

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

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CHAPTER FOUR

FORESHADOWINGS

A MONTH had elapsed since the translation of the church. A new order in everything had arisen - Religious, Governmental, Social. The spirit of lawlessness grew fiercer and fouler each day, it is true, yet there was a supreme authority, a governmental restriction, that prevented the fouler, the more destructive passions of the baser kind of men and women, having full scope.

A curious kind of religion had been set up in many of the churches. The services were sensuous to a degree, and were a strange mixture of Romanism, Spiritism (demonology,) Theosophy, Materialism, and other kindred cults. Almost every week some new ode or hymn was produced, every sentiment of which was an applauding of man, for GOD was utterly ignored, and the key-note of the Harvard college "class Poem," for the year 1908, became the key-note of the Sunday Song of the "worshippers" in the churches:

"No GOD for a gift GOD gave us-
MANKIND ALONE must save us."

It was a curious situation, since it was "man" worshipping himself. Presently, the center of worship would shift from man, to The Man of Sin - the Antichrist.

These religious services were held, as a rule, from twelve-thirty to one-fifteen on the Sunday once a day only, (without any week-night meetings). They were held at an hour when, in the old-days, the congregations would have been home, or going home, from their services. But this arranged lateness was due to the fact, that there had grown up in all sections of society an ever-increasing lateness of retiring at night, coupled with a growth of indolence caused by every kind of sensual indulgence, not the least of which was gluttony. Music of a sensuous, voluptuous character formed a chief part of the brief Sunday services, and every item was loudly applauded as though the whole affair had been a performance rather than a professedly religious service.

Most of the interior arrangements in many of the old places of worship had been altered. The theatre style of thing - plush-covered tip seats, etc. - had taken the place of the old pews and the wooden seats.

In many of these Sunday services, too, people of both sexes smoked at will - for smoking among women had become almost universal.

There were no Bibles, or Hymn books, the odes, etc., were printed on double sheets, after the fashion of theatre programs, and, like them, contained numerous advertisements of the Sunday matinees and evening performances at the theatres, music-halls, etc.

All this had been brought about much more easily than would at first appear, until we remember one or two factors that had long been working silently, subtly among the attendants - mere church professors-of the various places of worship, such as, the insistence on shorter services, and fewer - for long, before the Rapture, the unspiritual had clamored for a single service of the week, that of a late Sunday morning one.

Then for years, religious services (those of the Sunday) had grown more and more sensuous, unspiritual. Every real spiritual doctrine had first been denied, then expunged from the essay that had largely taken the place of the old-time sermon. Again, all spiritual restraints had now been taken away - the true believers, the Holy Spirit, every spiritually-minded, born-again pastor and clergyman.

The new Religion (it could not be called a Faith) was a universal one.

The powers of the Priest-craft had invented a religion of the Flesh, fleshy to a degree. Every type of indulgence was permissible, so that men everywhere gloried in their religion, **"having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."**

The performances at all theatres, music-halls, etc., had grown rapidly worse and worse, in character, licentiousness, animalism, voluptuousness, debauchery, these were the main features of the newer type of performances. Salome dances, and even the wildest, obscenest type of the "*can-can*" of the French, in its most promiscuous lascivious forms, were common fare on the varied English stages.

But if the stage was filthy and indecent, what could be said of the books!

There was not a foulness or obscenity and indecency that was not openly, shamelessly treated in the bluntest of phraseology. Thousands of penny, two-penny, and three-penny editions of utter obscenity were issued daily. And the vitiated taste of the great mass of the people grew voraciously by feeding upon them.

Marriage was a thing of the dead past.

There had been a growth of foul, subtle, hideous teaching before the translation of the church. Marriage had been taught (in many circles) to be "an unnecessary restraint upon human liberty."

"Women" - it had been written, absolved from shame, shall be owners of themselves." "We believe" (the same writer had written) "in the sacredness of the family and the home, the legitimacy of every child, and the inalienable right of every woman to the absolute possession of herself."

All this foul seed-teaching of the days before the Translation of the Church, burst into open blossom and fullest fruit when once the restraint of Christian public opinion had been withdrawn from the earth.

The friendship between Ralph Bastin and Baring had grown with the days, and as they watched the rapid march of events, all heading towards ultimate evil, they talked of the possible finale, while they encouraged themselves in their GOD.

One evening, when they met, Baring said:

"I suppose there will soon come the time when no one will be able to trade without bearing **"the mark of the Beast."**

"Some new indication that way?" asked Ralph.

"I think so," Baring returned. "You remember that I told you that previous to the taking away of the Church, the vessels of my firm had been tentatively chartered for the transport of the various parts of the Temple to Jerusalem. To-day, the negotiations have been quashed by those who had previously approached us."

"For what reason?" asked Ralph.

"They gave no reason," Baring went on, "but I have not the slightest doubt, myself, that the real reason is this, that I have, of late, continually spoken warningly against Antichrist."

"But how could that be known in circles purely 'Antichrist?'" Ralph's tones were eager; his eyes, too, were filled with a puzzled expression.

"You know," Baring returned, "what we were speaking of the other night, that now that the devil and his angels had been cast down from the air, they are (though invisible) yet actively engaged all about us on the earth?"

Ralph nodded assent.

"I believe, I am sure they are everywhere present." Baring smiled a little sadly, as he added, his eyes sweeping the room in a swift, comprehensive way: "There may be, there probably is, one or more present in this room, at this moment, their object espionage. They have doubtless been present when I have spoken against Antichrist, and-

"Yes, but this shipping matter of which you spoke, Bob, is a Jewish affair," interrupted Bastin, adding:

"For I presume, since the cargoes would be composed of the Temple parts, that it would be financed by Jewish capitalists, religionists, or what not? How then would Antichrist have anything to do with it?"

Slowly, deliberately, almost solemnly Baring replied:

"Lucien Apleon is a Jew!"

Bastin started sharply. Some idea of what his friend meant flashed upon him.

"Lucien Apleon!" he cried hoarsely. "But what-"

Baring broke in with: "I believe that Lucien Apleon will presently be revealed as the Antichrist, and-"

The conversation had been going on in Ralph's Editorial office. It was now interrupted by a startling call Over the tape-wire, and Baring suddenly realizing the hour, took a hurried temporary farewell of his friend.

An hour later Ralph was seated at his table penning the "*Prophet's chair*" column for the next morning's issue of his paper. It was only natural, under the new order of life and thought that prevailed, that a daily paper, conducted on the lines of the '*Courier*,' should drop heavily in circulation. The "*Courier*" had so dropped, though it still paid to issue it.

"My enemies, the enemies of GOD and of righteousness," he murmured, as he took up his "Fountain," (he preferred a pen to a type-writer) "are, I am inclined to believe, the chief purchasers of the paper now, and they only buy it to see what I say from the '*Prophet's Chair*.' "

For a moment, as was now his invariable custom, before beginning his daily message, he bowed his head and prayed for wisdom to write GOD's mind.

When next he lifted his head, and put pen to paper, he wrote with great rapidity, and without an instant's hesitation:

"Resuming the subject of which we wrote yesterday, we tried to show from Revelation 12, that the teaching was this, that, full of rage because of his casting out from the heavens, Satan, the great Dragon, the old Serpent, determined to destroy all lovers of GOD, that were yet found among mortals. But even Satan himself is a spirit, and cannot operate in the affairs of the world except through the minds, passions and activities of men. He needs to embody himself in earthly agents, and to put himself forth in earthly organisms, in order to accomplish his murderous will.

"Through this wonderful Revelation of GOD to John, GOD makes known to us what that organism is, and how the agency and the domination of the enraged Dragon will be exerted in acting out his blasphemies, deceits, and bloody spite. The subject is not a pleasant one, but it is an important one. It also has features so startling and extraordinary that many may think it but a wild and foolish dream.

Nevertheless it is imperative that we should all look at it, and understand it. GOD has evidently set it out for us to learn and know just how things will eventually turn out. *

* *The Apocalypse*, by Joseph A. Seiss, D.D. p. p. 401.

"John, '**in the Spirit**,' finds himself stationed on the sands of the sea - the same great sea upon which Daniel beheld the winds striving in their fury. He beholds a monstrous Beast rising out of the troubled elements. He sees horns emerging, and the number of them is ten, and on each horn a diadem. He sees the heads which bear the horns, and these heads are seven, and on the heads are names of blasphemy. Presently the whole figure of the monster is before him. Its appearance is like a leopard or panther, but its feet are the feet of a bear, and its mouth as the mouth of a lion. He saw also that the Beast had a throne, and power, and great authority. One of his heads showed marks of having been fatally wounded and slain, but the death-stroke was healed.

"He saw also the whole earth wondering after the Beast, amazed at his majesty and power, exclaiming at the impossibility of withstanding it, and celebrating its superiority to everything. He beheld, and the Beast was speaking great and blasphemous things against GOD, blaspheming His name, His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in the Heaven - the translated saints, assailing and overcoming the saints on the earth, and wielding authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue and nation. He saw also that all the dwellers on earth, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain, did worship this Beast. And for forty-two months the monster holds its place and enacts its resistless will.

"This is the picture! What are we to make of it? What does it mean? How are we to understand it? It would seem to be a symbolic presentation of the political sovereignty of this world at the final crisis.

"The Beast has horns, and horns represent power. On these horns are diadems, and diadems are the emblems of regal dominion. The Beast is said to possess power, a throne, and great authority. He makes war. He exercises dominion over all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations He is a monstrous Beast, including in his composition the four beasts of Daniel.

"From the interpreting angel we know that Daniel's four beasts denoted '**four kingdoms**' that arose upon the earth. The identification thus becomes complete and unmistakable, that this monstrous Beast is meant to set before us an image of earthly sovereignty and dominion. And if any further evidence of this is demanded, it may be abundantly found in Revelation 17:9-17, where the same Beast is further described, and the ten horns are interpreted to be '**ten kings**.'

"This Beast is therefore the embodiment of this world's political sovereignty in its last phase, in the last years of its existence. Daniel's beasts were successive empires, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Graeco-Macedonian, and the Roman. But the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the nameless ten-horned monster, each distinct in Daniel, are all united in one in Revelation.

"This Beast appears to be, undoubtedly, an individual administration, embodied in one particular man. Though upheld by ten kings or governments, they unite in making the Beast the one sole Arch Regent of their time.

"This he - the Beast, the Antichrist - gets a grip of the nations, who willingly submit to his rule, being under the spirit of delusion, believing the lie of the Antichrist.

"Already, we see that this confederacy of nations is being called into an almost sudden existence. The seers of our nation, before this strange order of things that has arisen in our midst, since the taking away of the church, were wont to say to certain political changes – ‘at the back of all the known forces that have helped to bring so-and-so to pass, there almost seems to have been some unseen, unknown Master-mind at work.’

"Tis so now, and the startling events that are following each other so rapidly, are the product of a mastermind, the '**Man of Sin,**' Antichrist, the Beast who has been energized by Satan, the Old Dragon, who though he has not yet avowed himself, may be expected to do so any day or hour now.

"It will hardly be news to anyone who reads this column regularly, that the building of the Temple which is to be reared in Jerusalem, by the Jews, who have largely returned to the 'Promised land' in unbelief, is being pushed on with the utmost celerity.

“The fact that, for some years previous to the Translation of the Church, all its parts, made to perfect scale, were prepared and fitted, enables the builders to erect this wonderful structure with almost magical speed.

"Simultaneous with this work, there has just appeared in Jerusalem, two remarkable men, who would appear to be Enoch and Elijah of old. These men are witnesses for GOD, and are testifying against Antichrist.

"We say that these men would appear to be Enoch and Elijah, and not Moses and Elijah, as some, in the old days before the Rapture, had supposed. The allusion to water turned to blood, in the eleventh chapter of Revelation (which treats of GOD's two witnesses) very probably led some writers to connect the first of the two witnesses with Moses - since Moses turned water into blood.

"The main point of identification, we think, in the case of these two witnesses, however, lies in the fact that since it is appointed unto men once to die, the two witnesses must needs be men who have never passed through mortal death.

“Moses did die, hence it seems to us that he was disqualified from being one of the two witnesses, both of whom have presently to pass through mortal death in the streets of Jerusalem.

“Now Enoch and Elijah did not pass through mortal death, hence we believe the event will prove that these two witnesses are Enoch and Elijah.

"Each day that we pen this particular column we are conscious that it may be the last we shall pen, hence our anxiety to warn all our readers against the Antichrist, and his lie-the strong delusion of II Thessalonians 2:12."

For a few moments longer Ralph wrote on in this strain, then, just as he had completed the last sentence, his special Tape-wire rang him up. He summoned Charley to carry his MS. sheets to the compo room. With a word to his Secretary, (who was divided from him by one thickness of wall only, communication being by a 'phone,) he turned to his Tape.

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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