

FALSE THEORIES OF DIVINE PLAN

All Creeds In Error as to the World's Ending.

THE BIBLE MISUNDERSTOOD.

Pastor Russell Says the Supposition that the Earth Will Be Burned is Unscriptural—What is Meant is the Destruction of Sin and the Overthrow of Evil—Following the Symbolic Fire Will Come a Blessing to Mankind—God's Scheme of Salvation Explained and Made Clear.



PASTOR RUSSELL

Oct. 15.—"London Tabernacle," Lancaster Gate, W., was crowded today to hear Pastor Russell.

He spoke of mistaken notions re the end of the world. He assured his audience that "the earth abideth forever," and claimed errors were built upon misinterpretations of Scriptures. We report him on Revelation x, 6, 7 as follows: Our text, with other Scriptural statements respecting the end of the world (for instance, St. Peter's statement, "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved"), have led Christians in general to accept the theory that God has decreed that shortly, or at some time, our earth is to be burned. The early Church expected and prayed for the second coming of Messiah, to establish the Kingdom of righteousness, to overthrow sin and to release mankind from its bondage and weakness and from the power of death, and thus to bless the whole earth, restoring all things to the glorious condition represented in miniature in Eden: man in perfection, with a Paradise home—Acts III, 19-21.

But as centuries passed without the manifestation of Messiah's Kingdom, those expectations yielded to another suggestion, namely, that Jesus had not meant what had been understood, but meant that the Church should convert the world, under His supervision, during a period of a thousand years, and that then He would come and give their work His stamp of approval and wind things up by taking all the saints to heaven, setting fire to the earth to entirely consume it.

Catholics and Protestants Much Confused.

Both Catholics and Protestants have been operating in harmony with this erroneous thought. Catholics claim that the Kingdom of Messiah was set up long ago and that the popes and cardinals are representatives of Jesus and the Church. They claim that the Pope is Christ's Vice-gerent—that is to say, He reigns instead of Christ, as His representative. They claim that "the thousand years" is already in the past, since 1700, and that we are now in the "little season" mentioned in Revelation xx, 3, in which Satan was to be loosed, at the close of the thousand years.

Many of them understand that Protestantism in general, and particularly, Socialism and Free Masonry, are organizations of Satan, which will soon be destroyed in the burning up of the world. Protestants are also much confused on the subject. They claim that we are in the reign of Messiah, but they are not sure when it began or when it will end. Before Luther's day the Catholic view prevailed, but according to Luther's preaching the Papal claims were false, and later the Papal system was branded as Antichrist. Since then Protestants are in confusion. Some recognize the Church of England and its kingly head as God's Kingdom in the earth, but they admit that it has not yet conquered the earth, nor is God's will done as in heaven, even in the British Isles. The Church of Russia makes a similar claim to being the Kingdom of God, and honors the Pope as the reigning representative of Messiah. Emperor William of Germany also has on his coins the legend that he is reigning "by the grace of God"—that his kingdom is a part of Messiah's Kingdom.

But all these theories Catholics and Protestants are now ignoring. In the light of our day none dare preach such theories. With present-day enlightenment it seems foolish to declare that the various kingdoms of Europe are Messiah's Kingdom, and that they are establishing a reign of righteousness. The costly preparations for war made by these very nations discredit entirely the claim that they are parts of Messiah's great Kingdom of righteousness and peace.

All denominations engaged in missionary work are professing the thought that soon the world will be converted; that the second coming of Christ will then take place, and then will come the consummation, and the burning of the world. How strange, how illogical! The heathen, according to reliable government statistics, are twice as numerous today as they were a century ago. Six hundred millions there were then; there are twelve hundred millions now. How long would it require, at this rate, to convert the world? And if the heathen were converted to the same condition of civ-

lization enjoyed in Europe and America, could we claim then that God's will was done on earth as it is done in heaven? Assuredly not.

Thank God, the second coming of Messiah will not delay until the world is converted and God's will fully done and the plan of salvation ended. Quite to the contrary. His coming is for the very purpose of bringing all things into subjection to the Father's will. He comes that He may reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, in association with His Church. He will not reign through a representative or vice-gerent, but personally, and "unto Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" to the glory of God. In His day the righteous shall flourish, and the evil-doers shall be cut off. The faithful Church, sharing in her Lord's resurrection, the First Resurrection, to glory, honor and immortality, will be His associate kings and priests, to reign for a thousand years. (Revelation xx, 6.)

Fire Symbolical of Destruction.

Let us examine some texts which seem to teach that our earth will be destroyed by fire, and note that they are symbolical. "Fire" is frequently used in the Scriptures as a symbol of destruction. Thus the Church is exhorted to mortify or kill the fleshly nature, and is told that the fiery trials of life will assist them in this work. The opposition of enemies is to be destroyed by works of mercy and kindness, which, figuratively, will be "coals of fire upon their heads." St. Peter mentions special trials and tribulations coming upon the Church, designed to purify her—purge out and destroy the dross. He says: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."—I Peter IV, 12.

St. Paul refers to special trials upon the Church in the end of the Gospel Age, which will consume false doctrines, human traditions, etc., and all false faith, but which will leave unscathed the true Faith and true character. He says: "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."—I Corinthians III, 12-15.

These various Scriptures do not prove that the world could not be destroyed by fire in a literal way, but they do prove that "fire" is very frequently mentioned in the Bible in a figurative or symbolical manner. "Our God is a consuming fire"—as regards everything contrary to righteousness; the symbolical "lake of fire," in the book of Revelation, is explained to signify the Second Death, utter destruction, without hope of recovery.

World Burning Unscriptural.

The supposition that the earth will be destroyed by fire, either soon or ever, would be contrary to the statement that "the earth abideth forever," and the declaration that God formed it not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited. (Isaiah xiv, 18.) One of the very strong passages which seems to teach that the earth will be devoured by fire is found in Zephaniah III, 8: "Wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until that Day that I rise up to the prey, for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger; for the whole earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy"—anger.

That the fire of God's anger which will come upon the world will not destroy the physical earth, with all its inhabitants, but will destroy the evil of present institutions, is shown by the succeeding sentence, which declares: "Then will I turn to the people a pure Message, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent." If the fire of this text were literal, the earth and its people would be no more, but as symbolical fire it is perceived that it is a burning against unrighteousness, iniquity, sin, the overthrow of all institutions of evil, and the awakening of mankind and preparing them to hear the Voice of God, the language of the Truth, the Divine Message.

What we have seen prepares us for the somewhat more difficult statement of St. Peter: "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, and the earth and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. . . . The heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for a New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Peter III, 10-13.) To harmonize these words of St. Peter with other Bible statements, we must consider the "fire" here mentioned to be symbolical. Not only the earth is to be consumed, but the heavens also. The "heavens" will take fire first and be dissolved.

What heavens shall we suppose are here referred to?—not the literal, starry heavens, nor even our atmospheric heavens, nor yet the heaven of Divine Presence and glory. The church systems, the ecclesiastical powers, are symbolically referred to as the "heavens," at the present time, supervising and over-ruling the temporal and social arrangements which are represented by the "earth." The "earth" represents organized society, as in con-

trast with the "sea," which symbolical-ly represents disorganized society, the uncivilized and all who are rebellious against governments. When the "heavens" (ecclesiastical powers) of the present time shall be "dissolved," it will be with a great noise, with great confusion, commotion. Ecclesiastical institutions of the present time are in a very troubled condition, though they are in no danger of immediate collapse. The principal outcry is that few attend church services, and that the collections are small.

St. Peter's words indicate a crisis in ecclesiastical affairs still future. The Scriptures show us that a great Federation is seemingly bringing Ecclesiasticalism into greater power than it has exercised in years. Other intimations of Scripture lead us to expect that that federative organization will attempt a rigid control of the world through affiliation with political and civil power, and that a considerable measure of success will lead to intoxication on the subject and an attempt to take away the liberties of the people entirely, the result of which will be a great explosion, or a great "earthquake," in the symbolical language of Scripture. It will be then that the heavens will take fire and be consumed with a great noise, commotion, disaster, etc. And the commotion will include the social order. The elements will melt with the intensity of the heat, the strife, which will then be engendered. The elements of society are those mutual advantages and assistances of good people, upon which the stability of government rests.

The Bible clearly intimates that the condition of affairs symbolized by the melting of society and the disintegrating of its elements in the great heat of strife at that time will be the result of superstition and fear. The end will be anarchy, or as the Bible declares, "Every man's hand will be against his neighbor." Selfishness will be the predominating, ruling principle.

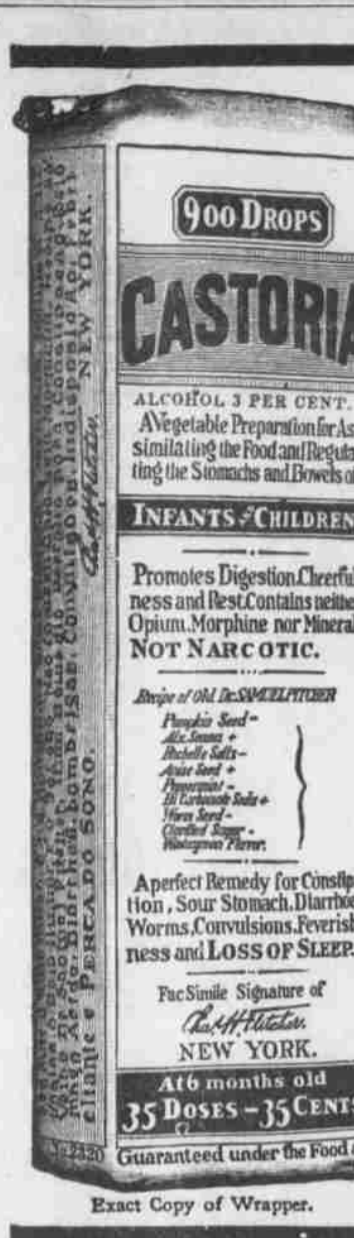
The Symbolic Fire Useful.

The question arises, Why should God permit the fall of our Christian systems, which certainly have done much that is morally assistful to the world? And why should He permit the overthrow of the present order of things, which certainly is much more advantageous than anarchy and disorder? The Bible answer is that God is not forcing this issue, but is merely allowing mankind to work out these results. The trouble and disaster will come as the natural result of ignoring the principles of Divine Law. Ecclesiasticalism is unauthorized to claim that it is God's Kingdom, invested with Divine power and authority to rule the world. This fallacious claim and the attempt to enforce it will bring upon it the "fire" which will consume. The world, neglectful of the Golden Rule, and obeying the false standard that "might makes right," will overthrow society by precipitating a conflict between the two great parties—the capitalists, trusts, kings and princes on the one hand, and labor unions and the masses on the other hand. Each will feel that a death struggle has arrived and that the battle "must be fought. Each will feel unwarrantedly self-confident of victory. According to the Bible, the result will be the complete wreck of our present society, symbolically pictured as a "fire."

But the Lord through the Prophet Zephaniah points out that, following this time of "fire" and trouble, will come a blessing to the earth. So also He declares through St. Peter, that following the symbolic fire, will come "a New Heaven" and a new earthly condition, the basic principle of which will be righteousness; and the Prophet Zephaniah says that then God's Message, in its purity, shall reach the people. Both statements are true. On the ruins of our present civilization, when mankind will be sick at heart with the failure of the Brain Age, they will look to the Lord, to whom they should have looked sooner. They will perceive the coming reign of righteousness and will say, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for Him and He will deliver us." (Isaiah xxv, 9.) Then the Prophet declares, "The desire of all nations shall come." (Haggai II, 7.)

All nations are desiring blessing, prosperity, and God desires that all shall have these very favors, and they will be obtainable through Messiah's Kingdom. Then the blessing of mankind will begin. The Messianic Kingdom, invisible but All-Powerful, will be thoroughly manifest in its dealings and its righteous judgments will have control. The blessing will come through Israel, extending to and including "all the families of the earth."

How grand the thought that the New Heavens will be the new ecclesiastical powers—the glorified Church—Christ and His Bride in glory and power. The New Earth mentioned by the Apostle will be the new organization of human society, along the lines of righteousness—the Golden Rule. We have not forgotten our text. What we have said is in line with it. It requires the addition of one word to make its meaning clear. The Mystery of God, which has been kept secret from the foundation of the world, shall be finished, completed, no longer a mystery. "And the angel swears . . . that the time should be no longer [delayed]." (Revelation x, 3, 7.) This has no reference to the end of time. Time can never end. Other Scriptures show that we are living very near the finish, the completion of the Church, which is the "Mystery." (Ephesians III, 3-6; v, 32.) With the completion of the Church the "Mystery" will begin the fulfillment of all the glorious promises of the Bible respecting the lifting of the curse from the earth, and the Divine blessing upon all earthly things.



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Indians Entertained Him. (UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATED PRESS.) Sheridan, Wyo., Oct. 20.—Visiting with Indian braves in full war paint who waited upon him with elaborate ceremony, formed a novel feature of the day's happenings with President Taft and his party on their home-

ward journey today. The President's throat is much better today. He will visit the towns of Sheridan, Gillette and Newcastle today.

Steamer Re-loaded. Vancouver, B. C., Oct. 20.—News

was received by wireless this morning that the C. P. R. steamer Princess Beatrice, which was wrecked last Saturday night, has been refloated. She is now on her way to Victoria.

Many a man has fallen hopelessly behind in a mad rush to get even.