 'I ... will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent'.

#### 'When love has gone'.

With one single sentence, the Lord Jesus casts a black cloud over everything He had said earlier: 'But I have against you that you have (not 'lost' but) left your first love'.<sup>2</sup> 'You have abandoned',<sup>3</sup> the Lord is saying, 'the love you had at first'.<sup>4</sup>

The Lord detects one life-threatening flaw in this 'active and valiant for truth' church; He knows that He (a) has their *heads* and (b) has their *hands* but that He (c) hasn't their *hearts*. They gladly render the Lord Jesus *the obedience of a faithful servant* but they deny Him that which He prizes far, far more ... *the love of a bride*.<sup>5</sup>

'Here is disclosed the root of Church and individual failure: heart departure from Christ ... Things may appear outwardly fair and promising, and none but an Omniscient eye may see the lack inwardly, coldness of heart to Christ ... The loss of virgin love is a serious matter, and not to be regarded as a mere "somewhat," as in the Authorised Version'.<sup>6</sup>

And the Saviour makes it very clear that all the activity and patient suffering in the world can never make up for the lack of inward devotion – for the lack of true affection for Him.<sup>7</sup>

#### 'The love of your espousals'.

In 2 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul describes the making of new converts as 'betrothing' them to Christ. 'I am jealous over you with godly jealousy', he writes, 'for I have espoused ('betrothed') you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'.<sup>8</sup> It has been well said, that, 'The

object of the true evangelist ... is a present result in a people ... saved not only for heaven by-and-by, but for the heart of Christ now'.<sup>9</sup>

And those words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 remind me of something which Jeremiah wrote long before, concerning the time when the Lord had brought the children of Israel safely through the Red Sea.

Jeremiah tells us that God spoke of that time as 'the love of your espousals' ('your love as a bride', that is): 'I remember you', the Lord said, 'the kindness ('the devotion'<sup>10</sup>) of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness ... Israel was holiness to the Lord, the firstfruits of His increase'.<sup>11</sup> Israel had been brought into the joy of complete deliverance from the power of the enemy and from the land of oppression.

At that moment, the Lord Himself had been everything to them— their 'strength', their 'song', and their 'salvation'.<sup>12</sup> His victory and glory, His thoughts and purposes, had filled both their hearts and their song.<sup>13</sup> They had been absorbed, not in any way with *themselves*, but with *Himself*.

But, alas, that 'honeymoon period' did not last long, and the first flush of bridal affection and devotion soon passed for Israel.

'Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?' God asks through Jeremiah, adding sorrowfully, 'yet *my people* have forgotten me days without number'.<sup>14</sup> But, although His people had long since forgotten Him, *the Lord* had not forgotten that brief period when He had been everything to their hearts. 'I remember', He says ... *more than eight hundred years later*.<sup>15</sup>

### The church at Ephesus and love for the Lord Jesus.

And here at Ephesus we find a local church (apparently in perfect working order, and demonstrating admirable faithfulness and spiritual energy) which now lacks the one thing which alone satisfies the heart of Christ.

Oh, yes, the Ephesian church continues to 'hate' the right things,<sup>16</sup> but, sadly, they no longer love the right Person!

Many years before, in a letter which Paul wrote from Ephesus, he speaks, in his farewell greetings, of people who do not love the Lord Jesus<sup>17</sup> and, in a letter which Paul wrote to Ephesus, he speaks, in his farewell greetings, of people who do.<sup>18</sup>

Now, the Lord Himself needs to write to the same church about people who once did love Him, but who no longer do so ... and they are the people!

### The church at Ephesus and the church at Thyatira.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the churches in Ephesus and in Thyatira in Revelation chapter 2.

'Both are commended for their "endurance".<sup>19</sup> Both letters refer to the church's first works.<sup>20</sup> To both churches, the Lord says, "But I have against you".<sup>21</sup>

Yet there is one striking contrast between them. **Ephesus** is praised repeatedly for its zeal for truth,<sup>22</sup> but is condemned for its lack of love.<sup>23</sup>

Over against this, **Thyatira** is praised for its love (and is the only church that is),<sup>24</sup> but is woefully deficient by way of concern for sound doctrine<sup>25</sup>.<sup>26</sup>

### The church at Ephesus and the church at Thessalonica.

The condition of the church of Ephesus here has often been contrasted with the condition of the church at Thessalonica as described by Paul in his first letter. There, he wrote of the 'work of faith', and the 'toil of love', and the 'endurance of hope' displayed by the then recently converted Thessalonians.<sup>27</sup>

In one sense, the apostle had commended the very same things as our Lord now commends at Ephesus. The same practices and externals were in evidence at Ephesus as they had been at Thessalonica almost half a century before.<sup>28</sup>

And yet how very different things really were.

In the case of **Thessalonica**:

- (i) the church's work was produced by faith;
- (ii) the church's labour and toil was motivated by love; and
- (iii) the church's patient endurance was inspired by hope.

Whereas, in the case of **Ephesus**:

- (i) although the work was there, the Lord makes no mention of any faith;
- (ii) although the toil was there, the Lord makes no mention of any love; and
- (iii) although the endurance was there, the Lord makes no mention of any hope.

To no small extent, all that is left at Ephesus is a shell.



### The church at Ephesus and me.

The danger is ever real that, by my taking my eyes off the Lord Jesus and His boundless love for me, I too cease to love Him as I once did – and as I ought.

Perhaps I am not altogether alone in having (all too often) to employ the words of William Cowper:<sup>29</sup>

Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.

F. A. Tatford hit the nail right on the head when he wrote:

'The essential need of the present day is not, in the first instance, a greater diligence in Christian service or a fuller sense of responsibility to the church and the world, but rather a fresh realisation of the love of Christ'.<sup>30</sup>

Truthfully, that goes for me!

## 5. THE COUNSEL PROVIDED

In grace, the heavenly Physician prescribes three spiritual medications to deal with their serious spiritual heart condition.

There would need to be three distinct stages on their return journey. They needed:

- (i) to remember,
- (ii) to repent, and
- (iii) to repeat.

### (i) To remember.

'Remember', He says, 'from where you have fallen'.<sup>31</sup>

We noted earlier that the Lord Himself remembers the 'first love' of His people and delights to call it to mind.<sup>32</sup> And He has every right (i) to count upon its being a precious memory to them also and (ii) to count upon the fact that they will be moved to say (in words which He puts into the mouth of Israel in a coming day), 'I will go and return ... for then was it better with me than now'.<sup>33</sup>

In his (much earlier<sup>34</sup>) letter 'to the saints which are at Ephesus', the apostle Paul had also called upon them to 'remember'. But, then, Paul had summoned them to 'remember' what and where they had been before they were converted.<sup>35</sup>

Many years ago, I read the autobiography of Mr Henry Broadhurst, who became a Member of Parliament in 1880 and who served in a ministerial post as Under Secretary in the (then) Home Department. In his early life, Mr Broadhurst had been a very capable stonemason and had helped build the Clock Tower of the Houses of Parliament. In his autobiography he noted that, when he first entered Parliament as an MP:

'Especially did my memory recall the months I had spent working on the very Government buildings which I was about to enter as a Minister of the Crown'.<sup>36</sup>

Henry Pickering reported of Mr Broadhurst in later life:

'An interesting piece of furniture in his home was a cabinet with the mallet and chisels which he used as a mason, ever reminding him of what he was'.<sup>37</sup>

I am unable to corroborate Mr Pickering's statement but I know for sure that it is a most healthy exercise for you and me to remember what we once were – and, indeed, would still be – apart from God's saving grace.

It is always good for God's people to 'remember' the 'rock' from which they have been hewn, and the 'quarry' from which they have been dug.<sup>38</sup> To 'remember', that is, **'the depth from which they have been lifted'**.

But here, in contrast to the apostle Paul, the Lord Jesus calls on the church at Ephesus to 'remember', not 'the depth from which they had been lifted', but **'the height from which they had fallen'**.

Dan Crawford (one-time missionary to Angola and author of the missionary classic, 'Thinking Black') comments:

'They are fallen from the heights of Love! If they fall, what a fall, for in Paul's Epistle [to the Ephesians] are "heights" indeed!<sup>39</sup> ... "Now", says the Lord of love, with the jealous eyes like a flame of fire, "I have one long debit against you that consumes all your credit". Poor insolvent Ephesus! All the coin of her spiritual commerce is revealed to be spurious. It never saw the mint of Love'.<sup>40</sup>

And, possibly, the very memory of the height from which they had fallen would kindle afresh the desire to scale those heights again!

**(ii) To repent<sup>41</sup> and (iii) To repeat.**

'Repent', the Lord says<sup>42</sup> (presumably calling on them to repent of their present spiritual coldness and of having abandoned their 'first love') and 'do the works you did at first' ... do again, that is, the kind of works you did when they were prompted and motivated by your first love, works truly 'worthy of repentance'.<sup>43</sup>

'Repentance' had formed, of course, a key element of Paul's gospel testimony at Ephesus some 40 years before.<sup>44</sup> But the demand for repentance and turning from sin is by no means confined to non-Christians.<sup>45</sup>

'Do the works you did at first' ... 'The Ephesian church was not lacking in works, but the motivation for the works had changed and was now adversely affecting the results'.<sup>46</sup>

'Not the quantity, but the quality, of ... works was now other and worse than once it had been'.<sup>47</sup>

**The need for an urgent response.**

'But if not, *I am coming* to you'; the very tense used by the Lord stresses to the angel<sup>48</sup> that this coming was imminent, thereby impressing upon him (and, of course, upon the church) the urgency<sup>49</sup> of a positive response, because, if there was no positive response, the judgment would be incredibly severe; the 'one like the Son of man' would 'remove'<sup>50</sup> his (the angel's) lampstand from its place.

In that the seven lampstands<sup>51</sup> 'are' the seven churches,<sup>52</sup> this meant that the Lord would take away the church – that it was doomed and would cease to exist as a testimony for Him.<sup>53</sup>

Ephesus was one of two cities in Asia Minor known in the first century as the 'luminaries', the 'lights', of Asia.<sup>54</sup> The other city was Smyrna. Our Lord wrote to the local churches in both of these cities, but, unlike the spiritual 'light' beaming brightly from the church at Smyrna, that of the church at Ephesus was at serious risk of being extinguished.

## The sequel.

It seems that our Lord's message and warning were taken to heart. For, about fifteen years later, Ignatius (who had been arrested and was on his way to Rome to face trial and, in the event, execution) wrote to the (still existent) church of Ephesus, commending them for both their Christian qualities and their continuing rejection of all forms of false teaching:

'No heresy has a home among you; nor, indeed, do you so much as listen to any one if he speak of ought else save concerning Jesus Christ in truth ... indeed you are not deceived, inasmuch as you are wholly devoted to God ... I have heard of some who have passed through you from Syria, bringing evil doctrine; whom you did not allow to sow among you, but stopped your ears, that you might not receive those things which were sown by them'.<sup>55</sup>

We noted earlier that the tenderness and kindness of our Lord was such that He would not end His letter with criticism and censure, but returned to a note of praise and commendation.<sup>56</sup> Here, in verse 6, his words, 'But this you have', clearly stands over against His earlier words, 'But I have against you'.<sup>57</sup>

For, although they had left their first love, they had not left their hatred for evil. To that degree, they shamed the church at Pergamum who openly tolerated the teachings of the Nicolaitans.<sup>58</sup> And, whoever the Nicolaitans were, in the Lord's letter to that church, their doctrine is compared to and connected with that of Balaam,<sup>59</sup> who advocated both (a) eating things offered to idols<sup>60</sup> and (b) sexual immorality.<sup>61</sup>

In that connection, I note that Irenaeus (writing towards the close of the second century) remarked that 'The Nicolaitans ...lead lives of unrestrained indulgence'.<sup>62</sup>

The Lord Jesus makes it clear that, in their 'hatred' of such practices, the church at Ephesus was marching in close step with Him: 'you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate'.<sup>63</sup>

## 6. THE CALL FOR ATTENTION

Echoing His frequent exhortations when here in the flesh,<sup>64</sup> the Lord issues His call, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'.<sup>65</sup>

Individual members of the church at Ephesus are exhorted to heed what the Spirit of God<sup>66</sup> was saying, not only to the church at Ephesus, but to all the churches.

Although for convenience we speak of 'the seven letters to the churches in Asia', neither the word 'letter' nor the word 'letters' occurs in the Book of Revelation. The seven so-called 'letters' were not to be sent separately to the seven churches. The Book of Revelation was only ever intended to be read as a whole; and 'the seven letters' simply form part of it. What the 'one like the Son of man' says to one, He says to all.<sup>67</sup>

The exhortation to 'hear', rather than to 'read', clearly indicates that the book was meant to be read aloud publicly.<sup>68</sup> Hence, the opening beatitude of the book:

'Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written in it'.<sup>69</sup>

But the exhortation here, 'let him hear', represents a personal challenge and emphasises my responsibility to apply the Lord's message, not to other people, but to *myself*. I dare not attempt to evade the force of what the Spirit says by misusing the request once submitted to the Saviour, 'Master, *speak to my brother!*'<sup>70</sup>

I confess I had to smile at a quotation which I came across from a (then) famous preacher of the nineteenth century:

'The churches of the land are sprinkled all over with bald-headed old sinners whose hair has been worn off by the constant friction of countless sermons that have been aimed at them and glanced off and hit the man in the pew behind'.<sup>71</sup>

And then, finally, comes the reward and 'compensation promised' by the Lord.

## 7. THE COMPENSATION PROMISED

### The overcomer.

'To him who overcomes'. I take this expression to refer, not to a member of some elite band of super-spiritual Christians but to all believers.<sup>72</sup>

John wrote elsewhere: 'Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'<sup>73</sup>

Again, towards the close of the Book of Revelation, writing of the eternal glory, he says, 'He that overcomes shall inherit these things'.<sup>74</sup>

I conclude, therefore, that 'the promises to the "overcomer" in Revelation 2 and 3 are made to every true Christian'.<sup>75</sup>

### **'To eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God'.**

And 'to him who overcomes' at Ephesus is promised something far better than either:

(i) the food dished out at the idol banquets frequented by the Nicolaitans.<sup>76</sup>

'In each letter the character of the promise ... corresponded to the character of faithfulness displayed. Those who had abstained from the idol meats and sinful dainties of the world, as offered by Nicolaitanism, were promised a corresponding reward or compensation. They would eat of the tree of life'.<sup>77</sup>

or

(ii) the fruit from the date palm.

'The date-palm was the characteristic symbol of Artemis on the coinage (of Ephesus)<sup>78</sup> and was regarded by the worshippers of the goddess as 'the tree of life'.<sup>79</sup>

Rather, the overcomer is promised that he will 'eat of the (real) tree of life, which is (not in the garden surrounding the temple of Artemis, which garden was called the 'paradise of Artemis',<sup>80</sup> but) 'in the paradise of God'.

Indeed, the overcomer is promised something far more wonderful even than eating of 'the tree of life' which once stood in Eden, in the *earthly* 'paradise of God',<sup>81</sup> access to which man lost after his 'fall':<sup>82</sup>

'At the east of the garden ('paradise', the Greek Old Testament) of Eden, the Lord God placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life'.<sup>83</sup>

'This first of the sevenfold promises to the victors carries us back to the earliest pages of Scripture ... Whatever Adam threw away Christ brings back. "There shall never be one lost good". But there is more than that. Paradise is better than Eden'.<sup>84</sup>

And no cherubim will ever bar the way to 'the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God'.

'No longer flame or sword shall guard  
The gate by Jesus' hand unbarred'.<sup>85</sup>

Truly (in the words of the last blessing pronounced in the Book of Revelation):

'Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right ... to the (heavenly) tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates'.<sup>86</sup>

### **A concluding history lesson.**

I don't know whether you are familiar with the history of the (short) life of Lady Jane Grey.<sup>87</sup>

Jane (the niece of King Henry the Eighth) was only 16 or 17 years old when she was made Queen of England and Ireland in July 1553. This role she filled for only nine days, following which she was deposed and (along with her recently-married husband, Lord Guildford Dudley) was beheaded in the early reign of Mary the First of England, known as 'Bloody Mary'.<sup>88</sup>

It was reported that, just before her own execution, she caught a glimpse of her husband's mutilated remains as they were carried into the Tower of London for interment. 'Oh Guildford, Guildford!', we are told she exclaimed, '*the antepast* ('the foretaste', that is) *that you have tasted, and I shall soon taste, is not so bitter as to make my flesh tremble; for all this is nothing to the feast of which you and I shall partake this day in Paradise*'.<sup>89</sup>

And you and I can each say (not, thankfully, as Jane, against the background of public execution by beheading, but) of anything – of simply, anything – that ‘this is nothing to the feast of which’ we shall one day ‘partake ... in Paradise’.

**To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life,  
which is in the paradise of God.<sup>90</sup>**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Note the present tense: 'I am coming', Rev. 2. 5. His arrival is imminent.
- <sup>2</sup> The verb 'left' stresses that this was an act for which someone was personally responsible. This was not a case of 'lost love'; this was a case of 'left love'.
- <sup>3</sup> The word ('ἀφίημι') means 'to leave, to give up, forsake, abandon, depart'. It is used of a husband divorcing his wife, 1 Cor. 7. 11-12.
- <sup>4</sup> Rev. 2. 4 ESV. 'But (Greek, ἄλλὰ), I have ... against you' is the first of three occasions in the chapter on which the Lord Jesus uses the expression to dash His praise with censure, Rev. 2. 4, 14, 20. In neither of the later cases, however, is the problem as serious or the blame as severe as here; it is on this occasion only that He utters the threat of removing the Ephesian lampstand.
- <sup>5</sup> 'You do not love me now as you did at first', Rev. 2. 4 (Good News Bible).
- <sup>6</sup> Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, page 60. 'It is indeed not a "somewhat" which the Lord has against the Ephesian church; it threatens to grow to be an "everything", R. C. Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia*, pages 106-107.
- <sup>7</sup> Like Martha, a church can easily become so engrossed in its work that it neglects the 'one thing needed', Luke 10. 42.
- <sup>8</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 2.
- <sup>9</sup> C. A. Coates, *Affection for Christ*, in the volume, *The Paths of Life*, pages 84-85.
- <sup>10</sup> The rendering in the ESV.
- <sup>11</sup> Jer. 2. 2.
- <sup>12</sup> Exod. 15. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Exod. 15. 1-18.
- <sup>14</sup> Jer. 2. 32.
- <sup>15</sup> Jer. 2. 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Rev. 2. 6.
- <sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. 16. 22 with verse 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Eph. 6. 24.
- <sup>19</sup> Rev. 2. 2, 19 literally.
- <sup>20</sup> Rev. 2. 5, 19.
- <sup>21</sup> Rev. 2. 4, 20 literally.
- <sup>22</sup> Rev. 2. 2, 6.
- <sup>23</sup> Rev. 2. 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Rev. 2. 19 literally.
- <sup>25</sup> Rev. 2. 20, 24.
- <sup>26</sup> Malcolm Horlock, *The Seven Golden Lampstands*, Precious Seed Magazine, Volume 50, Issue 6, 1995 (emphases added).
- <sup>27</sup> 1 Thess. 1. 3. It is interesting to note the significant distinction drawn between the first-generation Thessalonians and the second-generation Ephesians.
- <sup>28</sup> I assume that 1 Thessalonians was written about AD 50.
- <sup>29</sup> The hymn, 'O for a closer walk with God'.
- <sup>30</sup> F. A. Tatford, *The Final Encounter*, page 94.



- <sup>31</sup> 'The Greek imperative is present, with a meaning like 'keep on remembering', 'hold in memory'. They had enjoyed a close walk with God. Let their minds dwell on that', Leon Morris, '*Revelation (Tyndale New Testament Commentary)*', on Rev. 2. 4.  
'Have fallen' is the perfect tense. It looks at a completed act with existing results; a state, and not a process. In one sense, we might loosely speak of 'the angel of the church of Ephesus' as a 'fallen angel'!
- <sup>32</sup> Jer. 2. 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Hos. 2. 7. Not dissimilar to the way in which the prodigal's recollection of 'bread enough and to spare' in his father's house prompted him to return, Luke 15. 17-20.
- <sup>34</sup> Of some 30 years before; from around AD 63 to around AD 95.
- <sup>35</sup> Eph. 2. 11-13. The word 'Gentiles' summed up perfectly their former condition. Their state as Gentiles brought with it a seven-fold disability; they were then:  
(i) Uncircumcised, carrying no mark and sign of God's covenant with Moses, verse 11.  
(ii) Without Christ, having no claim on Israel's Messiah, verse 12.  
(iii) Alienated from the citizenship of Israel, v. 12.  
(iv) Foreigners as far as the covenants of promise (those made with the patriarchs and David) were concerned, verse 12.  
(v) Without hope, v. 12.  
(vi) Without God, being destitute of any knowledge of the only true and living God, v. 12.  
(vii) Afar off, spiritually distant from both God and his people, v. 13.
- <sup>36</sup> '*Henry Broadhurst, M.P. The story of his life from a stonemason's bench to the Treasury bench told by himself*', 1901, page 189.
- <sup>37</sup> Henry Pickering, '*1000 Acts and Facts*', number 5 on page 9.
- <sup>38</sup> Isa. 51. 1.
- <sup>39</sup> Eph. 1. 3; 2. 6.
- <sup>40</sup> Dan Crawford, '*Not Lawful to Utter*', pages 46-49.
- <sup>41</sup> 'The present imperative (of 'remember') shows that the remembering is to continue; on the other hand, the repentance (aorist imperative) is a thing to be done immediately, once for all', A. Plummer, '*Revelation (The Pulpit Commentary)*', page 58.
- <sup>42</sup> As He does to the churches at Pergamos, Rev. 2. 16, Sardis, Rev. 3. 3, and Laodicea, Rev. 3. 19.
- <sup>43</sup> Acts 26. 20; interestingly, spoken by Paul concerning his work at *Ephesus*! Cf. Matt. 3. 8.
- <sup>44</sup> Acts 20. 21. The apostle laboured at Ephesus from AD 53 to AD 55; see Acts 19. 10; 20. 31 (Jewish reckoning).
- <sup>45</sup> 'This is enjoined in Scripture not only on sinners, but also on saints', W. Jay, '*Biblical illustrator*', on Rev. 2. 1-7. It 'calls for a decisive change of attitude with its resultant action', R. L. Thomas, '*Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*', page 142.
- <sup>46</sup> Tony Garland, '*A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*', Volume 1, comment on Rev. 2. 5.
- <sup>47</sup> R. C. Trench, *op. cit.*, page 111.
- <sup>48</sup> The 'you' is singular, as in all other cases of 'you' in the letter.
- <sup>49</sup> There is a whole world of difference between 'a sense of urgency' and 'rashness'. In connection with the latter, Cotton Mather (1663-1728; a New England Puritan minister) 'used to say that there was a gentleman mentioned in Acts 19, to whom he was often and greatly indebted--viz., the town clerk of *Ephesus*, whose counsel was, "Do nothing rashly". And on any proposal of consequence he would say, "Let us consult a little with the town clerk of Ephesus"', J. S. Exell (editor), '*The Biblical illustrator*', on Acts 19. 35.
- <sup>50</sup> 'Perhaps as indicating deliberation and judicial calmness; there would be no sudden uprooting as in anger, but a movement which would end in the loss of the place that the Church had been called to fill; unless there came a change for the better, the first of the seven lamps of Asia must disappear', H. B. Swete, '*The Apocalypse of St. John*', on Rev. 2. 5.

<sup>51</sup> 'The so-called Arch of Titus in Rome depicts soldiers carrying in a triumphal procession the sacred Menorah - the seven-branched lampstand taken from Herod's temple consequent on the fall of Jerusalem in AD70. When John wrote the book of the Revelation, that lampstand (which was a fitting symbol of Israel's role as the upholder of the lamp of divine witness in the world) lay extinguished in the Temple of Peace in Rome. That glorious role now belonged to local Christian churches', Malcolm Horlock, *'The Seven Golden Lampstands'*, Precious Seed Magazine, Volume 50, Issue 5, 1995.

<sup>52</sup> Rev. 1. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Compare: 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof', Matt. 22. 43.

<sup>54</sup> 'A great part ... has recourse to the jurisdiction of Smyrna ... but to Ephesus, the other great luminary of Asia, resort the more distant peoples', Pliny the Elder, *'Natural History'*, Book 5, Chapter 31 – accessed at ...

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D5%3Achapter%3D31>.

<sup>55</sup> *'The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians'*, Chapters 3, 6 and 9 – accessed at ...

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> 'Very beautiful is the tenderness of the Lord in thus bringing forward a second time some good thing which he had found at Ephesus', R. C. Trench, *op. cit.*, page 112.

<sup>57</sup> Rev. 2. 4. 'Certainly, in spite of their sad and serious failure, Jesus does not say, "Your problem is that you have got the balance wrong between love and hate. You have become far too critical. Lighten up a little; become a little more positive, a little less negative". Not a bit of it: Jesus commends this church for its hatred of the practices of the Nicolaitans', D. A. Carson, *'Love in hard Places'*, page 183.

<sup>58</sup> Rev. 2. 15. 'Whereas the verbs in verse 2 are in the aorist tense: ἐπείρασας, "endured", εὑρες, "found", indicating that the episode involving the testing and unmasking of the false apostles was an event of the past, the verbs in verse 6 describing the Nicolaitans are in the present tense, indicating that they are a continuing threat', Anders Aune, quoted by Thomas Witulski, *'Die Johannesoffenbarung und Kaiser Hadrian'*, page 294.

<sup>59</sup> Rev. 2. 14-15.

<sup>60</sup> 'The Ephesians' refusal to tolerate the Nicolaitans' practices and to avoid all cultic meals in pagan temples may be related to another quality for which Christ had commended them: for the sake of Jesus' name, they had endured suffering, being marginalized in a city where economic life was driven by flourishing religious tourism and banking industries, both associated with the temple of Artemis. To withdraw from the pagan celebrations of Ephesus' trade guilds and its celebrated landmark was to risk financial ruin, but these Christians were "enduring patiently and bearing up for [His] name's sake" (Rev. 2:3)', Dennis Johnson, *'The Letter to the Church in Ephesus'* – accessed at ... <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/letter-church-ephesus/?mobile=on>.

'All commercial trade was under the patronage of pagan deities, and business people joined trade guilds to do business. 'These trade-guilds were associated with the worship of [patron] deities: each guild had its own guardian god ... if you wish to get ahead in this world, you must belong to a guild; if you belong to a guild, your very membership implies that you worship its god. You will be expected to attend the guild-festivals and to eat food, part of which is offered to the deity and which you receive on your table as a gift from the god ... Refusing to ... attend the heathen feasts, meant withdrawal from a great part of the whole social life of that time ... Refusal to join in these feasts often meant that a man would lose his job, his trade; he would become an outcast'. W Hendriksen, *'More than Conquerors'*, page 67.

<sup>61</sup> ὁμοίως. “In like manner” ... The sense is: “thou hast with thee followers of Balaam: he taught God’s people to fornicate and to communicate in idol-worship, and the Nicolaitans with thee teach the same”, W. H. Simcox, *The Revelation of S. John the Divine (The Cambridge Greek New Testament)*, on Rev. 2. 15.

‘The doctrine of Balaam is the same as the counsel of Balaam (Num. 31. 16). Apparently, what happened was Balaam told Balak he could only bless the nation of Israel but not curse it. As he departed, he counselled Balak on how to get the God of Israel angry with His people. The plan was quite simple: get the Moabite women to commit harlotry with the men of Israel (Num. 25. 1-3). How does this incident relate to the “meat offered to idols” and sexual immorality as well as the Nicolaitans in the church at Pergamum? The books of Numbers and the Psalms give us the answer. In Numbers 25. 2, the Moabites invited the people of Israel to “the sacrifice of their gods”. The psalmist reflects on the incident in Numbers 25 by saying. “They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them” (Psa. 106. 28, 29)’, Gordon Franz, *Meat Offered to Idols in Pergamum and Thyatira* – accessed at ... <https://biblearchaeology.org/new-testament-era-list/3972-meat-offered-to-idols-in-pergamum-and-thyatira>.

<sup>62</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 1, Chapter 26, Section 3.

<sup>63</sup> Rev. 2. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Matt. 11. 15; 13. 9, 43; Mark 4. 9, 23; Luke 8. 8; 14. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. 2. 7.

<sup>66</sup> The church at Ephesus had previously been admonished by the apostle Paul not to ‘grieve’ the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. 4. 30 – ‘by giving way to any wrong temper, unholy word, or unrighteous action’, *Adam Clark’s Commentary* on Eph. 4. 30. Here the church is exhorted to ‘hear what the Spirit’ is saying.

‘There are at least six ways in which people can sin against the Holy Spirit, six specific sins that people can commit. The first one that the New Testament talks about is insulting the Spirit (see Heb. 10. 29). Jesus himself warned us of the second, that there are dire consequences for blaspheming the Spirit (Matt. 12. 31). Stephen charged his accusers with resisting the Spirit (Acts 7. 51–53). And the apostle Paul warned the church in Ephesus about grieving the Spirit (Ephes. 4. 29–32). Peter accused Ananias and Sapphira of lying to the Spirit (Acts 5. 3). Finally, there is the text ... where Paul cautions the Thessalonians about the tendency to quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5. 19–22). My reading of these texts leads me to conclude that only non-Christians can commit the first three of these sins, but the latter three are within the power of Christians to commit’, Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, page 147.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Although the epistle is addressed in each case to a Church in the person of its angel, yet the concluding exhortation and promise are always addressed to the individual Christian’, A. Plummer, *Revelation (The Pulpit Commentary)*, page 59.

<sup>68</sup> Rev. 1. 3. ‘Plainly the author of the Book contemplates its being read publicly in the Church. “ἀναγινώσκων” is the proper word for reading aloud’, W. H. Simcox, *op. cit.*, on Rev. 1. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Rev. 1. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Luke 12. 13.

<sup>71</sup> Henry Ward Beecher – quoted by Paul Beasley-Murray in *Living out the Call: Reaching out to God’s World*, page 60.

<sup>72</sup> To overcome ‘in John’s writings is synonymous with saving faith in Christ (cf. 1 John 5. 4-5). This is not a special group of Christians distinguished by their spirituality and power from other genuine Christians who lack these. This is a general designation for what is expected of all true Christians ... All the promises to the conquerors are fundamentally symbolic promises to the faithful of the benefits of Christ’s redemption and of participation in the kingdom of God described in the closing vision of this book’, R. L. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pages 152-153.

<sup>73</sup> 1 John 5. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Rev. 21. 7 literally.

<sup>75</sup> Malcolm Horlock, 'The Seven Golden Lampstands (Additional Note)', *Precious Seed*, Volume 50, Issue 6, 1995. The verb 'to overcome' is characteristic of John, occurring twenty-four times in his writings (once in his gospel, six times in his epistles and seventeen times in the Book of Revelation), over against only three times in the whole of the rest of the New Testament (Luke 11. 22; Rom. 3. 4; 12. 21).

'Almost all the references to overcoming mention a promise for all believers, promises that accompany salvation ... It would seem strange to think of only some believers eating of the tree of life, or not being hurt by the second death, or not being clothed in white garments', Mal Couch, 'Soteriology in the Book of Revelation', in 'A Bible Handbook to Revelation', pages 164-165.

<sup>76</sup> Rev. 2. 6, 14-15.

<sup>77</sup> F. A. Tatford, *op. cit.*, page 100.

<sup>78</sup> Colin J. Hemer, 'Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting', page 45.



<sup>79</sup> 'The palm tree was a "sacred tree" and was considered the "tree of life"', Gordon Franz, 'Propaganda, Power, and Perversion of Biblical Truths: Coins Illustrating the Book of Revelation' (referencing Colin J. Hemer, *ibid.*, pages 50-52) – accessed at ... <https://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/propaganda-power-and-perversion-of-biblical-truths-coins-illustrating-the-book-of-revelation/>.

<sup>80</sup> '(Ephesus) was famous because it housed one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Temple of Artemis ... there was a garden with deer roaming in front of a sacred tree and the cult statue of Artemis. This garden was called the "paradise of Artemis"', Gordon Franz, *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> 'The Lord God planted a garden ('paradise', 'παράδεισος', the Greek Old Testament) in Eden, in the east ... the tree of life was in the midst of the garden', Gen. 2. 8-9. 'No tree in the garden ('paradise', the Greek Old Testament) of God was its equal', Ezek. 31. 8.

'The Greek word παράδεισος ... is a loan word, borrowed from the Persians and Medes. Its original meaning is not disputed: ... a walled enclosure, such as the private parks of rulers and nobles. The Greeks, however, understood the word to mean what was contained within the wall, that is the royal gardens ... That explains why the translators of Genesis 2, where the Hebrew word indicates a fenced garden, used παράδεισος rather than the simpler κήπος (garden: an open space, not enclosed, where ordinary plants and trees grow) to describe the garden of Eden', P. H. R. van Houwelingen, 'Paradise Motifs in the Book of Revelation', page 3.

Cf. 'You were in Eden, the garden ('paradise', the Greek Old Testament) of God', Ezek. 28. 13. The Greek expression, 'the paradise of God' in both Ezekiel 28 and Ezekiel 31 is identical to that in Rev. 2. 7.

<sup>82</sup> 'They will participate in the blessing intended at creation but never realized by Adam and Eve', G. R. Osborne, 'Revelation (Baker Exegetical Commentary)', on Rev. 2. 7b.

'After Adam and Eve sinned, God decided that He would not continue their lives indefinitely while they were in that evil state', C. A. Davis, 'Revelation (The College Press NIV Commentary)', on Rev. 2. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Gen. 3. 24.

<sup>84</sup> A. Maclaren, 'The Tree of Life' – accessed at [https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/maclaren/the\\_tree\\_of\\_life.htm](https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/maclaren/the_tree_of_life.htm).

<sup>85</sup> Margaret Clarkson, the hymn, 'Let us draw near'.

<sup>86</sup> Rev. 22. 14.

<sup>87</sup> 1537-1554.

<sup>88</sup> In May 1553, Jane was married to Lord Guildford Dudley, a younger son of Edward VI's chief minister, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. She was proclaimed Queen on 10 July 1553, deposed on 19 July 1553, and executed on 12 February 1554.

'The true tragedy of Jane Grey is that her death was through no fault of her own, but of the unfortunate fact of her heritage and of her religion. She most likely never really wanted to be Queen but it was not something that was under her control.

Her ambitious parents (Frances Brandon and Henry Grey), along with John Dudley, father of her husband, Guilford Dudley, sought to keep a Protestant monarch on the throne if Edward were to die without an heir of his body and to have that monarch under their thumbs. The best way to do that was to make their own children King and Queen. Four days after Edward's death on July 6, 1553, Jane was proclaimed Queen of England.

However, Mary, who was the rightful heir to the throne according to Henry VIII's will, was gathering support in Suffolk. She and her followers rode into London nine days later and imprisoned Jane and her supporters. Mary was the next Queen of England.

Jane and her husband were held in the Tower of London but were not executed until after a second ill-fated uprising in their name'.

(Source: '*Lady Jane Grey: Queen for Nine Days*', accessed at ... <https://tudorhistory.org/jane/>).

<sup>89</sup> Richard Davey, '*The Nine Days' Queen, Lady Jane Grey, and Her Times*', pages 338-339. Almost certainly, Jane had in mind the words of the Lord Jesus to the believing malefactor: 'today you will be with me in Paradise', Luke 23. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Rev. 2. 7.