

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

BY their perversions of the truth, and accommodating themselves to the ways of the heathen, the self-exalted teachers referred to by Paul in his word to the elders of the church at Ephesus, had occurred to themselves a host by reason of transgression.

The lust for power was the secret of all this course, from the beginning; for no man can ever want disciples to himself except it be to obtain power. And when this host had thus been gathered, in this was found the incentive and ambition, among these bad leaders and teachers themselves each one to obtain for himself the position of supreme power. And Eusebius tells that "some that appeared to be our pastors, deserting the law of piety, were inflamed against each other with mutual strifes, only accumulating quarrels and threats, rivalry, hostility, and hatred to each other, only anxious to assert the government as a kind of sovereignty for themselves."

Nor was it only government in the church and over this host that had been gathered by reason of transgression that they were anxious to assert: it was government of all kinds—civil as well as ecclesiastical: state as well as church. And, at the beginning of the fourth century the political conditions of things in the Roman state was such as to open the way for these ambitious church managers to get control of the civil power, and thus assert the civil government as a kind of sovereignty for themselves, and to use it the further to enlarge, and more firmly to fix, their ecclesiastical power.

In A.D. 308, it came about in the Roman state, that there were six emperors at once, each one holding a particular division of the empire: each one in command of an army, and each one ambitious to be himself sole emperor of the whole empire. But, there being so many of them, and each one having gathered to himself all the troops that he could, the military strength of the empire was exhausted. There being no more resources in military strength, it became a matter of interest to each emperor to secure the alliance, or the favor, of whatever other element of power there might be. And just at this time it was that Eusebius declares that those chief church men were "anxious to assert the government as a kind of sovereignty for themselves," and when, as stated by another, "it was the hope of every bishop in the empire to make politics a branch of theology."

This ambition on the part of the clergy was detected among the emperors, and, with certain of them it awoke a desire to make theology a branch of politics. Maximum made advances to win to his interests the church element, but he was distrusted by the church managers, and so his design in that direction was frustrated. Constantine, however, a consummate politician in all phases of the term, and who, therefore, more than any of the other emperors, was able "to make theology a branch of politics," succeeded in so gaining the favor of the bishops as to win to his cause the apostate church-elements throughout the whole empire; and, what to his immediate purpose was more important, gaining to his interests such of the apostasy as were in the armies of his rivals.

Maxentius was emperor in Italy and Africa, with Rome as his seat. He was so "cruel, rapacious, and profligate" that his reign recalled the times and acts of the worst emperors of the past. By this time also the bishopric of Rome had become a position of such possibilities of power and wealth, that in the times of the election of a bishop there were repeated all the chicanery, contentions, violence, and riot that characterized the political contests in Rome in the worst days of the republic.

In A.D. 308 Marcellus was elected bishop of Rome. "His severity rendered him odious to the people, and caused divisions among the faithful. Discord degenerated into sedition, and the quarrel terminated in murder." Maxentius blamed Marcellus as being the chief cause of these disturbances, "and condemned him to groom post-horses in a stable on the high-road."

After about nine months of this service, some priests succeeded in carrying off Marcellus. They concealed him in the house of a Roman lady named Lucilla. When the officers would have taken him again, the faithful assembled under arms to defend him. Maxentius ordered out his guards and dispersed them. He then commanded that Lucilla's house should be converted into a stable, and obliged Marcellus to continue in the office of groom. In January, A.D. 310, Marcellus died, and was succeeded by Eusebius, whom Maxentius banished to Sicily. He died thereafter a few months, and was succeeded by Melchiades, in the same year, A.D. 310.

Because of these things, Maxentius was held to be a persecutor of the church, even equal to Pharaoh, to whom he was likened, while the church was correspondingly likened to Israel in Egypt, oppressed by this Pharaoh. Melchiades improved his opportunity to seek deliverance from this Egypt and the oppressions of this Pharaoh. Accordingly, in A.D. 311, Melchiades wrote a letter to Constantine, and by a delegation of bishops sent it to him at Treves, in Gaul, inviting him to come to the relief of the church, and to make the conquest of Rome. Constantine deliberated, and Maxentius became more and more tyrannical. In A.D. 312, an embassy from Rome went to Constantine at Aries, and in the name of the senate and people requested him to deliver the city from the despotism of the tyrant. Constantine now gladly embraced the opportunity thus afforded, and quickly set out toward Rome.

At Turin he met and destroyed a strong body of the troops of Maxentius; and at Verona, after a considerable siege of the city, and a hard-fought battle in the field, which, beginning in the afternoon, continued through the whole of the following night, he vanquished quite a formidable army. Between Verona and Rome there was nothing to check his march. Maxentius drew out his army, and met Constantine on the banks of the Tiber, nine miles from Rome. He crossed the Tiber and set his army in battle array, with the river in his rear. The battle was joined Oct. 28, A.D. 312. Maxentius was soon defeated, and his army, broken to pieces, attempted to escape. In the confusion and by the terrible onslaught of Constantine's veterans, thousands of the soldiers of Maxentius were crowded into the river and drowned. Maxentius, endeavoring to escape on his horse across the Milvian bridge, was crowded off into the river, and being clothed with heavy armor, was drowned.

Since Maxentius was Pharaoh, and the church in Rome was Israel in Egypt, oppressed by this Pharaoh, the system was completed by counting Constantine as the new Moses sent by the Lord to deliver Israel from this Egypt and this Pharaoh. When Constantine marched against Maxentius, it was the new Moses on his way to deliver Israel. When the army of Maxentius was defeated and multitudes were drowned in the river, it was the Red Sea swallowing up the hosts of Pharaoh. When Maxentius was crowded off the bridge and, by the weight of his armor, sank instantly to the bottom of the river, it was the new Pharaoh, "the horse and his rider" being thrown into the sea and sinking to "the bottom as a stone," and "as lead in the mighty waters." Ex. 15:9, 10. Then was Israel delivered, and a song of deliverance was sung by the new Israel as by the original Israel at their deliverance. Thus the story is told by one of the principal bishops of the time and of the dark intrigue with Constantine:—

And now those miracles recorded in Holy Writ, which God of old wrought against the ungodly (discredited by most as fables, yet believed by the faithful), did *He in very deed confirm to all, alike believers and unbelievers, who were eye-witnesses to the wonders I am about to relate. For as once in the days of Moses and the Hebrew nation, who were worshipers of God, He cast Pharaoh's chariots and his host into the waves, and drowned his chosen chariot-captians in the Red Sea, so at this time did Maxentius and the soldiers and guards with him sink "to the bottom as a stone," when in his flight before the divinely aided forces of Constantine he essayed to cross the river which lay in his way, over which he had made a strong bridge of hosts, and had framed an engine of destruction, really against himself, but in the hope of ensnaring thereby him who was beloved of God. For his God stood by the one [Constantine] to protect him, while the other [Maxentius], destitute of His aid, proved to be the miserable contriver of these secrete devices to his own ruin. So that one might well say, "He made a pit, and digged it, and shall fall into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his iniquity shall come down upon his own pate."* Thus in the present instance, under divine direction, the machine erected on the bridge, with the ambuscade concealed therein, giving way unexpectedly before the appointed time, the passage began to sink down, and the boats with the men in them went bodily to the bottom. At first the wretch himself [Maxentius], then his armed attendants and guards, *even as the sacred oracles had before described, "sank as lead in the mighty waters."* So that *they who thus obtained victory from God* might well, if not in the same words, yet in fact *in the same spirit, as the people of His great servant Moses, sing and speak as they did concerning the impious tyrant of old: "Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has been glorified exceedingly; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. He is become my helper and my shield unto salvation."* And again: "Who is like to thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, marvelous in praises, doing wonders?"—*Eusebius.*

A. T. Jones.

*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 77, No. 18, May 01, 1900, p. 280.

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Next Week the study in the Third Angel's Message will be, How the union of church and state was formed in the making of the Beast. From this time forward, each of these studies will be especially present truth; for each step taken at that time and in the making of the Beast, has now its likeness in the making of the Image to the Beast. Nobody can afford to miss them. (*Ibid*, p. 288)