

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST ILLUSTRATED

LETTER V

Welsh Tract, Cooch's Bridge, New Castle County, Delaware, June
24th 1831.

Brother Beebe: - I again proceed in the prosecution of my object. That which next comes under consideration, is the direction which the two horned Beast gives to them that dwell on the earth, saying unto them that they should make an image to the Beast which had a wound by a sword and did live.

We will notice first, the persons to whom the direction was given, namely; Them that dwell on the earth. By the earth here, I think certainly, we cannot understand the Romish church, nor by the persons intended, the members of that church, or the inhabitants of popish countries; because it is inconsistent to suppose, that the reformed churches should have the influence, implied in this direction, over the Catholics. And the difficulty is not diminished, by supposing with Dr. Gill, that the Beast here speaking designed the Popish powers; for neither the Popes, nor the church of Rome have ever manifested any disposition to divert the obedience or worship of mankind from that establishment to anything else, nor has the church of Rome ever represented itself to be the image of a preceding power, but constantly affirms, that it is the original church, and in it is invested the original, and supreme power established by Christ on earth. Hence the solicitude manifested to confine the obedience of mankind, not excepting the kings of the earth, to popery itself. And herein is the inconsistency of the Doctor's exposition of this thing. I therefore understand by the expression them that dwell on the earth, earthly minded professors of the true church, or those dwelling interspersed among the earthly churches. And the same are the persons deceived by the miracles which this Beast had power to do.

I will now state what I understand by the Image of the Beast that had a wound with the sword and did live; and wherein it is already manifested. The first Beast according to the views I have already expressed concerning it, denotes the whole of popery. This Beast is in every instance described as a monster. In Dan. chap.7, the Beast from whence the little horn, by which Popery was designed, arose, is a nameless thing. So in this 13th chapter of Revelation, this Beast is represented as blending in its composition all that is most terrible in the beastly creation. And popery indeed, embraces in its constitution all that is represented by the Beast of Daniel. We see in it the iron mixed with the miry clay. It pretends to power and authority derived directly from God, and yet depends on human governments, human force, the influence of money, and on intrigue and cruelty to maintain its authority. It pretends to be the church and kingdom of Christ, and yet is composed of earth-born subjects, and is blended with the kingdoms of this world. It pretends to dispense pardons for sin, and to bestow eternal glory, &c., and yet ascribes the whole of acceptance with God to the merit of good works. Lastly, it pretends to be engaged in promoting the salvation of men and yet is seen drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs. This is a living Beast; its union with the governments of this world gives vitality, action and power unto it. An I image of this Beast, must be a form, made to resemble it, in its general appearance, but without vitality.

Again, the description particularly given of this Beast, as having had a wound with a sword, &c., necessarily implies that the making of this image, is an event subsequent to the wounding and healing of the Beast; consequently subsequent to the rise of Bonaparte.

By noticing the manner in which the Beast grew into existence, we may judge of the progress of the Image towards a perfect formation. I speak of the Beast's growing into existence. For though the Beast was seen rising out of the sea, or what was intended by that, out of

the inundations of the barbarians into the Empire, yet he then arose a Beast ready grown, and the rising was the coming into power. He must therefore have been previously growing into existence. This growth took place within the visible church of Christ; and there we are to look for the formation of the Image.

The first limb of the Beast may be supposed to have owed its origin to that anxiety which the Christians would naturally feel to have their children distinguished from the heathen, and to have them become Christians and enjoy the privileges of the church. Growing impatient of waiting for the Spirit of God to convert their children, they contrived the plan of doing the work themselves. Hence the catechumen classes in 1 which children and such adults as were willing to submit to the discipline, were instructed in what they considered the first principles of the Christian religion. These after being thus taught, and having manifested an orderly deportment, were admitted to baptism and the privileges of the church. The churches thus came to be supplied with members, who gave no other evidence of their being subjects of grace, than their being able to repeat the creed, and their professions of renouncing their sins, particularly the devil and his pompous allurements. See Mosh. Eccl. Hist. Vol. I., pg. 112.

And wherein are Sunday Schools, and Bible Classes different in principle and effect from the institution of catechumens? I mean not those Sunday Schools designed for teaching such poor children to read, as cannot enjoy the privilege of attending school on other days of the week; but those schools, the professed object of which are to teach the children religion; or in other words, to do that which the Scriptures teach me, the Holy Ghost alone can do.

Another limb of the Beast, formed about the same time with the other, seems to have grown out of an anxiety to draw into the churches, the philosophers and great men of the age; and whereas they had not the power of humbling the hearts of these persons, to

submit to the self abasing religion of Jesus, their only resource other than to submit to the will of God in this thing, was to conform the religion to the proud notions of men. Hence the blending of the Grecian philosophy with the doctrines of the cross; the substituting for the simplicity of gospel worship, a pompous show made up of Jewish and heathen ceremonies, and the establishing of schools at Alexandria and other places, for teaching those intended for the ministry to preach a philosophized gospel, and to preach it scientifically. And are not the systems of theology and the theological schools of this day the same in design and effect with the establishment at Alexandria? They tell us that society has become more generally polished than formerly; and that if we should see the learned and polite part of society brought into our churches, we must have a polished gospel, and a learned ministry. Hence the simple doctrines of the cross, and those plain preachers who with Paul are determined not to know anything among the people save Jesus Christ and him crucified, must retire to the back woods and give place to the fashionable divinity, and to those clerical gentlemen who are flocking from the seminaries; and these in many instances are but an excuse for men of science. They have to be sure, learned enough of the Scriptures to know how like Peter, to fish for money, and they have learned to feel their own importance, to sway the churches, and to preach so as not to offend the world.

A third limb of the Beast was a natural growth from the preceding. For those philosophized preachers, not only considered themselves entitled, on account of their scholastic acquirements, to the care of such churches as were more eminent for being planted in the cities, &c., and accordingly wound themselves into such stations; but they also considered themselves entitled to a pre-eminence over the neighboring preachers. Hence we find, shortly after the establishing of those schools, certain preachers claiming, in consideration of their being the pastors of those churches, which were more eminent as mother churches, an oversight over the neighboring churches, and the right of appointing their preachers; sometimes reserving to

themselves the right of administering baptism; or what was more common, delegating to the preachers the privilege of baptizing, but reserving to themselves the right of confirming the baptized. The one class of preachers came soon to be called distinctively bishops, the other presbyters. What less dignity and superiority than this is claimed by the boards of Managers of our modern Mission Societies, who assume the oversight over the destitute churches, and parts of the country, and the right of appointing to these churches their preachers, and to the preachers their fields of labors, &c.

A fourth limb is found in those rich endowments which were bestowed on the churches, and those distinguished honors conferred on the Bishops. A corresponding part of the Image we find in those vast funds which are accumulated for Mission and other professedly religious purposes, and committed to the disposal of the several boards. And the having the exclusive control of these funds, will be found to give to these bodies an influence greater than did those honors conferred on the Bishops, give to them.

There were other things which undoubtedly entered into the composition of the Beast, such as the multiplication of ceremonies, the formation of religious societies other than gospel churches, as the different orders of monks, &c., the custom of persons aiming at superior holiness, and becoming secluses and submitting to great self mortification; veneration paid to relics, and the like unscriptural practices; and even correspondences to some of these, if I mistake not, are already showing themselves. What less than an idolatrous veneration for relics is that which ascribes to those little tracts, circulated with so much zeal, an efficacy quite equal, or indeed superior to the Scriptures, in leading persons to believe in Christ, and which are mostly represented as the experiences of persons dead, or extracts from dead authors? In truth, what are all those expositions and those systems of divinity which are substituted by our modern Theologians for the Bible, but as rotten bones compared with the Scriptures of Eternal Truth? But that which gave vitality and

power to the Beast, was the establishing of penal laws, the observance of the Christian religion in its then prevailing doctrines, ceremonies &c., making it the religion of the Empire, and the Emperor the Head of the church, which headship was ultimately transferred to the Bishop of Rome. The image of course has not a correspondence in this particular, for an image has no inherent vital principle; to this image however life is to be given, as will be noticed.

Yours, &c., S. TROTT.