

THE FIRST PLAGUE.

"And the first went forth and poured out his bowl on the LAND; and there came an evil and malignant ULCER on those men having the mark of the BEAST, and on those WORSHIPING HIS IMAGE." – (Chap. 16:2. Diaglott.)

These evils, called plagues or bowls of wrath, are designed to rid the world of every form of evil and wrong. The class symbolized by the land or earth, we understand to mean all people under religious restraint, of whatever name or order. Land or earth as a symbol represents settled, organized religious society, as sea represents the restless irreligious, unsettled masses of humanity. Those having the mark (characteristics) of the Beast (Papacy) and those worshiping his Image (Protestantism), as hitherto shown, are the great mass of non-overcoming and nominal Christians.

It is upon this class that the trouble first comes. While Roman Catholics constitute an important proportion of this earth class, yet the trouble does not affect them at first, as shown from the fact that the ulcer is not upon those worshiping the BEAST, but on those worshiping the IMAGE and having the marks or characteristics of the Beast (Papacy), which indicates clearly the various shades and degrees of Protestantism.

Their trouble is compared to an ulcer – "an evil and malignant ulcer." To appreciate the symbol let us consider the literal: An ulcer is a running sore; it is an evidence of constitutional disorder, and very painful. A CANCER in its worst stages, becomes a malignant ulcer. An ulcer is a cankerous sore, that is, one which eats, corrupts and destroys. Now carry the thought – what an ulcer or bad cancer is to a man will illustrate the character of the consuming, life-draining trouble coming upon the systems constituting

Protestantism, so called, which ultimately will destroy it. It arises from within itself; it is a constitutional disorder, caused by the errors inherited and retained from the "Mother of harlots and abominations." There is no cure for this evil – the blood is poisoned, it has permeated [R498 : page 8] the entire body, and death must ensue.

There was a time – in the days of Luther and reformation – when the daughters might have been radically healed, but her false ministers "healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace." (Jer. 8:11.) Now there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there – therefore she is not healed. Her King is not in her, she is spewed out of his mouth. (Jer. 8:22, Young's Trans. See also Rev. 3:16 and 18:23.) There is no remedy, these systems must die. The disorder comes from within. Already these disorders have broken out, and though the canker is carefully concealed, the bad odor and distress are noticeable.
