

Part I, Chapter XIII: Of the King who did according to his will, and magnified himself above every God, and honoured Mahuzzims, and regarded not the desire of women

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Source: *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: 1733).

Published online: September 2006

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CHAP. XIII.

Of the King who did according to his will, and magnified himself above every God, and honoured Mahuzzims, and regarded not the desire of women.

In the first ages of the Christian religion the Christians of every city were governed by a Council of Presbyters, and the President of the Council was the Bishop of the city. The Bishop and Presbyters of one city meddled not with the affairs of another city, except by admonitory letters or messages. Nor did the Bishops of several cities meet together in Council before the time of the Emperor *Commodus*: for they could not meet together without the leave of the *Roman* governors of the Provinces. But in the days of that Emperor they began to meet in Provincial Councils, by the leave of the governors; first in *Asia*, in opposition to the *Cataphrygian* Heresy, and soon after in other places and upon other occasions. The Bishop of the chief city, or Metropolis of the *Roman* Province, was usually made President of the <195> Council; and hence came the authority of Metropolitan Bishops above that of other Bishops within the same Province. Hence also it was that the Bishop of *Rome* in *Cyprian's* days called himself the Bishop of Bishops. As soon as the Empire became Christian, the *Roman* Emperors began to call general Councils out of all the Provinces of the Empire; and by prescribing to them what points they should consider, and influencing them by their interest and power, they set up what party they pleased. Hereby the *Greek* Empire, upon the division of the *Roman* Empire into the *Greek* and *Latin* Empires, became *the King who*, in matters of religion, *did according to his will; and*, in legislature, *exalted and magnified himself above every God*: and at length, by the seventh general Council, established the worship of the images and souls of dead men, here called *Mahuzzims*.

The same King placed holiness in abstinence from marriage. *Eusebius* in his Ecclesiastical history^[1] tells us, that *Musanus* wrote a tract against those who fell away to the heresy of the *Encratites*, which was then newly risen, and had introduced pernicious errors; and that *Tatian*, the disciple of *Justin*, was the author thereof; and that *Irenæus* in his first book against heresies teaches this, writing of *Tatian* and his heresy in these words: A

Saturnino & Marcione pro <196> facti qui vocantur Continentes, docuerunt non contrahendum esse matrimonium; reprobantes scilicet primitivum illud opificium Dei, & tacite accusantes Deum qui masculum & feminam condidit ad procreationem generis humani. Induxerunt etiam abstinentioniam ab esu eorum quæ animalia appellant, ingratos se exhibentes ergo eum qui universa creavit Deum. Negant etiam primi hominis salutem. Atque hoc nuper apud illos excogitatum est, Tatiano quodam omnium primo hujus impietatis auctore: qui Justini auditor, quamdiu cum illo versatus est, nihil ejusmodi protulit. Post martyrium autem illius, ab Ecclesia se abrumpens, doctoris arrogantia elatus ac tumidus, tanquam præstantior cæteris, novam quandam formam doctrinæ conflavit: Æonas invisibiles commentus perinde ac Valentinus: asserens quoque cum Saturnino & Marcione, matrimonium nihil aliud esse quam corruptionem ac stuprum: nova præterea argumenta ad subvertendam Adami salutem excogitans. Hæc Irenæus de Hæresi quæ tunc viguit Encratitarum. Thus far Eusebius. But altho the followers of Tatian were at first condemned as hereticks by the name of Encratites, or Continentes; their principles could not be yet quite exploded: for Montanus refined upon them, and made only second marriages unlawful; he also introduced frequent fastings, and annual fasting days, the keeping of <197> Lent, and feeding upon dried meats. The Apostolici, about the middle of the third century, condemned marriage, and were a branch of the disciples of Tatian. The Hierocitæ in Egypt, in the latter end of the third century, also condemned marriage. Paul the Eremite fled into the wilderness from the persecution of Decius, and lived there a solitary life till the reign of Constantine the great, but made no disciples. Antony did the like in the persecution of Dioclesian, or a little before, and made disciples; and many others soon followed his example.

Hitherto the principles of the Encratites had been rejected by the Churches; but now being refined by the Monks, and imposed not upon all men, but only upon those who would voluntarily undertake a monastic life, they began to be admired, and to overflow first the Greek Church, and then the Latin also, like a torrent. Eusebius tells us,^[2] that Constantine the great had those men in the highest veneration, who dedicated themselves wholly to the divine philosophy; and that he almost venerated the most holy company of Virgins perpetually devoted to God; being certain that the God to whom he had consecrated himself did dwell in their minds. In his time and that of his sons, this profession of a single life was propagated in Egypt by Antony, and in Syria by Hilarion; and spread so fast, <198> that soon after the time of Julian the Apostate a third part of the Egyptians were got into the desarts of Egypt. They lived first singly in cells, then associated into cænobia or convents; and at length came into towns, and filled the Churches with Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons. Athanasius in his younger days poured water upon the hands of his master Antony; and finding the Monks faithful to him, made many of them Bishops and Presbyters in Egypt: and these Bishops erected new Monasteries, out of which they chose Presbyters of their own cities, and sent Bishops to others. The like was done in Syria, the superstition being quickly propagated thither out of Egypt by Hilarion a disciple of Antony. Spiridion and Epiphanius of Cyprus, James of Nisibis, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eustathius of Sebastia in Armenia, Eusebius of Emisa, Titus of Bostra, Basilus of Ancyra, Acacius of Cæsarea in Palestine, Elpidius of Laodicea, Melitius and Flavian of Antioch, Theodorus of Tyre, Protogenes of Carrhæ, Acacius of Berrhæa, Theodotus of Hierapolis, Eusebius of Chalcedon, Amphilocheus of Iconium, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, and John Chrysostom of Constantinople, were both Bishops and Monks in the fourth century. Eustathius, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, Basil, &c. had Monasteries of Clergymen in <199> their cities, out of which Bishops were sent to other cities; who in like manner erected Monasteries there, till the Churches were supplied with Bishops out of these Monasteries. Hence Jerome, in a Letter^[3] written about the year 385, saith of the Clergy: *Quasi & ipsi aliud sint quam Monachi, & non quicquid in Monachos dicitur redundet in Clericos qui patres sunt Monachorum. Detrimentum pecoris pastoris ignominia est.* And in his book against Vigilantius: *Quid facient Orientis Ecclesiæ? Quæ aut Virgines Clericos accipiunt, aut Continentes, aut si uxores habuerint mariti esse desistunt.* Not long after even the Emperors commanded the Churches to chuse Clergymen out of the Monasteries by this Law.

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^[4]*Si quos forte Episcopi deesse sibi Clericos arbitrantur, ex monachorum numero rectius ordinabunt: non obnoxios publicis privatisque rationibus cum invidia teneant, sed habeant jam probatos.* Dat. vii. Kal. Aug. Honorio A. iv. & Eutychiano Coss. A.C. 398. The Greek Empire being now in the hands of these Encratites, and having them in great admiration, Daniel makes it a characteristick of the King who doth <200> according to his will, that he should not regard the desire of women.

Thus the Sect of the *Encratites*, set on foot by the *Gnosticks*, and propagated by *Tatian* and *Montanus* near the end of the second century; which was condemned by the Churches of that and the third century, and refined upon by their followers; overspread the *Eastern Churches* in the fourth century, and before the end of it began to overspread the *Western*. Henceforward the Christian Churches having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, came into the hands of the *Encratites*: and the Heathens, who in the fourth century came over in great numbers to the Christians, embraced more readily this sort of Christianity, as having a greater affinity with their old superstitions, than that of the sincere Christians; who by the lamps of the seven Churches of *Asia*, and not by the lamps of the Monasteries, had illuminated the Church Catholic during the three first centuries.

The *Cataphrygians* brought in also several other superstitions: such as were the doctrine of Ghosts, and of their punishment in Purgatory, with prayers and oblations for mitigating that punishment, as *Tertullian* teaches in his books *De Anima* and *De Monogamia*. They used also the sign of the cross as a charm. So *Tertullian* in his book *de Corona militis*: *Ad omnem progres <201> sum atque promotum, ad omnem aditum & exitum, ad vestitum, ad calceatum, ad lavacra, ad mensas, ad lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia, quacunque nos conversatio exercet, frontem crucis signaculo terimus*. All these superstitions the Apostle refers to, where he saith: *Now the Spirit speaketh expresly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, the Dæmons and Ghosts worshipped by the heathens, speaking lyes in hypocrisy, about their apparitions, the miracles done by them, their reliques, and the sign of the cross, having consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, &c.* 1 Tim. iv. 1,2,3. From the *Cataphrygians* these principles and practices were propagated down to posterity. *For the mystery of iniquity did already work in the Apostles days in the Gnosticks, continued to work very strongly in their offspring the Tatianists and Cataphrygians, and was to work till that man of sin should be revealed; whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness; coloured over with a form of Christian godliness, but without the power thereof,* 2 Thess. ii. 7-10.

For tho some stop was put to the *Cataphrygian* Christianity, by Provincial Councils, till <202> the fourth century; yet the *Roman Emperors* then turning *Christians*, and great multitudes of heathens coming over in outward profession, these found the *Cataphrygian* Christianity more suitable to their old principles, of placing religion in outward forms and ceremonies, holy-days, and doctrines of Ghosts, than the religion of the sincere *Christians*: wherefore they readily sided with the *Cataphrygian Christians*, and established that Christianity before the end of the fourth century. By this means those of understanding, after they had been persecuted by the heathen Emperors in the three first centuries, and *were holpen with a little help*, by the conversion of *Constantine* the great and his sons to the *Christian* religion, fell under new persecutions, *to purge them from the dissemblers, and to make them white, even to the time of the end.*

[1] Lib. 4. c. 28, 29.

[2] In vita Constantini, l. 4. c. 28.

[3] Epist. 10.

[4] L. 32. de Episcopis.
