

[R602 : page 5]

**NO MAN BUYETH THEIR MERCHANDISE  
ANY MORE.**

**REV. 18:2.**

There are already evidences of consternation and forebodings of disaster in the nominal Church, because of the general apathy and indifference of her membership and the falling off of attendance at her services. We hear reports far reaching of flocks without pastors, and pastors with rapidly diminishing flocks, and this state of things exists not only in this country, but also in Europe and elsewhere, as the following clipping from the New York Herald of January 6th will show:

**PASTORS WANTED.**

"Much is printed in the religious newspapers on the other side of the Atlantic regarding the scarcity of ministers in the United States and Canada. It appears that the disease complained of – pastorless flocks – is not confined to this continent alone. From a recent publication giving some religious statistics for France it is gathered that not less than 60,000 Protestants – nearly one-tenth of the whole Protestant population of the country – belong to churches which are without pastors. One of their churches has been without regular pastoral superintendence for twelve years. Eighteen churches have been deprived of their pastors during the year just ended. There is surely room for improvement here."

Not many months ago it was stated in the WATCH TOWER, as quoted from some other publication, that the Presbyterian Church was 500 ministers short, and from the Cleveland Leader of Oct. 25, 1883, we quote the following report of the P.E.

Conference: "There are now in the United States 48 dioceses and 15 missionary jurisdictions, 67 bishops, 2,500 other clergy, 3,000 organized parishes, and more than 353,000 communicants: the report referred to the inadequate number of candidates for holy orders." This report shows the number of bishops to exceed the number of dioceses and missionary jurisdictions, while the number of pastors to parishes shows a deficiency of at least five hundred.

That there has been a much larger decrease in membership and attendance at services, we believe, but these cannot be arrived at by figures: Observation, however, and the statements of ministers and others go far to prove it to be in a very demoralized condition. The Rev. Dr. Collyer evidently thinks we are on the verge of a religious panic. We quote from his sermon preached on Feb. 3d, and published in the New York Herald of Feb. 4:

### **PANICS IN RELIGION AND LIFE.**

Rev. Dr. Collyer on the harm done by faithless men in the Church.

"I notice," said the Rev. Dr. Collyer, in his sermon yesterday morning in the Church of the Messiah, "that when I talk with those who watch the world's great markets, they say that when there is an ever growing fever in the centres of business, if this continues we are going to have a panic. And I answer 'God forbid,' for I know of but few things in this world and life of ours so cruel and ruthless as a panic, or that take the manhood so completely out of men, leaving only a mob of poltroons and monsters. It makes no matter what form the evil and ugly thing may take, in a public hall or a theatre, or in a church where men go to worship God, or in Wall street; and it is no matter what our conduct may have been down to the day when we were confronted in a moment by this last and most terrible test of our manhood. If we have lost on that

day the quality Herbert Spencer insists on as one of the choicest blessings we can possess – "the supremacy of self-control" – it is all over with us the rest of our lives.

I notice that my brethren in their conferences deplore the deadness in their churches. I do not wonder at this, but I do wonder a little that they should even by inference lay the blame on God and talk sometimes as if they believed with the priests of Baal that he was asleep in his heavens or had gone on a journey. Because if they only look deeper they will see that the whole trouble lies with the Christians themselves. I venture to observe, but with no mean spirit, God knows, that the most cruel and ruthless blows ever struck against our common faith have been made, not by men like Robert Ingersoll, but by deacons of good standing in their churches, and prominent persons in Christian associations. Where men I will not name do things I will not name under the mask of religion – the safest mask I know of – it is no wonder so many should go apart and say, if this is the fruit I do not believe in the tree. No wonder that so many should leave the churches and that we should have what we may call a religious panic. And when this panic occurs no words of mine or of any one else can estimate the damage it does to the world; for it means that men throw aside all religion, all morality, all that is really precious in this life. But such panics and desertions from religion will invariably take place when we see unworthy men who have no real religious life in them assume the high places in Christian councils."

The Rev. Wm. Loyd in a sermon (which we quote below) preached on the same day and published in the New York Herald, Feb. 4, takes a different and wider view of the situation: he regards, we think truthfully, the misrepresentation or malrepresentation of God in the horrible dogmatic theology of the

dark ages, as the chief cause of all that is now transpiring within the walls of that "great city, Babylon."

## **HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIANITY.**

Dogmatic theology driving people out of the Church and preventing its growth.

"Rev. Wm. Loyd, in the pulpit of the Central Congregational church, spoke with more than his ordinary vigor. His congregation was a large one, for it had been announced that the pastor was to talk very plainly upon the position of the Church and its relation to the public at large. Christianity, he declared, had not made the progress which it ought to have shown. To-day, after nearly twenty centuries of existence, the Christian Church had failed to make more than the slightest impression upon the world. The vast majority of the inhabitants of the globe were strangers to it, and even in countries where Christ was officially recognized fully seven-eighths of the people were not connected with the Christian Church. The intellectual and cultured classes had withdrawn almost wholly from the Church, and those who kept without its pale were not people to whose immoral habits and tendencies the teachings of the gospel were obnoxious, but people of the most blameless lives. These people refused to accept the assertion of the Church that Christ was really the Son of God, and that through Him there was salvation. They accepted the teachings of morality, but rejected all that was of real pith in fixing the divinity of our God and Saviour. The thinkers of the age, here and abroad, have in almost every instance held to these sceptical views, and now, in place of writing their views only for the few who read books of philosophy and obstruct thinking, these thoughts were embodied in the popular novel and through the current works of fiction, strongly put and attractively worded. There is no failure of Christianity in itself, but there is a failure of Christianity to get a

secure hold upon the popular heart and become a guide and mentor in the daily life of the people.

In conclusion Rev. Mr. Lloyd considered the causes which had brought about this state of affairs. They were, he said, to be found within the Church itself. God had been misrepresented. In place of the forgiving Father for all, he had been held up in the frightful dogmatic theology of the past centuries as a Creator of countless millions of human beings who were from birth doomed to an eternity of suffering and woe. Christianity had suffered, too, from the secularization of the Church and from Church quarrels. One such dispute did more to hinder the progress of Christianity than a thousand sceptical tracts scattered abroad over the land."

Infidelity, skepticism and apathy to religion are but natural results of the bad representation of God by the nominal Church, notwithstanding that God has little by little, "line upon line," made known his true character as exemplified in a great and grand plan for the redemption of all his human creatures from the consequences of Adam's transgression. The different sects, Protestant and Romanist, have so distorted and falsified it at every stage that God, whom they say is all-wise, is made to appear unwise; and, though they proclaim him a God of love, they make his acts appear those of a cruel and vindictive monster, to be feared rather than to be loved.

This, together with the gathering unto her, as into a cage, every "unclean and hateful bird," and the love for and conformity to the world of her members, in church matters and in social life, have caused the Lord to spue her out of his mouth, and to leave her desolate. She is unfit to be any longer his mouth-piece. In her conformity to the world, and departure from the narrow way, she has sought out many inventions – many questionable modes for raising money, ostensibly to pay the Lord's bills, but really to

gratify worldly pride in erecting costly edifices, fine organs, and in general display. Her ministers delight in high-sounding titles, contrary to the express command of Him who only is the Head of the Church – "Neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ." Had these men whose significant remarks we have quoted, taken heed unto the words of the Master, they would have been able to discern the signs of the times, and would not be walking now as blind men. "They shall look unto the earth and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." (Isa. 8:22.) "And he shall be for a sanctuary [to the sheep that hear his voice], but for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses [Jewish and Gospel] of Israel." (Verse 14.) **[R603 : page 5]**

Jesus said the tares, the children of the wicked one, and the wheat, the children of the kingdom, would grow together until the harvest, and he explained that the harvest is the end of the age – consummation of the age (Revised version). And Paul says: "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters,...high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power;...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 1:5-13.) And again he says "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears," i.e., teachers who would have pleasure in hearing the praise of men.

Peter, referring to this same time, says, "And there shall come in the last days scoffers, in scoffing walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is promise of his presence?" (2 Peter 3:4, Sinaitic MSS.) We have here the testimony of Jesus, Paul and Peter as to what would be the condition of the nominal Church in

the harvest, or last days, and we find this inspired testimony to exactly correspond with its present condition. And added to this we have the words of Jesus (Matt. 24:14) literally fulfilled now: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations then shall the end come," i.e., the end of the Gospel age. Every nation under heaven has heard the Gospel, and it was so declared by the Bible societies as far back as 1866. That the nations have not received the Gospel testimony is true, but witnessing to nations is not witnessing to individuals – not one in a thousand have heard, and most of those who have heard have not accepted it.

The nominal Church, in looking for the conversion of the world before Jesus comes, is totally at variance with the Scriptures. This falsification of the truth, and adulteration of that which should be the children's meat, has brought her to her present condition of barrenness and confusion. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird....The merchants [symbolic – the clergy] of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for [shortly] no man buyeth their merchandise any more:... the light of a candle [lamp – the Word] shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom [Jesus] and of the bride [the Lamb's wife] shall be heard no more at all in thee." Rev. 18:2,11,23. These are not our words, but God's denunciation – the final doom of a false system.

S. O. BLUNDEN.

-----