

## THE CONDUCT OF PREACHERS.

As you have just heard the ground of the calling and doctrines of the preachers, we will proceed, and through the grace of God point out by the Scriptures how the *true* apostles, bishops, teachers and pastors, in the church of Christ, should conduct themselves in their deportment and lives; it is not enough that a man appears to speak much of the word of the Lord, but what he says must also be maintained by a devout and unblamable conduct, as the Scriptures teach.

Thus says Paul, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. 9: 27. If it becomes the hearers and disciples to lead an unblamable life, how much more does it become teachers, because they rule the hearers and are their overseers; as Paul says, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," Heb. 13: 7.

He also admonishes Timothy thereto, and says, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," 1 Tim. 4: 12. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine, shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, &c., Tit. 2: 7. For it is undoubtedly proper, if any one teaches and reproves others, that he first himself be rightly taught and unblamable, as Paul teaches, "If a man desire the office of a bishop he desireth a good work. A bishop

then must be blameless, the husband of one wife vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil, he must be sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers; even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things," 1 Tim. 3: 1—11; Titus 1: 8, 9.

Behold dear reader, it is requisite that every preacher and teacher, who would rightly govern and rule in the church of God, be thus qualified; for if any one were to reprove and teach others, and is himself not blameless and is ignorant; he will justly have to hear; Why do you teach others and teach not yourself first! Thou teachest a man should not steal, and thou dost steal. Thou sayest a man should not commit adultery, and thou dost. Thou adhorrest idols, yet thou committest sacrilege. Thou boastest of the law of God; and dishonorest God by breaking the law, Rom. 2: 21—23.

All those thus called, who are in doctrine sound, and unblamable in life, may teach,

exhort, reprove, root up, and build in the name of the Lord; their labors will not be fruitless, as may be seen, in the case of Moses, Sammel, Elias, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, John, and with all the true prophets, apostles and servants of God, who preached the word unblamably in the power of the Spirit.

Their doctrine cuts like a sharp edged sword, for it has power, it is fruitful, has spirit and energy, as the prophet says, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. 55: 10, 11.

Yea, all those who enter the vineyard of the Lord with such a sending or calling, and with such a spirit, doctrine and conduct, as said, are the shepherds of whom it is written, "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," Jer. 3: 15.

They are the teachers who turn many to righteousness; and they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, as the stars forever, Dan. 12: 3.

They are the spiritual streams, and the rivers of the paradise of Christ, which issue from the fountains of the paradise of God, to irrigate and fertilize the whole country, Gen. 2: 10—14.

They are the spiritual posts and pillars in the court of the tabernacle of Moses with hangings of fine twined linen, Exod. 27: 9.

They are the three score valiant men, of the valiant of Israel, who are around Solomon's bed; they all hold swords; being expert in war; every man with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night, Cant. 3: 7, 8.

They are the seven horns or trumpets, of the golden years, before whose sounds, teaching and preaching, the walls of Jericho fell, that is, all false doctrine, all powers and dominions raised up against the true Joshua, Jesus Christ, and his people, are brought low, Josh. 6: 10.

They are the beautiful messengers of peace, who preach the gospel of grace, favor, mercy, love, and peace, and bring glad tidings of good things, to us, poor, miserable, troubled sinners, Isaiah 52: 7; Rom. 10: 15.

They are seven mighty mountains, whereupon grow roses and lilies, whose sweet scent refreshes with joy all who fear the Lord, 2 Esd. 2: 19.

They are the splendid crown of twelve stars of the woman, pregnant and in travail, Rev. 12: 1, 2.

They are the walls of the new and heavenly Jerusalem, based upon the twelve foundations, that is upon the ground and doctrine of the twelve apostles, Rev. 21: 14.

See, worthy reader, with such and similar glorious images and parables, are all the pious pastors and teachers honored in the Scriptures, whom the Holy Ghost has ordained as bishops and overseers in his church, congregation and house.

These may say with holy Paul, Follow us as we are the followers of Christ, "for our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts; for neither at any time, used we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory," 2 Thess. 2: 3—6.

I repeat it, These are they who gather with Christ what has been scattered, bind up the wounded, and heal the sick, for they are influenced by the Spirit of the Lord and urged by unfeigned love. They are vigilant, and assiduous in the discharge of entrusted duties. They fight daily with the weapon of obedience. They tear down, break and destroy all that which is against the word of God, not by external power, with sword and spear, but by the preaching of the holy word, in power and spirit, with the word of the Lord. They till, sow, water and plant. They cut down what is ripe. They gather their grain and sheaves, and carry them into the Lord's barn, and their fruits will abide unto eternal life.

Since the Scriptures require such teachers,

as before-mentioned, it is then indispensable, that we weigh the conduct of your preachers in the balance, and determine their actions, by the plummet of the divine word, before your own eyes, that you may discover how much they are wanting in their conduct of the pattern of the true bishops, preachers and pastors, spoken of by Paul to Timothy and Titus, in all their lives and actions; and that they are the very reverse, who, without spirit, word, work or truth, but in semblance only, are so called of the world.

It is manifest, beloved reader, that they have changed the meek office of a true bishop, preacher and pastor, which is an office of christian service, and if rightly attended to, is an office full of labor, poverty, trouble, care, reproach, misery, tribulation, cross and affliction, into ungodly gorgeousness and princely glory, that they may be greatly respected and feared, of those whose names are not written in heaven, to this end they appear in splendid robes: are dressed in shining garbs, Rev. 13: 8; are called by pompous names, and use in their services crosses, ointments, caps, togas, unclean purifications, and have cloisters, chapels, bells, organs, music, masses, offerings, &c., of which there is not a word to be found in the Scriptures. Under these splendid trappings may plainly be seen the sly, croaching wolf, the earthly, sensual mind, the anti-christian seductions and bloody abominations; for they seek nothing but the favor of men, honor, splendor, vengery, idleness, self, gold, silver, gluttony, &c., and suffer themselves to be called spiritual doctors, teachers, lords, abbots, guardians, fathers and priors.

Alas! how vastly they do differ from the prophets and apostles in their office, services, examples, usages, lives, and in all they did; who entered the vineyard of the Lord without purse, without money, or much clothing; who were made a spectacle to the whole world; and for Christ's sake were killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter: as may be seen from the Scriptures.

But these have their chests and coffers full, they are waxed rich through the abundance of the Babylonian sorcery, and have

become princes on earth, Rev. 18: 15. In all things they are blamable, violating female chastity, which is carried on to such an unblushing degree, that it cannot be expressed; they are unchaste, unmerciful, malicious, scorers, unfriendly, unrighteous, liars, drunkards, and full of inordinate desires. Their tables are full of uncleanness, as Isaiah the prophet says. Their hearts are full of avarice, and they are malicious towards those who will not contribute to their support. They even prepare war against them, as Micah teaches; are full of adultery; sit with harlots in their houses; beget children illegitimately. They are unbelieving, refractory, proud, ambitious; obey not the word of the Lord; are bound with the cords of the devil, and there are many who have not known the truth, are a scandal and disgrace to the world. Their dreadful, abominable fruits make this manifest to all. They fight against Christ and his word; hate all the pious; speak reproachfully of all those who seek, love, and fear the Lord with all their hearts. In short, it is impossible to relate all their abominable crimes, lewdness, ungodly deeds, private and public vices, infamy and abominations.

O dear Lord! how much more have they become the reverse of the upright and true bishops, overseers and pastors, although this proud generation boast that they can bring Christ down from heaven, reconcile God, forgive sins, and that they are the true pillars, heads and eyes of the church.

Although I have written this especially of the Roman priests, the reader should know, that I cannot acquit those in any wise, who boast of the word; for with the exception of adultery and fornication, and a few of the abuses of the bread, which are not found with them, they seek and desire, in the common walks of life, unreasonable gain; they idolize baptism and the Holy Supper, and oppress, backbite and slander the pious, about the same as the others do.

Therefore, I fear all who preach for money, and flatter the world, are the spiritual sorcerers of Egypt, 2 Tim. 3: 8, priests of the groves, servants of Baal, and prophets of Jezebel, destroyers of the Lord's vineyard, Jer. 12: 10, defilers of the land, Jer. 23: 11,

blind watchmen and dumb dogs, spoilers of the good pastures, they trouble the clear waters, are devourers of souls, Ezek. 22: 27, false prophets and ravening wolves, devourers of widows' houses, thieves and murderers, enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, Phil. 3: 18, 19, false teachers, founders of sects, cursed children, wandering stars, withered trees, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; foaming out their own shame, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, Jude 13: anti-christs, locusts that rose from the bottomless pit, came to hurt those who have not the seal of God in their foreheads, Rev. 9: 4. In short, if they will not repent, they are already condemned according to the Scriptures, Tit. 3: 11; Rev. 21: 8.

Not that I would judge any one, my good reader, I well know that it is written, Judge not, that ye be not judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; but they are judged of him, who says, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day," John 12: 48.

Who do such and the like things, says Paul, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But if any one shall do the works whereof Paul speaks, he will not be judged of me, nor by any other man, but by the word of the Lord. Therefore we entreat you to measure the conduct of your preachers with the Scriptures, and you will find, by whom they are judged.

O miserable preachers, whose blindness we may well lament; how much better would it be for you never to have been born. For if you have finished your short, perishable, voluptuous and idle life; and have not repented, as above stated, your portion will be God's eternal wrath, punishment and judgment in the torments, the pains and burnings of hell; woe and death shall be your end, as the Scriptures threaten, Phil. 3: 19.

The reason is, because you reject Christ, and despise his word, which is everlasting food for the soul, upon which we must eternally subsist. You despise his word because it reproves your vain and frivolous conduct, showing that you are indeed sen-

sual; of the world, and of the devil, as is evident; and that you so miserably deceive poor souls; and so cruelly hate, belie, reproach and betray all those who sincerely seek the salvation of their souls; take their property, deprive them of honor, and life, who in great love admonish, by the word of God, your deceiving teachers, and reprove their ungodly deeds with all discretion, Deut. 8: 3; Matt. 4: 4.

O Balaam, Balaam, how long will you so unmercifully kick and cuff the poor ass which has to suffer all the opprobrium, scorn, and disgrace, for the sake of his master's testimony? And never kindly listen how he answers you in a human voice, and reproves your great folly and error? That he is driven by an angel with a naked sword, namely, by the Spirit and word of the Lord, that he can longer carry (endure) you in your ungodly deeds.

Well now! seed of Cain, Korah and Balaam, prepare for defence; lie, cheat, censure, blaspheme, hate, root up, disgrace, and murder as much as in you lies; allege all the councils, authors, and learned teachers who have been for centuries; appeal to all the lords and princes, emperors, kings and the mighty of the earth. Use all the power, art and cunning that you can command, it will avail you nothing; the Lamb will conquer and gain the victory, the people of God will triumph, not with tangible weapons, but in patience with the Spirit and Word of God. Jerusalem and the temple must be built up, although the Azotus and Sanballat may attempt to hinder it, not with inanimate stones, which are now tread upon in every street with your unclean feet, Neh. 4: 6; although all the gates of hell may resist, Babel must be destroyed and laid waste. The ten kings *will* and *must* perform their services. You will gnaw your tongues for pain, bitterly cry and weep on account of the torments of Babel, and say, Alas! alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought; for her sins rose up to heaven, and the Lord remembered her wickedness, Rev. 18: 16.

The gospel *will* and *must* be heard; lies

must be exposed, and your blind folly made known to all men; although I and my brethren may be called off by death before this takes place, yet it will undoubtedly happen at the appointed time, which the Holy Ghost so plainly foretold and taught through the worthy disciple, John.

O stiffnecked, and evil generation, how long will you resist the Holy Ghost? How long will you revile the truth, and prefer lies? How long will your hands drip with the blood of the innocent? Reform your wicked lives, fear God with all your hearts, renounce all your glossy, sensual and carnal doctrine, come forward with us, treat us according to the word of God, that the gospel may be rightly preached, and maintained by a pious and blameless life. O, if you would do this, no innocent blood would be shed, and the truth would be made known.

But we are afraid it will be as the prophet said, "The wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand," Dan. 12: 10. For it is the custom of all the sects, who are out of Christ and his word, to defend their foundations, faith and actions with the sword. The Romans, the Arians, the Circumcellions, the Lutherans, the Zuinglians, and the Munsterites, are our witnesses; but Christ's people suffer and forbear.

Is it not a grievous error, that these poor people want to be called Christians, and are guilty of such abominable things, such as exterminating, robbing, apprehending, burning, torturing, murdering, &c., under pretences, as if the kingdom of Christ, the glory of the Lord, the word and truth of God, were to be defended and maintained with such horrible disgrace?

Alas, no! you miserable men, no. All who are moved by the spirit of Christ know of no sword but the word of the Lord; their weapons are powerful, fervent prayer, a long-suffering and patient heart, strong, immoveable faith, a living hope, and an unblamable life, whereby the gospel of the kingdom, the word of peace, is to be promulgated, and to be defended against the gates of hell.

Beloved reader, if you have the fear of God, then learn rightly to know your bishops, prophets, pastors and teachers, and

remember what is written, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. 6: 17, 18; and again, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," Rev. 18: 4. Consider that the mouth of the Lord said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Matt. 7: 15, 16. They are the salt which has lost its savor, and is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men, as the Lord says, Matt. 5: 13.

In short, they are those of whom Paul warned and said, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away," 2 Tim. 3: 1—5.

Again, thus you see that your preachers are such persons as described, and that the Scriptures abundantly admonish and command that we shall forsake them, fear them, avoid and flee from them, &c. And this is the reason why we openly teach *not* to hear their seducing doctrines, *not* to use their sacraments, and to have nothing to do with their false worship.

Rather say, What godliness can Israel bring from Assyria, Egypt, or from Babylon?

How can the true service be found with the priests of Baal? How can you be taught in divine things to righteousness, by those who are ignorant thereof themselves?

How can you learn Christ from anti-christ; and the word of God from false prophets?

How can you be blessed by the cursed, and be rightly led by the blind?

How will you draw water from dry fountains, and gather fruit from withered trees? 2 Pet. 2: 17.

How can you be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils?

How can you drink both of the Lord's cup and the devil's cup, and be in the communion of Christ and of anti-christ? 2 Cor. 10: 21.

You cannot serve two masters who are opposed to each other; you must love the one and hate the other, or else you will hold to the one and despise the other. You must be for Christ or against him, you will gather with him, or destroy in opposition to him, Matt. 6: 24.

Since we, by the grace of God, so plainly see how your preachers are sent, see their doctrine and lives, how they go without being called, falsify the word of God, lead a wanton, sensual life, deceive the poor people; and being so abundantly admonished by the Scriptures, that we should forsake, avoid, and shun such preachers, because they are so diametrically opposed to Christ and his word, and we desire to be obedient to the voice of our shepherd in this matter as it becomes all the pious of Christ, for the kingdom is promised to the obedient, as the Scriptures say, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into

the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father," Matt. 7: 21.

And we also, agreeably to the contents of God's word, have departed from their doctrine, sacraments and service, and this we testify both by word and deed, with possessions and blood, before lords and princes, in cities and in the country, before you, and the world as an admonition, doctrine and instruction, so that you all, both teachers and hearers, might awaken, to reflect on the truth, repent and come out from the kingdom and fellowship of anti-christ, and enter the kingdom and communion of Christ; and thus extricate your poor souls from the snares of unbelief, that you may be rescued, preserved and eternally saved.

For we will sooner endure, in our mortal bodies, misery, poverty, tribulation, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, bonds and death, and adhere to the word of the Lord, than lead secure easy lives with the world, and for the sake of a short and temporal life, ruin our souls.

We think with holy Peter, that we should rather obey God than man; and with virtuous Susanna, it is better to fall into the hands of man, than into the hands of God. All who fear the Lord may read and judge.