

VIEW FROM THE TOWER

THE long expected shaking of the social earth is, we believe, already in progress. The great war for which Europe has been drilling its troops, preparing its treasuries and armaments, is shaking every nation of the world, financially, socially, politically. Strong as the nations feel themselves to be, all tremble in dread at the results of the conflict now in progress. Only the Bible can or does speak authoritatively respecting results. In the same breath it tells of disaster and of blessings – disaster to the nations, but ultimate blessings to the people through the new Government of Messiah's Kingdom.

St. Paul, referring to our day and to present conditions, declares the Lord's Message, "Yet once more will I shake, not the earth only, but also the heavens." By inspiration the Apostle informs us that this will be the last great shaking which the world will ever have, because in this troubled time in the early dawn of the Millennium, everything shakable will be shaken and destroyed so thoroughly that nothing will remain except that which is unshakable – that which will fully have the Divine approval. The Apostle says that the only thing remaining unshakable will be the Kingdom of God in the hands of The Christ – Head and Body. – Hebrews 12:18-27.

We should not get the thought that the shaking of the nations is just beginning, but rather that the shaking that has been in progress for some time is now reaching its violent stage. For years Europe has been trembling with occasional violent revolutionary shocks; but now it is preparing for the great shock, the great "*earthquake*," as the Bible symbolically styles it. – Revelation 16:18.

Knowledge is power. For the past fifty years in particular knowledge has been preparing the masses of humanity, and their power has been growing apace. Proportionately the errors, superstitions and serfdoms of the past have been obliged to yield. A social revolution has proportionately progressed, different in its kind from anything of the past. Socialism is a revolution based upon increase of knowledge, even though, as we shall seek to demonstrate, much of its reasoning is fallacious, and much of its work likely, in the future, to be terribly injurious; in fact, if not eventually overruled by Christ's Kingdom, nothing would escape its misguided destructiveness.

NATIONS HURRYING TO ARMAGEDDON

Europe is honeycombed with Socialism, which, like yeast, is fermenting the entire social fabric. Kings and emperors dare not oppose it too openly, and all of their secret intrigues have failed to hinder its development. The general war now begun has inspiration from different quarters. Politics have to do with it – a desire to enlarge national boundaries. Religion has something to do with it – the Greek and the Roman Catholic Churches being opponents, the sympathies and prejudices of the people are directed accordingly.

But Socialism is, we believe, the main factor in the war now raging and which will be earth's greatest and most terrible war – and probably the last. Socialism is related to the war by the fact that kings and emperors hope that patriotism and self-defense will cement the interests and sympathies of their peoples, now tending to disintegrate under the influence of Socialism. They would rather risk a general war than face a social revolution.

Already press reports tell us that in Russia patriotic enthusiasm is healing dissension. They tell us further that the differences between the Nationalists and the Ulsterites of Ireland are being forgotten in the presence of the war crisis, which has involved Great Britain. Doubtless the same is true in Germany to a considerable

extent. The various political factions are ignoring their differences in the presence of a national danger. Austria-Hungary, four distinct peoples with varying interests and centrifugal tendencies, will doubtless be welded together in self-defense. Similarly, the discontented of France and Italy are having their attention diverted temporarily. For a time, at least, the peace propaganda and the determination of the internationals to oppose the war is drowned by public sentiment.

THE WAR CLOUD'S SILVER LINING

But after the shock of battle – What? Such a war as is now progressing will surely bring no great victory to any single nation or to any combination of nations. The winners in the war will surely pay a high price for every victory. Civilization, falsely styled Christendom (Christ's Kingdom), drenched with blood and terribly impoverished at the end of the war, will have been only partially shaken. The great Armageddon battle of the Scriptures will have been only partially fought. The remnants of armies, returning to their homes sour and discouraged with defeat or costly victory, will be war-sick and mad against their rulers who led to the carnage. Then the great Armageddon of the Bible may be expected. Every man's hand will be against his neighbor. Various factions and parties will proclaim panaceas, and will endeavor to force them upon the public. As a result, foretold in prophecy, "there shall be a Time of Trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." – Daniel 12:1. **[R5516 : page 244]**

The shaking process will continue, the Apostle tells us, until Messiah's unshakable Kingdom shall assert itself and take control of the world's affairs. The Lord through the Prophet Haggai tells us this, saying, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of *all nations* shall come." (Chapter 2:7.) All people really desire peace, joy, happiness, blessing, such as God purposes to provide through Messiah's Kingdom. The world really wants what God purposes to

give them; but they do not comprehend their needs, and are seriously misled as to the methods by which they might be obtained.

We as Bible students are coming more and more to appreciate the fact that the Divine Plan presented in the Bible is wonderful in its simplicity and its comprehensiveness. More and more we are coming to see that our error in the past has been that we studied not the Bible, but the creeds – and correspondingly had darkness instead of light.

SYMBOLIC SHAKING AND BURNING

Note again St. Paul's quotation of the Lord's words, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." (Hebrews 12:26.) We have seen what the shaking of earth signifies as respects society, governments, social order. In the same symbolic language of prophecy the heavens represent the ecclesiastical systems, as the earth represents the social. The meaning of the Lord's words is, therefore, clear; the coming trouble is not to be merely one upon the world of mankind, but in a very special sense it is to signify a shaking of the Church – the ecclesiastical, or spiritual, or heavenly powers.

There are doubtless saints in every church, in every sect, in every party. And these alone constitute the true Church, the saints of God – "the Church of the Firstborns, whose names are written in Heaven." (Hebrews 12:23.) The masses of Christians of all denominations, according to this prophecy, will be shaken – shaken in faith, shaken from their self-conceit, superstitions and bigotries. Only the true Church, only those who are in vital union with Christ, only the saints, will remain unshaken in the strenuous storm described by the Apostle.

While Socialism has been shaking the political earth for the past thirty years, other forces have been shaking with great severity the ecclesiastical heavens. Inquire where we may, we find that not

only ignorance and superstition have been letting go their hold upon all Christians, but additionally many of God's professed people have been shaken loose from faith in a Divine Revelation – many even shaken loose from faith in a personal God. Indeed, it is the habit of Christian ministers to boast amongst themselves that they have lost faith in the Bible – under the influence of what is known as Higher Criticism, formerly styled Infidelity.

Probably not more than one in ten of all the Protestant ministers of the world would today acknowledge that he still holds fast his faith and confidence in the Bible as God's inspired Message. The other nine-tenths, if cross-questioned, [R5517 : page 244] would privately admit that they had lost their hold, or been shaken loose, and perhaps would boast of it even in public. Others, through fear of loss of prestige or salary, would seek to dodge the question and give evasive answers.

The shaking has proceeded from the clergy and the college-bred, through the professors and the text-books, down to the high schools, and, to some extent, the grammar departments of the public schools. Everything that can shake the faith of the people in respect to the inspiration of the Bible seems to be at work, and extremely few anywhere are found lifting up their voices and their pens in defense of the Divine Revelation and a personal God.

Let no one think that the shaking of the ecclesiastical heavens is ended. The Bible pictures the culmination as a sudden catastrophe which will awaken and set free all in Babylon who are the Lord's people – "Israelites indeed," without guile. – John 1:47.

"THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS"

The shaking of the heavens and the earth mentioned by St. Paul, corresponding with the shaking mentioned by the Prophet Haggai (2:7), is referred to under a different figure in St. Peter's writings. Following the style of some writers of today, who

tell us of a general European conflagration, St. Peter describes the end of the nominal Church systems of our day under the figure of a fire. The heavens being on fire shall pass away with a great noise – great disputation, confusion, etc.; "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," writes St. Peter. "The fire of that Day shall try every man's work of what kind it is," writes St. Paul. – 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13.

Those who have built with gold, silver and precious stones supplied by the Divine Message and its promises, will survive the conflagration, because their faith and hope and relationship to God are indestructible. But all those who have built with wood, hay and stubble of human tradition and churchianity will find their work utterly destroyed in the fire of that Day. All their hopes, all their anticipations, will be utterly gone. "Yet themselves shall be saved, so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:11-15.) Then he explains that God will save this class because they have been truly consecrated Christians, who have built their false hopes and wrong expectations upon the sure foundation – Christ and His redeeming work.

The passing away of the present symbolic heavens, or ecclesiastical powers, will leave the place of spiritual control to the "new heavens" – the Church of Glory. The passing away of the present social earth will give place to the new order of things styled "the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13.) The new earth will be this same planet, but under new conditions, new social arrangements, provided by the Messianic Kingdom. At that time the prophecy of Haggai will begin to be fulfilled – the portion which declares "the desire of all nations shall come." That new earth condition is pictured by St. Peter most beautifully, saying:

"Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, as before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive [retain] until the TIMES OF

RESTITUTION of all things spoken by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets since the world began." – Acts 3:19-23.

"SOON shall restitution glory
Bring to earth a blessed rest;
And the poor, and faint, and weary
Shall be lifted up and blest.

"Just beyond the coming trouble
See the reigning Prince of Peace!
Lo! God's Kingdom now is coming,
And oppression soon must cease.

"Tell how Eden's bloom and beauty
Once again shall be restored,
Making all man's wide dominion
As the Garden of the Lord.

"He's now gath'ring out His jewels,
Those who with Him soon shall reign;
And earth's weeping and sad farewells
Soon shall change to joyous strain."

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