

The Seven Last Plagues.

CONCLUDED

THE FIFTH PLAGUE.

And the fifth poured out his bowl on the THRONE of the BEAST and his KINGDOM was DARKENED, and they bit their tongues because of the pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven on account of their pains ["and their ulcers" is omitted by Sinaitic MS.] and they reformed not ["from their works" is omitted by Sinaitic MS.] – Rev. 16:10,11.

This pictures to us trouble coming upon Papacy (the Beast); not so much upon the masses of Romanists as upon those in authority, its rulers – the throne power – their clergy. Papacy's walls are higher, its claims are stronger, and its claims to divine authority and infallibility of longer standing than those of the Protestant system – her daughters; therefore she the longer escapes the increasing light of this "Day of the Lord," and hence the longer escapes the trouble consequent to her errors.

But she shall not escape the trouble. It comes on the throne or ruling class, and their kingdom is filled with darkness – uncertainty – absence of former unity and harmony, and in their trouble the pain will be increased by tongue-biting. The tongues of Papacy are its decrees and utterances, past and future. To bite, then, in pain, implies contradiction and denial of former utterances. Whether this signifies a contradiction and reversal of previous utterances of the Papal hierarchy, or whether it means controversy and differences between the living rulers of the Church, we may not decide, but it will probably include both of these difficulties, and in their attempt to justify their contradictory teachings, God's character will be further dishonored, misrepresented, or blasphemed.

As an illustration of this symbol, "biting their tongues," we note Papacy's present humiliating concessions and contradiction of her former teachings, in her present recognition of the Protestant governments of Europe, which Papacy not only did not create, but actually cursed, and encouraged her faithful to use every means to destroy. This biting is occasioned by the pain and humbled condition in which Papacy finds herself. She has lost all temporal power, and to maintain long her spiritual influence, feels that she must not antagonize the governments which she can no longer claim the right to control.

When we remember that it was this same Papal system which in its prosperity had "a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8-25; Rev. 13:5), making boastful claims, it should not surprise us that God should ordain as part of its reward that it should eat its own words.
