

**THE MILLENNIUM: THE
GOOD TIME COMING. WITH
A HISTORY OF EXPERIMENTS
ON THE ODIC FORCE**

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WILLIAM SHELDON

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ODIC FORCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
MILLENNIAL INSTITUTIONS, THE SEVENTH VIAL, AND THE THEOLOGICAL MYSTERY.

William Sheldon

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1862.

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THE MILLENNIUM, &c., &c.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

I TRUST I shall not be suspected of levity. Something of the kind might be suggested by my title—THE MILLENNIUM—THE GOOD TIME COMING. It was merely designed however, to contrast the ideas suggested by the respective designations—the secular and the scriptural. Most people of reflection, it is probable, throughout the *so called* Christian world, are looking for a glorious future. But how different the views of him who is imbued with the teachings of scripture, and of him who is not. The one looks for a future where righteousness—RIGHTEOUSNESS—will prevail universally. Where humility and meekness will take the place of the haughty, punctilious, resentful, or, as the case may be, servile, spirit of the world. Where the love of acquisition is repressed or diffused. Where emulation is regulated and chastened. Where faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity will be attributes of all, and will “abound;” where plenty will be the heritage of all; where to each one will be secured the substantial advantages of wealth, without its temptations; where the enjoyments of this life will be sought and partaken of with moderation, and in all good conscience; and where spiritual mindedness, (as opposed to worldly mindedness,) or that earnest desire for the perfected nature and enjoyments, and the glory, of a blessed future state of ex-

istence, will shed a sacred calm, like that of a holy Sabbath, on the minds of all. Of course, those who are on the right side, will not all attain equal degrees of these gifts and graces.

Shall I venture to attempt a delineation of the views of the future, entertained by the men of this world? Such a delineation would be difficult; for, while the scripture account is well defined, the notions of those who reject the scriptures, or but slightly regard them, are diverse, like those of the ancient schools of philosophy, while philosophy was truly "vain," as according to scripture—little more than hypothesis built upon conjecture.

Some of the plans of the *social reformers* are sufficiently simple and direct, for I conclude that those of agrarians and radicals, if not those of red republicans, should be included. In England there are such as believe that deposing the hierarchy and abolishing the House of Lords, placing all religious denominations on an equality, and rendering offices of public trust accessible to all, would be the great panacea. The attention of many of these is fixed more upon pulling down than upon building up.

Then there are great numbers, extensively diffused, but having their chief abiding place in the United States, who hold that a purely representative government, religion being left to itself, and in which the freest scope is afforded to the worldly passions of acquisition, emulation and ambition; a very liberal morality being accorded in the matter of electioneering, to say nothing of the license assumed in transactions of business, is the *chief hope of mankind*. An overweening patriotism would almost seem to be the principal religion of many of these. Events now rapidly transpiring in the United States—July, 1861—surprisingly manifest this, and will ultimately perhaps, modify the current of opinion as to the "hope of mankind." Though this system does not oppugn religion, it appears to contemplate little if aught but worldly advantages.

In advance of these systems, somewhat primitive, or at least crude and immature, as they are regarded by many, are others, not yet extensively reduced to practice, embracing a wide range of thought, and some of them rising to theories of great refinement. Among these may be mentioned the theory of the *perfectibility of human nature*, so prevalent about the time of the French revolution, and that of the late Robert Owen. Mr. Owen is extensively known as an advocate of communism. But he has other claims to attention: first, arising from the circumstance, set forth in the work entitled *Millennial Institutions*, that he is *perhaps*, expressly alluded to in prophecy.* In addition to his teachings in socialism, Mr. Owen provided for his followers, a religion, such as it was. He also deemed amusement and relaxation, of sufficient importance to be included as an integral part of his system. His religion, if that may be so called which rather ignores or sets aside all religion, is known under the name of the Doctrine of Circumstances. This system teaches, if I comprehend it perfectly, that no one can be more guilty than any other, since another, under *similar circumstances*, would act precisely as he does. This was probably regarded by Mr. Owen as irrefragable; and at first view it seems quite plausible. It causes a glimmering of the mental vision, which prevents our at once seeing its fallacy. Does it find, or appear to find confirmation in the teaching of scripture, that he who is guilty of one of the commandments is guilty of all? He who violates one, *under circumstances equally favorable*, would violate any other. It need not be said that it is inconsistent with scripture. It is opposed by the phenomena of conscience

* Those who have read the work referred to, will understand me when I say, that it is difficult to fix with certainty, *on the map*, the precise situation of the north coast—Ezek. 40: 35-49. According to one method, the table towards the north-east—verse 39—is precisely on the site of Lanerk, the seat of Mr. Owen's socialist experiments. According to other methods it is at a greater or less distance.

and remorse, *original principles*, implanted in our natures, by the great author of our being, for the regulation of our conduct. The metaphysical answer perhaps is, that God has made each individual accountable for his actions, *under the circumstances in which he is placed*. It was indispensable for those to whom it was appointed to bear the heat and burden of the day, to labour and be faithful; while those who were called at the eleventh hour, would not fail of their reward. The practical influence of the doctrine must be antinomian and demoralizing, in a high degree; though it will not be questioned that Mr. Owen, and many others, whose teachings have conflicted with scripture, (most or many of whom, however, have taught some kind of morality,) have been quite sincere in their views.

The science of metaphysics, (which teaches first principles,) is unquestionably, one of the noblest that can occupy the attention of the human mind. Regarded collectively however, like all things else since the fall, in which man is a *particeps*, with the exception perhaps, of the pure mathematicks, it is imperfect. This is evinced by the discordant notions entertained by religious sects, all supported by subtile metaphysics. Most of these discrepancies however, would be avoided by a more just and philosophic metaphysical training. God has vouchsafed *two revelations* to man: that of *intuitive truth*, and that of the revealed word. And it has been the fault in the reasoning of most religious sects, that they seem to have regarded the teachings of the revealed word, *and as according to their own interpretation*, as the only infallible truth, instead of the verities of intuitive certainty; not considering apparently, that upon these the truths of the word must ever rest, as a basis. I will not affirm that no amount of cumulative evidence, of a lower grade is not sufficient to neutralize an intuitive certainty; but as a general rule, that which presents itself to the mind as a primary idea, self-evident, and the converse of which cannot be clearly apprehended, is in all cases to be received as truth, unless opposed by another *apparent truth*, of the same character.

It was not my intention however, to offer a treatise on the rules of metaphysical reasoning; but, from the acknowledged imperfection, and unsatisfactory results of metaphysical speculation heretofore, to deduce the importance of a *right spirit*, in the quest after truth. To some extent this is of more importance than the discovery of truth itself. It appears to be ordained as the great compensating power for the unavoidable imperfections of all copies of the scriptures. Christ says, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.* In the earliest and best ages of the church, the Apostles and their cotemporaries and successors, embraced the doctrines of the gospel with the singleness of view and the confiding trust of little children. Metaphysical difficulties had not yet arisen. When these appeared, faith became, not less confident perhaps, but less satisfactory, natural, consolatory and vital. It is needless to inquire here, how far the views of the apostles were finally enlarged, and their mental vision rendered more clear, by inspiration. Such a disposition is of more value than a stern, ungenial bending of the intellect to a supposed inexorable logick. An over confident, dogmatic, positive temper on the one hand, and an unfaltering, unswerving adherence to party lines on the other, unreasoning it may be added, except in the prescribed methods, and after the received formulas—might there not be danger that these would sometimes lead to a “form of godliness without the power?” Viewed as adapted to the circumstances which surround him, man is evidently in a most imperfect condition. The dislocations and disadjustments, which are observable in every direction, seem to prove that he is in a lapsed and fallen condition. Have any of those who reject the Bible, avowedly or practically, offered a theory of man, bearing the least comparison, for sublimity and probability, to that proposed in the scriptures? the ac-

count there given of the creation, and of the fall of man, and of the method devised for his recovery? Under a more logical system of exegesis than has generally prevailed, and observing the simple rule of holding the mind in suspense, where objections are *as yet* insuperable, instead of rushing to a premature conclusion, most of the alleged difficulties will vanish. Even geology, I believe it will appear hereafter, instead of being reconcilable with the Mosaic account, only after much violence to language, singularly confirms it. If there be any who hold that man was created as he is, and that therefore he is not accountable, such a doctrine would perhaps find its best support in the fact that mere morality has hitherto done little for restoring or bringing him to a state of purity, righteousness, peace and happiness.

In the year 1833 I published a work entitled *Millennial Institutions*. It consisted principally of a comment on the fortieth chapter of Ezekiel. It was supposed to be proved that the six courts of which the "frame of a city," verse 2, consists, properly arranged, form a map, representing the continents of the old world, together with England. In this delineation, under architectural emblems, are represented, more especially, the civil and social institutions of the millennial period. Most of these emblems are found in the court, ver. 35—49, representing England. Here are the emblems of government, and of social and domestick arrangements. Here are the chambers of the *singers*, and of the *priests the keepers of the charge of the house*, and of the *priests the keepers of the charge of the altar*. *These are the sons of *Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him*. The altar, ver. 47, is in front of this court, towards the east; while at the north gate are "tables, whereupon they slew" *their sacrifices*; intimating perhaps, in the connexion, both the

*Priest in the time of David.