

The Third Angel's Message. The Making of the Beast.

ANOTHER element in the falling away out of which came the Beast, and which was a mighty impulse in the making of the Beast, was the adoption of pagan philosophy.

In the second century there was a school of philosophy in Alexandria called the Eclectic, so called because its originator held that there was truth in all the philosophies of the world, and that if this truth was gathered out from all and embodied in one, this one would become the universal philosophy, and would dominate the world. At the beginning of the third century an improvement was made upon this system by a certain Ammonius Saccas, by which the formation of a universal philosophy, one that would dominate the world, should be accomplished more easily and much more quickly. Ammonius held that the essences of all the philosophies in the world were already one if only men understood one another; and he applied himself to the task of forming such a system of explanations as would enable the philosophers to understand all the philosophies just alike.

Clement, one of the earliest "Fathers of the church," adopted the system of Ammonius, and finally established a philosophical school in Alexandria, which at the same time he held under the name and form of Christian.

Clement is supposed to have died about A.D. 220, and was succeeded by Origen, who had been taught by both Ammonius and Clement. This is the Origen who became by this very means, and even yet is regarded, one of the greatest of the Fathers of the Catholic Church. By his philosophizing comments in exposition of the Scriptures, to make this perverse Christianity acceptable to the heathen, and by the great success that he had in building up this new system of things, he became the commentator and master not only of his time, but for ages afterward. For "from the days of Origen to those of Chrysostom [A.D. 451] there was not a single eminent commentator that did not borrow largely from the words of" Origen. "He was the chief teacher of even the most orthodox of the Western Fathers." — *Farrar*.

From the beginning there was in the church earnest protest against this tendency to the heathen philosophy. Indeed, this was certain to be so on the part of all who respected the Scriptures, for there it is plainly written: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." For in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." And again, it was plainly stated in the Scriptures that by this very philosophy the world had been brought to the point where it did not know God. Therefore Christians were warned against it because it led away from God.

But these would-be Christians philosophers were not restrained by this admonition of the Scriptures; because, as in former studies we have seen, it was not disciples to Christ that they were after, but "to draw away disciples after them;" and for this purpose

they would even pervert what was plainly written in the Scripture. They wanted a multitude drawn to themselves that they might have power; and whatever means would draw the multitude was readily adopted by them.

"The estimation in which human learning should be held was a question on which the Christians were about equally divided. Many recommended the study of philosophy, and an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman literature; while others maintained that these were pernicious to the interests of genuine Christianity and the progress of true piety." This heathen philosophy and literature *were* pernicious to the interests of genuine Christianity, and could not be anything else. And the fact that there was *any division at all* on the subject among the Christians, simply reveals that among the Christians there were those who could not discern that the heathen philosophy and literature were not compatible with Christian principle and Christian literature.

And this reveals further that the Christianity of those persons was a mere profession, that it consisted only in outward form. And this shows that the heart had never been touched by the divine Spirit, that these persons had never been converted. The natural mind was still theirs, the mind that "is enmity against God," that "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They never had attained to true faith; to the righteousness, the character of God, which is by faith; to the mind of Jesus Christ. And the fact that "the Christians were about equally divided" demonstrates that there were a great number at this time in the church who were unconverted, who knew nothing of true conversion, of the righteousness of God which is by faith, nor of the mind that was in Christ.

These of course followed the lead of Clement and Origen, were pleased at the great "success" of these teachers and their school in gathering such large numbers to "Christianity;" and so "the cause of letters and philosophy triumphed, however, by degrees; and those who wished well to them continued to gain ground till at length the superiority was manifestly decided in their favor. This victory was principally due to the influence of Origen. . . . The fame of this philosophy increased daily among the Christians; and in proportion to his rising credit his method of proposing and explaining the doctrines of Christianity gained authority till it became almost universal." Thus, *by this means*, yet further, "an host was given him" "by reason of transgression."

This system of philosophy, originated by Ammonius and perpetuated by Clement and Origen, was altogether Egyptian, and thence passed to the Greeks, among whom it was preserved in its bad purity, especially by Plato, from whom it was given the title of the New Platonism.

The means employed by Ammonius, and from him adopted by Clement and Origen, of finding or making all the philosophies to be one, was a system of allegorization and mystification by which anybody could find whatever he wanted in any writing that might come to his notice. And when this method was applied to the Scriptures, it was easy enough to pervert the word of God so as to make it sanction anything taught in the pagan philosophies. According to it, in *every passage* of Scripture there are at least three meanings, and there may be from three to six meanings.

The basis of this was the immortality of the soul. As every man is composed of body, soul, and spirit, so every Scripture has in it three original senses: (a) a literal sense corresponding to the body; (b) a moral sense, corresponding to the soul; and (c) a mystical sense, corresponding to the spirit, or mind. And as the body is the baser part of man, so the literal is the baser sense of the Scripture. And further, as the body often betrays good men into sin, so the literal sense of Scripture often leads into error. And yet further, as the body is a clog to the soul, and hinders it in its heavenly aspirations, and must therefore be despised and separated as far as possible from the soul; so the literal sense of Scripture, which corresponds to man's body, is likewise a hindrance to the detection and proper understanding of the hidden and mystical meanings of the Word, and therefore the literal sense of Scripture must be despised and separated as far as possible from the hidden senses, and must be counted as of the least possible worth.

Accordingly Origen taught and wrote: "The source of many evils lies in adhering to the carnal, or external, part of Scripture. Those who do so will not attain to the kingdom of God. Let us therefore seek after the substantial fruits of the Word, which are hidden and mysterious. The Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written."

This system at once took away the Scriptures from the common people, and shut up the Scriptures to be interpreted solely by these philosophers, who alone were learned in the mystifications and mysteries that were "the true spirit and substantial fruit of the Word." The common people could understand the Scriptures only as they are written, just as they must any other writing; because they knew nothing of the use of that method of mystification. And as it was settled that those who did understand the Scriptures as they are written would "not attain to the kingdom of God," it was plainly in the interests of the common people themselves that these leaders in the new philosophic "Christianity" should withhold the Scriptures from them. For it was only in the receiving of the mystifications of these self-exalted teachers that the ignorant—the common people—*could* attain to the real truth and "substantial fruit of the Word." In this Egyptiaco-Platonic-philosophic-Christian system of the third century lies the origin and the philosophy of the papacy's forbidding even to this day the common people to read the Scriptures.

And when from the common people the Scriptures were shut away, and were shut up exclusively to a perverse-minded hierarchy, who were set on reading into them every pagan doctrine that they chose, in order to be able to class the pagans as Christians—when thus such a sinful and iniquitous "host was given him . . . by reason of" such "transgression," it was easy, and indeed only natural, that, as the consequence, there should be revealed "that man of sin. . . the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that *he* is God," "the mystery of iniquity," "that Wicked," "the Beast."

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