


BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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Contents

Thought for the Month	2
The One Thing Desired	3
David—A Man after God's own Heart	4
Ten Visions of Christ Triumphant—Pt. 2	10
The Bible's Song of Love—Pt. 1	17
The Clouds hang Low and Human Hearts are Breaking—A hymn	22
The Plan of God in Brief—Study 1	24
The Gathering Home of Saints—Pt. 10	28
The Effect of the Pandemic on Christendom	32



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(Psalm 27:14)

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

"Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV)

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Secretary & Treasurer: Nicholas Charcharos

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart." (Psa. 27:14)

The New Year is always a suitable time to review the Lord's goodness, and to look forward to the future days, in the certain knowledge that He who does all things well will continue to sustain us as we walk in the light now due. (*Old Paths, January 1956*)

But what is the heart. The heart itself is only a pump whereas the heart in figurative language is the seat of our emotions. Yet does not the physical heart truly ache when overwhelmed with emotion?

David was a man after God's own heart. (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) His faithful heart was in evidence when slaying Goliath. In that light it is surprising that David was a man, a king who engineered the death of a man in battle, Uriah, in order that he could marry that man's wife, Bathsheba and cover up their sin. The prophet Nathan put this fault in theory to him for David to judge before pointing out that such was David's sin. David's heart from that moment was repentant and this is reflected in some Psalms. Afterward David was even more a man after God's own heart.

Throughout the Christian era (Gospel age) God has been working with all true-hearted disciples. This is through the epistle of Christ not written like the Ten Commandments on stone but in our hearts. (2 Cor. 3:3) In this way it is successful.

We have become more aware of sad hearts in this present crisis especially for those mourning much loved members of the families—natural and spiritual. But death is not the end, merely a punctuation of this present life before the resurrection of the dead.

Then there are fearful hearts which is understandable for those in fear of infecting the older generation, fear of losing a job and not being able to find another one and then general fear when looking at polarisation in politics leading to chaotic scenes.

We look forward to that day when all the saints are gathered in and with the cloud of witnesses will work on the hearts of all men and women.

THE ONE THING DESIRED

In Psalm 27:4 we read, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.” This expresses aptly the goal of all our endeavours as new creatures in Christ—the attainment of the Heavenly Kingdom. It can be attained, however, solely in His strength, hence the need that “he shall strengthen thine heart.”

This is surely the right outlook at the opening of the year, more particularly because we know the subtlety of the Adversary in these evil days.

As we wait on the LORD, so we should evince keen interest in His Word and in the wonderful truths which belong in our day. This attitude alone will enable us to endure even unto the end. It is expressed in other language in verse 8 of Psalm 27, “Thy face, LORD, will I seek.”

(Old Paths, January 1956)



**SWORD AGAINST
ALL NATIONS**



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DAVID—A MAN AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

A characteristic of the Old Testament is that, while the records show the strength of faith manifested by numerous men and women, their frailties are also honestly recorded. Abraham was a man of God without equal. Nevertheless, he turned aside temporarily from the path of faith more than once into eager impatience and into open violations of exact truth. In the case of Jacob too, we would have to pass over many incidents in his life to make him an ideal of most submissive resignation to the command and will of God. Also Moses, of whom it was written that he was found “faithful in all God’s house,” yet he was prohibited from entering the promised land on account of presumptuous disobedience to God.

So also with David, who presented a pattern to the eyes of Israel and of the world of every manly and princely virtue, if only a single event in his life had been omitted from the record. It is to this great character that we devote this article.

Shortly after the time David may be said to have reached the pinnacle of his greatness, his inborn dignity seemed to be broken. A surprising change in his general demeanour had taken place. What is it that had produced this most surprising change? Something scarcely credible. A most atrocious crime had been committed. A two-fold heavy guilt rests upon David’s head. He, the most pious among thousands, raised above the earth on the wings of divine inspiration, to a height which no common emotion can reach, and who is to be not only the human ancestor of the future Saviour of the world but also His personal type, stands before us, meets us suddenly, as an adulterer and a murderer!

Let us lift the veil. While the royal army was besieging the capital of the Ammonites, David, perhaps resting on his laurels, preferring to remain at Jerusalem while his faithful captain Uriah was with the host, was inflamed with adulterous passion for Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, and wickedly beguiled her to unfaithfulness. His carefully contrived attempt to conceal this crime, by sending Uriah from the camp, was frustrated; and therefore he contrived a more godless plan still, whereby Bathsheba, as a widow, might become his with the appearance of entire compliance with the law. He sent back the unsuspecting warrior to Joab, the commander-in-chief, with a letter, which, under the name of “Uriah’s Letter” has become notorious. It was written with the same pen with which the sweet psalmist had written his Psalms. This treacherous letter read: “Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be

smitten, and die.” (2 Sam. 11:15) Joab acted as instructed, and the base plot was carried out. Uriah, and many of his companions, were left dead on the field.

Joab sent a messenger to David to break the news of the issue of the battle, telling him that if he saw David’s wrath arising because of the reverse sustained in the battle, he was then to say in addition that Uriah was amongst the slain, and this the messenger did. But how it surprised him when David answered him with an incomprehensible and hypocritical mildness: “Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city.” (2 Sam. 11:25)

Unhappy David, how deep art thou fallen! How constantly the first sinful act propagates others! Murder comes after the adultery, and after the murder a sad web of dissimulation, hypocrisy and lies. And no mention of the living God! Only an appeal to a blind fate, which, according to freak, sometimes takes away this one, sometimes that one. Oh! how the word of the Lord verifies itself: “whosoever commiteth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34) and “of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage!” (2 Pet. 2:19)

Let no one, however far advanced in holiness he may think himself to be, imagine himself set free from taking to heart that cry of Christ, “Watch and pray,” and that of the apostle, “Be sober and watch.” Protection and safety are only found in cleaving by a steadfast faith to God and to the grace of God.

What appears yet more incomprehensible than David’s fall is the stubbornness with which for months he strove against confessing in the sight of God the heavy guilt that lay upon him. What he suffered during this time of lying and concealment, he afterwards himself gave expression to in few but striking words, which are preserved for us in Psalm 32. Let us hear him. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” (vv.3-4) The lively and fervent expressions with which he naturally commences that psalm, composed, of course, after his reconciliation with God, shows a still clearer light than the words just quoted on the misery he then endured: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” (vv.1-2)

Of David's fall, it may be said that "it has become the riches of the world." And David was even more the "man after God's own heart" after his confession than he was before. How many of his most heart-searching Psalms would never have been written if he had walked on continually to the end along the lofty path of cloudless holiness, unmoved and without wavering!

Let us turn more particularly to David's repentance, and to the circumstances which led up to it. But first, we have to remember that we are accustomed to associate with the word "repentance" exclusively the idea of mourning over past sins. By this means many have been misled into a hasty and unwarrantable assumption that they have obtained the forgiveness promised to penitents; others, on the contrary, because they do not shed tears over their demerits, are led unnecessarily to despair of divine mercy. The truth is that our word "repentance," as it is commonly understood, does not fully represent the meaning in the original. The import of the Greek is that it is less a matter of feeling than an act of the moral will. An accurate translation is "A change of mind." Among other texts, the words of Paul in 2 Cor. 7:10 make this abundantly clear: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Here Paul certainly talks of sorrow on account of sin as an indispensable condition to salvation. He speaks of this sorrow as "godly," in opposition to a "sorrow of the world;" which latter has its foundation only in a selfish concern for the consequences of sin, instead of love to God. Literally, the passage stands thus: "The godly sorrow worketh for salvation." What further? "Repentance not to be repented of." The godly sorrow is not in itself repentance, unless repentance is understood only to mean to have sorrow. According to the original text, the sorrow toward God rather works "a change of mind with no regrets." The full meaning of repentance contains a strong emphasis on a resolute rupture with sin than on the sorrow on account of it. Perhaps the Good News Bible even more cleanly interprets Paul's words aright: "For the sadness that is used by God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation—and there is no regret in that! But sadness that is merely human causes death."

Heaven had shut itself against David, and his harp would be standing silent, perhaps covered with dust in a corner. Yet over him God kept watch; He who is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. 34:6) He never forsakes those who once in sincerity have given to Him their heart and hand. "He knows," as David wrote later, "our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psa. 103:14 RSV)

So far we have heard nothing of Nathan, the friend and counsellor of the king. Suddenly there came to him, in the way of an immediate revelation, a commission from God to go to the king's, palace. Nathan laid before him, as the supreme judge of the land, a case for his decision. The story was in fact a parable. (See 2 Sam. 12:1-14) David reacted, almost in simplicity, into the snare that was laid for him; or was he bribing his own conscience, when in flaming anger he said "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die?" (v.5) What do we say about the king's blindness? How true are Paul's words: "wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." (Rom. 2:1) How frequently does one hear the backbiter declare against the ruling passion for slander. That is the "deceitfulness of sin." None of the similitudes of our Lord is more frequently verified in daily experience than that of the blinded man who does not see the beam that is in his own eye, while he manifests a scornful displeasure in his neighbour's eye. Whoever arrives at a thorough knowledge of himself will always have forbearance and mildness toward others, and will on all occasions be much more inclined to leave the final decision with Him whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," than to pronounce sentence by his own presumptuous authority with the importance of a judge over his fallen brother.

To revert to Nathan, as he stood in the king's presence: with solemn earnestness the prophet looks at the king and says, with all becoming respect, but not less firmly and fearlessly, "Thou art the man!" (v.7) The king is overwhelmed, the words ringing in his ears: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?" (v.9) But, thank God, it came to pass that David's heart, instead of being benumbed, was only softened in deepest humiliation and shame, and encouraged him to open confession. The fire of repentance, which had been long kindling within him, now broke forth into a clear flame; and with inexpressible emotion agitating his contrite spirit, which was now set free from the phantom by which it had so long been bound, and from the cunningly-contrived deadly falsehoods by which he had endeavoured to weaken the complaints of his conscience, he broke out aloud in frank confession, "I have sinned against the LORD." (v.13) Scarcely has he uttered this confession, when he hears from the mouth of the prophet, the absolving word: "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (v.13) Oh the blessedness of repentance toward God, when it reaches its fulness in a decided breach with sin! The cry, when it is sincere and bathed in godly sorrow, "I have sinned," how it releases the burdened heart!

What passed in the inner recesses of David's heart, he has recorded in the fifty-first Psalm, left behind as evidence of his genuine conversion, and as an example to Christian believers of penitential prayer. Let us examine this precious legacy, and may the Lord create in our hearts a clear and continuous echo of its contents!

“O God,” he says. He had not yet found full confidence to say, “My God.” He prays, “O God...have mercy upon me...according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” David strengthens his petition first of all by an appeal to the earnestness of his repentance: “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.” (vv.3-4)

Laying claim to God's mercy, he supports his position further by referring to the universality of human corruption; certainly not, however, as if thereby his guilt was lessened: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (v.5) “Behold” he continues, “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts:” (true rectitude in the innermost disposition and aim). But whence is this obtained? “In the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.” (v.6) But how shall this be done? By pardon of sin and the communication of the Spirit. With a fundamental comprehension of the types and symbols appertaining to the holy tabernacle and the Levitical ordinances of divine worship, as shadowing the atoning work of the future great Mediator and High Priest, the psalmist prays: “Purge me with hyssop” (v.7) (do in reality to me what is typically done by the priest for those who are, according to the Levitical law, impure, when he sprinkles on them, by means of a branch of hyssop, water in which has been mixed the ashes of a red heifer)—“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy holy spirit from me...Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways” (this he does in the thirty-second Psalm); “and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness...for Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” (vv.7-14,16-17)

That this penitential prayer, enlightened and full of earnestness, pierced through the clouds, and found an audience with God, the king has himself testified in the thirty-second Psalm. "I said" (he thus bears record), "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (v.5) Thus the gracious announcement made by Nathan is sealed to him by God in the holy tabernacle in an immediate manner, and now for the first time, with fulness of joy, he is able to sing Psalm 103: "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name...forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities;...who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." (vv.1-4)

How blessed the king is now! Free and unburdened he now stands again before God. He continues to pray, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." (Psa. 19:12) He is now again wholly "the man according to God's own heart" which he formerly was. Yes, he is now more than ever he was before, after he has come forth freed from all the dross of selfishness and self-love, and seven times purified as gold from the furnace of thorough self-condemnation. He is now among those who are poor and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at God's word! And we, who have received Christ as Saviour, do we not, more thoroughly than the holy men under the old covenant, know God as our Father, who through Christ "will abundantly pardon?" (Isa. 55:7) Indeed, to the very end of our lives on earth, those words of the apostle John hold true: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7-9)

Forest Gate Monthly

JESUS is MERCIFUL

He is full of mercy; compassionate. Jesus says ...I understand what you are going through. Are you tempted beyond what you think you can handle? Give that struggle to Me. Look to Me. Cling to Me. I am your saviour and helper. My compassion is toward you to heal that aching part. Rest and delight in Me...

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18 ESV)

At the Name of Jesus, Sarah Hornsby

TEN VISIONS OF CHRIST TRIUMPHANT

Part 2. Vision 3—"I am with you"

The first part of this exposition showed chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation as picturing the birth of Jesus, the "Man-child" who ascended into Heaven and the presence of the Father despite the enmity of the Devil, followed by the vision of chapters 4 and 5 in which the risen Christ opens the Book of the future and reveals what is to happen during the Age which interposes between his First and Second Advents. Now the story passes on to the third vision.

This third vision is of such surpassing interest and importance, that it is given the honour of first place in the Book of Revelation. From the 10th verse of chapter 1 to the end of chapter 3 the majestic picture unfolds, the picture of the spiritual presence of the Church's High Priest in the midst of the successive generations of his Church. "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Age)*" was his promise. (Matt. 28:20) On the eve of his death He assured his disciples that his presence would be with them in the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16-18 and 16:7-16) "*I will not leave you orphans*" He said; "*I will come to you.*" (John 14:18 margin) Here in Rev. 1 to 3 is the symbolic tableau depicting that coming and that presence. The wonderful manner in which so many different symbols are assembled together to inculcate the lesson of our Lord's constant watchcare over the members of his Church has been a comfort and strength to Christians in all ages.

The presentation here is one of Christ, resurrected and glorified but still bearing the indications of past humiliation and suffering, ministering to the needs of all those who in every century of this Age have become his faithful followers. Says John, alerted by the Divine Voice from heaven (Rev. 1:10-11) "*I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the midst of the seven lampstands one like unto the Son of man.*" (vv. 12-13 margin) John had known Jesus in the flesh as the Son of Man, and he also knew of the prophetic Son of Man seen by Daniel in the vision of the Last Judgment, a majestic king coming in the clouds of heaven into the presence of God to receive his Kingdom. This was the same Son of Man, but the setting was different. This was not Jesus as the Man of Nazareth, neither was he the victorious king of Daniel. The Son of Man in the vision which appeared to John was arrayed as a Priest, and He is shown in the act of ministering as a Priest. That is evident, for He stands within a circle of lampstands, indicative of Temple and Tabernacle ritual, and only a Priest could enter the sacred apartment in which the seven-branched lampstand gave its

light, and only the Priest might tend those lamps that they continue to give their light to all in that apartment—and in Levitical ritual only the under-priests could enter that apartment and those under-priests are representative of the Church of this Age, no one else. So in this vision the resurrected Lord stands ready to minister Divine light and life, Divine favour and blessing, to those who are consecrated with him and to him in the service of God. When John saw that awesome yet radiantly splendid figure he knew that he was witnessing the fulfilment of words he had heard while Jesus was still with them *“I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.”*

But He was no priest of the Aaronic order. The garments in which He was arrayed were not those with which John was familiar in connection with Aaron, and the characteristics of glory, power and wisdom which are evident are not characteristic of the sacrificing and dying priesthood of Aaron. The writer to the Hebrews gives a clue to the understanding of this vision. *“They”* (the Aaronic priests) *“truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.”* (each priest died at length and had to be succeeded by another) *“but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.”* (Heb. 7.23-24) The Priest we see in the first chapter of Revelation is one who continues to all eternity, the minister of a Priesthood which will never pass away, unlike that of Aaron which did come to an end when the time for sacrifice and offering had ended. This Priest is one like unto Melchisedek, the royal priest of the days of Abraham, a Priest upon his throne, ruling and ministering Divine favour eternally. Because of that He is able to minister in power to his faithful ones and execute judgment upon the unfaithful. Therefore this One who claims *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore”* (ch. 1:18) has the white hair of maturity, the flaming eyes of penetrating insight, the voice of many waters in its oversweeping gentleness reaching into the recesses of every heart. His feet, like brilliant molten metal in the furnace, are burning with zeal to set out on the great work amongst mankind for which He suffered and died. The two-edged sword issuing from his mouth is one of piercing truth, the truth of God, illuminating the minds of his own, and one of swift and unerring judgment upon his adversaries. His countenance, like unto the sun shining at meridian day, brings to mind the prediction of Malachi, who promised that the Sun of righteousness would arise with healing in his wings—the sunbeams of the rising sun. (Mal. 4:2) The full glory of the Divine presence is now spiritually manifest to all whose minds are receptive to the influence of the Holy Spirit. All these things are characteristic of the present manifestation of our risen Lord to his Church.

This great High Priest is our shepherd. In all the affairs of daily life He is at our side, ministering and helping, sustaining and strengthening, exhorting and encouraging; and when it is necessary reproofing and chastening. That is one of the great lessons of these celebrated messages to the seven churches in Asia. It is usually and rightfully held that this long passage in chapters 2 and 3 with its seven-fold exhortation is intended primarily to picture the condition of the Church in this world throughout the entire Christian Age, a compendium of seven successive periods of church history, each period manifesting its own particular characteristics, its own virtues and failings, and our Lord's particular commendation or reproof for each. But in a quite distinct and separate field of thought, it is undeniable that these messages also contain valuable instruction applicable to the believers in any and every generation from Pentecost onwards, to the end. All of these messages are for each and every one of us and contain valuable counsel and encouragement, coming to us as such from our Lord himself.

So John, listening to the majestic voice of his exalted visitant, represents the entire Church upon earth, of all generations, in communion with the One who had promised to be with us always to the end of the Age, receiving that spiritual guidance and instruction which only our risen Lord can give. This is the background of the vision and the messages to the seven churches are for our acceptance and our benefit.

The first message is that to the church at Ephesus, not much more than twenty years old when these words were uttered. "*Repent, and do the first works.*" (Rev. 2:5) Repentance is the first stage in our progress towards God. It is a continuing demand too. We need first to repent and come to God in loyal submission, accepting Jesus the Saviour in our hearts and lives, being justified by faith in him and in his redemptive work. Only after this can we take the further step of consecration and dedication of life to God which alone can give us entry into the communion and community of the Church on earth. Appropriately enough, therefore, repentance is the first exhortation. But here in Revelation 2 the Ephesians were already disciples and had already passed that first stage. The repentance to which they were exhorted was a repentance for shortcomings and failures in their Christian lives. That is necessary for Christians of later times also. The fact that "*if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 John 2:1), does not remove the necessity for sincere repentance for failings and shortcomings, once one's eyes have been opened to them. This Ephesian message is timely for all.

The second message is equally certainly the second step of the Christian life, that of consecration. This is where the outcome of a consecrated life maintained to the end is simply stated. *“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”* (Rev. 2:11) which, taken in conjunction with the Divine principle that death is the inevitable end of the irrevocably unregenerate, is just another way of saying that the overcomer will achieve immortality. The primary exhortation comes in Rom. 12:1-2 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren...that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (offering)...your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* This is the commencement of a Christian life which may involve hardship, persecution, or suffering according to the conjunction of outward circumstances in the individual case; but even if so, the message comes as it did to the early church at Smyrna, *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* (ch. 2:10) That phrase has become a kind of watchword to Christians of every period in history; it stands as the epitome of the course and consequence of a consecrated life pursued consistently and unflinchingly to the end. This is an encouragement and a promise of the outcome of consecration faithfully maintained. As such, it is a message to all at any time in the Church’s history.

Logically one would expect **the third message**, that to the Church at Pergamos, to dwell upon the conditions of the consecrated life, the process of sanctification. That word means “to make holy” and it implies the whole continuing process in life whereby the believer is being *“made...meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”* (Col. 1:12) Turning aside from the rather theological tone of the expression and its supporting texts, sanctification really means being made like Christ and this is the purpose and aim of the Christian life. That implies a turning away from much of the aims and ideals and interests of this world in preference for the things of the Spirit, and this, it would seem, is where many in the Church at Pergamos had failed. They held the doctrine of Balaam, who minded earthly things, and were not completely separated and cleansed from those things of this world which are deleterious and antagonistic to Christian progress. So there was the call to repent of these things, and reform, or judgment—the two-edged sword—would come. But some there were who had held fast and not denied the name of Christ, and these were approved. It is a solemn thought that the preference for the things of this world over the things of God is a denial of Christ’s Name, but so it is. The one who takes to himself the Name of Christ does so in full knowledge of the dictum *“as he is, so are we in this*

world” (1 John 4:17) and must needs pursue the same course and live the same life and be devoted to the same ends. Jesus was no ascetic, but he was completely and utterly devoted to the Will of his Father. Whatsoever He did was done to the glory of God. Those who assume the name of Christ must lead the same life and manifest the same standards. This is the essence of the Christian calling.

The fourth message is a warning against false teachers. Thyatira was not and is not the only Church to suffer from that scourge. We suffer from it still in our own days. It has always been true that grievous wolves enter in among the Lord’s sheep, not sparing the flock. The pity of it all is that the position is so often tolerated. They did in Thyatira. *“Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants.”* (Rev. 2:20) One would have thought that if the splendour of the vision of the Lord in the midst of the lampstands, ministering to his Church, was properly appreciated, false teachers would be quickly recognised and rejected. It is not so; perhaps it is because the spiritual things are seen dimly at best and the earthly and carnal things so much more plainly by contrast. It is always difficult to divorce Christian standards from everyday worldly ethics, as witness the problem so many sincere Christians have in accepting Jesus’ exhortation to love one’s enemies, or the enthusiasm with which a converted military officer or film star or noted athlete is hailed and prominently featured just because of the outward appeal of the military rank or the screen or sporting world fame. These things have to be faced as facts and we all do well to learn that erroneous doctrinal teaching is not the only kind of false teaching in our midst and may not even be the most dangerous.

In the (fifth) message to Sardis there is the pitiable spectacle of a Christian community which has so far lost its first love that it is spiritually dead. It still retains the name of Christian, but that is all of Christianity that it has left. There is little that even the Lord can do. He can only exhort to awakening, to repentance, to a revival of their early enthusiasm, to a fresh attempt to attain true unity with himself. The Lord does not seem very sanguine; *“if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”* (ch. 3:3) That sounds suspiciously like the unhappy and hopeless situation of unheeding man in the days of the ending of the Age. *“As it was in the days of Noah, they knew not, until the Flood came and took them all away, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.”* (Matt. 24:37-39*) The same fault, the same ending. The message of Sardis is one that calls us to be watchful and hold fast that which we have. *“I will come on*

thee as a thief,” (Rev. 3:3) silently, unobtrusively, and yet surely and with a terrible finality. The same words are applied very definitely to the time of our Lord’s Second Advent and come with redoubled force to those who believe they are living in that period; *“ye know neither the day nor the hour—therefore be ye also ready.”* (Matt. 25:13; 24:44) The life of sanctification, of setting apart to the purposes of God, is one that demands continual watchfulness lest at any time the believer lets slip the things that he has seen and heard.

One of the most vital factors in Christian fellowship is stressed in **the next message, that to Philadelphia**. That factor is brotherly love. The word Philadelphia means “brotherly love” and it is significant that the Church in this city is the one to which the Lord gave his greatest commendation. Christians are members one of another, and all are members of Christ. *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience”* He says *“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.”* (ch. 3:10) Is it because we learn well this lesson, our fellow-membership in the Divine family, that we are immune in the hour of trial? Not because God interposes in some miraculous manner, but simply because those who live their lives in the fellowship and love of their brethren, always ready to “lay down their lives for the brethren,” (1 John 3:16) have thereby developed a character and an outlook that is proof against the destroying influences of time, of disappointment, of disillusionment? *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”* (1 John 3:14) That is no empty phrase. Entrance into this family relationship in Christ infuses a vitality that has power to withstand much that would otherwise corrupt and destroy. The sure knowledge that we love the brethren and are loved by them yields a grace and strength which is of inestimable value in the life, leading to breadth of vision and a tolerance of the weaknesses of others, making each one more and more a child of the Father in heaven and more fitted for the Church’s future work of service for all mankind.

So to the **final word, that to Laodicea**. As might be expected, this is a personal word to each one. Many have fallen by the wayside; their love has grown cold. Others are in that indeterminate position, neither hot nor cold. None of these are of any use to the Lord in the purpose He has for the Church. That august body must be composed of sincere, true-hearted ones who have remained faithful through all the vicissitudes of life and at life’s end are found ready, “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14) The rest He must reject; whatever station in the eternal state they may attain hereafter, they are manifestly unfitted for the High Calling of

the Christian Church. But for those who have maintained their loyalty the position is vastly different. All the long progress from repentance through consecration and the sanctification of Christian life, all the experiences with false teachers and holding fast to the faith, leading up to the heights of brotherly love with those who are the *true-hearted* disciples of Jesus, bring us at the end to the position where we recognise the knocking of Jesus at the door of our hearts and with rejoicing we open the door and let him in. Like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, we learn to walk with Jesus and then to sup with him “*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. 3:20)

The climax of our understanding of this vision of the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands is reached when we appreciate that in this Age He is working within our hearts. He wants to come in, and make of each one of us a new creation, all glorious and perfect within, that He may at the end present us faultless before the glory of the Father’s presence with exceeding joy.

To be continued

AOH

Vision 1	Rev. 12:1-6
Vision 2	Rev. 5:5-14
Vision 3	Rev. 1:10-3:22
Vision 4	Rev. 8
Vision 5	Rev. 14

Praise Yahweh! Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever. (Psalm 106:1 WEB)

LIVE FOR OTHERS

Live for others while on earth you live,
 Give for others what you have to give.
 Flowers do not hoard their sweet perfume,
 Nor withhold the glory of their bloom.

Sunshine helps to melt the winter’s snow,
 Timely rain compels the grain to grow;
 So a smile can banish grief and care,
 And a kindly word encourage prayer.

*W.M. Runyan
 Songs of the Nightingale*

THE BIBLE'S SONG OF LOVE

Verse by verse through the Song of Songs

All references RV unless otherwise specified

1:1 The book opens with a sub-title “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” The Hebrew writers of the Old Testament often intensified the meaning of their words by repetition. Thus we read of “the holy of holies” (Exo. 40:10 mar.) or “the heaven of heavens.” (1 Kings 8:27) So it is with this gem of the Hebrew scriptures—it is not just a song—it is the Song of Songs. As one writer has pointed out: “The mystic union (of Christ and His Church) is involved in attributing the Song to Solomon—the antitypical Christ—for it is uttered mutually by Christ and by His Church but is attributed to him, the Head only.” “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:32 KJV)

PART 1—CHAPTERS 1:2-2:7

1:2 The maiden opens the song with a soliloquy as she meditates upon her Beloved. Like Mary at the Sepulchre she is so wholly engrossed with the thoughts of her Beloved that she does not explain of whom she speaks. “LET HIM KISS ME WITH THE KISSES OF HIS MOUTH” she says, thus telling in the language of love how the words of Jesus come to His faithful followers. The Psalmist foretold this loving adoration in the words “Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips” (Psa. 45:2) but the prophet Isaiah foretold that the multitude would say “...he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2 KJV) and so to the multitude He spoke in parables but to His own His words are as intimate kisses of affection. “...he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21)

“It would seem strange if we knew about the love of Christ, and did not desire some personal token of it...The tokens of His love are asked for on the ground that they are valued.” (C.A.C.*) “FOR THY LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE.”

The Song is a book of symbols of which the maiden’s reference to kisses and wine are the first two. Wine in scripture is a symbol of doctrine. (See Matt. 9:17; Isa. 28:7) Here the maiden speaks in the spirit of the Apostle Paul’s words “Knowledge” (of doctrine) “puffeth up, but love buildeth up.” (1 Cor. 8:1 mar.) This does not minimise the value of sound doctrine; in fact in Chap. 2 verse 4, the maiden is brought to “the banqueting house” but her satisfaction is not in the wine “that maketh glad the heart” (Psalm 104:15) but rather in His love. Are we content with the

wine of doctrine or do we value something better—the love of Him who has provided the feast? Those who love Him and His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8) have the assurance of our Lord that they will be well served with doctrine. “Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.” (Luke 12:37)

1:3 But our Lord does more than serve His loved ones. He brings with Him what can only be described as spiritual fragrance and so the maiden recognises a fragrant quality in the symbol of our Lord’s anointing and also in His name. “THINE OINTMENTS” (i.e. anointing oil) “HAVE A GOODLY FRAGRANCE” she says, “THY NAME IS AS OINTMENT” (Anointing Oil) “POURED FORTH.”

In Isa. 11:3 we read a prophecy concerning our Lord which in the literal Hebrew means “and his fragrance shall be in the fear of Jehovah” (see RV mar.). His name—Christ—means anointed—for “Thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Psa. 45:7) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” quoted our Lord “because he anointed me to preach good tidings.” And elsewhere we read that “All...wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:18,22)

A perfume poured forth yields up all its fragrance for enjoyment. The seal of the casket containing the perfume that was to fill heaven and earth with its fragrance was fully broken on Calvary—the culmination of a fragrant life on earth. After Pentecost the name “Messiah” (which also means anointed) which had been shut up among the Jews streamed forth over all the world. This fragrance which is so dear to His loved ones is as ointment poured forth, the odour of which fills the whole household of faith.

The anointing oil, poured upon the Head, flows over the whole Body. (Psa. 133) The original was most precious and costly—“For you therefore which believe is the preciousness” (1 Pet. 2:7) of sweet odour—“Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell.” (Eph. 5:2) It was compounded of a variety of spices—“Christ Jesus...was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30) Nothing was to be made like it—“and in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) “THEREFORE” or for this cause, “DO THE VIRGINS LOVE THEE.” “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear.” The fragrant name of the anointed is appreciated and loved by all sincere believers,—by both wise and foolish virgins—by the

espoused and also by “the virgins her companions that follow her...” (Psa. 45:14)

1:4 With deep earnestness the maiden then says to her Lord “DRAW ME.” Our Lord told us that it is the Father who draws us to Jesus but the maiden’s request has a different meaning. Literally it should read “Draw me out.” Thus she expresses her need of Christ to draw her out of the entangling influences of the world, but, not content that this should apply to her alone, she adds “WE WILL RUN AFTER THEE.” “As a forerunner Jesus entered for us.” (Heb. 6:20) The running is ours; the power to run is Christ’s. “...even so run, that ye may attain” (1 Cor. 9:24) “...forgetting the things which are behind...press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13,14) Christ can draw us out of “the sin which doth closely cling to us” so that we may “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.” (Heb. 12:1,2 mar) But we are permitted not only to follow after but to “sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,” (Eph. 2:6) and so the maiden says “THE KING HATH BROUGHT ME INTO HIS CHAMBERS.”

Her words “WE WILL BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN THEE” anticipate our Lord’s promise that the treasuring of His words will ensure that “my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled.” (John 15:10,11 & John 16:24) The maiden then goes on to emphasise the love of Him who “first loved us.” A more literal translation of the next phrase reads “WE WILL MAKE MENTION OF THY LOVE MORE THAN OF WINE.”

“Let love be without hypocrisy” says the Apostle. (Rom. 12:9) This same thought is embodied in the closing phrase of this verse “IN UPRIGHTNESS DO THEY LOVE THEE.” (mar.) “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” (Eph. 6:24 KJV)

1:5 Every devoted follower of the Lord must feel as the maiden “I AM BLACK,” but, realising that all who belong to Him partake of the inner beauty of His spirit, she adds “BUT (I am) COMELY, O YE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, AS THE TENTS OF KEDAR”—dark and weather-beaten on the outside but often luxurious within—or—“AS THE CURTAINS OF SOLOMON” which hung in glorious beauty in the House of the Lord. Of himself Paul could say “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given.” (Eph. 3:8) “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.” (2 Cor. 4:7) “So shall the King...

desire thy beauty: for...the King's daughter is all glorious within." (Psa. 45:11,13 KJV)

1:6 "LOOK NOT UPON ME, BECAUSE I AM SWARTHY, BECAUSE THE SUN HATH SCORCHED ME. MY MOTHER'S SONS WERE INCENSED AGAINST ME, THEY MADE ME KEEPER OF THE VINEYARDS: BUT MINE OWN VINEYARD HAVE I NOT KEPT." The searching rays of the sunlight of God's word make us sensible of our own lack of comeliness but, as if that is not enough, we are warned that we may expect heated criticism from others of the Lord's family. As the Psalmist said with sorrow "...it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it...but it was thou... We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company." (Psa. 55:12-14 KJV)

How often others in a mistaken zeal soon find activities for believers—other vineyards to cultivate—whereas the consecrated Christian should cultivate his own vineyard. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Pet. 1:10) "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12)

1:7 The followers of the Lord are concerned to break free from those who would keep them away from communion with Jesus and so the maiden addresses her Beloved again "TELL ME," she says, "O THOU WHOM MY SOUL LOVETH, WHERE THOU FEEDEST THY FLOCK, WHERE THOU MAKEST IT TO REST AT NOON: FOR WHY SHOULD I BE AS ONE THAT IS VEILED BESIDE THE FLOCKS OF THY COMPANIONS?" Some might feel that they are near enough if they are beside the flock of His companions. Are we content to be beside some earnest and devoted servant of Christ or do we share the Apostle's earnest desire "That I may know Him?" (Phil. 3:8-10)

1:8 The Bridegroom's response invites her to effort. "IF THOU KNOW NOT, O THOU FAIREST AMONG WOMEN, GO THY WAY FORTH BY THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK". "Seek and ye shall find." We are not to expect some new and extraordinary direction—we are to "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16) "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know..." said our Lord for "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:4,6 KJV)

Then comes the further guidance "...FEED THY KIDS BESIDE THE

SHEPHERDS' TENTS." We are to be "imitators of them" (the shepherds) "who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12) or, as the Apostle advises "Be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. 3:17) The maiden is also told to "feed thy kids." Christ is most likely to be found by us when we are diligently attending to the charge committed to us—to be found in actual duty as well as private devotion.

1:9 But all this is of grace and abounding love and so our Lord does not merely point the way, He gives us confidence to draw nearer to Him and so the Bridegroom encourages the maiden with the words "I HAVE COMPARED THEE, O MY LOVE, TO A STEED IN PHARAOH'S CHARIOTS." The beauty of the horse suggests a comparison strange to western minds but it is frequently used in Oriental poetry where it is intended to express the highest praise. Thus we can say that in the eyes of our Beloved Lord His true followers have beauty of grace (derived from "the beauty of holiness" Psa. 96:9) and a liveliness of spirit (based on "a lively hope" 1 Pet. 1:3 KJV). Moreover, as the courage and endurance of horses is implied by the frequent references in scripture to their being used in battle, so His followers will have courage and endurance (for "the LORD is my strength and my shield"—Psa. 28:7). Just as the horses trained to draw a king's chariot must be obedient, in subjection, and harmonious and united in action, so does our Lord look for such qualities in His own ("bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"—2 Cor. 10:5).

"It is a feature in this book...that the King does not speak of the beauty which He sees in her until it has manifested itself. It is her capacity to appreciate His excellence and peerless worth that makes her attractive to Him. And His expressions of love follow upon the expression of hers...it is a discriminating love which is attracted by lovable features in its object." (C.A.C.)

1:10 To the maiden her checks are black but to her Lord, "THY CHEEKS ARE COMELY WITH PLAITS OF HAIR, THY NECK WITH STRINGS OF JEWELS." Her neck is no longer burdened with the yoke of Satan but adorned with the chains of heavenly wisdom (Prov. 1:9) "as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isa. 61:10) Believers are made comely as God said of Israel "perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee." (Ezek. 16:14 KJV)

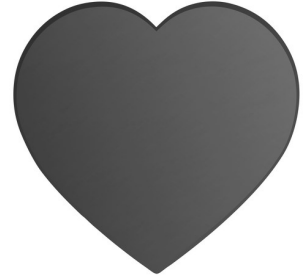
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THE CLOUDS HANG LOW AND HUMAN HEARTS ARE BREAKING—A HYMN

THE clouds hang low, and human *hearts* are breaking
O'er all the earth to-day;
Yet through the gloom a low, sweet song, awaking,
Breaks through the shadows grey.

Chorus-

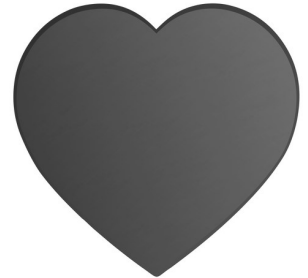
*Gladness will come! Hallelujah! it is coming;
Gladness is on the way.
God will unveil the fulness of His mercy,
Gladness will come to stay.*



Soon the dark pall, so long the world enshrouding,
Hiding the blessed light;
Shall disappear like mists before the morning,
Scat'ring the shades of night.

Desolate souls, your vanished loved ones mourning,
Soon will your pain be o'er;
Your arms shall clasp their dear and long lost treasures,
Gladness will come once more.

Sad *hearts*, look up! The glorious dawn is coming,
E'en now the murky skies
Glow in the east, and flush with rosy promise,
Greeting your longing eyes.



Earth yet will smile in more than Eden-glory,
Sighing will flee away;
Tears will not mar life's beautiful to-morrow,
Gladness will come to stay.

These words are attributed to M. L. McPhail (1854-1931) a hymnwriter of the late 19th century Bible Student movement. Born in Scotland before emigrating to Northeast United States of America, 22 hymns are listed as his and they appear in two main hymnals "Zion's Glad Songs" and "Winnowed Anthems." In regard to this hymn of coming gladness it is worthy of note that his son died in 1897.

He made a Pilgrim visit in 1905 to this side of the Atlantic and visited 48 churches from Brighton on the south coast to Dundee in the Scottish lowlands as well as Belfast and Dublin on the island of Ireland.*

Here are some verses from the Bible which could have influenced the writer:

Psalm 18:11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

Ezekiel 30:3 (RSV) For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

Psalm 119:64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy.

Isaiah 58:8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.

Psalm 30:5 (RSV) Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Revelation 21:4 God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Acts 17:15&18 They that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens... Then certain philosophers...said, What will this babbler say?... He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

Acts 4:2 They taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Ezekiel 43:2 The glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.

Luke 21:28 When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Matt. 24:27 (RVIC) As the breaking sunshine cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the presence of the Son of man.

Isaiah 51:3 The LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Isaiah 51:11 The redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

THE PLAN OF GOD—IN BRIEF

Study 1 The Bible Viewed in the Light of Reason

The Bible is the torch of civilization and liberty. Its influence for good in society has been recognized by the greatest statesmen, even though they for the most part have looked at it through the various glasses of conflicting creeds, which, while upholding the Bible, grievously misrepresent its teachings. The grand old book is unintentionally but woefully misrepresented by its friends, many of whom would lay down life on its behalf; and yet they do it more vital injury than its foes, by claiming its support to their long-revered misconceptions of its truth, received through the traditions of their fathers. Would that such would awake, re-examine their oracle, and put to confusion its enemies by disarming them of their weapons!

The Bible is the oldest book in existence; it has outlived the storms of thirty centuries. Men have endeavored by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth: they have hidden it, buried it, made it a crime punishable with death to have it in possession, and the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives.

The fact that it has survived so many centuries, notwithstanding such unparalleled efforts to banish and destroy it, is at least strong circumstantial evidence that the great Being whom it claims as its Author has also been its Preserver.

This book throughout constantly points and refers to one prominent character, Jesus of Nazareth, who it claims, was the Son of God. From beginning to end His name, and office, and work, are made prominent. That a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived, and was somewhat noted, about the time indicated by the writers of the Bible, is a fact of history outside the Bible, and it is variously and fully corroborated. That this Jesus was crucified because He had rendered Himself offensive to the Jews and their priesthood is a further fact established by history outside the evidence furnished by the New Testament writers. The writers of the New Testament (except Paul and Luke) were the personal acquaintances and disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, whose doctrines their writings set forth.

One plan, spirit, aim and purpose pervades the entire book. Its opening pages record the creation and fall of man; its closing pages tell of man's recovery from that fall; and its intervening pages show the successive

steps of the plan of God for the accomplishment of this purpose. The harmony, yet contrast, of the first three and the last three chapters of the Bible is striking. The one describes the first creation, the other the renewed or restored creation, with sin and its penal-curse removed; the one shows Satan and evil entering into the world to deceive and destroy, the other shows his work undone, the destroyed ones restored, evil extinguished and Satan destroyed; the one shows the dominion lost by Adam, the other shows it restored and forever established by Christ, and God's will done in earth as in heaven; the one shows sin the producing cause of degradation, shame and death, the other shows the reward of righteousness to be glory, honour and life.

Though written by many pens, at various times, under different circumstances, the Bible is not merely a collection of moral precepts, wise maxims and words of comfort. It is more: it is a reasonable, philosophical and harmonious statement of the causes of present evil in the world, its only remedy and the final results as seen by divine wisdom, which saw the end of the plan from before its beginning, marking as well the pathway of God's people, and upholding and strengthening them with exceeding great and precious promises to be realized in due time.

The teaching of Genesis, that man was tried in a state of original perfection in one representative, that he failed, and that the present imperfection, sickness and death are the results, but that God has not forsaken him, and will ultimately recover him through a redeemer, born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), is kept up and elaborated all the way through. The necessity of the death of a redeemer as a sacrifice for sins, and of his righteousness as a covering for our sin, is pointed out in the clothing of skins for Adam and Eve; in the acceptance of Abel's offerings; in Isaac on the altar; in the death of the various sacrifices by which the patriarchs had access to God, and of those instituted under the law and perpetuated throughout the Jewish age. The prophets, though credited with understanding but slightly the significance of some of their utterances (1 Pet. 1:12), mention the laying of the sins upon a person instead of a dumb animal, and in prophetic vision they see Him who is to redeem and to deliver the race led "as a lamb to the slaughter," that "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," and that "with (by) His stripes we are healed." They pictured Him as "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and declared that "The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:3-7) They told where this deliverer would be born (Micah 5:2), and when He should die, assuring us that it would be "not for Himself." (Dan. 9:26) They mention various peculiari-

ties concerning Him—that He would be “righteous,” and free from “deceit,” “violence,” or any just cause of death (Isa. 53:8,9,11); that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12); that He would be numbered among transgressors in His death (Isa. 53:12); that not a bone of Him should be broken (Psa. 34:20; John 19:36); and that though He should die and be buried, His flesh would not corrupt, neither would He remain in the grave. (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31)

The New Testament writers clearly and forcibly, yet simply, record the fulfilment of all these predictions in Jesus of Nazareth, and by logical reasonings show that such a ransom price as He gave was needful, as already predicted in the Law and the Prophets, before the sins of the world could be blotted out. (Isa. 1:18) They trace the entire plan in a most logical and forcible manner, appealing neither to the prejudices nor to the passions of their hearers, but to their enlightened reason alone, furnishing some of the most remarkably close and cogent reasoning to be found anywhere on any subject. See Rom. 5:17-19, and onward to the 12th chapter.

Moses, in the Law, pointed not alone to a sacrifice, but also to a blotting out of sin and a blessing of the people under this great deliverer, whose power and authority he declares shall vastly exceed his own, though it should be “like unto” it. (Deut. 18:15,19) The promised deliverer is to bless not only Israel, but through Israel “all the families of the earth.” (Gen. 12:3, 18:18; 22:18; 26:4)

These writers point out the harmony of this view with what is written in the Law and the Prophets; and the grandeur and breadth of the plan they present more than meets the most exalted conception of what it purports to be—“Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10)

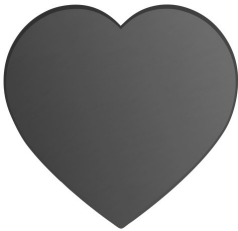
The thought of Messiah as a ruler of not only Israel, but also of the world, suggested in the books of Moses, is the theme of all the prophets. The thought of the kingdom was uppermost also in the teaching of the apostles; and Jesus taught that we should pray, “Your Kingdom come,” and promised those a share in it who would first suffer for the truth, and thus prove themselves worthy.

This hope of the coming glorious kingdom gave all the faithful ones courage to endure persecution and to suffer reproach, deprivation and loss, even unto death. And in the grand allegorical prophecy which closes

the New Testament, the worthy “Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:12), the worthy “overcomers” whom He will make kings and priests in His Kingdom, and the trials and obstacles which they must overcome to be worthy to share that kingdom, are all faithfully portrayed. Then are introduced symbolic representations of the blessings to accrue to the world under that Millennial reign, when Satan shall be bound and Adamic death and sorrow wiped out, and when all the nations of earth shall walk in the light of the heavenly kingdom—the new Jerusalem.

The Bible, from first to last, holds out a doctrine found nowhere else, and in opposition to the theories of all the heathen religions—that a future life for the dead will come through a RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

Reprint 8th Edition 1993



MY HEARTFELT GREETING

THE best of all good wishes flow from my heart to-day:
That God's great loving-kindness may bless thee on thy way;
For with it comes all favour, the warmth of His embrace.
Sweet fragrance of His presence in every time and place.

'TIS joy for me to wish thee the fulness of His love,
So strong, so good, so mindful, and gentle as a dove.
Without this loving favour what would to us remain?
All earthly treasures worthless, and life spent here in vain.

O PRECIOUS thought to wish thee, the best He has to give.
To all who truly love Him who through His Word do live.
The glory of His purpose, with plan so wide and deep.
Brings hope to His beloved who will His precepts keep.

FRIEND, when these wishes reach thee, O breathe the prayer for me,
The echoes will arise to God in sweetest melody.
Then heart to heart we shall respond to Heaven's glad refrain.
Which tells of joyous life to come beyond the hour of pain!

FL

THE GATHERING HOME OF SAINTS

Part 10 Bringing forth Earth's Princes

The moment comes for which so long prepared, the raising up of worthy men of God, whose singleness of heart in ages past shone forth as lights in this dark earth. Each one a life of simple trust deterred by nothing that this world could bring to contradict that vision of an all-wise God. How these will first appear once more upon this earth we cannot tell. Perhaps at first unnoticed they will rise like soldiers from the fields in which they fell in far off days, picked men of valour proved, the army of Immanuel, their presence to be felt in that great hour of need beyond the battle of the day of God; a time when poor bewildered men surviving desolation know not which way to go, or where to find the heart to start again.

For such an hour of man's "wit's end" the Father has reserved this band He has prepared to witness to the power of holy walk with God. However they come forth, that moment of rebirth of these, faith's witnesses, will surely draw the praise of countless hosts above admiring angels who sustained the courage of these noble minds that claimed the shadow of Almighty care, for they had found the "secret place" reserved for total trust, not in seen material things of dust, but in that deep unfathomed love of God. They walked in faith, nor did faith need to lean on human comforts of the flesh. Prosperity was theirs, but founded not in earthly bliss, nor yet in smoothed untroubled road of tranquil life. They knew no city built by man with walls sufficient to repel the enemies of the soul, while sin and sorrow stalked the earth, and death was in control. It was their inner man that prospered, not their flesh. Their mind found stay in God and thus found rest. The Rock of Ages was foundation sure of better prospects glimpsed and welcomed from afar. Their city *He* would build, without Whom every man but built in vain. For God to sign the deeds was in their minds enough, and they could confidently wait secure, for they endured as seeing One above. From hope they borrowed for each day its joy and thanked their God.

Now each comes forth, with wondering eyes surveying the scene, perhaps with feelings mixed, as Noah did first behold the life-drained earth, flood-washed, and desolate. Yet eyes accustomed to faith's vision keen regard not anxiously immediate things of natural sight. So trained they are to see far off, no present view confines the mind, nor does a faith so tried regard the natural boundaries of human strength. What seems impossible to man they wave aside who know their God. Through every obstacle they see a way, and mountains fall at faith's command, nor do they hesitate to face

the giants that stalk the land, for giants there are that stand between man and his rest. That confidence will never be misplaced that hangs its all on heavenly powers above, and ways and purposes of Him Who framed the worlds. However dark the scene that time of trouble leaves each hour they know will brighter be, and in their faith poor man will see way out of his tragedy. If enemy appears (and enemies will there be in that fair day), or limits are revealed of natural strength, they know of old the Lord did so arrange that thus His glory be explored.

What noble leaders these as earth's returning multitudes come forth from death to learn the ways of life. For these shall lead the blind in ways they have not known, and as man feels for God it will be men of faith who then will shine, inspire, enlighten, share the eye-salve they have learned so well to use. New senses they will rouse in man's bewildered mind, and purpose in his step, and light of hope will turn out darkness from the soul. The King in holy beauty men will "see," and will explore the land of untold breadth, the wondrous everlastings and the infinite that are the realms of the Eternal God. These teachers of mankind will point men to the Word, and in the leaves of Scripture men will find the healing of their mind. When Ezra stood to read God's Law, the Levites helped men understand what truth was all about, and so will these. Thus man will come to know the love, and find the arms, and feel the bond, and every other joy that can be known, belonging to the family of God. The trivial transient toys of present state will be exchanged for things that satisfy the perfect mind in tune with God, a mind that, like its Maker, can create, and man with wisdom true will be endowed, to take once more dominion of this earth. And willing offerings then men will be, who once distorted judgment, hated light, and evilly disposed of men of faith.

As one who wakens from a fitful dream, man's past will seem unreal in that fair day, and gladly will he welcome in new light the very ones his eyes, once blind, despised. How touching then the scenes this change will bring. The helping hand of Abel reaches out to wipe away the guilty mark of Cain, and brothers cleaved by hate will love again. And everywhere the story is the same. There Joseph's brethren stand, now filled with awe. At last they understand and seek the door, in terror of a wrath they well deserve. But Joseph had wisely worked on all their hearts, through circumstance and trial overruled, and knew that they had learned at last the way of self denial. No longer could they break their father's heart. So when they looked on Joseph now with fear, his tears and kindly words filled them with cheer, as arms outstretched, he said to them, "*Come near.*"

Look back on every record of the past and mark the enemies of men of God. Each foe is marked out for the aid of those who once spitefully they misused. The hand of mercy and of grace will wipe the fear and guilt from every face, and readily one-time enemy embrace. The wicked hands by which the Saviour died will one day reach out to the Crucified with penitential grief. How great then their relief, to hear the “forgiveness,” and “Come near.” “You meant it for evil, God for good.” Such gems of truth they never understood when Satan reigned. Those very hardships, disciplines and pain prepared just men, and tested faith to uttermost degree. Men’s lives He gave, examples now to me. And in the age now opening they will see fruit of their suffering in the hearts of men who through their work of faith will live again.

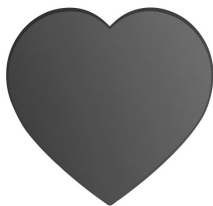
How fit will Moses be, as closing eyes reopen to ignore the passing age that intervened, when God shall tell him, “There’s the land, go forth!” “The straggling band of Israel first you’ll lead, but there behind them see the Gentiles too.” Then Samson will share secrets of his strength to all who seek to take the Nazarite vow of consecration to Almighty God. Then all will Samson’s victory know, together bring the house of sin to ruin, when in men’s hearts the power of God is shown. When princes rule in judgment who can tell the sum of earthly blessings that will flow from righteousness? As faithful hearts of old behold the special part the Lord has long prepared for those who love His Word, what deep emotions fill that worthy band, who greeted from afar Emmanuel’s land.

CONCLUSION of this story cannot be until we shall exhaust eternity! Nor can we now with noontide sight appreciate the things of which we write as we shall then. So near to us the hour, so dear the hope for which we long. Yet close proximity leaves still a veil between those blessed things and me. Six thousand years have passed since Abel’s blood was shed, and we have reached that resurrection day, as saints beyond the veil will testify. Yet none of us below can visualize the scene when resurrected hosts of men rise from their graves. The answer to the questions voiced by Paul, *how man will rise and how will he be clothed*, he now, at last, may know, but while we wait below, these things must still remain hid from our eyes. The programme we hold dear, but we must wait the hour the curtain will be raised before the blessed details are exposed. The intellect of saints is tied to time and cannot clearly see beyond this hour. The words we use are based on present need, and, like dear Paul, if we were carried now to view those scenes and then return to earth, we could not tell what we had seen, for human language fails when trying to describe another realm. The Lord so understands both our desires and all the limits of our present state.

Hence here throughout the Word He uses poetry to convey the feelings and the joys of things unspeakable... *The earth transformed to paradise, the lion and lamb in sweet accord, the little child that tames the wild beast...* Through types and shadows too He speaks, and men of old act out for us great truths... *In glory garments does the priest emerge to bless the flock of God...* Where speech and intellect fail the heart may still pass veil and human boundary. If now it burns within, we know that He Who fills our minds this day with precious glimpses of the truth for which we long, Himself has blessed to us the bread of life, and hears our prayer to with us stay until this night be gone.

May hope's sweet vision brighter grow each hour until we meet beyond to break death's power, and know in greater fulness than those joys He waits to share. Amen.

DH



MY HEART'S DESIRE

*FATHER I know that all my life is portioned out for me;
And the changes that are sure to come I do not fear to see:
But I ask Thee for a present mind intent on pleasing Thee.*

*I ASK Thee for a thankful love, through constant watching—
wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles, to wipe the weeping eyes,
And a heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathize.*

*I WOULD not have the restless will that hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do, or secret thing to know.
I would be dealt with as a child, and guided where to go.*

*I ASK Thee for the daily strength, to none that ask denied;
And a mind to blend with outward life, while keeping at Thy
side:
Content to fill a little space if Thou be glorified.*

*(Psalm 27:4; 37:4)
Anna Leatitia Waring (1850)*

THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CHRISTENDOM

Part 1. As students of the Bible we naturally look at major world events from a prophetic standpoint. It is proper to “*watch and pray*” as our Lord Jesus told us. (Matt. 26:41) We do not know if this current “*birth pang*” (1 Thess. 5:1-3) is the final one or if it is merely another spasm. Time will tell. Regardless the pandemic which is global is a major event that ranks in importance with World War I and World War II. The world as we knew it only a few months ago is gone, perhaps forever. We should consider soberly what we should be watching for and more importantly what we should be doing.

Overview:

The Bible tells us, and C. T. Russell foresaw, that the prominence of Christendom will not continue to be a dominating influence in the world. In fact, expectations are that anarchy will begin in the Western World and will end with the home governments of Gog and Magog. (Ezek. 38)

We have seen changes that are contributing to a decline in Christendom:

- (a) Support for the Jewish people has gradually diminished, and will continue to decline until “all her lovers will forget her” as stated in Jer. 30:14. In proportion as the Western World abandons the Jewish people, to that extent any special favour from God, related to that support for the Jewish people, is being and will continue to be withdrawn.
- (b) Christian principles have been abandoned and, beginning in the 1960s, evolution, higher-criticism, liberalism and relativistic morality have taken over. This trend has grown to become the accepted norm in recent years and is accelerating the decay of Western Civilization.
- (c) Western Society has become more polarized, politics has become more dysfunctional, and social dissatisfaction and unrest have increased.
- (d) The Pandemic has resulted in severe financial difficulties that have aggravated all of these problems further, and this will lead to a general weakening of the Western World, not only financially, but politically and militarily as well.

What is Christendom?

“Christendom” or the “The Christian World” is the geographic region where Christianity is a vital part of the inhabitants’ lives. “Christendom” is also defined as the collection of countries where Christian principles [as they understand them] are upheld by the Government. The “Western World” is another term used to identify a certain region where Christianity is the majority religion. This region includes the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe. The region dominated by the Eastern Orthodox religion is generally considered separate from

“Christendom,” a fact supported by Bible prophecy. In the Harvest Message the term Christendom is applied to the “field” of the Wheat and Tares Parable. (Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43) The Harvest Work has been most predominant in the countries of so-called Christendom. Only recently has the focus of the Harvest Work changed to other countries such as Africa and India.

What has happened in Christendom since the Pandemic started?

There are five areas to be considered. Perhaps there are more.

- (1) Restriction of liberties
- (2) Economic crises and instability
- (3) Polarization and social unrest
- (4) Political dysfunction
- (5) General fear for the future

Restriction of liberties

The Scriptural basis for this expectation is found in the closing experiences of John the Baptist; the prophetic picture in Daniel 3; Jesus’ words in John 9:4; several places in the Book of Revelation, and other prophecies.

For many years the Christians have wondered how it would be possible for all the governments of Christendom to restrict personal liberties in such a way that the majority of people would accept those measures, at least for a time. The Pandemic has provided such an opportunity. As a result face-to-face religious services, such as weekly meetings and conventions, have been stopped all over the world. We are still able to meet online, but we do not know how long this will continue to be possible. It would be very easy for our liberty in this area to be restricted further.

Christians in many countries are greatly limited in spreading the Gospel message as public meetings and other similar activities are no longer permitted. Much of the present Harvest Work is now conducted electronically and again it would be quite easy for liberty in this area to be restricted as well.

Travel has also been severely reduced, especially international travel and we do not know how long this will last.

Economic crises and instability

The Scriptural basis for this expectation is found in Isa. 2:17-21; Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18; James 5:1-9; Rev. 18:9-19 and other places. *C.T. Russell wrote many articles and discussed in great detail his expectation that the ultimate financial collapse in the world would be one of the major

factors in the Great Time of Trouble. He stated that the climax of the Great Time of Trouble will be a “financial storm that shall sweep over Christendom.” The Pandemic has created global economic instability that has not been experienced in modern times. However, its effect is most pronounced in the Western World. We are only in the beginning stages of this crisis and the ability of governments to prop up the global financial system is limited. The longer the Pandemic lasts, the greater this crisis will become.

One of the most pronounced effects of the Pandemic is on the place of the US Dollar in the world economy. There are now serious discussions about the possibility that it will be replaced as the key global currency. Such a change would have a dramatic effect and lead to even more instability, especially in the United States.

There has already been a huge personal impact on hundreds of millions of people. Many millions have lost their jobs. Governments have provided unprecedented amounts of financial assistance to the unemployed and to businesses. This has greatly increased the amount of government and private debt which was already at record levels. Since all government debt today is supported merely by public confidence, sudden and disastrous changes can take place because of a loss of such confidence. Eventually they will “*cast their silver and their gold into the streets*” as the Scriptures tell us.

Polarization and social unrest

The Scriptural basis for this expectation is found in Psa. 46:1,2; Isa. 24:19,20; Luke 21:25,26; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 18:21 and other places. The raging waves of the sea and the nations being angry are symbolic expressions of this breaking down of society. Another set of Scriptures is found in Joel 2:1-11 where it describes “*the Lord’s Great Army*.” Notice that verse 1 applies this prophecy primarily to Christendom: “*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand.*”

Never in recent history has there been so much polarization in society as we see today. Political parties are becoming more extreme on both ends of the spectrum, left and right. Racial inequality, as a social issue, has spread from the U.S. across the globe, but especially in Christendom. The division between rich and poor is greater than it has ever been, especially in the Western World, leading to more polarization and dissatisfaction. The Pandemic has been a strong contributing factor in all of these and

other areas.

There have been periods of social unrest in the past, but never so widespread or so severe as we see developing today. Polarization leads to further unrest. Unrest leads to additional restriction of liberties. This becomes a vicious cycle that tends to anarchy, which we anticipate is to be the final result. (Add to this vicious cycle the next point:)

Political dysfunction

The Bible points to the French Revolution as an example of the trouble to come upon Christendom. We find this in Dan. 12:5-7, Rev. 10, and Rev. 12:15,16. The French Revolution was brought on by political dysfunction which contributed to polarization. This led to financial crises resulting in greater and greater dissatisfaction, social unrest and eventually anarchy.

We see the same forces at work today. In fact, the degree and extent of political dysfunction, especially in the Western World, is the greatest it has been in modern history. The Pandemic can be seen to be a strong contributing factor in this political dysfunction, as government leaders and parties fight and argue about proposed solutions, primarily based on self-interests, while the people perceive that their interests are not being served.

General fear for the future

Luke 21:26 aptly describes our day: *“Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”* Even before this Pandemic there was a high level of fear in society; the degree and extent of that fear has been increased dramatically now.

So, we see the foregoing five factors active in Christendom today, we see that these five factors have been aggravated by the Pandemic, and we see the potential for greater effects in the future.

The following paragraph by C. T. Russell summarizes the situation very well: “The masses will be restless under their restraints but will be conscious of their weakness as compared with the kings and princes, financial, social, religious and political, who will then hold sway. The majority of the poor and the middle class prefer peace at almost any price. The masses have no sympathy with anarchy. They realize truly that the worst form of government is better than none. The masses will seek relief through the ballot and the peaceful readjustment of earth’s affairs for the elimination of evil, for the placing of monopolies and utilities and the supplies of nature in the hands of the people for the public good. The

crisis will be reached when the hitherto upholders of the law shall become violators of the law and resisters of the will of the majority as expressed by the ballot. Fear for the future will goad the well-meaning masses to desperation, and anarchy will result when Socialism fails.”

Part 2. What we have considered so far naturally leads to the next major question:

How does the Pandemic fit into the prophetic sequence of events?

There are many prophetic events which have already been fulfilled when seeing the Second Presence of our Lord. It is not possible to consider all of these but some of the more prominent ones include the call “*Come out of her My people!*” (Rev. 18:4) The increase of knowledge and “running to and fro” in Dan. 12:4 is another prophecy that is obvious to all. The end of the Times of the Gentiles and the events which prove this conclusively is another. Perhaps one of the most powerful of all is the regathering of the Jews to their homeland and the re-establishment of Israel as a nation.

We find this prophetic sequence in at least two places:

(a) Elijah’s vision in 1 Kings 19:11,12, and (b) Amos 5:19 and its context. The purpose for examining these two prophecies is to trace their accurate fulfillment so far, and then to see how the Pandemic might fit into them.

Elijah’s Vision of the Wind, Earthquake, Fire and the Still Small Voice.

The Wind was so powerful that it “*rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks.*” This reminds us of the prophecy in Daniel 2 and the striking of the multi-metallic image. Wind represents war, and the “Great War,” as it was called, (World War I) started right on time to the day in 1914. [This was on the 9th of Av, according to the Jewish calendar, the exact day when the first Temple was destroyed 2,520 years earlier.] Mountains represent kingdoms, and the kingdoms most affected by the “wind” feature of the Time of Trouble have been, and still are, the so-called Christendom kingdoms. This part of Elijah’s Vision had a beginning of fulfillment in 1914 and continues until today in spasms.

The “earthquake” represents revolution. Social revolution has been the natural consequence of the War phase of the Time of Trouble. Great spasms of social revolution began near the end of World War I with the Bolshevik Revolution and have continued to this day.

The “fire” represents anarchy. We have seen anarchy on a limited scale in certain parts of the world. Incidents of anarchy have generally followed a sequence: war creates problems: financial, political etc., this leads to

revolution and attempts at social reform that prove unable to solve the problems. The result is anarchy. The French Revolution is an example from the past; Libya is a more recent example and there are others. We have not yet seen anarchy on a global scale, but we do see many indications of incipient anarchy all over the world. These observations tell us that we are on the verge of anarchy, the fire phase of Elijah's Vision, and that the Pandemic is pushing the world closer to that condition. Will there be something more? We do not know, but we believe that the time is short. We wait longingly for "*the still small voice*" which will say to the raging waves: "*Peace! Be still!*"

Amos 5:19 The lion, bear and snake

A sequence of events is given in this verse concerning a man. Several factors in the context support the idea that he could represent Christian Society. The following is presented as a suggestion.

- (1) The man flees from a Lion, representing the Divine Right of Kings which ruled in Christendom prior to 1914. This came to an end in World War I, during the first phase of the Time of Trouble.
- (2) A Bear meets the man, representing Socialism, the second phase of the Time of Trouble. Though it spread over much of the world, Socialism cannot solve the world's problems. The Soviet Union fell in 1989. Any socialist movement which currently exists, or rises in the future, will also fail.
- (3) The man flees from the Bear, enters his House, and leans his hand on the Wall. Some in the past, decades prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, believed that the House represented Nationalism or Protectionism. The House as a symbol conveys the idea of protection. The Wall as a symbol conveys the idea of support. Recently, even before the Pandemic, there was a strong movement toward Nationalism and Protectionism in the Western World. The Pandemic has prompted many governments, especially the United States, to adopt stronger and stronger protective measures.
- (4) A Snake bites the man. Nationalism, instead of providing an environment of protection and support, will become a prison and the final destruction will come from within: anarchy. All attempts at government by fallen man will eventually fail. Christian Society, the Western World in particular, will fall first. The reasons for saying this will be considered later.

A related excerpt from the Harvest Message

"The Scriptures indicate that pestilences, as well as physical convulsions, will mingle with anarchy in making up the sum of the great trouble approaching, which will be a judgment from the Almighty to reduce the

world to humility and submission, and make mankind ready to hear ‘Him that speaketh from heaven,’ whose voice shall thus ‘shake the earth [society], and also the heavens [ecclesiasticism].’—(Heb. 12:25-29)*

So, we see a further confirmation of the thought that events such as the current Pandemic will “mingle with anarchy” and form a part of the Great Time of Trouble. The world recovered from the Great Pandemic of 1918 (Spanish flu). Perhaps it will recover from the one we are experiencing now. This possibility seems unlikely, but everything is in the hands of the Lord and He will decide the matter.

What do we expect to happen in Christendom in the future?

We do not know what the future holds in detail. We only know what the Scriptures tell us, and the broad view of those prophecies as given in the Harvest Message. There are many prophecies which are not yet fulfilled, or which are only partially fulfilled. Some of these prophecies may have some connection with the Pandemic.

Part 3. Five areas were already considered regarding the *current* effects of the Pandemic on Christendom. The possible *future* impact will now be considered in greater detail.

Restriction of liberties

The spasms of the Great Time of Trouble will lead to many problems for the “heavens” or powers of control. The governments of “Christendom” will look to the established churches for help. The combined efforts of Church and State, symbolized by the croaking of the frogs, will be to preserve the *status quo* and quelling any opposition. (Rev. 16:12-16) As mentioned before, we do not know how this total restriction of liberty will come about, but the Pandemic may play an important role. We must continue to “watch and pray” and more importantly, we must use the liberty we still have before it is taken away.

Economic crises and instability

The economic effects of the Pandemic have been global and catastrophic. These effects will last for many years. It seems certain that this important feature of the Great Time of Trouble has progressed greatly because of the Pandemic. It has already led to much instability all over the world, but especially in Christendom. We expect this instability to increase.

Rev. 18 shows that Great Babylon will be destroyed while the financial and political leaders stand “afar off” (v.10). This suggests that the religious institutions of Christendom will fall before the rest of the “heavens” or powers of control. Russell says “The time of trouble, as it will affect the

world, will be after Babylon has begun to fall and disintegrate.”

The “Beast” and the “False Prophet” [religious systems] are cast into the “Lake of Fire” first, but the “Dragon” is later cast into the “Bottomless Pit” to be released after the thousand years has expired. (Rev. 19:20; 20:1-3,7-10) Satan is behind all three agencies, but it is the Civil Power aspect that is shown under the symbol of the Dragon. The authority and influence symbolized by the power of the Dragon, Satan’s last vestige of control, will be totally suppressed after the destruction of the Religious systems. However, the Church will be complete before any of these three agencies are rendered powerless.

Another important prophecy which has not yet been considered is in Ezekiel. Chapter 38 shows a sequence of events harmonious with what has already been considered: Israel is now regathered to her homeland and is a nation again. This is a fulfillment of many prophecies. In this chapter we are told that a time will come after this regathering when Israel will “dwell safely” and “without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.” (vv. 8,11) At the same time, they are shown as being extraordinarily rich: having “gotten cattle and goods” and “silver and gold.” (vv. 12-13)

Gog and Magog (north and east of Israel) first go westward but are then drawn southward to Israel (v. 4). They go to “take a spoil” and to “carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods.” (vv. 12-13)

What is the connection of this prophecy to our subject? Israel must be at peace with her Arab neighbors. We see some strong indicators of this possibility in recent developments, politically and economically. The region will have stability and economic prosperity at a time when the rest of the world does not, Israel will be “dwelling safely at the time when the rest of the world is in its wildest commotion.” (Russell)

No one will come to help Israel against the invasion of God and Magog. All her lovers will have forgotten her. (Jer. 30:14) One likely reason is that the Western World at that time will be too weak to assist. This weakness, shown in other prophecies, will be financial, political, and social weakness. The effects of anarchy will already be felt in the Western World at this time.

The Pandemic is already affecting the Western World with financial, political and social weakness. There will probably be a combination of factors which will further weaken Christendom in the future. There may

be more than one Pandemic. Physical convulsions such as earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, floods and other natural disasters are already adding to the financial weakness and instability and will likely continue to do so.

Polarization and social unrest

With the French Revolution, several factors led to the violent overthrow of that government. One factor then was a polarization of society that led to social unrest. The dividing of the people into two classes is already begun taking place along financial, political and social lines. Government leaders are causing much of the political polarization. Financial “kings and princes” are causing a division between the rich and the poor. Social problems are dividing the masses as well. The Pandemic has aggravated these problems and the resulting pressures will continue to make matters worse. Future polarization and social unrest will increase because of many factors.

Political dysfunction

Much of the dissatisfaction of the masses is a result of the inability of current leaders and politicians to solve the problems that are affecting society. This dysfunction is generally a result of selfish infighting to advance their own agenda and to gain more power. Once again this is a strong parallel to the causes of the French Revolution. The Pandemic is the latest crisis that political leaders and politicians have been unable to solve. There will be other crises in the future.

General fear for the future

“Fear for the future will goad the well-meaning masses to desperation...”
Regardless of the causes, or how big a role the Pandemic plays in those causes, the final result will be anarchy.

More importantly, let us never forget what lies beyond the dark clouds of trouble and the fires of anarchy. Let us continue to pray: “Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

AGS

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