

## The Third Angel's Message. The Elements That Enter into the "Falling Away" (out of Which Came the Beast).

IT is essential to know the elements that enter into the "falling away," out of which came the "man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the mystery of iniquity," "that Wicked," "the Beast;" because it was by these elements that the power was gained which made the Beast, and which has been, and is to be, wielded by the Beast in his terrible career. For of him it is written that "an host was given him . . . by reason of transgression." Dan. 8:12. Now, since all transgression is sin, because "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), this statement in Daniel is, in itself, the original suggestion from which Paul wrote the expression "the man of sin."

It was by sin; by reason of transgression; by courting the elements of sin and playing into the hands of transgressors, that the man of sin gathered to himself the "host" which gave to him the power that characterizes him as the Beast. This process is described in Paul's words to the elders of the church at Ephesus, who met him at Miletus, in Acts 20:30: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This, in itself, tells of the self-exaltation of men to the place of Christ. They drew disciples to themselves, instead of to Christ; it was their *design* to draw disciples to themselves, instead of to Christ; and, in carrying out this design, they spoke perverse things. This they did deliberately: they did it TO draw away disciples after them.

Note further: It was not simply to draw disciples *to* themselves; but to draw AWAY disciples after them. These were men professing to be Christians, speaking to people who were, likewise, professed Christians—some of them, indeed, in good faith. But these self-exalted ones, not content that men should be disciples of Christ, perverted the truth of Christ, while still professing it; and this they did to draw AWAY from Christ and his truth disciples unto themselves and their errors.

All this was, in itself, to court the elements of sins, and to play into the hands of the transgressors. And this all *for power*. For, for what but power could any man want disciples drawn to himself? And what kind of power could it be that was gained by this means?—It could be nothing else than the power of iniquity. And while it was true that great numbers, even "an host," could by this means be gained, yet it was a host gained only by means of transgression. And this host being gathered from the elements of iniquity, only by means of iniquity, could never, in any of its workings, be anything but the working of iniquity, even as described; it would be "the man of sin," "the mystery of iniquity."

Even while the apostles yet lived, the mystery of iniquity had already begun to work, though not to open observation. But no sooner were the apostles all removed from the stage of action, no sooner was their watchful attention gone and their apostolic authority removed, than it developed into vigorous activity. In order to make easier the

"conversion" of the heathen; to multiply disciples to themselves; and, by this, establish their own influence and authority, would-be leaders and self-exalted men began to adopt heathen customs and forms, mingling them with the Christian forms, and adapting the Christian forms to the heathen rites.

Of all the ceremonies of the heathen, the mysteries were the most sacred and most universally practiced. And to gain the favor of the heathen, these perverse teachers gave it out that they also had mysteries. And to make good the representation, they gave to baptism and the Lord's Supper the name of "the mysteries," in the very terms of the pagan mysteries; and this they followed up by gradually incorporating from the heathen practices the very rites that were designated by the terms expressive of the heathen mysteries.

The mysteries were directly related to the worship of the sun; for "the most holy and perfect rite in the Eleusinian mysteries was to show an ear of corn mowed down in silence, and this was a symbol of the Phrygian Atys." And the Phrygian Atys was simply the incarnation of the sun. The character of the rites performed in the celebration of the mysteries is suggested in Eph. 5:11, 12: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." This evil was spread over both the East and the West of the Roman Empire before the apostle John had been dead forty years. So swiftly proceeded the fulfillment of the prophecy that "an host" would be "given him . . . by reason of transgression."

Another step: It was a universal custom of the heathen to worship with their faces toward the east; because the sun was the great object of their worship, and there first he displayed his bright beams. This practice of the heathen was also adopted by the perverse teachers who would draw disciples to themselves, and who would gain an host by reason of transgression.

Yet another step in the apostasy was the adoption of the heathen day of the sun—Sunday—as a festival day. So general did this become that, even before A.D. 200, one of the apostasy—even now one of the "church Fathers"—has reported that "others suppose that the sun is the God of the Christians, because *it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the east, or because we make Sunday a day of festival.*"—*Tertullian*.

And so much like the heathen was that of these of the apostasy, that the heathen themselves charged those so-called Christians with being worshipers of the sun. And the only defense that was offered by those of the apostasy was: "What then? Do you do less than this? Do not many among you, with an affectation of sometimes worshipping the heavenly bodies, likewise move your lips in the direction of the sunrise? It is you, at all events, who have admitted the sun into the calendar of the week; and you have selected its day, in preference to the preceding day."—*Id.*

While this was the only defense they made, it is true that they did, in fulfillment of the words of Paul, speak perverse things—perverted the word of the Lord—to *justify* it. In the Scriptures it is written: "The Lord God is a sun and shield." Ps. 84:11. And again: "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his

wings." Mal. 4:2. These beautiful passages were perverted, to justify the honoring of the sun, and especially at his rising. They claimed that in so honoring the sun they were honoring God, who is a sun, and who, *as the Sun* of righteousness, would "arise."

Another step in promoting the honor of the sun was taken, especially under the leadership of the church at Rome. The early Christians celebrated the Passover, in remembrance of the death of Christ, the true Passover. Accordingly, they celebrated it on the fourteenth day of the first month. Rome, however, and from her all the west, adopted Sunday as the day of this celebration. According to the original and the Eastern custom this celebration, being on the fourteenth day of the month, would, of course, fall upon different days of the week, as the years revolved. But the rule of Rome was that the celebration must *always* be on a *Sunday*—the Sunday nearest to the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year. And if that fourteenth day of the month were itself a Sunday, then the celebration was not to be held on that day; but upon the *next* Sunday. And this is why it is that, to this day, Easter, even though celebrated always on Sunday, is so very variable in its recurrence,—sometimes in March, sometimes early in April, sometimes late in April,—but always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the twentieth of March, or the spring equinox.

Indeed, this very item of Easter itself illustrated this gathering of a host to the man of sin, by reason of transgression. The word "Easter" is peculiar to the English language, and to the British Isles. "It is derived from *Eostre*, or *Ostára*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, to whom the fourth month, answering to our April—thence called *Eostur-monath*—was dedicated." The heathen in Britain were celebrating in early spring this festival of their goddess Eostre, when the agents of Rome first entered Britain; and by them this name of the heathen goddess was adopted, with the festival in her honor; and the whole ceremony thus adopted was carried on as the celebration of the so-called Christian Passover. And, says the Venerable Bede: "The old festival was observed with the gladness of a new solemnity." The word "Easter" in Acts 12:4 is not a translation, but a sheer insertion by the translators; as the Greek is *pascha*, meaning "passover."

Another item worth noticing, in this connection, is that this *Eostre*, or *Ostára*, of the ancient Britons, is identical with the Ishtar, or Astarte, of Babylon and Nineveh, and the Ashtaroth of the Phœnicians. She was the female of Bel in Babylon and Nineveh, and of Baal in Phœnicia; and represented the female element in sun worship.

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*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 77, No. 16, Apr. 17, 1900, p. 248.

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