

Pope Demetrius II Against Protestantism.

(Translated from the Arabic — by Gulian Lansing)

From Demetrius, the servant of Jesus Christ, called by the high grace of God, Patriarch on the Chair of Mark in Alexandria and the Egyptian and adjoining Provinces, to our blessed children, the trusted priests and renowned pillars and honoured deacons and respected scribes and merchants and artisans and peasants, and all the orthodox people, great and small, rich and poor, who are in the city of Osiout and its surrounding villages, and towns and hamlets and churches, even all our Christian children, — the peace of God the Father Almighty, and the grace of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, and the communion and gifts of the Holy Ghost the Comforter descend upon you and rest on you and abide among you, — you and your children and your relations, — and may supernal blessings be poured out upon you, and abundant heavenly benefits be multiplied unto you, and may you ever continue in all health, safety and peace, enjoying security and respect and honour, steadfast in your pure orthodox faith, being fruitful in every good and precious work, being preserved from all temptations and cares and griefs, profiting by your beneficent works, prospering always in your laudable enterprises, while being accounted children of the kingdom and of the blessed everlasting life in the paternal exuberant glorious joys, — by the intercession of the pure Virgin Lady St. Mary, the mother of God, the Supreme Incarnate Word, and by the prayers of the high archangels and the masters, the apostles, the exalted high priests and the happy just crowned martyrs and all the blessed saints. Amen.

Oh our spiritual children, beloved in the Lord, since it is a matter acknowledged and known by high and low legally, and popularly that the pastor is the watchman of his flock and pastoral visits are part of his duty, I therefore, although I have always been in assurance in respect of my children dwelling in these parts by means of epistles and letters and constant inquiries, yet since in these days we have determined to establish schools in different quarters for the children of our sect, and among them in your place, and also since certain causes have intervened causing contentions and controversies, my religious zeal and paternal affection have stirred me up to arise and endure the fatigues of journey, only to visit our children in the southern provinces: and we have continued by the providence of the Most High passing through the cities and villages and churches from Cairo until we reached this place, and thanks be to God that you are all in the possession of all security, peace, stability, and integrity, and we have reached your town and

witnessed your profound respect for us and your joy in meeting us, and your pleasure at our approach, and your exultation before us, and your filial preparation, and the signs of your rejoicing beaming in your faces. — We have therefore thanked the bounties of the Most High. May he be praised, glorifying his grace and benefits and bounties, offering to his Majesty all supplications, that he may increase you and bless you, in your merchandise and servants and trades and possessions and children and houses, and render you blessed in both worlds, — and as ye are all joyful in us, we are far more so in each one of you, and we will never cease to offer these prayers to the exalted Creator.

But Oh our children, our joy and rejoicing and the boast of our preaching, although the conditions of you all are joyous and pleasing, and ye are abiding in the true orthodox faith and established in the honoured sacraments of your church, and respecting exceedingly its spiritual ordinances, and rites and ceremonies, yet in this spiritual garden which the right hand of the Lord Christ planted by means of his priestly apostles, and their righteous disciples and successors, and in the spiritual cultivation of which they laboured, there are to be found two things which are displeasing, nay exceedingly grievous, and depressing, and heart-rending. — The first of these is the reception by some of you of the doctrines of those opposers who follow the Protestants, sometimes by receiving and reading their books, and sometimes by hearkening to their words, and being made to doubt by them and follow them. The second, that it has not sufficed that the adults have looked upon these poisons, but with your own hands you have cast your little ones into their deadly snares, since one gives over his boy to their school, and another his daughter unto them, that they may cause them to drink from their childhood the milk of error, and while from your city itself there are no boys in the school of that schism there are in it fifteen or more of your daughters, and from the surrounding towns and villages there are in it a number of boys.

These, then, are the two evils which I have witnessed as occurring among you. Therefore, O my children, my heart is not at peace, nor are my joys full since the fullness of joy is, that I bear, as said the Apostle John, that my children walk in the truth, not in doubts and corrupting confusions. In respect of the school, since there has been opened in your city and church a Coptic school, and we have placed in it a fitting teacher, — a man adept in the desired languages and renowned sciences, and we have further strengthened it and filled it by sending to it many of the children of the common schools, and we are purposing to do all that may be necessary for its increased prosperity and efficiency. Why, then, since you have your own school, which necessarily will irrigate the lands of your children's hearts with pure and sweet waters, do ye turn aside and cast them into these snares, the

teachers of which water your branches with foul water or rather with deadly poison, — and especially those pure maidens, how can you allow yourselves to cast them with your own hands into those pernicious perils, the evil consequences of which will yet come upon you, and cause you to repent when repentance will not profit you. Since, therefore, it is my duty, in accordance with the rule of my calling, to preach to you and proclaim in your ears what is necessary for the purity of your consciences, and salvation of your souls from the guilt of your children, I therefore proclaim to you by the word of God, that you take your sons out of these snares, and deliver your daughters from this pit of destruction, and train them up in your own houses in politeness and modesty and the fear of God. As for your sons, therefore, behold the school is open before them, and I by His grace am always prepared to assist it with books and teachers and the orders necessary for its respectability and prosperity, of the truth of which ye are my witnesses. But the girls bring up, in fear and modesty and humility, in your own homes, and deliver them not into the hands of those ravenous ones who cause them to drink cups of wickedness instead of morality.

Therefore, from this time henceforth, whoever transgresses and dares to take his son or daughter from his own church or school, and introduce him into the school of the Protestants, in order to abide therein and learn its detestable sciences, let him be under the excommunicating word of God. Therefore beware of transgression, and take heed unto yourselves, O company of my children, and abide in obedience, that blessings may descend upon you and let not one of you be like unto the Jews, who, not content with the crime of the blood of the Son of God upon themselves alone, placed it upon their children also. Wherefore beware exceedingly thereof, and inasmuch as ye have respect unto your own souls, and desire their salvation, so also have respect unto your sons and daughters; for while they are minors, you will be judged for them.

Then also in respect of the implication of certain ones of you in this obstinate schism, I know that your consciences and enlightened and unprejudiced minds, are not in ignorance concerning their true character, since every wise, prudent, God-fearing man knows well their abominable heresies and confused divisions, — a company who come to you, as said the Lord, clothed with sheep's clothing, and within they are ravening wolves — a company who feign humility and wisdom, while they cast into the hearts of believers the poisons of doubt and uncertainty — a company who claim to be preachers of the gospel, while they fight against the Author of the gospel, the Son of God, the Word Incarnate by the Holy Ghost and St. Mary, since they believe concerning his honourable incarnation what is opposed to the truth, for they say that the Word of God did not descend into the

womb of the virgin and assume humanity, and deny the word of the gospel with which Gabriel addressed the virgin lady: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” And they are people who claim to be evangelical, while they abolish the doctrines of the Lord of the Gospel, who says, “The bread which I give you is my body,” and his saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him. My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed.” And thus, also, when he delivered his sacrament to his disciples, he hallowed the bread and wine, and said to them, “This is my body; eat it: this is my blood; drink it.” But these persons say sometimes, that this is the sacrament of the body of Christ, and some times that it is the memorial of this body of Christ.

Then away with such false evangelicals, who have given diligence to pervert the word of God; but they are the perverted ones, who have deceived themselves. But the words of God are a firm and sure foundation which cannot be shaken nor changed, and who is he that opposes the words of God himself, and abolishes his plain teachings, which are brighter than the sun? Is not every one that does this a stranger to the true faith? A company who claim that they are the apostles of our Lord in the last times, while they themselves prevent the believers from honouring the apostles and the saints of the Most High, who himself blessed them and prepared for them the glory which is unutterable. They persuade the simple that they teach the true religion, while in truth the end of all their teaching is the abolishing of the precious sacraments without the participation in which a Christian can by no means be a Christian; — such as baptism, by which we are regenerated, and the holy mysteries by which we live, and our souls are enlightened, and we are united to Christ, — and such as penance, by which our hope is renewed and our purposes strengthened, and the priesthood, by which all the mysteries are perfected and bestowed upon us according to the necessities of each one, — and matrimony, by which we are kept and preserved, and as long as we are united by it in purity, we resemble the union of Christ with his church. And thus, as to the rest of the sacraments, they abolish them, and in order that they may convince a few, they claim that they believe in baptism, and the offering, — but what a faith is it?

It is nothing but a pretence and a deception; for they believe that in baptism we have only a mark and sign, and some of them have dared to equalize it to the baptism of John, and they have denied that by it a man is regenerated, thus rejecting the plain saying of Christ concerning it. And they believe that the offering

is simple or blessed bread, and deny the sayings of our Lord, (the alone Mighty,) who took that bread, and said, "Take, eat of it all of you, this is my body;" and so also the cup, "Take ye, and drink of it all of you, this is my blood, a new covenant." And the apostle Paul also confessed the same in his first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter x. 11, "That it is not lawful to draw near to this honourable sacrament unworthily, so that to him that approaches without preparation abound diseases and sudden death. Has, therefore, O my children, simple or blessed bread alone efficacy to such an extent? Is there in bread the power of everlasting life? Is there in simple bread the forgiveness of sins? Is common bread able to harm or heal? Our Lord has taught us concerning common bread saying, that not by bread alone does a man live, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. But concerning the holy offering which is replenished with the mysteries of wisdom, which is in truth, as the Creator of all creatures has revealed his own precious body; he hath said, "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." It is not like the manna which the fathers of the Jews ate and died.

Therefore judge ye, O wise brethren, concerning the doctrine of these new prophets. Truly a wise man is confounded by the mixture of their opinions and doctrines; for their books contradict each other. Their histories sometimes establish and sometimes refute their doctrines. Their verbal sayings disagree with the contents of their compositions. Let God, therefore, judge justly this company, who come to you claiming that they will enlighten your dark ness, and address you with words which in appearance are good, but within they are whitened sepulchres. Let us mention some of their enlightenments, that their true character may appear. Among them is. that they deceive the priest who has become a soldier for Christ, and has vowed chastity and celibacy, strip him of the honour of his priesthood, take from him the robe of his chastity, and plunge him into the sea of lusts, offering him certain women in the semblance of marriage of those women whom they have caught in their snares, and in which, as we have before said, we fear they may entrap some of your daughters. And no doubt you have heard what their marriage is. Are these, then, the spiritual lights? Where is the saying of the Master, by his own mouth, that no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God? And how is it fitting that a priest of theirs, claiming to be a disciple, should disgrace himself by marriage after having become a disciple of His? By the judgment of the Saviour, he has been stripped of the purity of the disciples of the kingdom. And where is his saying, "There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake?" And where is "the church of the first-born," [the word for first-born and virgin in Arabic is one,] "which are written in heaven," which Paul mentioned in the last of his epistle to the Hebrews? And where is the honour of the virgins, who have not been

defiled with women, and the glory prepared for them, as John, the speaker of divine things, indicated in his Revelation? Judge, O my wise children, whether these are enlighteners, or rather preachers of the darkness of their own lusts.

Then we also see these new spiritual ones dissuading the believers from temperance in food and fasting, opening to men the door of gluttony. Nor are they ashamed thereof, that the chief of bodily sins is gluttony, and it is that which drove our first grandfather from Paradise, and therefore our Lord came fasting for us a long time, that he might abolish the works of Satan, and lay for us a good foundation, that we might follow his example. These claim that they are preachers, and they are not ashamed of the state of the true preachers who traversed the world in hunger and thirst and much fasting and nakedness, and the like, in comparison with the state of these new ones of luxury and greediness, and letting loose the reins of their lusts in clothing, in drunkenness, in superciliousness, in anger, in schemes, in deception, in backbiting, Are these spiritual preachers, or rather those teachers whom the Master rebuked, saying, “Woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land.”

But it is not our purpose to exhibit all their vanities, one by one, in this short epistle; but it will suffice for every believer to have respect to the rule given by the Saviour, namely, “By their fruits, shall ye know them,” and it is enough for every believer to know that the Saviour has given woe and lamentation to every one casting doubt into the heart of any one of the believers in his name; and since the aim and end of this company is to cast doubts and stumbling blocks and quenching into the hearts of the faithful servants of God, let it, therefore, be judged whether these are evangelical, or rather deserving from God of that with which he has threatened those who offend his servants. Further, the glorious Master has redeemed his honourable church with his precious blood, adorned her with his divine sacraments, established her upon the orthodox faith in him, and promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; and he gave her over to his apostles, and commanded them to disciple others, that they might feed her, and promised them that he would not leave them unto the end of the world.

Therefore neither the heresy of Arius, who denied the divinity of the Son, could conquer this church, nor could the heresy of Manes, the liar, disturb her, nor the infidelity of Macedonius in the Holy Spirit deceive her, nor the error of Sabellius, nor others who invented heresies, nor did the wandering of Nestorius quench the new faith ; but by the supreme providence these heresies have been annihilated, and the church established upon her true faith, sacraments and ceremonies, and the Lord himself, who in olden times visited Egypt, has preserved his church which is

in it, as he foretold by the prophet, that “My altar shall be in the midst of thee, O Egypt!” and especially that the cruel foreign Governments of former times were not able to extinguish the candle of faith in the Egyptian Church. How then, O my children, is it that some of you are deceived by this heresy, which is so patent to every wise person? Since, by the grace of God, I have been called to the pastorate of the preaching of Mark, and ye have heard the sayings of God to the prophet Ezekiel concerning his obligation to warn the people, we therefore, in executing the high behest, and by the power given by the Most High, in his saying, “Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,” do exhort you and all, rich and poor, learned and simple, that you entirely abstain from them.

First, therefore, receive not at all their books, which teach their doctrines; and if any one has any of them, let him burn them with fire. Secondly, by no means receive their teaching, whether oral or by letters or signs. Thirdly, have no communications with them in the matter of a livelihood, nor receive them into your houses, on any other pretence, which would result in your own injury, nor assist them in obtaining a foothold, nor in opening houses or schools nor any thing of the kind, the evil consequences of which will come upon you; and, finally beware of them inwardly and outwardly, that ye may be the children of peace and obedience, and the divine blessing may rest upon you. And let the obstinate and refractory one who despises this our epistle and transgresses the laws of his church, and denies the seven holy sacraments, or is deceived in the truth of the orthodox faith delivered unto us by the honoured apostles, by the mouths of the holy councils of Nice and Ephesus, and established by that of Constantinople, or dares to disrespect the mother of God, who is worthy of the blessing and honour of all ages, or disrespects the saints, who are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and, in fine, everyone who is obstinate, and still holds the false doctrines of the Protestants, and does not return not recant his errors, nor respect the commands of his honourable church, know that he is under the bond of the excommunicating word of God.

But if he returns and repents, acknowledges his error, and repents towards God, the church will then receive him among her children, and will rest upon him the grace and blessing of God, who never yet sent back the wanderer, and the Most High, in his bounty, will forgive the past, of which he has repented, and he shall be absolved and blessed. Take heed, therefore, O my children, priests and people, great and small, whether they be men or women, from falling into these nets. And the God of peace strengthen you by his providence, and protect you by his care, and preserve you by his own right hand, and grant you perpetual peace; and grace

and honour and glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, now and ever and unto all ages. Amen.