

Towards The Dawn Of Better Times

NEVER AGAIN!

This evidently means that just as the baptism by water obliterated the iniquities of the antediluvian world (2 Peter 3: 7), this time there is to be a final purification by fire, so that all traces of sin shall be removed. Luke 17: 28-30.

While this thought is scorned by many people, we ought to remember that, after all, evolutionary science offers us no explanation of the distant future condition of the world beyond (1) extinction by extreme heat, or (2) extermination by extreme cold. The ultimate things of evolution are, to say the least, comfortless. On the other hand, Christian progress is toward perfection. We much prefer the Christian assurance of eternal life in a renovated and meaningful world.

There is a reference later in Scripture to the last cleansing by fire, which indicates that the finally and incorrigibly impenitent among men are also removed from the earth. Revelation 20: 9. Not even the Creator can compel goodness in men who do not choose it voluntarily.

Though sin is largely inexplicable to us, we may rest assured that a wise and loving God has done all things well, and in eternity the redeemed will understand what now is seen as "through a glass darkly." Never again shall sin with its sorry trail of misery raise its baneful head.

The refining fires "that shall burn as an oven" (Malachi 4: 1) having done their work, it would appear that the physical world is as it was "in the beginning" – "without form, and void," the Lord having caught up His saints in safety during this reconstruction period. 1 Thessalonians 4: 17. Jeremiah saw the earth evidently at this period: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord." Jeremiah 4: 23-26.

The apostles seemed to be quite clear about the end of the old order with the coming of the day of the Lord: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

A World of Satisfactions

GOD having purposed that the earth should be a happy home for man. "He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." Isaiah 45:18), He thereupon pronounces the most momentous words since Calvary: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." And then, in infinitely tender regard for the inhabitants of the renewed earth, He adds: "And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65: 17.

No more remembrance of sorrow! No piercing regrets and painful remorse! A new world for new men! Was not this the hope of the early church? "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3: 13.

This new earth, like the old, is created by divine fiat. It is natural that our pictorial glimpses thereof through the Bible penmen are but fragmentary. They are, however, sufficient to reveal surpassing beauty and satisfying perfection.

How pleasant that goodly land will be the present faculties of man cannot comprehend. We may gaze spellbound at the glory of an Alpine sunrise. We may be lost in soothing reveries as we watch the flaming sky bidding the sun adieu across the western ocean, we may revel in the charm of autumn tints, we may laugh and sing with the joys of spring, we may be emotionally transported by the rhapsodies of a Bach or a Beethoven, we may conjure up our best conceptions of happiness; but when all that has happened we must remember that, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Corinthians 2: 9.

What we do know of our future impressions of the new world order may perhaps best be summarized in the words of one of the greatest Biblical characters, who, in speaking of his hope of a future life in a new world, said: "As for me I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." Isaiah 17:4,5.

When we see the Son of man and all He has done to "prepare a place for us," when, too, we are "like Him" (1 John 3:2), we shall without exception be abundantly satisfied. A world of satisfied souls!

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That, to men who live in a world of dissatisfied beings as we do at present, is enough.

0 Son of man! if Thou and not another
I here have known,
If I may see Thee then, our First-born Brother, Upon Thy throne,
How stern so ever, how terrible in brightness
That dawn shall break,
I shall be satisfied with Thy dear likeness, When I awake.
Dr. T. Hodgkin, in "Christianity."

THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE FUTURE

All the predictions of the Bible respecting the future indicate a complete absence of the toilsome labor and vain dissatisfaction of earthly pursuits.

As far back as the days of David came the statement, "In Thy presence is, fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 0: 11.

By dint of much painstaking toil some men in this life realize all their ambitions. Multitudes, of course, never get the opportunity to enjoy such amenities as this life affords. But, assuming that some do accomplish all their plans and derive satisfaction from this fact, what is the end of it all? At the close of life's allotted span it must be relinquished. There is no continuity of enjoyment, no permanence in the pleasures we derive from our labors. Of the future world, however, we have this promise, "Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Isaiah 65:22. The duration of that enjoyment is God's gift of eternal life.

Again, the permanence of the joys of the new earth are stated in this way: "They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble." "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." Isaiah 65:23,21. That occupation is not of the vain, temporary, irksome kind that we know here, but of the pleasurable kind that brings infinite and permanent joy to the redeemed.

THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

According to our scientists and architects of today, the world they visualize for the twenty-first century would be marvelous indeed.

Double-deck streets, with beam-radio guidance above them for express traffic; houses made of glass which is transparent one way only, and so designed as to catch a maximum of sunlight. Winter's gloom banished by artificial sunlight in every home, and fully luminous paint in color schemes to suit man's varying moods. Radio appliances which will allow any two individuals in the world to televise and converse with each other within one twenty-fourth of a second; multitudes of ingenious gadgets that reduce household routine to something of a robot existence; a climate under perfect control; synthetic food for the people supplied in tabloid form; three hours' work followed by half an hour's rest for the supermen of that day, etc., etc. Such is the scientist's dream of the future, with, of course, much more that is fantastic than feasible in the light of human limitations.

The picture of the future as the Hebrew and Christian prophets have described it seems to offer much more that is alluring and desirable than anything man has yet produced or is likely to produce for himself. Of the true sons of God, the men of faith, it is said: "God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:16.

One of the last revelations of the New Testament concerned this city. "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2. The best human language available to describe the glory of this city conveys the impression of aesthetic perfection. Its walls flashed with a jasper hue, and the whole city scintillated like transparent gold. Its twelve foundations glistened with the coloring of costly stones. Its entrances had the appearance of pearls. No artificial lighting, nor even sunlight was seen in it, for "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is' the light thereof." Revelation 21:23,24. Compare Isaiah 54:11,12; 60:19,20; Revelation 22: 5.

THE WONDER WORLD TO COME

Symmetrically and amply proportioned (Revelation 21:16), in delightful and historic situation

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(Zechariah 14:4; Psalm 48:2), this city is to stand as the metropolis of a permanently united world. Revelation 21:24; Isaiah 66:22.

The desolate and inhospitable places of our present earth, occupying vast stretches of land surface, will be unknown in the new age, for, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly." Isaiah 35:1,2.

No more shall the pleasure of possessing the glories of the countryside be the perquisite of a favored few. The fair flowers and blossoms of the earth, the wonders of the woodlands, the majesty of mountains and hills, the inspiration of fountains and streams-these and a thousand other delights shall be the free possession of all God's people of the new age. And beyond these, doubtless the marvels of God's universe to explore and to revel in.

All nature will be so completely changed that the rapacity and ferocity of our animal world will be superseded by a new spirit that shall cause the kingly creatures of the forest to associate peacefully with the lamb and the ox. And the fear of human kind shall forsake the animal world, and in its place shall come mutual confidence and faithfulness. Isaiah 35:9; 65:25; 11:6-9.

Mr. Macdonald was thinking one tropical day about the beauties of the new earth as pictured by the prophets. Suddenly, he heard sounds which made him turn pale. He knew there had been a hunting expedition from the native village the night before, for the lions had been seriously depleting the native cattle herds. The hunters were returning now, but the peculiar droning of the drums and the wailing of the people told him a tale he had known so many times before.

He proceeded to the village and met the returning hunters. They bore in triumph a fine specimen of a lion. But also they carried four of the finest men of their tribe. There was wailing all night in that heathen hamlet. That was the price men pay for the fear, the dread, the rapacity that is in the world of men and of animals.

As the missionary spoke that night to the mourning natives of the day when they might meet their warriors again, he said:-

"No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35: 9,10.

The Call to Conquest

SOME years ago, Mr. Job Harriman, once one of America's foremost exponents of practical socialism, devoted his fortune and the best of his years to further a scheme of communal life to convince men of the practicability of his doctrines. In the Mohave Desert, California, the city of Llano del Rio took shape; the desert began to blossom with roses, and everything looked like Utopia at last.

But a canker began to work. Women got tired of cooking, men refused to go on with their work, jealousy and ill-will appeared, until today the city lies in ruins and the scheme has been abandoned.

"The communist idea," Mr. Harriman stated, "once seemed to me, theoretically, the solution of the world's woes.

"I learned in practice, however, that social problems are not only economic, but largely biological. It is human nature that is at fault."

He added that his ideals would never become possible, "until the selfish urge recedes and the unselfish love urge becomes dominant."

Exactly! Human nature is at fault. Men need not undertake costly communal schemes to discover that fact. The Christian gospel begins to build up its whole plan of human redemption from that point.

MAN THE ENIGMA

Of man in his natural state it is written: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" "I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." Jeremiah 17:9; 10:23.

The whole history of man has been marked by striking proof that man left to himself is unequal to the task of satisfactorily working out his own destiny. The story is a cycle of temporary progress for ever marked by serious setbacks. Men have ever "walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil