

PRIESTCRAFT OPPOSED TO LIBERTY.

SOME of the friends write us that their friends, ministers, etc., upon learning that it is the custom amongst us to celebrate the Memorial of our Lord's death, in little groups, or even alone when there are no others who appreciate and desire to commemorate it, have expressed astonishment, and pronounced such doings sacrilegious; – declaring that only the "clergy" have the right to administer to themselves or others the emblems of our Lord's broken body and shed blood.

We reply that the entire expression of our Master's will, and the only authority upon the subject, is found in the New Testament; and there we find no restriction, no limitation, except such as every true Christian can answer to, – *faith* in the precious blood of Christ, and *consecration* to the Redeemer's will and work.

The entire theory and arrangement marked by the terms "clergy" and "laity" is of Papal origin, and was arranged with the special object of binding and blinding God's children by taking from them the very liberty wherewith Christ made them free. Our Lord made no restriction as to who should serve it or give thanks for it, but intimated that all were to be ready to serve and in honor to prefer one another. His simple expressions were "eat *ye all* of it," and "drink *ye all* of it." Neither did the Apostles place any restrictions on the matter, nor say that when the *clergy* may please to prepare and bless and distribute, the laity may eat of the Lord's Supper. What restrictions did they place, if any? Like the Lord, they placed none, but advised that "a man *examine* HIMSELF" as to his worthiness to partake of the emblems. (1 Cor. 11:28.) It was not the "clergy" that were to examine and determine who might partake, but each one whom the Son had made free was to use his own freedom and examine himself before God and in the light of God's Word.

The Apostles knew nothing about "clergy" and "laity," and those words do not occur in the Holy Scriptures: they were a part of Papacy's

invention for keeping the masses subject to the priests. The Apostle Peter, whom they falsely style the first pope, contradicts all such popish ideas by declaring that the entire Church, including the very humblest one united by faith to Christ the Head, constitute together God's Royal Priesthood, God's Holy Nation, God's Peculiar People. – 1 Pet. 2:9.

As a part of the scheme of the Papal priesthood for their own exaltation as a special or "clerical" class, it was assumed, without the slightest warrant of Scripture, (1) that there was a special or "clerical" class; (2) that only such are authorized to teach, preach, baptize, bury the dead, read the Scriptures, or arrange for a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The evident design was to fasten with the cords of priestcraft and superstition the infant a few days old (for the baptism of *believers* was changed to sprinkling of infants), and to keep those tightly drawn until the last spark of consciousness expired; and then the theory of masses and prayers for the dead was not only to get money but also to teach that the priestly cords extended beyond the present life, beyond the grave, and that the eternal blessedness or misery of every being was at their disposal. Can we wonder that our ignorant priestridden fathers of the dark ages feared the priests and regarded them as beings of a different nature than themselves?

One of the strongest of these superstitious cords was the one associated with the Lord's Supper. This cord was doubled and twisted several times and made very strong and sacred, under the claim that literal bread and wine had to have a miracle performed upon them so as to change them into the *actual* body and blood of the Lord Jesus; for it was and is yet claimed by Papacy that in their Mass Christ is recreated by the priest, and then killed or sacrificed afresh [R1809 : page 109] each time the Mass is celebrated for those special persons or sins for whom the Mass is performed.

The doctrine of the Trinity added to the homage paid to the priesthood; for it was said, and with reason, that *if* the priest can *create* Christ out of bread and wine (by merely pronouncing a few

Latin words over it), he must, if Christ be God the Father, be considered able to create the great Creator of the universe by virtue of special power and authority of office conferred upon him. No wonder the people, the "laity," worshipped the "clergy," and revered and obeyed them as though they were God. [R1809 : page 110] But the people were not thereby lifted up and blessed; for nothing but the Truth *sanctifies*, and the Truth makes free and is in opposition to bondage.

The Great Reformation of the sixteenth century made a wonderful and blessed change in many respects, not only with those who became Protestants against these enslavements of priestcraft, but also in that those still fully enslaved were thereafter less tightly bounden.

But even those who thought that they had gotten free had been only partially released. Some of the cords were snapped asunder at once, but others were replaced by smaller and less noticeable cords, which nevertheless are very strong upon Protestants. They still retained the words "clergy" and "laity;" and, although robbed of much of their power, those words still imply a wide gulf between two classes of sheep in the Great Shepherd's fold.

Hindrance to Bible study was a cord that was snapped promptly, but some Protestants still seek to restrain that liberty by implying that only the clergy are competent to explain the meaning of the Bible. The Protestant clergy still seek to give the inference that none but the "clergy" are commissioned to preach, but they rarely express themselves plainly upon the subject, knowing that the Bible recognizes no such special "rights" as they would wish the common people to infer. So, too, generally by inference and custom, they give the impression that baptism and burying of the dead belong to them. And while Protestants wholly reject the Papal doctrine of the Mass, and with it the thought that Christ is recreated by the officiating minister or priest, so as to be sacrificed afresh, yet they carry with them a portion of the shadow of the error. They have a feeling that in some way which they cannot explain, and for some reason not given in the Bible, it would be *sacrilege* for any one not

of the "clergy" class to pass the emblems of the Redeemer's body and blood. Well, priestcraft is surely in danger wherever the Word of God is clearly understood; and ZION'S WATCH TOWER is published for no other purpose than to help God's benighted children out of the blindness and bondage put upon them by Satan, and to assist them into the light and liberty wherewith the Son makes free.
