

THE LETTERS TO THE ASIAN CHURCHES.

IV. AUTHORITY OF THE WRITER OF THE SEVEN LETTERS.

IN what relation did the writer of the Seven Letters stand to the Asian Churches which he addressed? This is an important question. The whole spirit of the early development of law and procedure and administration in the early Church is involved in the answer. That the writer shows so intimate a knowledge of those Churches that he must have lived long among them, will be proved by a detailed examination of the Seven Letters, and may for the present be assumed. But the question is whether he addressed the Churches simply as one who lived among them and knew their needs and want, who was qualified by wisdom and age and experience, and who therefore voluntarily offered advice and warning, which had its justification in its excellence and truth; or whether he wrote as one standing in something like an official and authoritative relation to them, charged with the duty of guiding, correcting and advising those Asian Churches, feeling himself directly responsible for their good conduct and welfare.

The question also arises whether he was merely a prophet according to the old conception of the prophetic mission, coming, as it were, forth from the desert or the field to deliver the message which was dictated to him by God, and on which his own personality and character and knowledge exercised no formative influence; or whether the message is full of his own nature, but his nature

raised to its highest possible level through that sympathy and communion with the Divine will, which constitutes, in the truest and fullest sense, "inspiration." The first of these alternatives we state only to dismiss it as bearing its inadequacy plainly written on its face. The second alone can satisfy us; and we study the Seven Letters on the theory that they are as truly and completely indicative of the writer's character and of his personal relation to his correspondents as any letters of the humblest person can be.

Probably the most striking feature of the Seven Letters is the tone of unhesitating and unlimited authority which inspires them from beginning to end. The best way to realize this tone and all that it means is to compare them with other early Christian letters: this will show by contrast how authoritative is the tone of the Seven Letters.

The letter of Clement to the Church of Corinth is not expressed as his own (though undoubtedly, and by general acknowledgment, it is his letter, expressing his sentiments regarding the Corinthians), but as the letter of the Roman Church. All assumption or appearance of personal authority is carefully avoided. The warning and advice are addressed by the Romans as authors, not to the Corinthians only, but equally to the Romans themselves. "These things we write, not merely as admonishing you, but also as reminding ourselves," § 7. The first person plural is very often used in giving advice: "let us set before ourselves the noble examples," § 5; and so on in many other cases. Rebuke, on the other hand, is often expressed in general terms: "that which is written was fulfilled; my beloved ate and drank, and was enlarged and waxed fat and kicked": such is the conclusion of a long panegyric on the Corinthians, § 2. The panegyric is expressed in the second person plural, but the blame at the end is in this general impersonal form.

A good example of this way is found in § 44. Here the Corinthians are blamed for having deposed certain bishops or presbyters; but the second personal form is never used. "Those who were duly appointed . . . these men we consider to be unjustly thrust out from their ministration. For it will be no light sin for us if we thrust out those who have offered the gifts of the bishop's office unblamably and holily."¹ It would be impossible to express criticism of the conduct of others in more courteous and modest form, and yet it is all the more effective on that account: "if we do this, we shall incur grievous sin."

Most strongly and directly expressed is § 47. It is entirely in the second person plural; but here the Romans shelter themselves behind the authority of Paul, who "charged you in the Spirit . . . because even then ye had made parties"; and on this authority the direct address continues to the end of the chapter; but the next sentence resumes the modest form, "let us therefore root this out quickly."

An example equally good, and even more instructive, because addressed to several of the same Churches not many years later, is found in the letters of Ignatius. Here we have letters written by the bishop of Antioch, the mother Church of all the Asian Churches, and by him when raised through the near approach of death to a plane higher than mere humanity. He was already marked out for death—to Christians the most honourable death—as the representative of his Church, and was on his way to the place of execution. He was eager to gain the crown of life; he had done with all thought of earth. If there was any one who could speak authoritatively to the Asian Churches, it was their Syrian mother through her chosen representative.

¹ Lightfoot's translation (which I use often, where it is advisable to bring out clearly that I am not pressing the words to suit my own inferences).

But there is not, in any of his letters, anything approaching, even in the remotest degree, to the authoritative tone of John's letters to the Seven Churches, or of Paul's letters, or of Peter's letter to the Asian Churches.

The Ephesians especially are addressed by Ignatius with profound respect. He ought to "be trained by them for the contest in faith," § 3. He hopes to "be found in the company of the Christians of Ephesus," § 11. He is "devoted to them and their representatives," § 21. He apologises for seeming to offer advice to them, who should be his teachers; but they may be schoolfellows together—a touch which recalls the tone of Clement's letter; he does not give orders to them, as though he were of some consequence," § 3. The tone throughout is that of one who feels deeply that he is honoured in associating with the Ephesian Church through its envoys.

There is not the same tone of profound respect in Ignatius's letters to Magnesia, Tralleis, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, as in his letter to Ephesus. It is apparent that the Syrian bishop regarded Ephesus as occupying a position of loftier dignity than the other Churches of the Province; and this is an important fact in itself. It proves that already there was the beginning of a feeling, in some minds at least, that the Church of the presiding city of a Province¹ was of higher dignity than those of the other cities, a feeling which ultimately grew into the recognition of metropolitan bishoprics and exarchates, and a fully formed and graded hierarchy.

But even to those Churches of less splendid history, his tone is not that of authority. It is true that he sometimes

¹ Usually, though not necessarily, the political capital. Probably Ephesus, though the greatest city in most respects of Asia, the gate and harbour looking out to the West and to Rome, was not politically the capital before Hadrian's time. The old capital of the Asian kings, Pergamus, continued to be the Roman capital of the Province until the end of the first or early second century.

uses the imperative ; but in the more simple language of the Eastern peoples, as in modern Greek and Turkish (at least in the conversational style), the imperative mood is often used, without any idea of command, by an inferior to a superior, or by equal to equal ; and in such cases it expresses no more than extreme urgency. In Magn. § 3 the tone is one of urgent reasoning, and Lightfoot in his commentary rightly paraphrases it "I exhort you." In § 6 the form is "I advise you," as Lightfoot's translation gives it. In § 10 the advice is expressed in the first person plural (as we found to be characteristic of Clement), "let us learn to live," "let us not be insensible to His goodness." Then follows in § 11 an apology for even advising his correspondents, "not because I have learned that any of you are so minded, but as one inferior to you, I would have you be on your guard betimes." When in Trall. § 3 he is tempted to use the language of reproof, he refrains: "I did not think myself competent for this, that being a convict I should give orders to you as though I were an Apostle."¹

It is needless to multiply examples. The tone of the letters is the same throughout. Ignatius has not the right, like Paul or Peter or an Apostle, to issue commands to the Asian Churches. He can only advise, and exhort, and reason—in the most urgent terms, but as equal to equals, as man to men, or, as he modestly puts it, as inferior to superiors. He has just the same right and duty that every Christian has of interesting himself in the life of all other Christians, of advising and admonishing and entreating them to take the course which he knows to be proper.

But John writes in an utterly different spirit, with the tone of absolute authority. He carries this tone to an extreme far beyond that even of the other Apostles, Paul

¹The text of Trall. § 3 is not entirely certain. Compare also Rom. § 9, quoted in next section.

and Peter, in writing to the Asian Churches. Paul writes as their father and teacher: authority is stamped on every sentence of his letters. Peter reviews their circumstances, points out the proper line of conduct in various situations and relations, addresses them in classes—the officials and the general congregation—in a tone of authority and responsibility throughout. He writes because he feels bound to prepare them in view of coming trials.

But John writes the Divine voice with absolute authority of spiritual life and death in the present and the future. Such a tone cannot be, and probably hardly ever has been, certainly is not now by any scholar, regarded as the result of mere assumption and pretence. Who can imagine as a possibility of human nature that one who can think the thoughts expressed in these letters could pretend to such authority either as a fanciful dreamer deluding himself or as an actual impostor? Such suggestions would be unreal and inconceivable.

It is a psychological impossibility that these Letters to the Asian Churches could have been written by any one, unless he felt himself, and had the right to feel himself, charged with the superintendence and oversight of all those Churches, invested with Divinely given and absolute authority over them, gifted by long knowledge and sympathy with insight unto their nature and circumstances, able to understand the line on which each was developing, and finally bringing to a focus in one moment of supreme inspiration—whose manner none but himself could understand or imagine—all the powers he possessed of knowledge, of intellect, of intensest love, of gravest responsibility, of sympathy with the Divine life, of commission from his Divine Teacher.

Moreover, when we consider how sternly St. Paul denounced and resented any interference from any quarter, however influential, with the conduct of his Churches, and

how carefully he explained and apologised for his own intention of visiting Rome, that he might not seem to "build on another's foundation," and again when we take into consideration the constructive capacity of the early Church and all that is implied in that, we must conclude that John's authority was necessarily connected with his publicly recognized position as the head of those Asian Churches, and did not arise merely from his general commission as an Apostle.

In a word we must recognize the authoritative succession in the Asian Churches of those three writers: first and earliest him who speaks in the Pauline letters: secondly, him who wrote "to the Elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in . . . Asia" and the other Provinces: lastly, the author of the Seven Letters.

V. PAGAN CONVERTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

In one respect Ignatius is peculiarly instructive for the study of the early Asian Churches, in which the converts direct from Paganism must have been a numerous and important body. This peculiar position and spirit of Pagan converts (coming direct from Paganism), as distinguished from Jews or those Pagans who had come into the Church through the door of the Jewish synagogue, must engage our attention frequently during the study of the Seven Letters; and Ignatius will prove the best introduction, and a frequent court of appeal as a commentator.

The Pagan converts had not the preliminary education in Jewish thoughts and religious ideas which a previous acquaintance with the service of the synagogue had given those Gentiles who had been among "the God-fearing" before they came over to Christianity. The direct passage from Paganism to Christianity must have left a different mark on their nature. Doubtless, some or even many of them came from a state of religious indifference or of vicious and degraded life. But others, and probably the majority

of them, must have previously had religious sensibility and religious aspirations. Now what became of those early religious ideas during their later career as Christians? If they had previously entertained any religious aspirations and thoughts, these must have sought expression, and occasionally met with stimulus and found partial satisfaction in some forms of Pagan worship or speculation. Did these men, when they as Christians looked back on their Pagan life, regard those moments of religious experience as being merely evil and devilish; or did they see that such actions had been the groping and effort of nature towards God, giving increased strength and vitality to their longing after God, and that those moments had been really steps in their progress, incomplete but not entirely wrong?

To this inevitable question Ignatius helps us to find an answer, applicable to some cases, though not, of course, to all. That he had been a convert from Paganism is inferred with evident justification by Lightfoot from his letter to the Romans, § 9. He was born into the Church out of due time, imperfect in nature, by an irregular and violent birth, converted late, after a career which was to him a lasting cause of shame and humiliation in his new life. That feeling might be considered as partly a cause of the profound humility which we observed in him towards the long-established Ephesian Church. Hence he writes to the Romans: "I do not give orders to you as Peter and Paul did: they were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am a slave to this very hour." In the last expression we may see a reference, not to his having been literally a slave (as many do), but to his having been formerly enslaved to the passions and desires of Paganism; and from this slavery he can hope to be set free completely only through death: death will give to him liberty, and already even in the journey and the preparation to meet death, "I am learning to put away every desire."

The remarkable passage in Eph. § 9 must arrest every reader's attention: "Ye are all companions in the way, God-bearers, shrine-bearers, Christ-bearers, and bearers of your holy things, arrayed from head to foot in the commandments of Jesus Christ; and I, too, taking part in the festival, am permitted by letter to bear you company." The life of the Ephesian Christians is pictured after the analogy of a religious procession on the occasion of a festival; life for them is one long religious festival and procession. Now at this time it is impossible to suppose that public processions could have formed part of their worship. Imperial law and custom, popular feeling, and the settled rule of conduct in the Church, all alike forbade such public and provocative display of Christian worship; and moreover we cannot believe that the Church had as yet come to the stage when such ceremonial was admitted as part of the established ritual.

Yet the passage sets before the readers in the most vivid way the picture of such a festal scene, with a troop of rejoicing devotees clad in the appropriate garments, bearing their religious symbols and holy things in procession through the streets. That is exactly the scene which was presented to the eyes of all Ephesians several times every year at the great festivals of the goddess; and Ignatius had often seen such processions in his own city of Antioch. He cannot but have known what image his words would call up in the minds of his readers, and he cannot but have intended to call up that image, point by point, and detail after detail. The heathen devotees were dressed for the occasion, mostly in white garments,¹ with garlands of the sacred foliage (whatever tree or plant the deity preferred), while many of the principal personages wore special dress of a still more sacred character, which marked them as

¹ At least that was the colour in Rome, where *candida urbs* was the city on a holy day.

playing for the time the part of the god and of his attendant divine beings, and some were adorned with the golden crown either of their deity or of the Imperial religion. But the Ephesian Christians wear the orders of Christ.

The heathen devotees carried images of their gods, both the principal deities and many associated beings. The Christian Ephesians in their life carry God and carry Christ always with them, for, as Ignatius has said in the previous sentence, their conduct in the ordinary affairs of life spiritualized those affairs, inasmuch as they did everything in Christ. Many of the heathen devotees carried in their processions small shrines containing representations of their gods; but the body of every true right-living Christian is the temple and shrine of his God. The heathen carried in the procession many sacred objects, sometimes openly displayed, sometimes concealed in boxes (like the sacred mystic things, τὰ ἀπόρρητα, which were brought from Eleusis to Athens by one procession in order that a few days later they might be carried back by the great mystic procession to Eleusis for the celebration of the Mysteries); and at Ephesus we have in an inscription of this period a long enumeration of various objects and ornaments which were to be carried in one of the great annual processions. But the Christians carry holiness itself with them, wherever they go and whatever they do.

How utterly different is the spirit of this passage from the Jewish attitude towards the heathen world! Every analogy that Ignatius here draws would have been an abomination, the forbidden and hateful thing, to the Jews. It would have been loathsome to them to compare the things of God with the things of idols or devils. Ignatius evidently had never passed through the phase of Judaism; he had passed straight from Paganism to Christianity. He very rarely quotes from the Old Testament, and when he does his quotations are almost exclusively from Psalms and

Isaiah, the books which would be most frequently used by Christians.

Hence he places his new religion directly in relation with Paganism. Christianity spiritualizes and enlarges and ennobles the ceremonial of the heathen ; but that ceremonial was not simply rejected by him as abominable and vile, for it was a step in the way of religion.

The point of view is noble and true, and yet it proved to be the first step in the path that led on by insensible degrees, during the loss of education in the Church, to the paganizing of religion and the transformation of the Pagan deities into saints of the Church, Demeter into St. Demetrius, Achilles Pontarches into St. Phocas of Sinope, Poseidon into St. Nicolas of Myra, and so on. From these words of Ignatius it is easy to draw the moral, which assuredly Ignatius did not dream of, that the Church should express religious feeling in similar processions ; and, as thought and feeling deteriorated, the step was taken.

The same true and idealized spirit is perceptible throughout Ignatius's letters. In Eph. § 10 he says : Pray continually for the rest of mankind (i.e. those who are not Christians, and specially the Pagans), for there is in them a hope of repentance. Give them the opportunity of learning from your actions, if they will not hear you. The influence of St. Paul's teaching is here conspicuous : by nature the Gentiles do the things of the Law, if they only give their real nature free play, and do not degrade it (Rom. ii. 16).

Ignatius felt strongly the duty he owed to his former co-religionists, as Paul felt himself " a debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians " ; and just as the term " debtor " implies that Paul had received and felt himself bound to repay,¹ such indubitably must have been the thought in

¹ Some commentators seem to assume that the term " debtor " in Rom. i. 14 has lost all its strict force, and that St. Paul is merely expressing his strong sense of duty as a Christian to try to convert the Pagan

the mind of Ignatius. Ignatius learned the lesson from St. Paul, because he was prepared to learn it. Many have read him and have not learned it.

In this view new light is thrown on a series of passages in the letters of Ignatius, some of which are obscure, and one at least has been so little understood that the true reading is by many editors rejected, though Lightfoot's sympathetic feeling for Ignatius keeps him right, as it usually does throughout; and Zahn independently has decided in favour of the same text.

One of the most characteristic and significant features in the writings of Ignatius is the emphasis that he lays on silence, as something peculiarly sacred and Divine. He recurs to this thought repeatedly. Silence is characteristic of God, speech of mankind. The more the bishop is silent, the more he is to be feared (Eph. § 6). The acts which Christ has done in silence are worthy of the Father; and he that truly possesses the Word of Christ is able even to hear His silence, so as to be perfect, so that through what he says he may be doing, and through his silence he may be understood (Eph. § 15). And so again he is astonished at the moderation of the Philadelphian bishop, whose silence is more effective than the speech of others.

So far the passages quoted, though noteworthy, do not imply anything more than a vivid appreciation of the value of reserve, so that speech should convey the impression of an unused store of strength. But the following passages do more; they show that a certain mystic and Divine nature and value were attributed by Ignatius to Silence; world. But it is a false and ruinous procedure to whittle away the meaning in that way. Terms must be taken in their proper sense. No man can become a debtor, except by receiving what he is bound to repay. Unless St. Paul had meant what lies in the word "debtor," he would not have used the term, but expressed himself otherwise. To illustrate Rom. i. 14 compare Rom. xv. 27, where St. Paul's own Churches are said to be the debtors of the poor Christians of Jerusalem, having received much from them and being therefore bound to repay, even by money.

and in the light of those two passages, the words quoted above from Eph. § 15 are seen to have also a mystic value.

In Eph. § 19 he speaks of the three great Christian mysteries—the virginity of Mary, the birth of her son, and the death of the Lord, “three mysteries shouting aloud (in the world of men), which were wrought in the Silence of God.” In Magn. § 8 he speaks of God as having manifested Himself through His Son, who is His Word that proceeded from Silence.¹

Now, we must ask what was the origin of this mystic power that Ignatius assigns to Silence. Personally, I cannot doubt that his mind and thought were influenced by his recollection of the deep impression that certain Pagan Mysteries had formerly made on him.

It is mentioned in the *Philosophumena*, lib. V.² that “the great and wonderful and most perfect mystery, placed before those who were [at Eleusis] initiated into the second and higher order, was a shoot of corn harvested in silence.” In this brief description a striking scene is set before us: the hushed expectation of the initiated, the contrast with the louder and more crowded and dramatic scenes of the previous Mystic acts, as in absolute silence the Divine life works itself out to an end in the growing ear of corn, which is reaped before them. There can be no doubt, amid all the obscurity which envelopes the Eleusinian ceremonial, that great part of the effect which they produced on the educated and thoughtful, the intellectual and philosophic minds,³ lay in the skilful, dramatically presented contrast between the earlier naturalistic life, set before them in

¹ I can feel no doubt that Lightfoot and Zahn are right in accepting this text: Hilgenfeld prefers the majority of MSS. which insert *ὄν* before *ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών*, a reading which misses all that is most characteristic of Ignatius, and can be preferred only by one who is not able “to hearken to the Silence” of Ignatius.

² Miller, p. 117; Cruice, p. 171.

³ As the ancient writers imply, a philosophic training and a reverent, religious frame of mind were required to comprehend them.

scenes of violence and repulsive horror, and the later reconciliation of the jarring elements in the peaceful Divine life, as revealed for the benefit of men by the Divine power, and shown on the mystic stage as perfected in profound silence. Think of the hierophant, a little before, shouting aloud, "a holy son Brimos the Lady Brimo has borne," as the culmination of a series of outrages and barbarities: then the dead stillness, and the Divine life symbolized in the growing and garnered ear of the Divinely revealed corn. That the highest nature is silent must have been the lesson of the Eleusinian Mysteries, just as surely as they taught¹ that the life of man is immortal. Both those lessons were to Ignatius stages in the development of his religious consciousness; and the way in which, and the surroundings amid which, he had learned them affected his conception and declaration of the principles, the Mysteries of Christianity.²

The scene which we have described is mentioned only as forming part of the Eleusinian Mysteries; and it may be regarded as quite probable that Ignatius had been initiated at Eleusis;³ but it is also true that (as is pointed out in Dr. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, v. p. 126) "the Mysteries celebrated at different religious centres competed with one another in attractiveness," and they all borrowed from

¹ There was, of course, no formal dogmatic teaching: the words uttered in the representation before the initiated were concerned only with the dramatic action: the initiated gathered the lessons for themselves through their own philosophic insight by comprehending the meaning that underlay the action.

² Marcellus about the middle of the fourth century was influenced probably in the same way, when he declared that God was along with a Silence (*εἶναι τὸν θεὸν καὶ τινα ἡσυχίαν ἀμα τῷ θεῷ*) and that, as early heretics had taught, in the beginning there was God and Silence, *ἦν Θεὸς καὶ σιγή*.

³ Initiation at Eleusis was in earlier times restricted to the Athenian people but was widened in later times, so that all "Hellenes" were admitted. Apollonius of Tyana was rejected in A.D. 51, but only because he was suspected of magic, not because he was a foreigner: four years later he was admitted to initiation.

one another and "adapted to their own purposes elements which seemed to be attractive in others." Hence it may be that Ignatius had witnessed that same scene, or a similar one, in other Mysteries.

Lightfoot considers (see his note on Trall. § 2) that when Ignatius speaks of the mysteries of Christianity, he has no more in his mind than "the wide sense in which the word is used by St. Paul, *revealed truths*." But we cannot agree in this too narrow estimate. To Ignatius there lies in the term a certain element of power. To him the "mysteries" of the Faith would have been very insufficiently described by such a coldly scientific definition as "revealed truths": such abstract lifeless terms were to him, as to Paul (*Col. ii. 8*), "mere philosophy and vain deceit." The "mysteries" were living, powerful realities, things of life that could move the heart and will of men and remake their nature. He uses the term, I venture to think, in a similar yet slightly different sense from Paul, who uses it very frequently. Paul, too, attaches to it something of the same idea of power; for "the mystery of iniquity" (*2 Thess. ii. 7*) is to him a real and strong enemy. But Ignatius seems to attach to the "mysteries" even more reality and objectivity than Paul does.¹

Surely Ignatius gained his idea of the "mysteries" in his Pagan days. He had felt the strong influence to which some of the greatest thinkers among the Greeks bear testimony; and the Christian principles completed and perfected the ideas which had begun in his Pagan days.

This idea, that the religious conceptions of Paganism served as a preparatory stage leading up to Christianity, was held by many, as well as by Ignatius. Justin Martyr gave clear expression to it, and Eusebius works it out in his *Præparatio Evangelica*. Those who were conscious that a

¹ The term occurs *Mark iv. 11*; *Matthew xiii. 11*; *Luke viii. 10*; four times in *Revelation*, and twenty-one times in the Pauline Epistles.

real development of the religious sense had begun in their own mind during their Pagan days and experiences, and had been completed in their Christian life, must inevitably have held it ; and there were many Pagans of a deeply religious nature, some of whom became Christians.

That the same view should be strongly held in the Asian Churches was inevitable. That often it should be pressed to an extreme was equally inevitable ; and one of its extreme forms was the Nicolaitan heresy, which the writer of the Seven Letters seems to have regarded as the most pressing and immediate danger to those Churches. That writer was a Jew, who was absolutely devoid of sympathy for that whole side of thought, alike in its moderate and its extreme forms. The moderate forms seemed to him lukewarm ; the extreme forms were a simple abomination.

Such was the view of one school or class in the Christian Church. The opposite view, that the Pagan Mysteries were a mere abomination, is represented much more strongly in the Christian literature. There is not necessarily any contradiction between them. Ignatius felt, as we have said, that his Pagan life was a cause of lasting humiliation and shame to him, even though he was fully conscious that his religious sensibility had been developing through it. We need not doubt that he would have endorsed and approved every word of the charges which the Christian apologists made against the Mysteries. Both views are true, but both are partial : neither gives a complete statement of the case.

The mystic meaning that lay in even the grossest ceremonies of the Eleusinian and other Mysteries has been rightly insisted upon by Miss J. E. Harrison in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, especially chapter viii., a work well worthy of being studied. Miss Harrison has the philosophic insight which the ancients declare to be necessary in order to understand and learn from the Mysteries. Their evil side is to her non-existent, and the

old Christian writers who inveighed against the gross and hideous rites enacted in the Mysteries are repeatedly denounced by her in scathing terms as full of unclean imaginings—though she fully admits, of course, the truth of the facts which they allude to or describe in detail. Miss Harrison, standing on the lofty plane of philosophic idealism, can see only the mystic meaning, while she is too far removed above the mud and filth to be cognisant of it. To call an action of the ugliest character a “Holy Marriage” seems to her to be a sufficient justification of it. But to shut one’s eyes to the evil does not annihilate it absolutely, though it may annihilate it for the few who shut their eyes. Plato in the Second Book of the *Republic* is as emphatic as Firmicus or Clemens in recognizing the harm that those ugly tales and acts of the gods did to the mass of the people. This must all be borne in mind while studying her brilliant work.

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