



ARTICLE IV.

THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

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(Continued from page 159.)

ITS RELATIONS TO THE EXISTING CHURCHES.

AFTER what has been already said, a few words will suffice to show the relations of this movement to the whole Christian church. It is not for the adding of another sect to the multitude which now rend the body of Christ, for apostles cannot be the founders of a sect, nor the originators of a schism. Their spiritual jurisdiction embraces all the baptized; and if they are restored, it is with authority to bring back all the churches into the true order of God's house. A sectarian movement is one set forward and directed by self-chosen leaders, or one proceeding on principles subversive of catholic unity. If any part of the church claims to be the whole, by denying to the rest all sacraments and ministry; or if it sets itself in antagonism to all others, seeking to build itself up by their overthrow; or if it separates itself, and withholds the offices of Christian love from the brethren; or if it circumscribes its organization by political or local boundaries, so as to be ecclesiastically independent of the rest, it thereby makes itself a *sect*, which is a portion of the body set in wrong relations to the other portions. The law of every healthful organism is the intercommunion and mutual helpfulness of all the parts; but this requires central organs, which shall sustain and control all the rest. If these are destroyed, or hindered in their workings, the harmony of the organism is impaired; and their restoration is indispensable if the ends for which it was created are to be answered. The church, which from its relations to Christ, the one head, is one body, and can be but one (although it may exist in a disorganized condition), had

in apostles a central ordinance, which embraced all the members, held them in their places, and ministered grace and strength to them from their Head in the heavens. The restoration of this office by the Lord would be no act of schism, nor would those whom he set in it, nor those who followed them, and received his commandments and ordinances from them, be schismatics. Apostles would be restored for the deliverance of the church from schism; not to increase and exaggerate its evils. The congregations gathered under them would not stand in hostility to the existing churches, but would, as it were, form the very heart and centre of the body, from which blessings should flow forth by every unobstructed channel to all the living parts.

This is the relation in which the restored apostles, and the churches that have been organized by them, believe themselves to stand to all other Christian communities. They do not disown and cast off any portion of the visible church which has not cut itself off by making utter shipwreck of the faith; but they recognize all the baptized as their brethren, and honor and seek to uphold the existing ministries and sacraments, however defective, and in whatever weakness they may be found. In the service of the holy eucharist, after having prayed for apostles and for all ministers serving under them, they say: "And unto all in any holy office in thy church give thy heavenly grace; and enable them to fulfil their several duties in thy fear, and in purity of heart. And cause all Christian people to grow in grace, in the knowledge of thy will, in sound religion, and unto all perfection." They believe that God has restored the highest forms of ministry ever known to the church for the common blessing of all, in order that the whole flock of Christ may, if it be possible, be recovered out of its divided, impoverished, and enfeebled condition; and they therefore regard themselves not as a sect adding to the confusion of Christendom, but as the first battalions of a disorganized army to wheel into line, and take their right places under the right leaders. God begins with a part as an example of what he would

have all to become, and as his instrument for the help of their brethren. They are not a sect, for they are gathered under a catholic (universal) ministry, and hold, without addition or rejection, the catholic faith and catholic ordinances of worship, and recognize as one with themselves in the body of Christ, all who believe his gospel and have been baptized into his name.

The special object of this divine movement in the church at this time they believe to be to prepare the way of the Lord, that he may return to the earth and establish his kingdom. It is for the making ready of the wife of the Lamb for her approaching marriage (Rev. xix. 7, 8), by clothing her with the fine linen which is the righteousness (*δικαιώματα*, all forms of righteousness, internal and external) of saints. This is the end for which the ancient gifts and ministries have reappeared, and the storehouses of Christian antiquity have been made to yield up their treasures, that the Lord at his coming may find his church lacking no spiritual grace or ornament that befits his bride. They believe that the restoration of apostles is the fulfilment of the promise to send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest he come and smite the earth with a curse¹ (Mal. iv. 5, 6); a promise which was fulfilled to the Jews in raising up extraordinarily the highest ministry known to the Jewish dispensation — the prophetic, and which must be fulfilled to the Christian church by the raising up again of the highest ministry known to the Christian dispensation — the apostolic;

¹ It is a striking fact that from a little time after the death of the first apostles, there has been an expectation that Elijah would come in person, and probably Enoch with him, to stem the ungodliness of the last days, and to bring succor to the struggling, sinking church. This interpretation of the promise is too literal, because it is against the fundamental law of the Christian dispensation, viz. that Christ's own ordinances and gifts are sufficient for the perfecting of his body; but the fact of such an almost universal tradition shows the widespread conviction that the existing ministries, after the removal of apostles, would be insufficient to prepare the church for her Lord's coming.

for this alone can do the work of reuniting men in all those divine and human relationships of which fatherhood and sonship are the type.

Nor are they disappointed, however much they may sorrow, that few, comparatively, receive their witness, for so it has been at the close of each preceding dispensation. But they are far from limiting the salvation of God to themselves, for they look upon the present work as the first of a series of his merciful actings in the bringing of the present order of things to a close. It is for that gathering of the first-fruits which precedes and sanctifies the harvest (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11; Rev. xiv. 4, 15, 16). The first-fruits are that company who are sealed with the seal of the living God while the angels are holding back the four winds. During the time of troubled calm which precedes the tempest, God seals his servants again, as in the beginning, by endowing them with the gift of the Holy Ghost, through the laying on of the hands of apostles (Rev. vii. 1-4; Eph. i. 13, 14; Acts xix. 1-6). They are the first stalks in the harvest field to be ripened, and the first to be gathered into the garner of the husbandman, before the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth. There is another company who *come out of* the great tribulation (Rev. vii. 9, 14), from which the sealed ones are exempted, purified by the fiery trial which they might have escaped. There is a day of wrath for apostate Christendom swiftly approaching, which will involve in sore calamities, but not in irremediable ruin, a great multitude who were slow to discern the peril and to receive the warning. God will save every one that loves him, but to Laodicea it will be by rebuke and chastisement (Rev. iii. 19). The harvest shall be reaped, and all the good grain shall be gathered in, but not till the storm has beaten upon it.

There are to be two stages in God's work of vengeance, answering to the two great forms of wickedness set forth under the symbols of Babylon and the beast; the former representing the church become corrupt and idolatrous; the latter symbolizing the lawless and infidel spirit which would sweep away Christianity altogether. The revelation of the

man of sin, the Antichrist, is yet future, and will immediately precede the revelation of the Lord in the glory of his kingdom.¹ It will be the consummation of the movement now swiftly going forward in all Christian countries, known under the names of Liberalism, Rationalism, and Pantheism, which are manifestations of one and the same spirit of rebellion against God and his Christ in the different regions of politics, theology, and philosophy, and are destroying the very foundations of authority and faith. Babylon will be first judged, as the adulterous wife whose doom is to be burned with fire (Rev. xviii. 8); and the instruments of her destruction will be the beast, to whom she has given the husband's place and rights, and the kings that fight under his banner (Rev. xvii. 26, 27); against whom, in their turn, the wrath of the Lord will burn, and they shall be cast living into the lake of fire (Rev. xix. 20). From all these fearful woes God would save his faithful people, and he will take away at the earliest dawn of the day those who have received his seal and have kept it from pollution, to meet the coming King, and to be hidden with him "until the indignation be overpast," and then to be manifested with him in glory. To resist to the uttermost the revelation of Antichrist by recovering the church from the errors and sins which have been the apology for the infidel, and by bearing a full witness to Christ in all his offices and works against the enemy now struggling to defile his cross and to rob him of his throne, is the burden which we believe God to have laid in this time of the end upon apostles, and the churches which receive them; and the reward which we hope for is to be the helpers of our brethren, and to "escape the things which are coming upon the earth, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36).

¹ The coming of the Lord to his saints, and his coming *with* his saints, are distinct events, and must not be confounded. Before he sets his feet upon the earth, and while he is yet hidden in the clouds of heaven, he will gather his saints to himself, and this will be done at different times, answering to the distinct seasons of first-fruits and harvest. All this may be invisible to the world, as his own resurrection was, but he will afterwards reveal himself and his church, so that every eye shall see him.