

Platonic Christianity

Edward G. Acton

“What harmony is there between Christ and Plato?” (2 Cor. 6:15 adapted)

You may not have heard of “Platonic Christianity.” We don’t think you will find a book with this title in the library. In fact it is not a frequently used term, even in theological circles. It is a topic unfortunately, and perhaps intentionally, avoided. It refers to a serious issue concerning certain popular traditional evangelical doctrines, and for this reason please read this presentation in prayer and open-mindedness to what the Lord might be wanting to reveal to us.

What does the term “Platonic Christianity” mean? It must refer to a combination in some manner of Platonic philosophy and Christian doctrine. But where do we find such a combination? What has Plato to do with the Bible? “What communion has light with darkness...What agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:14, 16).

We wish the question were harder to answer. The fact is, it is surprisingly easy and astonishingly revealing. Christianity has openly accepted certain Platonic doctrines which are contrary to biblical teaching. In fact these Platonic elements are now so universally believed that their origin is rarely suspected. Their disagreement with Scripture is either not known or not mentioned. Actually to suggest that certain traditional doctrines are of Platonic, not biblical, origin sometimes results in one being classified as a cultist or heretic.

Yet recognized Church historians record the acceptance of Platonic doctrines by the Church in its early centuries. They note the wholesale fusion of the religion of the New Testament with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy in the late fourth or early fifth centuries A.D. In this introduction it is sufficient to say that the area of Christian doctrine most damagingly affected by Platonic influence is the doctrine of man, his nature and destiny.

In this section of this study we will explain the term “Platonic,” draw attention to the Platonic doctrines which seem to have been espoused by Christians and to the contrasting biblical teaching, and trace the historical development.

The Meaning of Platonism and its Teaching Concerning the Nature and Destiny of Man

The term Platonism refers to the philosophy of Plato (427?-347 B.C.), one of the greatest Greek philosophers. The areas of his philosophy which have most gravely influenced Christianity are his teaching concerning (1) the nature of man (anthropology), (2) death (thanatology), and (3) future events (eschatology).

In regard to man Plato teaches anthropological dualism which states that man is composed of two separable parts, an inferior material and mortal part, the body, and a superior immaterial and immortal part, the soul. He considers the soul to be the real person; to him man is a spiritual being. Here are his own words:

“Man’s concern is not for the body that dies, but as far as he can he stands aloof from that and turns towards the soul.”¹

“The soul is most like the divine and immortal...the body is most like the human and mortal.”²

Plato teaches that only the body dies, not the soul (the real person). Death is the separation of the soul from its “prison,” the body. Here again are his words:

¹ *Great Dialogues of Plato* (trans. Rouse), p. 467.

² *Ibid.*, p. 484.

“Do we think there is such a thing as death? Is it anything more than the separation of the soul from the body?”³

(Quoting Socrates) “Don’t let him worry for me, or say at my funeral that he is laying out Socrates. Be confident, and say that you are burying my body.”⁴

Plato anticipates bliss in God’s presence. He quotes Socrates as saying:

“When I have drunk the potion, I shall not be here then with you; I shall have gone clear away to some bliss of the blessed.”⁵

Then Plato says himself:

“When the man dies...the visible part of him, the body, will dissolve and disappear...but the soul, the unseen part, goes to another place noble and pure and unseen...to the presence of the good and wise God, where, if God will, my own soul must go very soon. It goes away into the unseen, which is like itself — divine and immortal — where, on arrival it has the opportunity to be happy, freed from wandering and folly and fears and wild loves and all other human ills.”⁶

The Contrasting Teaching of the Bible

The Bible teaches that man is a simple unit of “dust.” We read in Genesis 2:7, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.” God said to Adam, “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Abraham testified, “I am nothing but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27), and David, “He remembers that we are dust” (Ps. 103:14).

Into the nostrils of this formed dust God breathed the “breath of life” or “life-spirit” as recorded in Genesis 2:7, Amplified: “the breath or spirit of life.” Interestingly enough Job, using the typical Hebrew poetic way of expressing a truth by the employment of synonyms in parallel lines, says, “The spirit of God has made me [Amplified: ‘stirred me up’], and the breath of the Almighty has given me life” (33:4). He says, “As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils” (27:3). The man of dust was thus animated by the “breath (or spirit) of life,” as stated in the last section of Genesis 2:7: “Man became a living soul” (or “being,” NASB, NIV, Amplified).

A simple equation may assist:

$$\text{DUST} + \text{BREATH} = \text{A LIVING BEING}$$

Note that the inbreathing of God’s breath did not add a second element to the nature of man; it did no more than animate the dust. Dr. Eugene Carpenter in *The Handiwork of God in Creation* states very emphatically:

“The breath of life is merely a way of saying that man was animated by God’s impartation of breath. The Hebrew word ‘nismah’ does not denote some divine element that God imparted to Adam. God did not impregnate an already living being with divine elements in order to make man. Nowhere is ‘dust’ used to indicate a previously living being.”

The Bible defines and describes death both as an event and as a state. It states clearly that when God takes back the life-breath (or life-spirit) which he loaned to man, nothing is left but dust. Note some of the Scriptures which deal with the event of death. Job states, “If it were His intention and He withdrew His

³ Ibid., p. 467.

⁴ Ibid., p. 519.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 485.

spirit [His breath], all mankind would perish together and man would return to dust” (34:14-15). Words almost identical are found in Psalm 104:29: “When You take away their breath they die and return to their dust.” In Ecclesiastes the statement is made concerning both man and animals, “All are of dust, and all turn to dust again” (3:20), and “The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit [breath] returns to God who gave it” (12:7).

As an equation this conception is the inversion of the creation equation above:

A LIVING BEING – BREATH = DUST

Note also the biblical description of the state of death. In the first place the Bible makes it clear that the dead are totally unconscious. “The dead know nothing” (Ecc. 9:5). “His spirit departs,” the Psalmist says, and “his breath goes forth [‘leaves him,’ Amplified];...in that very day his thoughts perish” (NIV: “his plans come to nothing”) (Ps. 146:4). “The dead do not praise the Lord, neither any that go down into silence” (Ps. 115:17).

The most used biblical term describing death is “sleep.” Job’s understanding is informative. He refers basically to the fact that the dead are “asleep,” but he also makes clear that the great future event of purification and “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21) will be the time of their awakening: “So man lies down and does not rise; until the heavens are no more they will not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep (14:12).

The term is later used by Jesus concerning Lazarus: “Our friend Lazarus is sleeping” (John 11:11). Peter in reference to David says, “David, after he had served his generation, fell asleep” (Acts 13:36). We should note in passing that Peter had said earlier concerning David that “he is dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...[He] did not ascend to heaven” (Acts 2:29, 34). The dead are thus awaiting the resurrection at Christ’s return.

Again we remark on the knowledge of Job as we quote his anticipation of that next great event: “All the days of my appointed time, I will wait until my change come. You will call and I will answer You; You will long for the creature Your hands have made” (14:14-15, NIV). Daniel was told, “Rest, and at the end of days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance” (12:13, NIV).

Future events for the Old Testament believer begin with the resurrection. The Bible indicates that this is the same for New Testament believers. They are included in the “many” of Daniel 12:2: “Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life.” Abundant confirmation is presented in the New Testament. God who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Heb. 13:20) will bring also from the dead, as He did Jesus, “those who have fallen asleep” (1 Thess. 4:14). Romans 8:11 repeats almost verbatim: “He who raised up Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies.”

Twice in his writing to the Corinthians Paul states that God who raised the Lord will also raise us (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14). “Then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (1 Cor 15:54). Note also the saying of Jesus: “The gates of Hades will not prevail” (Matt. 16:18).

Anticipation of the resurrection also reassures believers of their earthly rule and inheritance, proclaimed according to Matthew 25:31-34 by the Son of Man as he comes in glory and “sits on the throne of his glory”: “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Peter briefly describes the scene of the renewed earth, and what he had earlier called the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). “We, according to the promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13).

These positive promises and proclamations, along with such negative statements of Jesus as, “No one has ever gone into heaven except...the Son of man” (John 3:13), and “Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 13:33), show how the Platonic hope of being in the “presence of God” at death is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

What is man? Psalm 8:4 — A Resume

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| Man was made on the earth | Gen. 1:26-27 |
| Made of earth | Gen. 2:7; Ps. 103:14 |
| Made to rule the earth | Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:6 |
| Made to inherit the earth | Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:29 |
| Will die on the earth | |
| Will be buried in the earth | |
| Will become earth again | Gen. 3:19; Job 34:14; Ps. 104:29; Ecc. 12:7 |
| Will sleep in the earth | Dan. 12:2 |
| Will rise from the earth | Isa. 26:19 |
| Will be judged on earth | Prov. 11:31; Isa. 24:21; Matt. 25:31-46 |
| Will be rewarded on the earth or punished on the earth | Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12 Prov. 11:31; Matt. 16:27; 25:41-46 |
| Will be reinstated as ruler over the earth | Dan. 7:27; Matt. 19:28; Luke 12:42-44; 19:12-19 Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10 |
| Will inherit the earth or | Ps. 37:9, 11, 18, 22, 29, 34; 115:16; Gal. 3:29 |
| Be consumed from the earth | Ps. 104:35 |

A Brief Historical Outline of the Platonization of Christianity

Eventually, Christian doctrine was articulated in Platonic terms. For example, we quoted Plato as saying, “The soul is immortal.” This statement comes from the *Handbook of Doctrine* of a prominent evangelical denomination: “The soul is immortal; that is, it will live on after the death of the body.” The same source states, “Death...is the separation of the soul from the body.” Compare Plato’s statement: “Death...is it anything more than the separation of the soul from the body?”

We have attributed the traditional belief in instant heaven and endless hell to Plato’s teaching on the immortality of the soul. Note that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul did not originate with Plato. The ancient civilizations of Egypt and Babylon made provision for the after-death experiences of their deceased, as exemplified by such things as boats, hunting equipment, and provisions in the pyramids.

But earlier than the earliest recorded civilizations we have a documented record of belief in the immortality of the soul — from the first two chapters of the Bible. In the Garden of Eden was a tree called the Tree of Life. This name obviously referred to eternal life (immortality) since they were already living! It is therefore clearer to call it the Tree of Immortality. Confirmation comes from God’s statement that, if they took of the fruit of this tree, they would live forever (Gen. 3:22). Adam and Eve had permission to eat from it. Immortality was available (Gen. 2:8-9).

Did they partake of it? No! When they were cast out of the garden, God placed cherubim at the entrance. They were cast out “Lest [they] take of the Tree of Immortality, and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22). The cherubim were placed at the entrance to guard the way to the Tree of Immortality (v. 24). What could be clearer than the fact that now the opportunity for immortality was forfeited! Not until the “Restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21) including Eden will the Tree of Immortality be available again, and that to the “Overcomer” (Rev. 2:7) who will “enter in through the gates into the city and have the right to the Tree of Immortality” (Rev. 22:2, 14).

We have still to identify the originator of the fable that man “will not surely die.” The false assurances came from the mouth of the serpent.

From the Garden of Eden the road of religious philosophy “forked.” Two religious philosophies have been formulated. The first, God’s, stated, “You will surely die” (Gen. 2:17); the second, Satan’s, stated, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Every religious system, philosophy, denomination, creed, or cult

follows one or the other of these branches of theology: either God's (man is mortal) or Satan's (man is immortal). The historical glimpses below will give examples of these choices.

A few followed God's fork. Consider Abraham who testified, "I am nothing but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). His philosophy of death, resurrection, and reward is illustrated by his purchase of burial property in the land he is to possess (Gen. 23:4-9). Following his faith and example, Jacob insisted on being buried in the promised land to be ready and on the spot for the resurrection and inheritance (Gen. 49:29-33). Subsequently, Joseph made the children of Israel swear an oath that they would carry his bones back to the promised land, when God opened up the way for their return (Gen. 50:25). We have earlier quoted the testimony of Job (33:4; 27:3; 34:14; 14:12, 14), revealing in a remarkable fashion his clear understanding of the nature of man, of death, and of the future.

Note now some historical highlights concerning those who chose Satan's fork. We have already spoken about the early civilizations of Egypt and Babylon. Continuing down this fork, we are told of the "wisdom-lovers" (philosophers) of Greece, including Plato, who admired, studied, then embraced the "wisdom" of Egypt. Soon they were influential proponents of the immortality of the soul, its flight at death to the heavenly realm, and other fallacious outgrowths.

One more item of historical news appears before we actually come to the adoption of Platonism by Christians. Some Jews, God's own chosen people, followed the wrong fork. The late George Park Fisher, once esteemed professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale University, makes this observation:

"At Alexandria arose a peculiar type of Jewish theology, in which the Platonic philosophy was curiously blended with Old Testament teaching!"⁷

One of the Jewish philosophers influenced by Platonic philosophy was the renowned Plato, who taught in the University of Alexandria:

"blending Plato's teaching with the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, and producing what is called the 'Alexandrian theology,' by which the Old Testament had been made to echo with a modified sound the teaching of the Greek schools of thought."⁸

The more contemporary voice of Kenneth Scott Latourette confirms this observation as follows:

"Platonism had a marked influence on Christianity. It entered from many channels, among them the Hellenistic Jew Philo, who was utilized by some early Christian writers."⁹

As the Christian community grew in Alexandria, the "Alexandrian theology," according to Fisher:

"made the first serious attempts among those who adhered to the great facts and truths of the gospel, to adjust the relations of Christian doctrine to reason and philosophy."¹⁰

As we move into the second and third centuries of the Christian era, we find Platonism increasingly accepted. The majority of scholars almost unconsciously espoused and taught Platonic doctrine. Mention of two outstanding teachers will help to reinforce the seriousness of the situation. Tertullian (c. 160-230 A.D.) was a highly educated scholar of Carthage and the first author of significant Christian writings in Latin. Here are his words:

"I may use the opinion of Plato, when he declares that 'every soul is immortal.'"¹¹

⁷ George Park Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, 1893, p. 15.

⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

⁹ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 1975, Vol. 1, p. 260.

¹⁰ Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 122

Origen (185-254), a pioneer in systematic theology, wrote “Christian Platonists of Alexandria.” How would a treatise on “Christian Platonists of America be received today? According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, Origen’s “one achievement was to give philosophy a place in the creeds of the Church.”

Dr. George Park Fisher remarks that Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), was “steeped in the Platonic spirit.”¹² The *Encyclopedia Britannica* states:

“His mind was the crucible in which the religion of the New Testament was most completely fused with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy.”

His mind was also the conduit by which the product of this “fusion” was transmitted to the Christendoms of medieval Catholicism and Renaissance Protestantism.

The world has expanded considerably, and missionaries, many with Augustine’s Platonic Christianity alloy, have reached its extremities. All around us is heard and read — from pulpit, seminary podium and television; in books, magazines, and Sunday school quarterlies — this very same Platonic Christianity. The fusion of Plato and the Bible, and the diffusion of the alloy thus produced, have resulted in confusion, the appalling ignorance concerning the nature and destiny of man.

Augustine is said to have shaped the basic Western concept of the soul. Since it was thus shaped more than 1500 years ago, is there any hope of reshaping it according to the biblical pattern?

The Seriousness of the Issue

From many aspects we believe that Platonized Christianity is a very serious issue. Its threat to this point has gone largely unheeded. The philosophy of Plato was more to be feared by the Christian Church of the early centuries than was Judaism. Since it constituted the culture of such a high percentage of Christians, it was not likely to be considered an enemy. The last thing we would want to be warned about would be our traditional beliefs. It is hard to admit that we, our parents, our teachers, our textbooks, or our denomination might be wrong.

Paul, who understood this situation perfectly, warned of it specifically: “Beware that no one take you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men” (Col. 2:8).

Paul warned Timothy, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It is astonishing to note how few preachers, teachers, and writers have carefully studied, with unbiased mind, such subjects as the nature and destiny of man; the meaning of “soul,” “spirit,” “death”; the intermediate state; the time, place, and nature of the reward of the believer, and the punishment of the lost. Sermons, Sunday school material, magazine articles, Christian books and tapes display this tragic ignorance. In such a situation, what hope has the average Christian, who never studies the Bible for himself but drinks in Platonic philosophy as Gospel truth?

When “blind leaders of the blind” are contacted concerning their unbiblical teaching, they refer to the doctrinal statements of their denomination as the ultimate criteria of truth. We need to write in letters of fire across the evangelical sky, “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (Isa. 8:20).

Neglect is serious, leaving us open to error. Note something more serious than neglect. It is the reversal of Scripture to line up with our Platonic theology. Personally we would rather someone neglect what we say than to propagate as from us something we did not say, or even the reverse of what we said. If this is unacceptable on the human level, how can we estimate the gravity of treating Scripture in this fashion? Yet this is done on several basic doctrinal issues.

For example, the Christian is to “Wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10), but the message of today’s Gospel is to GO to His Son TO heaven (Plato). While we are told specifically, “The dwelling of God will be with men,” Platonic preachers tell us that the dwelling of men will be with God! Apparently

¹¹ Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, ch. 3.

¹² Ibid.

rejecting Jesus' teaching that "The Son of man will come...**then** he will reward each person" (Matt. 16:27), and his message in Revelation 22:12, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me," many departed believers are said to have "gone to their reward"! They are also spoken of as being "with the Lord," in spite of Paul's clear statement and his expressed prayer that we "not be ignorant concerning those who are asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13); after which he points out that they and we "will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord [for the first time], and so [at that time] will we ever be with the Lord" (v. 17).

Very little is preached concerning the resurrection of believers at Christ's return. Since the invention of "heaven," this is no longer the believer's greatest anticipation, as it was Paul's (Phil. 3:10-11). With the emphasis on heaven, the redemption of creation, the "restoration of all things," has largely faded into insignificance.

The "gospel of heaven" has just about replaced the biblical "Gospel of the Kingdom" which will bring the King back, for "then will the end come" (Matt. 24:14) and the King! Some seem to have little interest in this, so long as they can "make heaven." Others want to combine the two — let him come back and take us to heaven.

A new philosophy easily identifiable as Platonic teaches that the material, eternal, great planet earth is "not my home; I'm just a-passing through," and it makes us forget the Creator's expressed intention. It makes us forget such specific statements as: "He set the earth on its foundations; it cannot be moved" (Ps. 104:5) and Peter's expressed anticipation that "We are looking forward to renewed heavens and a renewed earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13), as well as his reference to the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).

Dr. Eugene E. Carpenter, in an admirable treatise on "Cosmology," points out:

"As to the original creation, God is its perfect Creator; as to the restoration and redemption of that original creation, he becomes its new Creator or, as more commonly termed, its Redeemer. God's new creation, as we shall see, is very much related in nature, purpose, and goal to his first creation...God did not create arbitrarily; he created the material in the beginning that would be receptive to his further designs and goals."¹³

This is indeed a cause for serious concern. Any tradition may be domineering and enslaving. Theological tradition can be an iron fetter. Anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological traditions are like the inner cell of the Philippian jail (Acts 16:24-26) — nothing but an "earthquake" will release us. Experience of a geo-physical or of a mental (theological) earthquake is not very pleasant; but it may have to come.

We need to recognize a milder way whereby God's truth may enter a prejudiced heart. Just ten verses earlier in this account, and in the same city of Philippi, we read of Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened" (v. 14). This does not suggest an earthquake. It may have been the open-mindedness of the women's Bible class described in this context which made Lydia willingly yield to the influences of the Holy Spirit, through Paul's preaching. But there are more cases of hardheartedness and closed-mindedness, requiring an earthquake, than there are of the Lydia type.

Will Durant in his monumental works accuses Plato of placing man's destiny, the "Ideal State," "somewhere in heaven...eternally with God," or "in perpetual torment with the devil."¹⁴ No one will deny the "Extent and Dominance" of such beliefs, even if they are unaware of their satanic origin. Their dominance is further encouraged through their acceptance by such outstanding church leaders as Thomas Aquinas, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus and John Calvin, quoted by Will Durant.¹⁵ These views are passed down to subsequent generations by preaching (church, radio, TV, tape-ministry), Christian literature (commentaries, Bible notes, stories, allegories), and by an abundance of devotional publications.

¹³ Eugene Carpenter, *Cosmology: A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, 1983, p. 176.

¹⁴ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 1953, Vol. 4, p. 73

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Christian periodicals abound in Platonic propaganda, but probably the most powerful influence is our hymnology, of which a great percentage of hymns “take us to heaven” in the last verse!

Kenneth Scott Latourette, “prince of church historians,” not only emphasizes the effect of Platonism (or Neoplatonism, as it was later called) on Christian theology, but also stated his fear that:

“Much that passes as Gospel has sacrificed the essential features of the Gospel.”¹⁶

How can we persist in calling ourselves “Protestant,” when we no longer “protest” against the Platonic doctrine of the Church of Rome? Luther points out that it was the Pope, not the Bible, that taught the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. And Adam Clarke, acknowledged “prince of commentators,” states that a doctrine that is not found in the Bible is not a biblical doctrine. Yet the editor’s preface to his abridged Commentary gives the date when he “left for his eternal reward”! We don’t think Adam Clarke found this in the Bible.

Some ignore the issue by refusing literature, ignoring correspondence, or avoiding constructive argument. Others present a lame excuse that they don’t believe all that we say or “our interpretation.” The fact is that their very words betray them as those who, contrary to the Thessalonians, “when they received the word of God which they heard from us, they received it not as the word of God, which it is in truth, but as the word of men” (see 1 Thess. 2:13).

Another common attitude is procrastination — “A thief of our time, their time, and God’s time.” They put the pressing issue “on the back burner” and never turn the gas on! The imitate Felix’s remark: “When I have a convenient time, I will call for you” (Acts 24:25) It is taking some people a long time to find a “convenient time”!

Many Christians testify to receiving “fresh light” from the Scriptures very frequently, yet when light on such primordial subjects is revealed to them, they reject it and bring deeper darkness upon themselves, as the Scripture warns: “Walk while you have the light, or darkness will come upon you” (John 12:35).

The form and measure of rejection varies. Some will use strong terms such as “error,” “heresy,” and “unbiblical,” without pointing out what they think is error, let alone discussing it with an open Bible. Others take the time to sincerely list, for example, passages which they think “prove” that we go to heaven, but will not discuss these passages, which are obviously taken out of context and misinterpreted. We suppose that the extreme attitude toward truth-bearers would be the classifying of them as “cultist,” sometimes mentioning the very cult they have in mind. Such malediction for such blindness and ignorance.

Summary

When God says, “You are dust,” Plato says, “You are spirit,” and the Christian Church sides with Plato; when God says, “You will surely die,” Plato says, “Is there such a thing as death? Is it anything more than the separation of the soul from the body?” and the Christian Church accepts Plato; when the Bible says that the Christian’s future depends on the resurrection, Plato teaches “instant heaven,” and the “Christian” creed acknowledges Plato; when Scripture teaches destruction, annihilation of the wicked, Dante passes them through successive phases of endless torment, and the Christian Church accepts Dante; we have, not only an unprecedented, unsurpassingly tragic situation, we have also a challenge!

Note that the prevalence of Platonism represents a failure to heed Paul’s warnings against the threatening inroads of Platonic philosophy. It indicates neglect and ignorance of the teaching of Scripture on these particular subjects, related to the nature and destiny of man. It includes the preaching as Gospel truth things which the Scriptures do not say; and many times turning Scripture around to suit popular tradition.

It downgrades the material — the human body, and our eternal, great planet Earth. It denounces truth-bearers as heretic, without being willing to engage in prayerful, open-minded Bible study of the issues under consideration. It replaces the “Gospel of the Kingdom” which will bring back the King, by the Gospel of heaven.

¹⁶ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, Vol. 1, p. 122.