

Third Epistle of Peter

Preface

How the following epistle came to be overlooked by the early saints of christendom and by all the fathers, or whether it was purposely suppressed by the Council of Nice, and why it was at last destined to be found with other old manuscripts among the ruins of an ancient city by a miserable wandering Monk, are all circumstances which my limited knowledge of these subjects does not enable me to explain.

I am answerable only for the accuracy of the translation from a French copy presented by the Monk himself. Neither can I prove the authenticity of the original, unless it be on the strict correspondence of the actual state of the church with the injunctions contained in the epistle, a correspondence which seems to hold with as much veracity as that which is found in the fulfillment of any prophecy with the prediction itself.

— *Translator*

CHAPTER I

The Style and Manner of Living

Now you who are called and chosen to go forth to all nations and among all people, in time present and time to come, to preach the word, see you take to yourselves marks, nay, many outward marks, whereby you shall be known by men.

Be you not called as men are called; but be you called Pope, Archbishop, Archdeacon, or Divine, or Reverend, and Right Reverend, or some like holy name; so may you show forth your honor and your calling.

And let your dwelling places be houses of splendor and edifices of cost; and let your doors be decked with plates of brass, and let your names, even your reverend titles be graven thereon; so shall it be as a sign.

Let your garments in which you minister be garments not as the garments of men, neither let them be “seamless garments woven, throughout”; but let them be robes of richest silk and robes of fine linen, of curious device and of costly workmanship; and

have you robes of black and robes of white, that you may change the one for the other; so shall you show forth your wisdom and humility. Let your fare be sumptuous, not plain and frugal as the fare of the husbandman who tills the ground; but live you on the fat of the land, taking “good heed for the morrow and wherewithal you shall be fed.”

And drink you of the vines of the vintage brought from afar, and wines of great price; then shall the *light* of your *spirits* be the light of your *countenances*, and your faces glow in brightness; thus shall you show forth your moderation and your temperance in all things.

Let the houses in which you preach be called churches, and let them be built in manner of great ornament without, and adorned with much cost within; with rich pillars and paints, and with fine altars, and pedestals, and urns of precious stones, and cloths and velvet of scarlet, and vessels of silver.

And let there be rooms for the changing of robes, and places for the precious metals and mitres.

And let the houses be divided into seats for the congregation, and let every man know his own seat; and let the first seats in front of the altar be for the rich that pay thousands; and the next for the poorer that pay be hundreds; and the last for those that pay be tens. And let the poor man sit behind the door.

And let the seats be garnished with cushions and crimson cloth, and with fine velvet; for if the houses of players and vain people who deal in idle sayings and shows of mockery, be rich and gorgeous, how much more so should be the houses that are dedicated to Him “that is meek and lowly of spirit.”

CHAPTER II

The Choosing of Ministers

When you go out to choose holy ones to be of your brethren, and to minister at the altar, choose you from among the youth, even those whose judgments are not yet ripe, and whose hearts know not yet whether they incline to God or Mammon.

But you are wise, and you shall know the inclining of their future spirits, and you shall make them incline to the good things which the church has in store for them that are called, even those that shall be called by you.

Then shall you have taught exceeding many things. They shall not be as “ignorant fisherman,” or husbandmen, or men speaking one tongue, and serving God only by the knowledge of his law. Nay, you shall make them wise in the things of your wisdom; yea, exceedingly cunning in many *mysteries*, even the *mysteries* which you teach.

Then shall they be fitted for the “laying on of hands,” and when the bishop has done his office then shall they be reverend divines.

But if any man believe that he is called by God to speak to his brethren “without money and without price”, though his soul be bowed to the will of the Father, and though he work all righteousness, and “speak as with the tongue of an angel” if he be not made a divine by your rulers and by the hands of a bishop, then is he not a divine, nor shall he preach.

He that is chosen by *you* shall give *you* honor, and shall be honored by men, and honored by *women*; and verily he *expects* his reward.

CHAPTER III

The Performance of Preaching

When you go to the church to preach, go not by the retired way where go those that would shun the crowd, but go in the highway where go the multitude, and see that you have on the robes of black, and take heed that your pace be measured well, and that your march be stately. Then shall your “hearts be lifted up,” even as the hearts of mighty men shall they be lifted up. And you shall be gazed upon by the multitude, and they shall honor you; and the men shall praise you, and the *women* shall glorify you, even by the women shall you be glorified.

And when you go in, go not as the ordained, prepared *only* with a soul to God and with a heart to men, and a spirit filled with the Holy Ghost; but go you with your pockets full of papers and full of divine words; even in your pockets shall your divinity be.

And let your sermon be full of “the enticing words of man’s wisdom,” and let it be beautified with just divisions, with tropes and with metaphors, and with hyperbole, and apostrophe, and with interrogation,

and with exclamation, and with syllogisms, and with sophisms, and throughout let declamation be.

And take good heed to your attitudes and your gestures, knowing when to bend and when to erect, when to lift your right hand and when your left, and let your motions be graceful, even in your attitudes and in your gestures let your *grace* be. Thus shall you be pleasing in the eyes of the people and *graceful* in their sight.

Let your voice at times be smooth as the stream of the valley, and soft as the breeze that waves not the bough on its bank; and at times let it swell like the wave of the ocean, or like the whirlwind on the mountain top.

Then shall you charm the ears of your hearers and their hearts shall be softened, and their minds shall be astounded, and their souls shall incline to you; and the men shall incline to you, and likewise the women; yea, to your sayings and to your persons shall they be inclined.

And be you mindful not to offend the people; rebuke you not their sins, but when you rebuke sin, rebuke it at a *distance*; and let no man apply your sayings to his own case; so shall he not be offended.

If a brother shall raise up the manner of war against brother, and Christians against Christians, rebuke them not; but be some of you on the one side and some on the other; and tell the one host that God is on their side, and the other host that he is on their side; so make them bold to kill. And even among swords and lancets let your black robes be seen.

Preach you not “peace on earth and good will to men,” but preach you glory to the victor, and victory to the brave.

If any man go into a foreign land and seize upon his fellow man, and put irons on his feet and irons on his hands, and bring him across the great deep into bondage; nay, if he tear asunder the dearest ties of nature, the tenderest leagues of the human heart; if he tear the wife from the husband, and force the struggling infant from its mother’s bleeding heart, rebuke him not!

And although he sell them in foreign slavery to toil beneath the lash all their days, tell him not that his doings are of Antichrist; for lo! he is rich and gives to the church, and is esteemed pious, so shall you not offend him, lest peradventure he withdraw himself from your flock.

Teach them to believe that you have the care of their soul and that the saving mysteries are for your explaining; and when you explain your *mysteries*, encompass them round about with words as with a bright veil, so bright that through it no man can see.

And lo! you shall bind the judgments of men (and more especially of women) as with a band of iron; and you shall make them blind in the midst of light, even as the owl is blind in the noon day sun; and behold you shall lead them captive to your reverend wills.

CHAPTER IV

The Clergy's Reward

“In all your gettings” get money! Now, therefore, when you go forth on your ministerial journey, go where there are silver and gold, and where each man will pay according to his measure. For verily I say you must get your reward.

Go you not forth as those that have been sent, “without two coats, without gold or silver, or brass in their purses; without scrip for their journey, or shoes, or staves”; but go you forth in the good things of this world.

And when you shall hear of a church that is vacant and has no one to preach therein, then be that a *call* to you, and be mindful of the call, and take you charge of the flock thereof and of the fleece thereof even of the *golden* fleece.

And when you shall have fleeced your flock, and shall know of another *call*, and if the flock be greater, or rather if the fleece be greater, then greater be also to you the call. Then shall you leave your old flock, and of the new flock shall you take the charge.

Those who have “freely received” let them “freely give,” and let not men have your words “without money nor without price,” but bargain you for hundreds and for thousands, even for thousands of silver and gold shall you bargain.

And over and above the price for which you have sold your service, take you also gifts from them that go in chariots, and from them that earn their morsel by the seat of their brow.

Yea, take you gifts of all, and take them in gold and in silver and in bread; in wine and in oil; in raiment and in fine linen.

And the more that the people give you the more will they honor you; for they shall believe that “in

giving to you they are giving to the Lord”; for behold their sight shall be taken from them, and they shall be blind as bats, and “shall know not what they do”.

And you shall wax richer and richer, and grow greater and greater, and you shall be lifted up in your own sight, and exalted in the eyes of the multitude; and lucre shall be no longer filthy in your sight. And verily you have your reward.

In doing these things you shall never fail. And may abundance of gold and silver and bank notes, and corn, and wool, and flax, and spirits and wine, and land be multiplied to you, both now and hereafter.

— *Amen.*

The *Third Epistle of Peter* was written by Alexander Campbell in *The Christian Baptist*, 1825. Of this article, Homer Hailey said, “The article was purely a satire, written in the form of an unpublished epistle, as if it had just come to light... It definitely expresses an attitude worth keeping before preachers of each generation” (*Attitudes and Consequences*, p. 77).

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