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EDITORIAL

## ENDS OF THE WORLD.

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**T**HREE hundred Triune Immersionists, defeated in their hopes of the end of the world, are now sadly plodding back from West Duxbury, Mass., to the homes they left shortly ago, some as far away as Virginia, to pick up again the thread of the earthly life they thought they had laid down forever. Not only that. Many of them are going back to face scenes of desolation and destitution. Believing the usefulness of worldly goods outlived, they gave up their jobs, abandoned their businesses, sold their property, and donated all they had to the church.

This is not the first time a similar drama has been enacted, nor the largest stage it has occupied. The founder of Christianity, after describing the destruction of the world, his own second coming, and the judgment, declared: "This day and generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." And his followers took him at his word. Thus are accounted for the rapid gains the faith made among the poor of earth, their unshakable adherence to the new doctrine, and their sublime indifference to persecution. What mattered a brief season of pain? It was not to a lifelong struggle against evil he was calling them, but a temporary preparation before the end of all and the relief from oppression.

But the day and generation passed away, and all these things were not fulfilled. To account for the fact, recourse was had to "allegorical" interpretation. The day and generation were interpreted as meaning centuries, periods of 500 years, or even longer. The texts were eagerly scanned for more data. Finally the beginning of the year 1000 was set for the event.

The consequences of such a belief are easily imaginable. As the year 1000 approached industry was neglected; the arts and sciences drooped, the fields were allowed to lie untilled. No one would build for a future that wasn't going to be. The stream of human endeavor lay choked by the obstacle of an expected doom. The

world was stagnant. The Church alone was active, gathering in the estates and goods of those who could be induced to give them over as a peace-offering to the hereafter.

The last hours of the year 999 drew on. Multitudes thronged the streets and fields awaiting the cataclysm that was to wipe them out, and give the serf and laborer rest. Midnight arrived. The clocks sounded the hour—and nothing happened. The world wagged on as before.

Then broke in their full virulence the effects of the years of inaction. The earth, untilled, bore no crops. Frightful famines devastated the land. Thousands upon thousands died of starvation—for thirty years want and pestilence stalked the continent of Europe. The populations were decimated. Babies died at their mothers' dry breasts. Reduced to the last extremity, survivors ate the bodies of those who succumbed.

The year 1909 reenactment at West Duxbury of the catastrophe of the year 1000 is but a puny echo of the earlier event; so far has the spread of scientific knowledge carried us. But in one way or another similar tragedies will continue until the workers cease to look to the skies for relief, and put their shoulders to the task of building, here on earth, the social system that will render misery and exploitation impossible.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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