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"HISTORICAL NECESSITY OF THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE." (Page 402) – Part 3

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ANOTHER subject that grew out of the differences between the Conformists and Non-Conformists was sprung by Thomas Cartwright, in an attempt to establish Calvin's system of church government in England, and which also effectually frustrated all hopes of any compromise. I will give this in the words of Mr. Green :-

"So difficult, however, was her [Elizabeth's] position that a change might have been forced upon her had she not been aided at this moment by a group of clerical bigots, who gathered under the banner of Presbyterianism. Of these, Thomas Cartwright was the chief. He had studied at Geneva; he returned with a fanatical faith in Calvinism, and in the system of church government which Calvin had devised; and as Margaret professor of divinity at Cambridge, he used to the full the opportunities which his chair gave him of propagating his opinions. No leader of a religious party ever deserved less of after sympathy. Cartwright was unquestionably learned and devout, but his bigotry was that of a mediaeval inquisition. The relics of the old ritual, the cross in baptism, the surplice, the giving of a ring in marriage, were to him not merely distasteful, as they were to the Puritans at large; they were idolatrous, and the mark of the beast. His declamation against ceremonies and superstition, however, had little weight with Elizabeth or her primates; what scared them was his reckless advocacy of a scheme of ecclesiastical government which placed the State beneath the feet of the Church. The absolute rule of bishops, indeed, Cartwright denounced as begotten of the devil; but the absolute rule of presbyters he held to be established by the word of God. For the church modeled after the fashion of Geneva he claimed an authority which surpassed the wildest dreams of the masters of the Vatican. All spiritual authority and jurisdiction, the decreeing of doctrine, the ordering of ceremonies, lay wholly in the hands of the ministers of the church. To them belonged the supervision of public morals. In an ordered arrangement of classes and synods, these presbyters were to govern their flocks, to regulate their own order, to decide in matters of faith, to administer 'discipline.' Their weapon was excommunication; and they were responsible for its use to none: but Christ.

"The province of the civil ruler in such a system of religion as this, was simply to carry out the decisions of the presbyters, 'to see their decrees executed, and to punish the contemners of them.' Nor was this work of the civil power likely to be a light work. The spirit of Calvinistic Presbyterianism excluded all toleration of practice or belief. Not only was the rule of ministers to be established as the one legal form of church government, but all other forms, Episcopalian and separatist, were to be ruthlessly put down. For heresy there was the punishment of death. Never had the doctrine of persecution been urged with such a blind and reckless ferocity. 'I deny,' wrote Cartwright, 'that upon repentance there ought to follow any pardon of death. . . . Heretics ought to be put to death now. If this be bloody and extreme, I am content to be so counted with the Holy Ghost.'

"The violence of language such as this was as unlikely as the dogmatism of his theological teaching to commend Cartwright's opinions to the mass of Englishmen. Popular as the Presbyterian system became in Scotland, it never took any popular hold on England. It remained to the last a clerical, rather than a national creed, and even in the

moment of its seeming triumph under the commonwealth it was rejected by every part of England save London and Lancashire. But the bold challenge which Cartwright's party delivered to the government in 1572, in an 'admonition to the parliament,' which denounced the government of bishops as contrary to the word of God, and demanded the establishment in its place of government by presbyters, raised a panic among English statesmen and prelates, which cut off all hopes of a quiet treatment of the merely ceremonial questions which really troubled the consciences of the more advanced Protestants. The natural progress of opinion abruptly ceased, and the moderate thinkers who had pressed for a change in ritual which would have satisfied the zeal of the reformers, withdrew from union with a party which revived the worst pretensions of the papacy."— *Larger History of English People* book 6, chap. 5, paragraph 31.

Shortly after this, in 1581, there occurred a division among the Puritans, which was followed by very notable results. Robert Brown drew off in a revolt from the government of synods and presbyteries, as well as from the government of bishops; and held that each church or assembly of worshipers was entirely *independent* of all others, and *self-governing*, and all points of doctrine or discipline were to be submitted to the congregation for discussion and final decision; that each congregation should elect its own pastor, etc. The sect that thus arose were called *Independents*, or Congregationalists. To escape the persecution that arose against them as a matter of course, they fled to Holland, and founded churches in Middleburg, Amsterdam, and Leyden. Shortly after going to Holland, Brown deserted his followers, returned to England, and took a benefice in the English church. This left John Robinson in charge, who remodeled the whole society, and in 1620 sent a company to America, who were the Pilgrims that landed at Plymouth Rock, and the first settlers of New England.

In entering the seventeenth century we find a new element upon the sea of controversy. Philosophy of the different schools is in each one striving for ascendancy; and if not a direct cause of many of the disputes of this century, it gives a coloring to them. At this time philosophy was represented in the two classes of *Peripatetics* (followers of Aristotle) and *Fire-Philosophers*, from their proposition that "the dissolution of bodies by the power of fire is the only way in which the first principles of things can be discerned." The Peripatetics held the professorships in almost all of the places of learning; and held all who questioned Aristotle as little less criminal than downright heretics: and so there was a lively contest kept up between them and the Fire-Philosophers, or *chemists*. But there was a union of the interests, of these two, when, about 1640, the Cartesian gauntlet, "*Cogito, ergo sum*" (i.e., I think, therefore I am), was thrown into the arena; and they both turned with all their energy against the new philosophy; "not," says Mosheim, "so much for their philosophical system as for the honors, advantages, and profits they derived from it." And, "seconded by the clergy who apprehended that the cause of religion was aimed at and endangered by these philosophical innovations, they made a prodigious noise and left no means unemployed to prevent the downfall of their old system ... They not only accused Descartes of the most dangerous and pernicious errors, but went so far, in the extravagance of their malignity, as to bring a charge of atheism against him." In opposition to Descartes, Gassendi also entered the lists, and this gave rise to yet another school of philosophy, the *Mathematical*. That of Descartes was called the *Metaphysical*, or Cartesian, philosophy. As the Peripatetic was the only philosophy taught in the Lutheran schools, the rise of the new philosophy was a new subject for discussion and opposition there, and gave more ample scope for the exercise of their propensities.

Another thing that greatly troubled the Lutherans was, that in 1614 John Sigismund, elector of Brandenburg, entered the communion of the Calvinists, and granted to all his subjects entire liberty in religious matters, and left to the free choice of all whether they would embrace one religion or another, or any at all. But the Lutherans "deemed it intolerable that the Calvinists should enjoy the same privileges as themselves." And this was carried to such a length that the people of Brandenburg were prohibited from studying at the university of Wittemberg.

But that which gave the Lutherans the most trouble in this century was the efforts of a succession of persons to bring about a state of harmony between them and the Calvinists. James I of England tried it, and failed. In 1631,

in a synod of the Calvinists at Charenton, an act was passed, which granted that the Lutheran religion "was conformable to a spirit of true piety, and free from pernicious and fundamental errors," but the overture was not accepted. In the same year, a conference was held at Leipsic, between several of the most eminent doctors of both communions, in Saxony and Brandenburg. And although the Calvinists showed all possible fairness, and made concessions that the Lutherans themselves could scarcely expect, yet all their efforts were looked upon and regarded with suspicion, as being only schemes to ensnare them; and the conference broke up with nothing done. In 1645 Udislaus IV., king of Poland, called a conference at Thorn, but it only increased the party zeal. In 1661, William VI., landgrave of Hesse, called a conference at Cassel, in which the doctors there assembled came to an agreement, embraced one another, and declared that there was nothing between them of sufficient importance to prevent union and concord. This was no sooner learned by the Lutheran brethren, than they turned all their fury against their delegates, and loaded them with reproaches of apostasy, Calvinism, etc.

Besides these public efforts, there were others of a private character. John Durteus, a Calvinist, a native of Scotland, says Mosheim, "during a period of forty-three years, suffered vexations, and underwent labors which required the firmest resolution, and the most inexhaustible patience; wrote, exhorted, admonished, entreated, and disputed; in a word, tried every method that human wisdom could suggest, to put an end to the dissensions and animosities that reigned among the Protestant churches. . . . He traveled through all the countries in Europe where the Protestant religion had gained a footing; he formed connections with the doctors of both parties; he addressed himself to kings, princes, magistrates, and ministers. . . . But his views were disappointed. . . . Some, suspecting that his fervent and extraordinary zeal arose from mysterious and sinister motives, and apprehending that he had secretly formed a design of drawing the Lutherans into a snare, even attacked him in their writings with animosity and bitterness, and loaded him with the sharpest invectives and reproaches: so that this wellmeaning man, neglected at length by his own communion, . . . spent the remainder of his days in repose and obscurity at Gasser—*Church History*, 17th cent., sec. 2, part 2, chap. 1, paragraph 6. That which he proposed as the foundation upon which they might unite, was, The Apostle's Creed, The Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

Another of the most zealous of the peacemakers was John Matthias, a Swedish bishop, who with George Calixtus, attempted to carry on the work of Duraeus. But the opposition was so bitter that Matthias was obliged to resign his bishopric; and Calixtus was accused of syncretism, and to his "charge many other things were laid, besides the *crime* of endeavoring to unite the disciples of the same master in the amiable bonds of charity, concord, and mutual forbearance."—Id. par. 7. (*Italics his.*) This crime was what was called *syncretism*.

The *Pietistical* controversy was another, that engaged the attention of the Lutherans during this century. This was set on foot by Philip James Spener of Frankfort, who had in view the promotion of *vital religion*, rousing the lukewarm and indifferent, stemming the torrent of vice and corruption, and reforming the licentious manners of both the clergy and people.—Id. par. 26. And the better to accomplish this, Spener and his adherents proposed that, besides the stated times for public worship, private assemblies for prayer and other religious exercises should be held. For these laudable and most necessary aims they were nicknamed Pietists, and the opposition was as strong as against any of the others.

This subject was carried further by some of the professors at Leipsic, who for the purpose of instructing the candidates for the ministry - in something better than how to perpetrate broils, "undertook to explain in their colleges certain books of Scripture in order to render these genuine sources of religious knowledge better understood, and to promote a spirit of practical piety and vital religion in the minds of their hearers. . . . Accordingly these lectures were much frequented, and their effects were visible in the lives and conversation of several persons, whom they seemed to inspire with a deep sense of the importance of religion and virtue." But immediately the cry arose that this was "*contrary to custom.*" "Hence rumors were spread, tumults excited, animosities kindled, and the matter at length brought to a public trial, in which these pious and learned men were indeed declared free from

the errors and heresies laid to their charge, but were at the same time prohibited from carrying on that plan of religious instruction which they had undertaken with so much zeal."—Id. par. 37. But this did not put down the good work thus begun; for the contest spread rapidly through all the Lutheran churches in Europe. Therefore the doctors and pastors of Wittenberg thought themselves obliged to proceed publicly, first against Spener in 1695, and afterward against his disciples, which gave rise to new debates. The Pietists held, (1) That none should be admitted to the ministry but such as had been properly educated, and who were distinguished by wisdom and sanctity of manners, and who had their hearts filled with divine love. (2) That the scholastical theology should be abolished. (3) That polemical divinity, that is, the controversies between Christians, should be less eagerly taught. (4,) That all mixture of philosophy and human learning with the Holy Scriptures should be abandoned, and (5) That no person who was not himself a model of piety, was qualified to be a public teacher of piety, or a guide to others in the way of salvation.

Out of these sprung other debates as follows: 1. "Can the religious knowledge acquired by a wicked man be termed theology? 2. "How far can the office and ministry of an impious ecclesiastic be pronounced salutary and efficacious?" 3. "Can an ungodly and licentious man be susceptible of illumination?" The Pietists further demanded the suppression of certain propositions that it was customary to deliver from the pulpit publicly, that, unqualified, were capable certainly of being interpreted as granting indulgence. Such were these: "No man is able to attain that perfection which the divine law requires. Good works are not necessary to salvation: in the act of justification on the part of man, faith alone is concerned, without good works." Also the Pietists prohibited dancing, pantomimes, theatrical plays, etc., among their members; and this again gave an opportunity for the scholastics to display their ingenuity. They raised the question, first, whether these actions were of an indifferent nature? and then from that whether any human actions are truly indifferent; i. e., equally removed from moral good on one hand, and from moral evil on the other.

In the Calvinist church, after the death of its founder, the controversy over the "divine decrees" continued through the seventeenth century. From the College at Geneva the doctrine of Calvin spread to all parts of Protestant Europe, and into the schools of learning. But there arose a difference of opinion not about the "decrees," but about the nature of the decrees. "The majority held that God simply permitted the first man to fall into transgression; while a respectable minority maintained with all their might, that to exercise and display his awful justice and his free mercy. God had decreed from all eternity that Adam should sin, and had so ordered events that our first parents could not possibly avoid falling." - Id. chap. 2, par. 10; The two parties in this division were the *Sublapsarians*, (those who held to permission) and *Supralapsarians*.

But these forgot their differences whenever and wherever there appeared those who "thought it their duty to represent the Deity, as extending his goodness and mercy to all Mankind." This new controversy arose in the early part of the century, and is known as the Arminian controversy, from James Arminius, professor of divinity in the university of Leyden, who was the originator of it. Arminius had been educated a Calvinist, at the College of Geneva, and because of his merit had been chosen to the university of Leyden. After leaving Geneva, and as he grew older, his mind more and more revolted from the doctrine of Calvin on predestination, and embraced the Scriptural doctrine that the grace of God is free to all, and brings salvation to all men. That none are prohibited, by any decree, from its benefits, nor are any elected thereto, independent of their own actions, but that Christ brought salvation to the world, and every man is free to accept or reject his offer as he chooses. But as Calvinism was at that time flourishing in Holland, the teaching of Arminius drew upon him the severest opposition. Arminius died in 1609, and Simon Episcopius, one of his disciples, carried the work forward with unabated vigor, and in a little while the controversy spread through all Europe, and created as much tumult in the Calvinist church as Calvinism had formerly caused in the Lutheran. And the stubbornness of the Lutherans was repeated on the part of the Calvinist. With these, also, some sought to bring the contending parties to an accommodation, but with no success. At last, in 1618, by the authority of the States General the national synod was convened at Dort, to discuss

the points of difference and come to an agreement. Deputies assembled from Holland, England, Hesse, Bremen, Switzerland, and the Palatinate; and the leading men of the Arminians came also. Episcopius addressed the assembly in a discourse, says Mosheim, "full of moderation, gravity, and. elocution." But his address was no sooner finished than difficulties arose, and the Arminians found that instead of their being called there to present their views for examination and discussion, it was that they were to be tried as heretics; and when they refused to submit to the manner of proceeding proposed by the synod, they were excluded from the assembly, and the famous synod of Dort tried them in their absence, and, as a natural consequence, they were pronounced "guilty of pestilential errors," and condemned as "corrupters of the true religion;" and all this after the solemn promise made to the Arminians that they should be allowed full liberty to explain and defend their opinions, as far as they thought necessary to their justification. After this the doctrine of "absolute decrees" lost ground from day to day; and the way in which the synod had treated the Arminians only increased their determination, and besides drew to them the sympathy of many, so much so indeed that the whole provinces of Friseland, Zealand, Utrecht, Guelderland, and Groningen; never would accept the decisions of that assembly.

Immediately after this too, the controversy over the Cartesian philosophy entered the Calvinist church, and set it all awlirl again, and kept it so.

(Concluded next ...)