

The Third Angel's Message. What Is It as to the Reformation?

GOD would have healed Babylon, but she would not be healed. In the Reformation he sent a balm for her, if so be that she might be healed; but she would not receive it, and, therefore, the Lord was obliged to leave her to her own ways. In the Reformation the Lord sent his gospel anew, and with power, to all people; and at that time all the people were in Babylon, because all were under the dominion of Rome. Multitudes received the gospel, and walked in the light as it was then revealed. but as that was the first step out of darkness, there were other steps to be taken, to reach the fullness of the gospel: there was advance light in which to walk.

And here again history began to repeat itself. Many of those who had come out of darkness, and had taken the first steps into the light of the gospel, stopped there, became satisfied with that: they counted themselves sufficiently rich, and increased with goods, and therefore in need of nothing. And, as the consequence, they grew proud of what they had, exalted themselves upon what they had, and became exclusive. Then, as the gospel must go on, as the light must increase more and more unto the perfect day, it followed that all those who would walk in the advancing light, all who would receive more truth,—the fuller gospel,—were excluded from the company of those who were self-satisfied, and were obliged to go forward as had the others at the first.

Then, in turn, these became satisfied with what *they* had, grew proud of it, exalted themselves upon it, and became exclusive. But as the gospel must still advance, the light must shine yet more fully, and as those who would walk in the advancing light, and would receive more truth, could not do so and be recognized as of the company of those who had taken the former steps, they must, in turn, inevitably go on in a separate company.

On this subject Mosheim says:—

The doctrine of the Lutheran Church remained entire during this [seventeenth] century; its fundamental principles received no alteration, *nor could any doctor* of that church, who should have presumed to renounce or invalidate any of those theological points which are contained in the symbolical books of the Lutherans, *have met with toleration and indulgence.*

And again:—

The method . . . observed by Calvin . . . was followed, out of respect for his example, by almost all the divines of his communion, who *looked upon him as their model and their guide.*

Thus those people, instead of continuing to be *reformers*, became respectively *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*.

Thus each phase of advancing truth developed a separate denomination. And this is the whole philosophy of the principal divisions manifest in the different denominations of

Protestantism. *Primarily*, of course, it should not have been so; yet, under the circumstances, as they developed, *secondarily* it becomes essential that it should be so. If those who *started* in the Reformation had continued to walk in the light as it shone more fully, if they had received advanced truth as they grew in the knowledge of the gospel, it is plain enough that there never could have been any other company, any new denomination: they would all have been reformers; there would have been one continuous and progressive reformation.

And that is as it should have been. But when, instead of that, those who had received light and truth refused to receive more; when they held that they had *all* the light and all the truth, and grew proud, self-exalted, and exclusive because of it; and when they excluded from their company those who would receive increased light and advanced truth,—then, in the nature of things, there was nothing else for these to do but to associate together in the fellowship of the light and truth that they had received, and in the spirit of the gospel to spread it to all people.

Then, history further repeated itself. These successive denominations, each in turn refusing to go further, and so rejecting truth, were turned from originally the "Gate of God" to "confusion." Each one, in turn, as the mother at the first, joined herself to another man: they accepted kings of the earth as their head, in place of Christ, the true Head,—entered into illicit connection with the kings of the earth. The Emperor of Germany to-day, as king of Prussia, is the head, the supreme pontiff, of the Lutheran Church in Prussia. In the Scandinavian countries also the Lutheran is the state church, and the head of the state there, is the head of that church. In England the sovereign is head of the Church of England; and in Scotland the same sovereign is head of the church (Presbyterian) of Scotland. And so, because the same person is sovereign of both countries, the same person is head of one church in England and of another in Scotland: is an Episcopalian when in England, and a Presbyterian when in Scotland. And in New England the Congregationalists became the state church, as had the others each in her place; and each and all of them after the very example of "Babylon the Great, the mother."

From the colonial period forward, will be considered next week.

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Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Vol. 77, No. 08, Feb. 20, 1900, p. 120.

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