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THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE BIBLE IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Active efforts are being made at the present time in various quarters for the reintroduction of the Bible into our public schools. This movement gives rise to a controversy very similar to the one which raged on the occasion of the elimination of the Bible as a text-book from the American public school system. The following brief historical consideration of that earlier struggle, therefore, seems appropriate at the present time.

The opposition to the Bible as a text-book began about 1840, especially in the large cities,¹⁾ and at the instigation of the Roman Catholic Church. According to Goodrich,²⁾ the Catholics at this time numbered 800,000, out of a total of about 10,000,000 church-members in the United States. The Roman Catholics favored legal exclusion of the Bible from the public schools; Daniel Webster opposed legal exclusion.³⁾

The controversy was really due to the rise of state-supported public schools. Denominational schools wanted state support; but it became the established policy of the State not to give such support. The controversy involves the interpretation of the Constitution and the question whether the Bible is a sectarian book.

1) Monroe's *Cyc. of Ed.*, I, p. 373.

2) Peter Parley's *Tales about the U. S.* (1883), p. 227.

3) Cheever, *Right of the Bible in Our Public Schools.* (New York, 1854.)

SENECA AND NERO.

Spending almost all of my life in endeavoring to gain a closer vision and a truer insight into the civilization of the ancient world, I have often marveled and as often grieved at two things. One was this, that divinity students, as a rule, left their classical studies behind them as soon as they could, and before they attained that maturity when wider knowledge and a mastery of life would furnish them a truer perspective. It was in a world subject to the Roman government, and resting, in the main, on Greek culture, that the religion of Christ began, and the sacred books of our faith were written, in the main, in the tongue which Alexander of Macedon had carried into Asia, books written by men who were Hebrews, one of them, Paul of Tarsus, a Roman citizen by birth. Should we not gain a truer insight of that polity of Rome and into that Hellenic civilization within which the Church of Christ arose? Contempt solves no problem, and a contemptuous phrase generally is a mask of but slight knowledge or no knowledge. The very world of the young Church reflects all this even in the nomenclature of its earliest members and converts, and the Acts of the Apostles, so largely a record of the first and greatest of Christian missionaries, are also a notable document of the Greco-Roman world. Epainetos, Stachys, Apelles, Herodian, Aristobulos, Tryphaina and Tryphosa, Persis, Asynkritos, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, all bore Greek names, all of them members of the first Christian Church in the capital of the world, how many of them were burned at the stake in the persecution of Nero, in 64 A. D.? Much smaller seems to have been the number of those who bore Latin names: Prisca and Aquila, Junia, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Rufus.

In one way the philosophies of the ancient world concern the divinity student much more than the poetry of the classical world: as for the *religions* of the Greeks and the Romans, they, indeed, were a feeble thing, institutional, ritual, or myths and legends, mainly of localities narrow and circumscribed, and

fairly without any appeal to conscience, character, or conduct. The philosophical systems, I say, were a very important part of that world with which the new Church had to enter into a contest. St. Paul, on the Areopagus, facing the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, and the same witness, in the golden house of Nero or on the Palatine: here are situations which indeed were typical: the culture of Greece and the world-power of Rome; we cannot, in the study of our history of the early Church, know them too well. The world, then, in which St. Paul wrought for the Master, the world of Caligula, of Claudius and Nero, was also the world of Seneca. Whoever knows better the life and times of the brilliant essayist and moralist, philosopher of the universe and for a while chief minister and counselor in the government of that world-empire, man of the world, and thinker in the cabinet, and, in a measure, prophet of righteousness, too,—whosoever gains a closer acquaintance, I say, with Seneca and his times cannot but acquire a truer and larger perspective of that supremely important generation in which St. Paul wrought and died. Both passed away as victims of Nero.

The divinity student, I say, should concern himself more with this period where classical studies and the study of the history of the Christian Church touch and overlap in a peculiar manner. My other grievance is with my own class, *viz.*, with the professional classicist. Many of them are fed on a rapture traditional indeed, but entirely fatuous. Fair and original letters in the Greek field now are pursued by an ever lessening number, and either with an assumption of esthetical felicity or with a mechanical solution of minutiae. There is notable here, very often, a painful absence of moral and historical concern. Many are like visitors in a gallery of exquisite marbles. They forget, or never realize, that this *elite* of gifted personalities lived in a pagan world, and had living relations to that pagan world. They deal with humanities indeed, but with but a very small number of aspects of actual humanity. Their vision is largely one-sided, and so falls far short of the only

truth which can be definitely and positively claimed for classical studies, to wit, historical truth. —

L. Annaeus Seneca was the son of a Roman citizen settled where his three sons were born, in Corduba, Baetica, Southern Spain. These three Senecas were, Novatus, Lucius, Mela; this latter one the father of the brilliant poet Lucan. Novatus, in time, was adopted by a wealthy rhetor, Gallio. It is he who later rose to the dignity of a proconsul of Achaia, with Corinth as the provincial capital. It was before his tribunal (Acts 18, 12 sqq.) that Paul was arraigned by the Jews of that city; it was Seneca, no doubt, to whose mediation Gallio owed that appointment, made, it would seem, at a time when Gallio's brilliant brother was the most influential person at the seat of government on the Tiber. It is to this elder brother that Seneca dedicated his essay on "Anger" and that on "Happy Life," and other works. Our philosopher himself refers to the Achaian proconsulate of his brother (*Epist.*, 104, 1): "My . . . Gallio, who, when crying and aloud, that it was a disease, inherent not in his own body, but in the locality." Marcus Seneca, the father, was himself a very extraordinary person; the mere mechanism of his mental endowment was unique. His earlier youth was contemporaneous with Cicero's last years; but he spent the stormy times of that catastrophe in the more peaceful abode of Corduba. In his old age, when his two older sons, Novatus and Lucius, had already entered upon the career of public distinction, he heeded their eager request, and repeated for them the peculiarities in style and treatment of specific themes as presented by the more eminent teachers of oratory of his younger years in Rome, the foremost of a great and influential profession, of which some, too, were Greeks. We observe here a faculty of presentation, a keen sense of literary form, and, above all, the perception of that wherein lay vigor, point, and power. These things descended to the gifted son.

I shall not fill these pages by transcribing the estimates of this or that scholar or literary critic as to the philosophy,

the public career, or the literary qualities of the brilliant Spanish Roman. Nothing is easier than pressing such fluttering leaves in one's herbarium. There are, indeed, ample data of the outward current of his life, of his ambition, of his books, to have him appear to us as he was, himself, neither embellished and idealized, nor disfigured by malice and depreciation.

Marcus Seneca, the father, a man of Equestrian rank, was one of the older time; he cherished the ideals of freedom and of the better and older republic. The philosopher refers to the old-time sternness of his father (*patris mei antiquus rigor; Helv.*, 17, 3). He was not fond of having women learned; they were to be filled with the precepts of wise living rather; in fact, he hated philosophy as a pursuit of life or as a predominating concern.

Seneca was brought to Rome as an infant, literally carried in the arms of his mother's sister. The latter's husband, for sixteen years (*Helv.* 19, 6), was governor of Egypt, clearly one of the most eminent in the Equestrian class, a man of wealth and distinction, and therefore too much more of a successful courtier than Seneca's father ever could have been. The latter lived at least up to the year 34 A. D., when old Tiberius had retired, like a tiger to his cave, to the impregnable rocks of Capri.

His training with the grammaticus seems to have been long and thorough; in the retrospect of old age he counted the time lost (*Ep.*, 58, 5). We may say here, once for all, that he mastered all the literary culture then prized in the Greco-Roman world; and this we know, that, whether in verse or prose, he acquired and held a primacy in the capital of the world which was undisputed, and which opened to him the doors of the Senate and the avenue of public honors.

But the studies which engrossed him much more than Greek and Roman letters and oratory were in the domain of philosophy. He mentions three teachers, Sotion, Attalus, and Fabianus. These men gave lectures as professional teachers, on which, it seems, like the grammatici and rhetors, they sub-

sisted. These pursuits probably were of the last period of Augustus and the earlier reign of Tiberius. The formal faculties of grammaticus and rhetor probably came to him with supreme ease; they did not command his soul. It was different with the concerns of wisdom. Remembering Attalus in the last years of his own life (*Ep.*, 108, 2): "Let the student be of good cheer; he will hold as much as he shall will to hold. . . . This Attalus, I recall, taught us (me and my brother Novatus), when we besieged his classroom, and were the first to arrive and the last to leave; and even as he walked along, we drew some discourses from him, not only as one equipped for those who learned from him, but meeting them half way." Favorite sayings of this philosopher abided with Seneca for life, as this one: "The recalling of deceased friends is delightful, just as certain apples are pleasantly tart, as in excessively old wine its astringency itself delights us. When, indeed, some time has elapsed, these tastes pass away, and we realize our unmixed sensuous satisfaction." Attalus was a Stoic. He was wont to say also: "I would rather Fortune had me in its camp than as its pet. I suffer at its hands, but bravely; it is well." (*Ep.*, 67, 15.) Or again: "I surely, when I heard Attalus discoursing against the faults, the wrong paths, the evils of life, — I often felt pity for our humankind and believed him a lofty being and higher than the zenith of human greatness"; or again: "An evil mind drinks the greatest part of its own venom." (*Ep.*, 1, 22.) "He himself was wont to say he was a king; but he seemed to me to be more than ruling, for he held the franchise of sitting in judgment on those who were ruling. But when he began to commend poverty, and to show how, whatever went beyond practical needs, was a superfluous weight and heavy for the bearer, my mood was often to retire from his classroom in poverty. When he began to mock our pleasures, to praise a chaste body, a sober table, a mind untainted not merely by forbidden pleasures, but even superfluous ones, I was in the mood to lay down stern laws to appetites." These, indeed, were early ideals, and Seneca intimates that they came into very

positive conflict with the life and conduct of his own generation. (*Ep.*, 108, 13—15.) We see also that the purest and earliest convictions which the youthful moralist so warmly cherished could not be, or were not, consistently maintained where the surging world without clashed with the spirit within. Compared with such nobler incentives and exemplars, mere taste and scholarly erudition were rated not very highly by Seneca. The liberal studies, so called (*Ep.*, 88), of earlier life have chiefly the value of a preparation, a fitting out; often petty and trivial and the very professors often men of base conduct. Anything may be interpreted into Homer: now he is made out a Stoic, now an Epicurean, now a Peripatetic, now an Academic, denying all dogmatic certainty. Other futile and pointless enquiries are whether Homer or Hesiod was earlier, points of age concerning Helen and Hecuba, the age of Achilles and Patroclus, the geography of the wanderings of Ulysses, and the like; whether Penelope indeed preserved her virtue, etc., etc. Another one of his cherished teachers was Fabianus, who had first been a rhetor; his literary finish is extolled by Seneca (*Ep.*, 100). He calls him inferior as a great prose writer to Cicero, Pollio, and Livy alone; he published on philosophical subjects more books than even Cicero himself. Fabianus would seem to have been of the Stoic school, which insisted on robustness of the will, and may indeed be called the philosophy of Freedom. (*De Brev. Vitae*, 10, 1); Brother Novatus attended him, too.

Sotion was the third of this clover-leaf. It is probable (from *Ep.*, 49, 2) that it was this philosopher whose instruction preceded the young Seneca's entrance upon the career of a pleader in courts. Like many gifted young men, young Seneca was susceptible to all kinds of academic influences. So to the doctrines of Pythagoras that men should abstain from meats because that food involved the destruction of life, a denial, too, of that universal brotherhood of life which to recognize and respect was one of the fundamental laws of right living. Here was the transmigration of souls, that eternal cycle of life

which all should hold in reverence, that perpetual change of abode which men, with their narrow vision, called death. The youth was mightily swayed by Sotion's appeals, and for a year actually abstained from animal food. He even believed his mental processes had gained in vigor and liveliness. But this cult greatly resembled certain forms of foreign superstition (*Ep.*, 108, 22), and under Tiberius this was dangerous, a hindrance certainly to a youth who had proposed for himself a public career. Then, too, the father had a keen aversion for all philosophy,—and young Seneca resumed current fare.

At that stage, too, he suffered from chronic catarrh (*Ep.*, 78, 2) and greatly wasted away. "Often I formed an impulsive resolution to cut short my own life; it was the gray hairs of my most affectionate father that kept me from this step. For I reflected, not how bravely *I* could die, but how *his* bravery would forsake him in his yearning for me. . . . It is to philosophy that I give the credit for the fact that I roused myself, that I recovered my health."

Seneca became a pleader in the courts. Although eloquence and forensic brilliancy no longer swayed or determined politics and large measures of public life as under the republic, still original genius in courts attracted attention and applause more than ever. Seneca was not merely supremely successful, but his manner and delivery positively outshone all his contemporaries at the Roman bar, and was acclaimed as the most brilliant achievement of the times. It was during the reign of the unspeakable Caligula (37—41 A. D.), in his forty-fourth to forty-eighth year or so, when he had also entered the Senate, that this matter brought him into a very serious conflict with that emperor himself. Seneca (*Dio Cass.*, 59, 19) once delivered a fine discourse in the presence of Caligula. That autocrat had a mania of profound and morbid antipathy against any form of eminence, particularly in oratory (Sueton., *Calig.*, 53), and personally prepared speeches in which he challenged and antagonized the most conspicuous pleaders in the Senate. He even

uttered deep displeasure with Seneca's manner: "mere sand," he said, "without the binding line."

He planned to destroy the famous Spaniard, and only abstained when one of his mistresses told him that Seneca was beset with a wasting disease and could not last long. Seneca, indeed, never seems to have been robust; his stature was far below the normal. In his old age he called himself one who differed little from a dwarf (*Ep.*, 50, 2). One of his favorite forms for striving for some degree of robustness were cold baths; this regimen he pursued even in January (*Ep.*, 83, 3).

The fashionables, indeed, of Rome hardly imitated him in such pursuits. We have a striking description of the prevailing type in Seneca's earlier manhood from his father's pen (*Sen., Rhet. Controv. J., Praef.* 8): "The mental endowments of our sluggish youth are apathetic; there is no alertness spent in the toil for a single honorable object; sleep and indifference and the zeal for evil things, a zeal more base than sleep and indifference, has taken possession of their souls. Vile pursuits of dancing and singing hold them in effeminate bondage, to groove their hair with the curling-iron, to practise a falsetto voice of womanish blandishments, to vie with women in the softness of their physical person, and to make their surface accomplished with elegancies steeped in impurity. Such is the visible type of the young men of our time." In such a generation the tremendous industry and the consuming ambition of the younger Seneca had, indeed, not many genuine rivals.

The brilliancy of his swiftly succeeding and scintillating epigrams did, indeed, become the fashion, but such gifts cannot be imitated, except by a forced and mechanical performance. There were many pseudo-Senecas, but there was only one original, one master. And then, too, Seneca was a scholar; he knew by close reading the philosophical schools which had come forward, one after the other, in the Hellenic world. He had in his youth sojourned in Egypt, and studied the impressive antiquities of that famous land; he had made the tour of the

Nile to the cataracts. As he, more and more, sought a definite basis and foundation for his life, a pilotage for his soul, in the Stoic system, he filled the niches of that soul with what we may call the great figures of the Stoic saints, among whom stood the great character whom so many schools revered; Socrates of Athens. It is a shallow phrase to call Seneca the fashionable philosopher of his time; few ages were so anti-Stoic as his own. In this deluge of luxury or mean ideals the small number of nobler spirits, Paetus Thrasea, Cremutius Cordus, and, later, Arulenus Rusticus, Arria, Fannia, Helvidius, and many others, have stood forth, but they were an *elite*, deeply at variance with their own world and with the trend of the times, devoted, in that autocracy varnished over with many republican shams preserved out of the past, devoted, I say, to the autonomy of the soul and to a philosophy of freedom.

And a severe test to all these things for the philosophical orator was close at hand. That crisis of life was bound up with the end of Caligula. One might call this emperor an insane monster or what you like, he certainly was beset with a disease which he himself considered a distemper of the brain (Suet., *Cal.*, 50). On January 25, 41, after Rome had endured him less than four years, he fell under the strokes of the conspirators. The world had long expected it, and took it as a matter of course. He was succeeded by his uncle Claudius, a helpless man of middle age. From childhood up he had been awkward, and troubled with many physical ailments. His own delight were books, and he had acquired no mean attainments in history, antiquities, and grammar. His family was sorry for him, and always felt, as it were, obliged to apologize for such a one as one of their own. The empress, at his accession, was Valeria Messalina, whose infamous unchastity has become proverbial. She was his third wife. Having now attained the highest earthly station possible to a woman, she gave full play to her rancor against the emperor's niece, Julia Sivilla, a daughter of the noble Germanicus. That princess was supremely fair, and often alone enjoyed her imperial uncle's

conversation (*Dio Cass.*, 60, 8). Besides this, Julia had not courted or flattered her. So Messalina trumped up a false charge that the princess had maintained adulterous relations with Seneca. She was banished and later slain, and Seneca was relegated to the Island of Corsica, where he lived for seven years. He had been tried in the Senate, the latter acting as a high court of impeachment, and the scholarly emperor's intercession, he himself claimed, had saved his life. This terrible experience, where his substantial innocence seems beyond any doubt, removed the foremost man of letters and the leader of Roman culture to an abode of misery. Later in life he surveyed this period and all the earlier stages of his life in these proud words (*Nat. Quaest.*, IV, 14 sq.): "I devoted myself to liberal studies. Although poverty urged another course, and my native faculties led me towards a goal where there is an immediate reward of scholarship" (a rhetor's profession at the capital), "I turned aside to poetical authorship" (his tragedies perhaps), "which brought no income, and betook myself to the wholesome study of philosophy. I displayed the truth that high excellence may settle on any soul, and, struggling to rise above the narrow limitations of my birth, measuring myself, not by accidental lot, but by the aspirations of my innermost being, I took my stand, a peer of the greatest. Not even a Caligula wrested from me my loyalty for Gaetulicus, nor Messalina and Narcissus in the case of others, when my affection for them had fatal consequences, — these two, I say, public enemies long before they destroyed themselves, could not swerve me from my purpose. Not a word was forced from me, other than could be uttered by a good conscience. For my friends I feared everything, for myself nothing, except that I might not have been a staunch enough friend. No womanish tears did I shed, no one's hands I wrung as a suppliant. I did nothing unbecoming a virtuous person, unbecoming a man."

So he went into the solitude and into the rude life of his Corsican exile. Here, as always, there were alive within him two voices, that of Stoic firmness and Stoic pride, but not less

so that of yearning after the fame and prosperity which had surrounded him at the capital of the world. Some of his verse of that period is preserved (*Epigrammata super Exilio*):—

Corsica, smaller than Sardinia, longer than Elba,
 Corsica, traversed by streams rich in fish,
 Corsica, awful in the first heat of the summer,
 More cruel when the dog-star displays his cruel face,—
 Spare thou the exiled, that is, spare thou the buried.
 Let thy soil be light to the ashes of the living dead.

His only son, Marcus, was then beginning his course with the rhetor. He died before his father's restoration. Some of Seneca's verse of exile is addressed to his native city of Corduba:—

Corduba, dishevel thy locks, and assume the countenance of
 sorrow,
 Send thou funeral gifts, weeping over my ashes.
 Now lament, O Corduba, thy distant bard,—
 I, once the great citizen, thy glory,
 I am pinned to the rock (like Prometheus). Corduba, dishevel
 thy locks,
 And congratulate thyself that nature doth lave thee with the
 furthest Atlantic,
 So much later comes thy grief.

New York, N. Y.

E. G. SHILLER.

(To be continued.)
