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Christ, Our All in All

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

As we have begun a new year, an honest appraisal of ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5, NASB) must lead to the conclusion that, as members of the fallen and sinful race of mankind, we have nothing of virtue or character by which we can commend ourselves to God, with the hope of being acceptable to Him because of our own righteousness (Romans 3:10). This means that our sonship privileges in His family are possible through the abundance of His grace in providing a way whereby He could be just and still be the Justifier of those who come to Him through Christ (Romans 3:26). Salvation and all the divine blessings are ours, because of the Heavenly Father's love in giving His Son to be our Redeemer (Ephesians 2:8).

The value of salvation is appreciated most by those who, having a proper evaluation of their own fallen condition, realize their great need for it (Psalms 34:18). Those who come to Him in simple faith and full devotion, may not only enjoy peace with God through His divine favor, but have access to the inner chambers of His grace, and there rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1,2). This “great salvation,” the apostle explains, began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him (Hebrews 2:3).

Jesus' first advent marked the opening of the age during which the high, or heavenly calling of those who were to reign with him in glory was to operate. Not until he came and shed his blood as the Redeemer of both the Church and the world would it have been possible for anyone to meet the conditions laid down for those who are called to “glory, honor and immortality” (Romans 2:7).

Christ — Our Wisdom

Not only was Christ the first one to walk in the narrow way that leads to immortality, but only

through his merit, and by virtue of his counsel and example, is it possible for others to walk acceptably in the same narrow way (Matthew 7:14). As our text emphasizes, Christ is our wisdom our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption, or deliverance. In other words, he is all and everything to us that is necessary in order that we may be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” in the heavenly reward offered to the saints during this age (Romans 8:17).

One of the official titles the Scriptures give to Jesus is that of Counsellor (Isaiah 9:6). If we are to be truly wise it is essential that we follow the instructions and leadership of Christ. “The fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). To reverence the Lord implies respect for His words of enlightenment and instruction, a respect that will lead us to fully obey the divine will (Philippians 2:13).

The quality of reverence for God is necessary from the very beginning of our approach to Him. We recognize His greatness, perfection of holiness, and our own unrighteousness. To recognize this is the true foundation of wisdom's structure, for it implies willingness and desire to put aside our own imperfect ways and to accept the counsel and will of God.

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Approaching God in this attitude of humility, and recognizing the need for a Redeemer, is the first step in the way of wisdom. Those who are called by God also need to recognize the wisdom of making a full consecration of themselves to do the Father's will, devote themselves fully to Him who has promised to give to them wisdom which is from above (James 1:5). The Word of God becomes the guiding light of our lives only when we devote ourselves unreservedly to the doing of His will.

Christ is our wisdom in this fuller sense also because he is to us the living Word of God. He is the Captain of our salvation, the Head of the body, who, in being guided by the words of God himself, has shown us the true meaning of those instructions as they affect the lives of those who are following in his footsteps (Hebrews 2:9-11).

Wisdom From Above

The Apostle James gives us an over-all picture of heavenly wisdom, saying that it is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17 ASV). Heavenly wisdom which is in harmony with the divine character of love. Christ did so wonderfully display the love qualities of heavenly wisdom as he went about in the divine service. Christ was first "pure." He was this by nature, even as a child; having been born perfect. His moral and intellectual purity was sealed by his obedience to the Law Covenant. He was pure also in his whole-hearted devotion to the divine will from the time of his consecration at Jordan until the very end of his earthly life. Jesus was fully devoted to the doing of his Father's will in harmony with the instructions of the written Word (Matthew 4:10).

"Then Peaceable"

The Apostle Paul admonished that "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). This beloved servant in the narrow way knew, even as Jesus exemplified in his life, that putting purity first in the consecrated life means that we will not always be able to dwell in peace in the world and with the worldly-minded. By putting purity first, Jesus did not yield to the adversary's suggestions to compromise the divine will. It was not his desire to avoid the persecutions that came upon Him. He fully resisted "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

One of the prophetic titles descriptive of the spirit of Jesus' mission to earth, was that of the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). In his Sermon on the Mount, he beatified the peacemakers. The gracious words which fell from his consecrated lips promoted peace and good will in the lives of those whose hearts were not flawed by selfishness, and whose minds were not blinded by the darkness of this world. But because the darkness hates the light (John 3:19, 20), the Master's words



The Apostle James

of peace and good will stirred up enmity against him by the world. In following the Master's example, we may not be confronted with similar large and dramatic issues to test the purity and whole-heartedness of our devotion to God, but his loyalty to the principles of righteousness in all matters of life, constitutes a perfect guide for us (John 16:33).

Putting purity first in the carrying out of our consecration vow will cause us the loss of worldly friendships, and may even test the depth of our devotion as it applies to our association with some who profess to be followers of the Master. Where issues of the truth and its service are concerned, we are to follow the example of Christ who, by the appointment of our Heavenly Father, has been made unto us the embodiment of heavenly wisdom. Worldly wisdom often compromises principle to avoid suffering, but Jesus did not do this. He was guided by his knowledge of the divine will even though it meant travail and sorrow (Isaiah 53:11).

"Gentle, Easy to be Entreated"

Following the course of heavenly wisdom must lead to gentleness of character, heart, and disposition. Christ was pleasingly gentle and so 'easy to be entreated' that even the children were not leery in his presence. Those who sought for the blessings he could bestow were given his consideration even though they succeeded only in touching the hem of his garment. The Master's gentleness was in keeping with his purity (Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:23).

In our desire for peace, and in our disposition to promote it, we, like the Master, should be gentle. We should have an open heart toward those who we meet and for those, by divine providence, we may have blessings of comfort and joy in the Holy Spirit, if they would receive them. Yet, as with Jesus, so with us, we will not be easily entreated to walk contrary to the will of God, or to lend our support by sympathy, word or deed to anything that is out of harmony with the spirit of heavenly wisdom.

"Mercy and Good Fruits"

Heavenly wisdom rejoices in mercy. How beautifully Jesus exemplified this quality of the divine character,

both in his teaching and manner of life. When he was asked how far one should go in forgiving, he gave that “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22) formula of divine mercy. When adapted in the Christian life, it serves to bypass nearly all friction and disputes that otherwise rob followers of the Master of the fullness of joy in the Lord that should be theirs. Whether in our individual lives as Christians, in our homes, or in the ecclesia, the mercy element of heavenly wisdom serves to sweeten all our experiences and to make us more like our Father in heaven.

Fruits of the Christian life are the fruits of the Spirit. The growth of this fruit and its proper ripening take place in the heart which is illuminated with the wisdom from above (Galatians 5:22-23). Here again the fullness of our devotion to God will be the measure of the fruitage developed in our lives. If we are to be full of good fruits, we must be empty of self. The will of God in Christ then becomes the all-possessing power of our lives, so that we can develop good fruit.

“Without Partiality”

The Scriptures explain that “ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Therefore, to show partiality in our dealings with fellow-members of the body of Christ would display a lack of wisdom from above. Just as God is no respecter of persons, so we who are trying to be like Him must ever maintain His viewpoint, which is one of love that seeks to bestow blessings upon all. The outward features of the natural man are ignored by those who have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom which comes from above. To be partial in our dealings with each other, would be contrary to the course of heavenly wisdom, and the example set by Christ. True, some of the disciples seemed to be more appreciated by the Master than others, and these were granted some additional privileges. His nearness to Peter, James and John was because of their greater love and understanding of him. God is not unjustly a respecter of persons, yet he makes it plain in his Word that He draws especially near to those who draw near to Him (James 4:8).

“Without Hypocrisy”

The heavenly wisdom which we see exemplified in Christ is also “without hypocrisy.” It is so pure, peaceable, gentle, and merciful toward all, that there is no need for hypocrisy where it is in control. Those guided by heavenly wisdom must, of necessity, be out of harmony and sympathy with all that is sinful — not merely outwardly, but in their hearts and characters. To be truly a follower of Christ, who is our wisdom, we must indeed be a doer of the word (James 1:22).

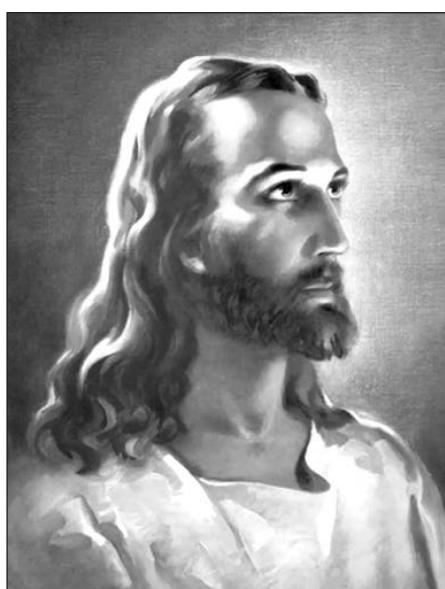
When analyzing the wisdom which is from above, we find that in the life of Christ we have a perfect example of how it should control those who are following him in the narrow way. Not only, therefore, does the beginning of wisdom lead us to Christ as the Redeemer, but we find wisdom’s perfection manifested in his every word and deed, which, by God’s grace, we are trying to copy in our own lives (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Christ — Our Justification

In addition to being our wisdom, as we see from our studies, the apostle explains that Christ is also our righteousness. In explaining this point, Paul used the Greek word *dikaiosune*, which literally means “equity,” and specially, “justification” (Strong’s). Various forms of this same Greek word are used in the New Testament, and are translated as “justified,” “justification,” and, also righteousness. As used in our text, the word could properly be translated justification. Considering the literal meaning of the word *dikaiosune* as being equity, we have a comprehensive view of what Christ means to us in connection with our relationship to the Heavenly Father and our hope of life. He is our “equity,” that is, His merit is the thing of value which gives us a standing with the Heavenly Father, and permits us to enjoy the privileges of fellowship, or partnership, with the Father and the Son.

No matter how perfect our heart’s intentions may be toward God and righteousness, how determined we are to lay down our lives in the divine service, and how much we appreciate the invitation to suffer with Christ, that we may reign with him. It is the equity of Christ’s righteousness imputed to us by divine grace that makes it possible for us to render an acceptable sacrifice.

The fact that Christ’s righteousness makes up for our deficiencies does not mean, as the apostle explains, that we can “continue in sin, that grace may abound” (Romans 6:1). We should daily wage an aggressive struggle to control our thoughts, words, and deeds, to bring them into captivity to the will of God. The merit of his righteousness is imputed to us upon the basis of our faith, giving us a standing of righteousness or justification before God (Psalms 40:2). Our continued standing with the Heavenly Father as His children depends upon Christ being our righteousness to the very end of the way (1 Corinthians 15:57).



Christ Jesus

Christ — Our Sanctification

Sanctification signifies setting apart to holy service. The Greek word *hagiasmos* used in our text



Holiness to Jehovah

which declares that Christ is made unto us sanctification literally means purity, or purification (Strong's). We should remember that the standard of purity to which the apostle refers is a purity of relationship to God and a full dedication of ourselves to do His will. The true meaning of sanctification from the divine standpoint is illustrated by the inscription appearing on the mitre worn by Israel's high priest, which read, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Exodus 28:36, 37). It meant in the case of the typical priest that through a properly constituted and carried-out service of consecration or dedication, he had been set apart to serve God in the holy things of the tabernacle, including the offering of sacrifice.

In the consecration service by which Israel's priests were dedicated to fill the office of the priesthood, a part of the blood from the ram of consecration was placed upon the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe of the right foot (Leviticus 14:13, 14). This indicated the comprehensiveness of their consecration. Antitypically, in the case of those who follow the Master, it would mean that all of life's powers are to be dedicated and used in the divine service. As the blood was put upon the thumb of the right hand, so our consecrated sentiments should be. As the blood was put upon the great toe of the priest's right foot, so we will endeavor to walk in the footsteps of the Master, to walk by faith in the way that the Spirit leads, to walk as he walked (2 Corinthians 5:7). We will say to our God, "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psalms 139:23). As the blood was placed upon the right ear of the priest, so our hearing is to be one of faith. We are to "hearken unto the voice of the Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 30:10) that we may know and do His will. If the dedication of our lives is complete, if our devotion is whole-hearted, we will not pay attention to suggestions of any kind, whether from the world, the flesh or the Adversary, which may turn us aside from the narrow way (James 4:7).

The life of the fully consecrated is one in which moments and days are made to flow in channels which can be used for showing "forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Our every thought and power should be used in keeping with the divine will (2 Corinthians 10:5). We want the will of God to be in our heart so completely that our life can be poured out to Him, being consecrated fully and forever to the doing of His will (Philippians 2:13, Romans 12:1).

Jesus, praying on behalf of his Church, asked that they be "sanctified" by the truth (John 17:17).

Ignorance and error will not sanctify. Our study of God's Word should be sincere, and in the spirit of humility, that we may glean from its pages what God expects of us. The Prophet Micah expresses this sentiment, when, enumerating the requirements of the divine will, he lists among them, "walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

Christ — Our Deliverance

Christ is also made unto us "redemption," says the apostle. The word redemption is here used in the sense of deliverance, or salvation, which is the outcome of the redemptive work — the result of a ransom, or a corresponding price, having been given. It is the same Greek word translated, "deliverance" in Hebrews 11:35. The thought is that of the Church's full victory through Christ, and the attainment of a position of glory with Him in the Kingdom. But if this ultimate and full deliverance of the church is to be realized, there must also be the intermediate and incidental deliverances of the faithful all along the narrow way. Christ is made unto us deliverance, both in our daily experiences of trial and testing, as well as in the final deliverance from this "vile body," in the glories of the first resurrection (Philippians 3:21).

The redemption provided by Christ is yet to result in the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death, but in the divine program the redemption and deliverance of the Church comes first. The redemption, or deliverance, which is in Christ Jesus, both as it applies to our present experiences and also to our ultimate deliverance into the Kingdom, is always identified with the sacrifice of our Lord, made on our behalf. In connection with that sacrifice, our Lord was severely tested and tried, and the apostle explains that by reason of this, he can deliver them from temptations which otherwise might overpower them (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

Because Christ is dealing with us as a faithful and sympathetic High Priest, we have the promise that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13 ASV). He may permit us to stumble temporarily, but even such an experience he will help us, and deliver us.

If, through all of our daily experiences in the narrow way, we learn to put our trust more fully in Him who is our redemption and deliverance now, who has provided a covering for our sins, we will finally experience that great and ultimate deliverance into the Kingdom. This grand hope is especially meaningful today because the signs around us in the world indicate that the entire Church will soon be delivered and united with her Lord. If we are faithful as individuals we can take comfort in the Master's blessed assurance, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28 KJV).

The Effect of the Pandemic on Christendom

Introduction

As Bible students, we naturally look at major world events from a prophetic standpoint. It is proper to “watch and pray” as our Lord Jesus told us (Matthew 26:41). We do not know if this current “birth pang” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) is the final one or if it is merely another spasm. Time will tell. Regardless, it is a major event that ranks in importance with World War I and World War II. The effects of the Pandemic are global. 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 Brother 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 (Ezekiel 38, Volume 4, page 557).

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

(1) Support for the Jewish people has gradually diminished, and will continue to decline until “all her lovers will forget her” as stated in Jeremiah 30:14. In proportion as the Western World abandons the Jewish people, to that extent any special favor from God, related to that support for the Jewish people, is being and will continue to be withdrawn.

(2) Christian principles have been abandoned and, beginning in the late 1960s, evolution, higher-criticism, liberalism, and relativistic morality have taken over. This trend has grown worse and worse in recent years and is accelerating the decay of Western Civilization.

(3) Western Society has become more polarized, politics has become more dysfunctional, and social dissatisfaction and unrest have increased.

(4) 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 (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The Harvest Work has been most predominant in the regions 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.

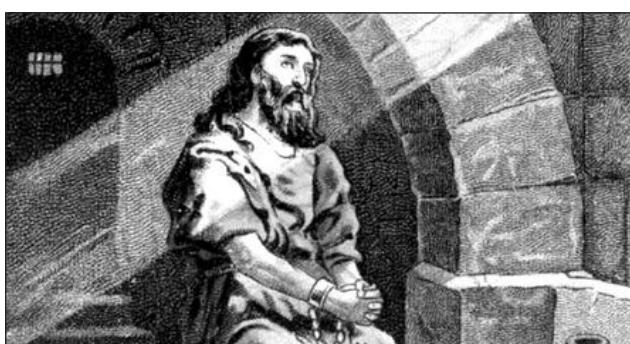
- (a) Restriction of liberties
- (b) Economic crises and instability
- (c) Polarization and social unrest
- (d) Political dysfunction
- (e) General fear for the future

(a) 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 Brethren 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 of the Pandemic, 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.



John the Baptist

As a result of the Pandemic, Brethren in many countries are greatly limited in spreading the Gospel message as public meetings, door-to-door witnessing, and other similar activities are no longer permitted. Much of the present Harvest Work is now conducted electronically. It would be quite easy for our liberty in this area to be restricted as well.

As a result of the Pandemic, travel has also been severely reduced, especially international travel and we do not know how long this will last.

(b) Economic Crises and Instability

The Scriptural basis for this expectation is found in Isaiah 2:17-21, Ezekiel 7:19, Zephaniah 1:18, James 5:1-9, Revelation 18:9-19 and other places.

Brother 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. Volume 4 is filled with such references. Volume 6 also tells us about this expectation, stating that the climax of the Great Time of Trouble will be a “financial storm that shall sweep over Christendom” (Volume 6, pages 579-580).

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 U. S. Dollar in the world economy. There are now serious discussions about the possibility that the U. S. Dollar 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.

The Pandemic has already had 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.

(c) Polarization and Social Unrest

The Scriptural basis for this expectation is found in Psalms 46:1,2, Isaiah 24:19,20, Luke 21:25,26, Revelation 11:18, Revelation 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.



The Prophet Joel

Another set of Scriptures is found in Joel 2:11 where it describes what we call “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 what we are seeing 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 know is to be the final result. Add to this vicious cycle the next point:

(d) Political Dysfunction

The Bible speaks of the French Revolution as an example of the trouble to come upon Christendom. We find this in Daniel 12:5-7, Revelation 10, and Revelation 12:15,16. The French Revolution was brought on by political dysfunction which contributed to polarization. This led to financial crises which resulted in greater and greater dissatisfaction, social unrest, and eventually to 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 has been a strong contributing factor to 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.

(e) 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 the Pandemic there was a high level of fear in society. The degree and extent of that fear has been increased dramatically by the Pandemic.

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 from Volume 4, page xiv 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.”

What we have considered so far naturally leads us to our next major question:

(3) How does the Pandemic fit into the prophetic sequence of events?

There are many prophetic events which have already been fulfilled since 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!” The “increase of knowledge and running to and fro” 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. And 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.



Flag of Independent Israel

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 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.

(a) Elijah’s Vision

We are all familiar with this vision of the Wind, the Earthquake, the 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, so-called Christendom. 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 continue until today.

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 these problems; the end 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. So we are perhaps at the beginning of, or very close to, the Fire phase of Elijah’s Vision.

These observations tell us that we are on the verge of anarchy, the fire of Elijah’s Vision, and that the Pandemic is pushing the world closer to that condition. Will there be something more? We don’t 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!”

(b) Amos 5:19

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.



The British Lion

(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 Socialistic 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**. Brethren 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]' (Hebrews 12:26-29)." — Watch Tower, May 1st 1895

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. 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.

(4) 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.

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.

(a) 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 Nominal Church for help. The combined efforts of Church and State, symbolized by the croaking of the frogs, will be to preserve the status quo and quell any opposition (Revelation 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.

(b) 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. The Pandemic has already led to much instability all over the world, but especially in Christendom. We expect this instability to increase.

Revelation chapter 18 shows that Great Babylon will be destroyed while the financial and political leaders stand "afar off." This suggests that the religious institutions of Christendom will fall before the rest of the "heavens" or powers of control. Here is a brief quote from Volume 1, page 241: "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. (Revelation 19:20, Revelation 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 prophecy which has not yet been considered is also important. 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 be “dwelling safely” and “without walls” and “having neither bars nor gates” (verses 8 and 11). At the same time, they are shown as being extraordinarily rich: “having gotten cattle and goods” and “silver and gold” (verses 12 and 13).

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

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” (Volume 4, page 553).

No one will come to help Israel against the invasion of God and Magog. All her lovers will have forgotten her (Jeremiah 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 (Christendom) 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.

(c) 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, and is taking place along financial, political, and social lines. Government leaders are causing much of the political polarization. Financial



The Prophet Ezekiel

“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.

(d) 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 masses will seek relief through the ballot and the peaceful readjustment of earth’s affairs ... 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” (Volume 4, page xiv).

The Pandemic is the latest crisis that political leaders and politicians have been unable to solve. There will be other crises in the future.

(e) General Fear for the Future

“Fear for the future will goad the well-meaning masses to desperation” (Volume 4 Foreword). Regardless of the causes, or how big a role the Pandemic plays in those causes, the final result will be anarchy.

In Conclusion

The Pandemic is only one of many factors. We must not ignore it, but we must consider it, and discuss it. The Pandemic is important, but there are also other forces working toward the eventual destruction of the present order. We need to look at all these factors.

We should consider soberly what we should be watching for, and more importantly, what we should be doing. Let us endeavor to “do with our might what our hands find to do” before “the night wherein no man can work” puts an end to the Harvest Work.

And most 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.”

W. E. Vine

William Edwy Vine was born in 1873 in Dorset, England. His father ran the Mount Radford Boarding School in Dorset, which was relocated to Exeter in 1875, it was in Exeter that he spent the remainder of his youth. His parents were both deeply religious and played an integral part in his religious education and his decision to be baptized at the age of 14 in the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, Exeter.

At 17 he began his first job as a teacher at the Mount Radford Boarding school (his father's school), and he later moved to Aberystwyth to commence his studies at the University College of Wales. He completed his studies at London University, receiving his Bachelor of Arts with honours and his Masters of Arts in ancient classics in 1906, which greatly help him in his writings.

In 1899 he married Phoebe Baxendale in her home county of Lancashire, and they had five children. In the early years of their marriage they lived in Exeter, and had returned to the Mount Radford Boarding school where he took up the position of assistant headmaster. Phoebe was an ideal companion, and later a faithful nurse when pain and weakness affected his life. Vine would wake early every day to read and study the Bible before work, but his life was not all focused on study. He felt it was an important part of his religious practice to also spend time outdoors enjoying God's creation, doing walks, rowing, sailing, and swimming. He also devoted much of his time to his children, helping them to construct block towers and sandcastles, playing the violin or piano, and singing for them. He also made time for preaching and teaching of the scriptures in his local area. He influenced young people through Sunday School and Bible Class, turning the conversation to serious spiritual matters.

On one occasion he rescued three boys from drowning in a choppy sea.

In 1909 he was offered a job with the missionary magazine, *Echoes of Service* in Bath, which was published monthly and recorded the activities of the missionaries from the British Isles. The role involved reading correspondence from hundreds of missionaries, often reading, and responding to sixty to seventy letters a day and arranging funds from the local congregations to be sent to these missions. He continued to work there for the remainder of his life.

Vine was also an Elder at his congregation in Bath, which had over 250 members at the time. His

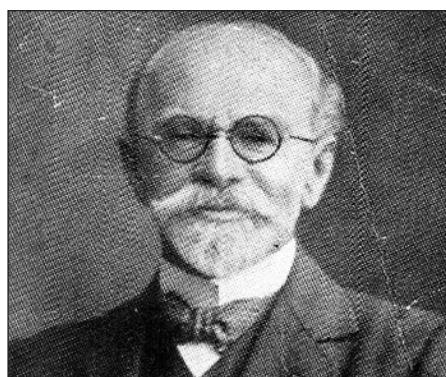
dedication to his role was shown by always being the first to arrive in order to personally greet people on their arrival. He also made regular visits to individuals who were ill or in need and would include them in prayers during the congregation's prayer meetings.

In 1927 his health began to decline, and he was subsequently diagnosed with heart disease, which caused many bouts of unconsciousness and constant weakness. This did not stop him from continuing his work at *Echoes of Service*, as an elder, his writing, or even visiting those who were ill or in need.

Vine began his writing career while he was still completing his studies in 1905 with the joint publication with C.F. Hogg of a correspondence bible study course of 1 Thessalonians and then Galatians. He went on later to complete more of these studies, including Philippians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, and 1, 2 and 3 John. All these and his many other works his writings were enough to fill five large volumes, which were published by Gospel Tract Publishers of Glasgow.

It is of course for his largest work that he is most renown, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, commonly referred to as *Vine's*. He published this work in 1940 in a set of four volumes. It is designed as a cross-reference for words in the Authorised King James Version to the Greek words in the original New Testament. It provides a concise meaning of the original Greek word, if there are several Greek words that may translate to the same English word. *Vine's* distinguishes the shadings of meaning and connotation that may be lost in the English translation. There are a number of Greek words that may be translated by the one English word. *Vine's* has also been designed to be used in conjunction with *Strong's Concordance*, as every word is numbered with the equivalent *Strong's* number so one can use it more efficiently.

It is said of this work in his Biography, "The English reader with little or no knowledge of Greek has, of course, concordances and lexicons. These provide a skeleton: Vine clothes it with the flesh and sinews of living exposition, and in so doing makes available for the ordinary reader the expert knowledge contained in the more advanced works." To the last day of his life he was active in the service of others, in prayer, dictating letters, resting a while because of the weakness he felt. He finally succumbed to heart disease in 1949, three months after his 50th wedding anniversary. He continued his work with *Echoes of Service* right up till his dying day.



W. E. Vine

Peace

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18 NASB).

The letter to the Romans was written while Paul was in Corinth. The Corinthian Church was not an easy church to preach to. There was conflict between the believers who followed different leaders. There was immorality in the Church, so bad that those outside the church were aware of it. There were disputes of the eating of different foods. It was a stressful time for Paul as he was among people who often opposed him.

One of the reasons he wrote his letter to the Romans is that peace would not have been easy for them. It would have felt as unnatural to them as it can to us, amid hardships, never-ending opposition, and personal differences.

“If possible,” *i.e.*, as much as is under our control and would be consistent with supreme love, service, honour, and obedience to God, we are to live peaceably “with all men.” This general rule applies where principle is not violated. Paul shows in earlier verses the efforts we should make for peace. It is not always possible to secure peace with those all around us. Yet, Paul reminds everyone that peace is possible.

The Greeks thought that peace was the idea of harmony and the absence of hostility and violence. But Paul taught that peace is the feeling that we can bring during hostility. This peace is a wholeness we have because of our relationship with God.

Just before his crucifixion, Jesus said to his disciples, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27 NASB).

Peace is a gift that our Heavenly Father gives to believers. This gift distinguishes us from those in the world. It is our union with Christ that makes this peace possible. Paul writing to the Philippians tells them “And God’s peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7 AMP).

Our demonstration of peace during hardships makes it noticeable as particularly rare and odd. To live peaceably with all seems like such an impossibility. It is made possible because of Christ in us and by following his example as the prince of peace.

In our opening text, Paul does not say, “As far as it depends on **other** people to bring peace.” No, he says, “So far as it depends on **you**.” Our peace is not prevented by choices of other people. It flows from



Eirene, goddess of peace, with her son Pluto

our choices. To achieve this, we must keep our hearts swept clean of bitterness and remain humble even when we are wronged.

Peace evidences a life of forgiveness. It is not that people all around you are peaceful, or that your relationships are always peaceful. It is releasing oneself from the binding effects, constricting force, and constraining feelings of anger. Living in the comfort of peace is so much better than living in the constraints of being unable to forgive and forget.

Finally, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 NASB).

Comment, “The Pillar of Cloud”

Dear Brethren, We always respect our Brethren and their opinions. But here a few words of comment on the article “The Pillar of Cloud,” from last issue, an agreeable article, well written. Our single point of concern respects the use of the Divine Name. The article quoted from Strong’s, word 3078, which refers to it as the Jewish National Name for God. However, we observe, it was not the Jewish people who chose this name. In fact they refuse to utter it, and in the first and second centuries a Jewish person could be taken to court by the Sanhedrin for blasphemy if they pronounced it.

The Divine Name, the “I AM” or “will cause to be” — Jehovah — was given to Moses by God Himself. This was in reply to Moses’ question, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your forefathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What should I say to them? This is what you are to say to the Israelites, ‘Jehovah the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-15).

Psalms 83:18 (RVIC) says, “That they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, art the most high over all the Earth.” The RVIC makes it plain in simple language. “I am Jehovah [not LORD, but Jehovah], that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images” (Isaiah 42:8, RVIC).

The name Jesus, given him by God, reflects this also. It is the same as the name Joshua, and corresponds to the Hebrew Jeshua (Yeshua), in its fullest form Jehoshua, “Jehovah is Salvation.” Thus Jehovah is not the Jewish national name for God, for they had nothing to do with the name Jesus, but rejected him, as they did his heavenly Father. — *Br. Richard Tazzyman*

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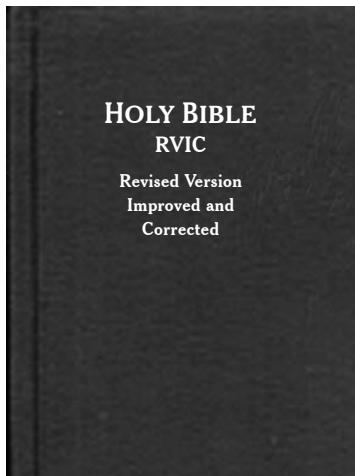
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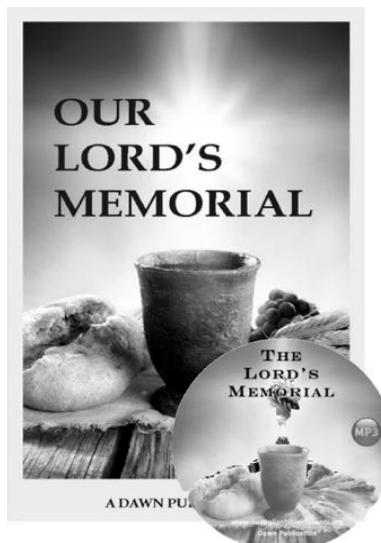
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THE NEW COVENANT IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

New Covenant Not for Church

If the New Covenant, in no sense of the word, belongs to the Church — that is to say, if we are not under the New Covenant, if it belongs merely to Israel, and through Israel to the world, why does the Apostle have so much to say concerning it in the Book of Hebrews?

Necessity for Book of Hebrews

To appreciate the necessity for the Book of Hebrews, we must mentally take our stand back in apostolic days and get our bearings as though we were living there under those conditions. Thinking of matters from this sympathetic standpoint the answer to this question is very simple, very plain. The early Church for seven years after our Lord's baptism, for three and a half years after His cross, was composed exclusively of Jews.  until the end of Israel's promised "seventy weeks" of special favour could the Gospel message go outside of that nation at all. We remember that Cornelius, a just man, who prayed always and gave much alms, was the first one from the Gentiles to be received. In his case we remember how it was necessary for God to specially prepare St. Peter for such a remarkable change in the Divine method of dealing.

Jews and Gentiles on Equality Caused Disturbance

We remember that years after this, the question of involving the Gentiles and eating with them, or in any sense of the word recognising them as being on equality with the Jews, was one which caused continual disturbance in the Church and amongst the most prominent of the apostles of the time. Years after Cornelius had received the holy spirit Teachers from Jerusalem went to Antioch and found that there Gentiles were received on an equal footing with the Jews in the Church of Christ without, in any sense of the word, subscribing to Moses and the Law Covenant. They were shocked and expressed themselves in such positive terms that the Antioch Church sent Paul and Barnabas with others to Jerusalem that a full conference on the question might be had. Guided of the holy spirit the Apostles reached right conclusions, yet even Peter was so little in sympathy with these conclusions that years after we find St. Paul reproving him for dissimulation and refusing to eat with the Gentile brethren when Jewish brethren were in the company — through deference to the law Covenant, which somehow all Jews felt must be recognised and subscribed to. St. Paul seems to have been one of the apostles who, early on, got the proper focus on this subject.

Judaizing Teaching Affected Gentiles

We find that this Judaizing teaching was not only in the ascendancy in Palestine, but that its influence in considerable measure affected the Gentiles. St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, for instance, shows how many of them, Gentiles by birth, had been misled into believing that whatever blessings they might enjoy through Christ and the original Abrahamic Covenant, they must also become amenable to the Law Covenant. Note that the Apostle's letter to the Galatians is almost exclusively devoted to this subject, and remember that the Galatians were not Hebrews, or, at least, the majority of them were not.

In that epistle he found it necessary to show that he had equal authority with the other apostles as a teacher — that the Galatians might know that he was as well qualified as the others, and as fully authorised to instruct them respecting their obligations; that his word was authoritative; that the Gentiles were not under the Law Covenant, but under the Grace Covenant — the original Abrahamic Covenant. He recounts that he did not get his instruction or his knowledge of the Gospel from the Apostles at Jerusalem, but that, so far as it was concerned, he had under the Lord's Providence been their instructor, rather than they his instructor (Galatians 2:1-14).

Paul's Argument in Galatians re Law Covenant and Gentiles

Note carefully the Apostle's appeal in Galatians 3. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the Truth, before whose eyes (of understanding) Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of Faith?" etc. His entire argument in this chapter is to show that the Law Covenant never was over or binding upon the Gentiles, but only upon the Jews.

He shows also that the Law Covenant, instead of advancing the Jew, condemned him, so that the Jew needed to be specially redeemed from the curse or sentence of that law Covenant, by our Lord's death by crucifixion. Throughout this chapter St. Paul contrasts the law Covenant, from which the Jews were desirous to get free, with the original Abrahamic Covenant, which had only free children. He shows that the Gentiles were received under this Abrahamic Covenant of grace (favour), whose blessings are conferred on a basis of faith and not as a basis of works, as under the Law Covenant.

Paul's Argument that Binding Obligations Necessitate Mediator

St. Paul shows further that the Law Covenant had Moses for a Mediator because that Covenant placed binding obligations of obedience to the law upon all who came under it. But reasons the Apostle, the original Covenant made with Abraham was not so. It imposed no binding obligations and therefore it needed no mediator and had no mediator. "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (Galatians 3:20). That is to say, a mediator is not necessary to a Covenant in which only one person is bound. In the case of the Abrahamic Covenant this is so: God is the one person bound by that Covenant; hence there is no need of a mediator for that Covenant to see to the faithful performance of the contract. However, as there was no mediator to guarantee a contract or Covenant on God's side, He gave to Abraham and to all who would be of his faith, the best possible guarantee that God did not make the Covenant lightly, in a trifling manner or thoughtlessly; for, in addition to pledging His Word, God gave His oath — that the Covenant was secure, sure, could not fail. It was this that gave Israel such great hope in that Oath-Bound Covenant.

Law Covenant Did Good Service to the Jews

The Apostle proceeds to show that the Law Covenant did a good service for the Jews in that it prepared them and brought them to Christ, the great Teacher; that by hearing His message, His invitation, they might exercise obedient faith, sacrificing faith, and, being baptised into Christ, might put on Christ — become members of His Body. All such, Jew and Gentile, bond or free, male or female, would be members of the one Body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. This chapter winds up with the forceful statement, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed and heirs according to the promise" (the Covenant made to Abraham).

Galatians Not Under Law Covenant

All this argument was to show the Galatians that, so far from needing to get under the law Covenant, they had no need of it whatever and those who were under it needed to get out from under it, in order to be able by faith to accept Christ as their Redeemer and Justifier, and by faith to consecrate their lives unto death, that they might be acceptable to God as members of the Body of Christ.

Paul's Argument Against Error of Getting Under Law Covenant

The fourth chapter to the Galatians continues the argument, the expostulation against the error of wanting to get under the law Covenant, until, with tears in His pen, the Apostle writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice (to one of utterness), for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law (Covenant), do ye not hear the Law?" Do ye not realise its bondage, its impossible exactions? "Behold, I, Paul,

say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised (every Jew), that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are (trusting that you are) justified by the Law (Covenant); ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 4:19-21, 5:2-4).

Law Covenant a Burning Question in Early Church

We have, perhaps, said sufficient to prove that the question of the Law Covenant was a burning question in the early Church, not only with the Hebrews, but also with the Gentiles. It seemed impossible, especially for the former, to learn that the Law Covenant, after having been in force, with all the wonderful paraphernalia of the Jewish dispensation, its laws, its sacrifices, etc. — that it, after all, was not necessary and that a Gentile could really have access to the Abrahamic Covenant through Christ easier than could a Jew.

Book of Hebrews Written to Counteract Powerful Error

It was to counteract the powerful error of that day that St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. It certainly has been a valuable epistle to the Gentiles, but it was written specially to the Hebrews, and because of their tenacious adherence to the law Covenant, from the dominating influence of which they seemed not to be able to free themselves.

Book of Hebrews Written to Prove New Dispensation

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to prove that a totally new dispensation of Grace, and not of Works, had been ushered in through Jesus at Pentecost. He would have them see that Moses' faithfulness as a servant and Head of a typical priesthood, was inferior to Christ and the Royal Priesthood, of which He is the Head. He would have them see that Moses and his house were types and servants or illustrations of good things to come; but that Christ and His "elect" are sons of God, who will minister the real blessings of the future. He would have them see that there was a Canaan rest to which Moses led the willing and obedient — priests and people of Israel — and that there is a greater rest which remains for the people of God, to which Christ will lead His people; and that those who by faith accept of Christ now may enter by faith into His rest in advance, now, in their hearts.

Book of Hebrews Teaches the Coming of a Greater Priesthood

Noting that the Hebrews were long accustomed to look to the earthly priests and yearly ministrations for the cleansing away of sin, the Apostle calls attention to the fact that the lord Jesus is the High Priest of a new order of priests and that His Church are those under-priests. Answering their objections that Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi and therefore not entitled to the priesthood, he shows them that God had already foreshown that there would be a new priesthood of a different kind; that Melchizedek was a type of that new priesthood.

He gives the intimation that while Jesus and His Church in the flesh in their sacrificing work were typified by Aaron and his sons, nevertheless the real work of this higher priesthood is a future one of glory when Jesus, the great Priest, and the Church, His Body, an under-priesthood, associated with Him, will be installed in a kingly, as well as a priestly office, and in ruling, as well as teaching authority. These glories of the Christ in the Royal Priesthood of the Millennial Age were not at all represented in Aaron, but were quite well represented in Melchizedek, who was a king at the same time that he was a priest. His greatness was shown, in that Abraham did him homage and paid tithes to him. And since Levi, the Father of the priestly tribe, was in Abraham's loins at the time that the tithes were paid, therefore he and all his sons inferentially paid tithes to Melchizedek and thus the Melchizedek order of priesthood was recognised as higher than the Aaronic.

Jesus a Priest Before He Came Into the World

With this foundation for his subject the Apostle (Hebrews 7:18-22) points out that it evidently was not God's intention to allow the Law Covenant to stand perpetually, nor to allow its priestly arrangements to continue forever. He proceeds to show that prophetically Jesus was made a priest by Divine appointment long before He came into the world — that God said of Him, "I have sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for the age after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7: 21) — not after the order of Aaron. This oath shows that the priesthood of Jesus was superior to the priesthood of Aaron which was established without any Divine Covenant of this kind.

"By this much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament or Covenant." That is to say, the fact that God by His oath had recognised this higher order of priesthood particularly implied that in due time a New Covenant would supplant the Law Covenant, which the Hebrews felt must be perpetual.

Not Paul's Argument that New Covenant Had Been Established

The Apostle does not argue that the New Covenant had been established, nor that the new priesthood had been established in its office of combined kingship and priesthood. He merely points to the fact that such a New Covenant is assured by God's promise, which implied the doing away with the Law Covenant and its priesthood, and the introduction of a better one. He proceeds to show that Israel and the world needed a higher order of priesthood than the Aaronic to inaugurate the reign of righteousness under the New Covenant. He points to the two sacrifices of Lev.16, and intimates that our Lord will fulfil that Day of Atonement type by two offerings; first, for His own sins (not for His individual sins, for He had none), but for the sins of those accepted during this Gospel Age as the under priesthood, the "members of His Body"; and then later a second sacrifice for the sins of the people — the world in general.

When Christ and Church Were Offered in Sacrifice

He tells us that the typical work of Atonement by the Levitical priest repeated this Atonement work every year (on the Atonement Day), but that our great Priest does it once for all time in the great antitypical Day of Atonement, in which He offers up Himself — first individually, and secondly His members, collectively. In this connection we are to remember that as Christ offered Himself in sacrifice at Jordan, and not at Calvary, so also, He offered His Body, the Church, collectively in sacrifice at Pentecost. As the laying down of the life of the man Christ Jesus proceeded through three and a half years, and was finished at Calvary, so likewise the laying down of the life of the Church has proceeded since Pentecost, and it will not be finished until the last member of the Body shall have suffered with Him — been faithful even unto death.

Sacrificing Only Figuratively Finished When Paul Wrote Hebrews

This was shown in the type; for, after the priest had sprinkled the blood of the bullock, he appeared at the door of the tabernacle and laid his hands (power) upon the head of the lord's goat (which represented His consecrated Church) and slew it. We see, then, how this entire work of sacrificing may have been said to have been accomplished at the time when St. Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews. The Apostle does not proceed to tell of the consummation of this Gospel Age but drops the matter here by showing the two sacrifices performed. That he does wish us to understand that the second sacrifice of Atonement that was offered at Pentecost is evidenced by the fact that he speaks of the Church as under-priests in the Holy, enjoying the light of the Golden candlestick, the table of shewbread and the golden altar privileges, and waiting until the testings shall have been completed and we shall have passed beyond the veil, even into heaven itself, where the blood of this second sacrifice of Christ will then be offered in the propitiatory on behalf of the world.

Mediator of a Better Testament

Hebrews 8 opens with the words, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have a high Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister (servant) of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle." Verses 3-5 show that the sacrificial work already referred to was a necessity before he could enter the still higher work of distributing to Israel and the world the blessings of God's favour secured by the "better sacrifices." The glorious High Priest in heaven has a more exalted service (ministry) than the earthly priests, and, accordingly, He is the Mediator of a better Covenant or Testament than the law Covenant. The Apostle is here showing that our lord's sacrificial work needs not to be continued throughout eternity; but that He has been exalted to the heavenly plane, and has another work to accomplish, namely, as the Mediator of a better Covenant than the Law Covenant. He is trying to get their minds away from the thought that they are under

the law Covenant. If he can convince them that Christ is the antitype of Moses and the antitype of Aaron, he will thus convince them that there must be a higher Covenant and arrangement for the blessing of the world than the law Covenant in which they were trusting and which they considered indispensable. The remaining verses of the chapter and Jeremiah 31:31 show that such a better Covenant was in contemplation.

Paul and Hebrew Christians re New Covenant

Neither St. Paul nor the Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem and elsewhere to whom he wrote the epistle, had any thought that they were living under the provisions of the New Covenant. As he shows in Chapter 6:19,20, they were all hoping in the Abrahamic Covenant: but some of them had the erroneous thought that they additionally needed the law Covenant and that it would be perpetual. St. Paul's argument is that God never intended it to be perpetual, but merely to prevail for a time as a schooling until Christ should come as the antitype of Isaac—the antitypical heir of the Abrahamic Covenant. He now shows that The Christ is in due time to be the Mediator of the New Covenant with Israel as a proof that their old law Covenant was not intended to last forever. Why should they be trusting in the old law Covenant, when God distinctly tells that "after those days He will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel," and that Messiah (with His members now being selected) is to be the Mediator of that New Covenant, and is merely waiting for the completion of the Church to finish all the ministration necessary to put that Covenant into operation—the blessing of Israel and all the families of the earth?

Paul's Contrast of Typical and Antitypical Arrangements

Chapter 9 contrasts the typical arrangements made for the service of the law Covenant and the making of its blessings effective to Israel, with the arrangements for the service of the New Covenant to make its blessings effective to Israel and all people who shall eventually avail themselves of its privileges. All the paraphernalia of the Tabernacle and the work incidental to the typical sacrificing were so much necessary to the putting of that law Covenant into effective operation for all the people of Israel. And similarly, on a spiritual plane, there are antitypes, including better sacrifices, all of which are incidental to the putting of the New Covenant into operation for Israel and that all mankind may avail themselves of its privileges. The antitypical priest has appeared—"Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come." Those future good things represent the glorification of the Body of Christ, the blessing of Israel and all the families of the earth.

Dead Works of the Law vs. Blood of Christ

All those blessings on a higher plane are abundantly provided for in God's arrangement. For if the typical

arrangements of the law Covenant needed a cleansing from sin by blood, and if the blood of bulls and goats, etc., typically accomplished this, how much more full of value should we esteem the sacrifice of Christ—how much more able to purify our consciences! Shall we not esteem the blood of Christ aside from the law Covenant sufficient for our sins? And, as believers in His merit, shall we not conscientiously drop dead works of the law Covenant and trust to something higher, even to the merit of the antitypical High Priest? It is for this cause, or to this end, that He is the Mediator of the New Covenant, so that eventually all Hebrews condemned to death under the law Covenant may be released from it as in Romans 11:27 he declares will be the case as soon as the elect, the Body of the great Deliverer, the great Mediator, the great Priest, shall have been completed.

Hebrews Nine Shows Special Work of Christ on Behalf of Jews

In Hebrews 9:15 St. Paul shows that there is a special work of Christ on behalf of the Jews: they being under the death sentence of the law Covenant, Christ's death on the tree was necessary for them, because that was the special "curse" of the law. Thus, a basis is laid, whereby all the transgressions of the Hebrews under the law Covenant may be fully cancelled, under the provisions of the New Covenant when it shall become effective (Romans 11:27). Not only so, but this special redemption of the Hebrews enabled those called of God from that nation during this Gospel Age to receive a share in the promise of the eternal inheritance—as members of Christ under the original Abrahamic Covenant.

Death of Victim before Ratification of New Covenant

Then follows a statement of the general principle—that where a Will or Testament is made, the death of the testator is implied, and only after the death of the testator could its blessings be enjoyed. Our Lord having earned a right to human perfection and human life by obedience to the Law Covenant conditions, laid down those earthly rights in sacrifice, in harmony with the Father's will. And, when raised from the dead a New Creature of the Divine Nature, He possessed those earthly rights which He laid down as a ransom price for mankind, with the right to dispose of them. His Testament or Will disposing of those earthly rights could have been so made as to give them at once to fleshly Israel by sealing for them the promised New Covenant. But instead the Testator gave those earthly blessings to the household of faith, those called out from the nominal Jewish Church during and after His earthly ministry, and to "us" of the Gentiles since, on condition that they join in His sacrifice, "suffer with Him," "be dead with Him," participate with Him in the glorious privileges of the Abrahamic Covenant provision.