

Pastor and People.

God's call to His People in the Church of Rome to Leave her Communion.

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"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."—Rev. xvi.

From what precedes this chapter there is no doubt about the meaning of the word "her" in the text. Paul, writing forty-two years before John, saw the visions and heard the revelations described in this book, very plainly unfolded the character of the great apostasy from the faith of Christ. Its spirit was working in his own day. Its moving spirit, is that spirit of rebellion against God, which has its place in every unrenowned heart. Unwilling to be held in restraint it is determined to be more than free. With freedom, as a subject of the King of Zion, it is not satisfied, but must, as God, occupy the position of an irresponsible law-maker; to make laws and alter them, and rule over men and nations as it will. Its portrait, as painted in Scripture, is a life-like image, so like its parent that there can be no mistake about its origin. Daniel, personifying the Papal system, says: "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws." The distinguishing doctrines of this system which Paul names "The Mystery of Iniquity," and "The Man of Sin," are called the doctrines of Devils. He also says of him that his coming is "after the working of Satan," and that he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thes. ii.) The future history of this great apostasy, which has Rome as its centre, and the Pope—who has often received the title of "Our Lord God the Pope"—at its head, is predicted in this book. Its fall is described in this chapter. Warning is given of its approaching destruction, and, in the text, the people of God who may still be lingering in it, are called upon to come out lest they perish among its ruins.

The text divides itself into two heads. The first is the fact that God has some people in that apostate Church. The second is the command to them to leave it. After directing your thoughts to these I shall refer to our duty to those who obey this command.

Firstly: The fact that God has some people in that apostate Church.—The question, "Is the Church of Rome a part of the Church of Christ?" has often been discussed. Without stating the arguments for or against, its position may be illustrated thus: Sometimes in an orchard, a fruit-bearing tree shows signs of disease and decay. One of the limbs are sickly. Its leaves are small and shrivelled. Its buds are few; and whilst those on the other limbs are vigorous, they begin to pine away. Two or three of them show signs of life, and more mature along with their healthy neighbours, but are prevented by the want of proper nourishment from the sickly leaves. Being left alone that limb grows worse. No amount of discussion on the nature of the disease will cure it. Nor will the cutting off of this twig or that branch preserve it. In vain the owner tries to attach to it grafts from a healthy tree. The only resource is the axe. The limb must be cut off or the whole tree will perish. In like manner each different limb that grows from the parent stem of true Christianity must be fruit-bearing. If not, the command will be "cut it down." It is not so much the creed as the conduct of any Church that decides whether or not it is fruit-bearing.

Taken as a system, we believe that this Church has long been in a diseased and dying state in relation to Divine truth, and that in a few generations the sentence "cut it down" will be executed. Its denial of the doctrine of the one Mediator between God and man, its worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, its arrogating to itself an equality with God by the recently proclaimed dogma of infallibility, its claiming the right to forgive sins, its claiming power over hell and heaven, together with its discription given by Paul and John is, we consider, sufficient Scriptural ground for believing that God's recognition of it is about to end. This does not, however, imply that he has no people within its pale. No, by no means. The Jews, as a nation, in the days of Elijah, had renounced the true God. The lawful descendant of Aaron performed the duties of high priest, and no doubt, prided himself on being the successor of God's chosen servant. The people went to the temple, they offered sacrifice according to the law. Not, however, to Jehovah, but to Baal. They, no doubt, gloried in being the descendants of that people whom God delivered from Egypt, and to whom he gave his law. These circumstances did not make Baal's worshippers the true people of God. The latter were found in Elijah, Obadiah, and the two hundred prophets in hiding, and the seven thousand whose knees had not bowed to Baal, and who had not kissed him.

In like manner there are some within the pale of that system whose doom is predicted in this book. We have no reason to believe that each one is a saved person, but they have such a knowledge of Divine truth, and such an abhorrence of what is sinful about that Church that they practically dissent from it. They see its errors, are convinced of its unscriptural character, and though within are not of it. Circumstances or prejudices constrain them to remain in its communion,

The fear of persecution makes them afraid of making an open declaration of their knowledge of the truth, and they continue to identify themselves with it. In this they err: for we are to obey God rather than man; and His command is "Come out of her my people."

Secondly: The command to them to leave it. This command is to be obeyed under pain of sharing her plagues. We have the plain statement of Scripture to the effect that "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him it is sin." Whatever may be the result to them their duty is to make an open confession of the truth and renunciation of their error. Hard, indeed, it is at times to do this. Many who have done so have suffered persecution of one kind or another. Some have been driven from their homes. Some have been deprived of their property. The lives of others have been endangered and even lost. The civil law has failed to protect some, and has been employed against others. But let not the persecuted think that the hand of God has been stretched out against them. Christ himself has said, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." The promise of God will not be dishonoured in their case; for them who honour him he will honour, whereas they who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Those who obey do good to others by their example. They encourage not only those who are of like mind in the Church they left, but those whose communion they have joined. Were it not that the Reformers at the risk of life in some cases, and expense of it in others, had come out, there would not have been the civil and religious liberty in the Christian world that presently prevails. Either they secured this liberty and transmitted it to their children, or they began a good work which their children finished.

At the present time important movements have been made in this Church within the Dominion, as well as in some of the countries of Europe and America, North and South. Civil upheavals have been followed as in Italy, Germany and Spain, with liberty of conscience. As a consequence many have seceded from Rome; and, either as the Old Catholics in Germany, or the Presbyterians in Spain, have sprung a new Church into existence; or, as in the Province of Quebec, become part of another Church. May God bless those, wherever they are, who are taking an active part in this noble work, and crown it with complete success. Within the last few months the public press have made known a great and good work going on in Montreal. By means of the labours of Mr. Chiniquy and his co-workers about a thousand have openly seceded from the Church of Rome and joined ours. May the blessing pronounced by the dying Jacob on his beloved son be given to them. May their "bow abide in strength, and the arms of their hands be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The eyes of our fellow citizens, and now co-religionists, have been opened to see the unscriptural and unreasonable character of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and have seen it to be their duty to abandon the Church that maintains it. In other parts of the Province the Spirit of God is working in the same way, with results more or less happy. But those residing in the country have not the same protection as those in cities, and as a consequence have not the same inducements to comply with the command of the text. When such secessions are made, and the same work going on in different places, we cannot but conclude that God has some great end in view. What share of the work are we to bear? What are we to do in this great work?

This, leads me, in conclusion, to refer to our duty to those who have obeyed this command. In one sentence it is, "Give them all the help we can." This we can do by our prayers, sympathy and wealth. Their request to us is, "Brethren pray for us." They need our prayers, that we also at the throne of mercy may plead and wrestle for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, that they may be made more free in the truth as it is in Jesus, and strengthened with all might in the inner man, so that they will remain steadfast in the faith they now profess and adorn the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

They need our sympathies as well. Those who have been brought up as we have been know not fully the sacrifices these converts make. It may be now as it has been before, when family ties were rent asunder, scorn and hatred supplanting respect and love, and persecution waged openly and in secret.

Means also are required to keep this mission in operation. On the liberality of the Christian people, especially the membership of our own Church, they have cast themselves; and whilst a great work is being done by our agents, the complaint has been made that unless the hearts of our people are opened to provide for the mission it must be curtailed or stopped. God works through human means, and these must be kept up as all human means are, namely: by the wealth which God has given us power to acquire. Giving of our substance to aid in securing liberty to those whose souls have long been bound by the fetters of superstition and ignorance is both a privilege and a duty. If we prize our freedom no time will be lost in trying to persuade us that we ought to use all proper means to secure the same blessing to those whose cry is, "Lord, save us, we perish." What is given for this work is "bread cast upon the waters," to be gathered, it may be, not many days hence. Let us not the part of the good Samaritan who did more than pity his unfortunate brother; and by honouring the Lord with our substance, by responding to this appeal for our prayers, sympathies and liberality, we will be delivered from the curse of Merod, who came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and on our heads will descend the blessing of him that is ready to perish.

The Freedom of the Free.

"Plato seems to have exceeded all the other philosophers in wisdom." Yet whilst teaching that an omnipotent, independent, and all-wise God ruled the universe, whilst declaring what men ought to fear, and what to expect after death, his doctrines were based on slender foundations, and are exceedingly obscure.

Amongst a mass of ingenious philosophy and pungent truths, we find an allegory which, whilst it was given to illustrate a particular idea, explains to a wonderful degree the doctrines of the plan of redemption. The old divines frequently used it to simplify this great scheme of redeeming love, and certainly it is admirably suited for this purpose.

In describing this, the leading points have been taken, and the whole clothed in the form of a story or allegory, so that it may be more interesting than the original to many besides the young.

Once on a time when a certain man, named Nemo, was travelling through the land of Dialogismos, he came to a long and descending avenue, down which he walked, determined to explore its utmost bounds. After a while the light became fainter and feebler; a depressing feeling grew upon him with the gathering gloom that he had left the abode of all that was joyous, bright, and cheery, and foreboding fears spoke loudly about the propriety of his proceeding further. However, he resolved to advance, and after reaching the further end of the path, he suddenly found himself at the entrance of an immense cavern. He gazed around the dimly-lighted place with great interest, mingled with feelings of awe, and saw before him a raised walk that crossed the cavern at right angles to the avenue by which he had just entered. Along this path he was astonished to find human beings passing and repassing with all sorts of utensils, images, and representations in their hands.

Wondering greatly what all this could mean, Nemo crossed the well-trodden path, and was still more astonished to find a row of people, sitting like statuary in the dark ravine beyond. His curiosity now deepened into interest, and he determined to investigate the lamentable condition of these unfortunate ones.

To his great sorrow, he found that their necks and feet were bound fast in the stocks, and in his pity he could not help exclaiming, "What cruel monster delights in thus tormenting such helpless creatures?" He questioned them, and learned the amazing fact that they had been in that condition ever since they had had a being. So securely bound were they, that they could neither turn around to face the light as it streamed faintly in through the avenue, nor even change the posture in which they had been placed. Consequently, they could not leave their gloomy abode, nor see anything in the cavern, save what was directly before them. And as the other side of the cave rose up like a polished wall but a little distance from them, there was nothing to be seen save the shadows of the passing crowd as they wandered to and fro.

Now, consider the condition of these captives. What they saw were but the shadows of realities they never beheld. Everything present to them was as vanity, for never having seen the substance, they believed only in the shadow. Besides, when the passing people behind them spoke, their voices reverberated throughout the cavern, so that the captives believed that the shadows lived and held converse with one another.

After obtaining this sad information, Nemo determined to liberate one of the captives, called Desmion, and having done so, turned him about for the first time to look upon those things that were behind him. The instant effect was that nothing could be seen, as the light had pained and blinded his eyes. He earnestly desired to return and gaze upon the shadows on the wall. Nemo urged him to continue looking towards the light till his eyes would become used to it, and praised the forms he saw, as well as the beauty of the world above.

At the same time he denounced the figures that flitted backwards and forwards as mere shadows of those who walked in the light, but Desmion would not believe him. He maintained that these bodies were mere illusions because he could not see them distinctly, whilst the shadows were realities, and had been beheld without pain for a number of years.

Nemo then took hold of him with the intention of dragging him out of the cave, up the avenue, into the sunlight of heaven, but Desmion resisted with pain and rage.

Finding that force would not do, he took him to a pool of water, and showed the glory of many things, by means of reflection. In this way Desmion saw to distinguish between the shadow and the substance.

Thus whilst his mind was becoming informed, his eyes were gradually strengthened, so that one night Nemo led him out of the cave and bade him look up, and behold the star-spangled heavens above. The sight so overcame this inmate of darkness, that he was lost in wonder, awe, and praise. Nemo led him a little further till the soft silver rays of the moon shone down upon them, and made him behold the satellite of the earth.

This he could afterwards do without either dimness or pain, and great was his delight in bathing in the mellow beams of the queen of the night.

At last, one day, they stood together on the top of an eminence, and Desmion looked up in the noon-tide brilliancy of the sun, to gaze for a moment on that great orb of the day—the centre of the solar system.

Half-blinded by the sight, he thought that his cup of happiness was full; heart and mind could hold no more.

But Nemo did not end his good work by

simply being a guide to the sight-seeing Desmion, he taught him that the sun, by his revolutions, caused day and night, as well as the different seasons of the year, and that his heat verifies, strengthens, beautifies, and matures the different products of the earth.

Desmion could have leaped for joy as the light and truth dawned on his mind, and as he thought of the wonderful deliverance he had had from his former abode.

He saw that what he had prized there was but fleeting shadows, and as nothing compared with the glory he now beheld. He said that his name should no longer be Desmion, but Polites, for the captive was changed into a freeman, and the child of sorrow into an heir of glory.

Unsolit by nature, Desmion felt for his benighted friends. He resolved to revisit the cavern, and plead with them that they might have the liberty he was now enjoying. But they laughed him to scorn. They derided him, and said that his sight must have become defective, and his tastes depraved by being in the upper regions.

To make him desist, they resolved that from that time forward no one should leave their present position on the pain of condign punishment.

What became of Nemo in his wanderings, or of Desmion in his labours of love, we are not in a position to tell, for this is the end of our story based on the parable of Plato.

From it the following inferences are obvious:—

The inmates of the cavern were helpless. So is it with man by nature. He is in bondage to the beggarly elements of this world, in the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him at his will.

They were miserably deceived. The God of this world has blinded the eyes and deceived the hearts of many, so that they prefer the darkness and shun the light, or grasp at the shadow, and despise the substance. But "woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness."

They had the offer of their freedom. Nemo was Desmion's deliverer, and Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." No more can the unbeliever free himself from the chains that bind him down to time and sense than the inmates of that gloomy abode.

No more can they turn of themselves to love and serve a Saviour, than these prisoners could to praise and adore the light. A power must break the sinners' chains such as no human potentate commands, and nothing short of the work of the over-blessed Spirit can effect that liberty and happiness every child of God can, and ought to possess.

The liberated captive was happy. Happiness is one of the sure results of a regenerated life, however little it may be experienced by the soul or witnessed in it by others. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

The others were entreated to be free. So ought every child of God to do with those still out of Christ. The faithful pastors are not the only ministers. The humblest member of the flock of Christ will wrestle with God for a careless soul, or speak to that one in love if the love of Christ is shed abroad in his heart. "O that one might plead for a man with God as a man pleadeth for his neighbour."

But they laughed him to scorn. Such is oftentimes the reception that the earnest entreaties of the people of God receive at the hands of the ungodly. But ah! that lightsome laugh will end in an agonizing wail, and the defiant rebel will become a stricken outcast. The pleading Saviour will soon become an impartial judge. Then how stern his word, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded."

I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Those, however, who listened to the words of light and truth, and who cried for liberty, had a glorious jubilee by being made free in the bonds of the gospel. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." And when they have walked as children of the light till their sun is sinking in the west, they "shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."—T.T.T.

Money.

The Gospel needs it. The good news of grace cannot be successfully spread without a liberal use of cash. The need is always urgent, and the supply stinted. What shall we do? A company of Christian workers were once burdened with desire for means to do a useful work, and they betook themselves to prayer. Hour after hour their supplications were urged before the throne of grace, and yet their souls struggled with anxious desire. At last there was a calm, and answers begun to come. Larger and larger the contributions grew, until the treasury was fat with abundance. Christians possess wealth, and God can move them to give. He delights in benevolence, and honors the prayers of those who are strongly exercised by its impulses. Hence, where there is mighty prayer, He hates to reveal His power that His children may be encouraged to bear the burdens of others. Asking for money selfishly, He will not regard; asking from love of others, and especially from concern for the lost for whom Christ died, He delights to hear and hastens to respond. Special prayer for money for special work, if more common, would bring large resources to the Church. Concert in prayer is of great value, for the Lord has pleasure in the fellowship of love. We ought not to hesitate to attack the most selfish souls in all the church, and implore the Saviour to unlock them. He has many ways to touch them, and can bring honey from the rock, and money out of sordid hands. With masterful faith, and persistent supplications, money can be had to preach the Gospel, and bear forward the kingdom of Christ.

Random Readings.

NEVER covet easy paths. Time is not my own any more than money.

The excessive desire for riches makes one ever poor.

The vengeance of the Christ is in his murderers being forgiven.

For men love is a story; for women it is a history.

The divine victories are not for overthrow, but for conquest.

On, that men were more concerned about apostolic imitation than success.

The conquests of the cross are not over the sinner, but sin.—M. Charles.

Sin has its lurking holes, and must be hunted out through them all.—Starke.

There is no one so suitable to lead me as He who sought me out in the dark.

The vengeance of heaven is as the joy of heaven in the redeeming of one sinner that repenteth.

The vengeance of God is the binding not of hands from violence, but of hearts to himself in victories.

God never gave you grace that you might live upon it, but grace that you might live upon Christ.

Do you ask me, beloved, what it is that chiefly strengthens faith? It is having much to do with Jesus.

If there be tossing and doubting, beloved, it is the heaving of a ship at anchor—not the dashing of the rocks.

I am inclined to think that there is not one sin we ever commit but has its effects upon our souls in after years.

Hold fast the principles of truth, but hold thy brother in thy arms, whilst thou dost hold them fast. (Eph. iv. 14.)

The man who undervalues one means of grace, cannot honestly look up to God for His blessing in any means of grace.

There is not a trouble a Christian has, but if he lives by faith on Christ in it, it will turn to a blessing.—Romans.

It is a glorious thing to see a spark in the midst of that ocean, and all the power of that ocean unable to extinguish it.

LEIGH RICHMOND says, "Never preach a single sermon from which an unenlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never afterwards heard another discourse."

WIKES a Breton mariner puts to sea his prayer is, "Keep me my God! my boat is so small, and the ocean is so wide!" Does not this beautiful prayer truly express the condition of each of us, as we sail with a frail boat on life's broad sea?

REVENGE is a momentary triumph, the satisfaction of which dies at once, and is succeeded by remorse; whereas forgiveness, which is the noblest of all revenge, entails a perpetual pleasure. It was well said by a Roman emperor that he wished to put an end to all his enemies by converting them into friends.

RIGHTLY to wish for death is a mark of one who belongs to God, and is ready for his departure to a blessed eternity. Try thyself by this! Whoever gives all his time and attention to the body, and so thinks nothing of the soul, how can he have pleasure in the thought that he is to journey forth from the body.—Hedinger.

HERE are some solemn reflections of Michael Angelo in the sad, long twilight of his closing years:

The course of life has brought my lingering days in fragile ship over a stormy sea, To the common court where all our counts must be.

A soul occupied with great ideas performs small duties; the divinest views of life penetrates most clearly into the meanest emergencies, and so clearly far from petty principles being best proportioned to petty trials, a heavenly spirit taking up its abode with us, can alone well sustain the daily trials, and tranquilize us in the humiliations of our condition; and, to keep the house of the soul in order and pure, a God must come down and dwell within, as servant of all its works.

An oak which grew on the bank of a lake was blown down in a great storm. As the oak swam with the stream some of its boughs struck a reed which grew near to the shore. "Ah!" said the oak to the reed, "Have you stood the storm? It tore me up by the roots. How was it that you were not hurt by it?" "I will tell you how it was," said the reed. "I did not trust in my own strength. I knew that the wind was strong and that I was weak, and I thought it best to yield and bend to the blast. A strong oak might be firm, but it would be vain for a poor reed to try to be firm in a gale."

THE church debts are now getting raked by an indignant press and none too severely, for they are crippling all the energies of our Christian life. But more of the advice about economy and against extravagance five or six years ago, would have saved some, at least, of the present disaster. The advice was then very sparingly given, and they to whom it is now extended, accompanied with reproof and rebuke, have learned all its wisdom from experience much more clearly than it can be taught in the profoundest editorials. What encumbered churches now most want to know, is how to get out of the difficulty into which they have fallen, and on this subject they get but little information.—Pittsburg Presbyterian.

MR. SANKEY tells us, says the United Presbyterian, that no unconverted person should be permitted to lead the singing in public worship. The doctrine is good, and if he help to drive the hired reprobates from the choir and organs of the Eastern cities, he may be well called a reformer. But there is a more modest way of stating his opinion. It is not so easy to tell who is converted and who is not, that we may determine infallibly to make such nice distinctions. If we say none but professors of religion will engage in religious worship, have we not said enough? There is no reason for breaking down the distinction between the visible and invisible church.