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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.)

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

(Continued.)

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Matt. 7, 13: *Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat.*

We find this exhortation towards the close of the Sermon on the Mount. In striking imagery the Lord pictures man's journey into eternity. There are two roads. Many walk on the "broad way," few on the "narrow way"; the former leads to "destruction," the latter to "life." At the beginning of the narrow way is the "*strait*," i. e., narrow, gate. This "strait gate" is conversion by means of contrition and repentance. By regeneration, conversion, one enters on the "narrow way,"

a way full of self-denial, beset by temptations to sin, etc., a way that requires wary walking. The meaning, of course, is not that we Christians merit eternal life by the careful walk on the narrow way. No. Faith alone saves; but faith manifests itself in a Christian walk, in good works. Faith without works is dead. The "wide gate" and the "broad way" are the image of an unbridled life, a life of sin. By nature man is on the broad way, and—if no change of heart occurs—his end is "destruction."—The passage speaks of but *two* gates, of *two* ways, of *two* destinations, of *two* classes of people. There is *no third* way, a way leading to an intermediate state between heaven and hell, leading, *e. g.*, to Hades, to a *Mittelort zur Selbstentscheidung*, or to purgatory.

OF ETERNAL LIFE.

Luke 23, 43: *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Who knows them not, these words of the repentant malefactor!—"This was a case of repentance in the last hour, the trying hour of death; and it has been remarked that *one* was brought to repentance there, to show that no one should *despair* on a dying bed; and *but one*, that none should be presumptuous and *delay* repentance to that awful moment." (*Barnes.*) The criminal dying on the cross recognized the crucified Savior as the "Lord," *i. e.*, God, Jehovah. This bleeding, dying Jesus, moreover, he knew to be a king, who rules over a kingdom,—not, indeed, a kingdom of this world (John 18, 36), but a heavenly, supernatural kingdom. This prayer of faith the Lord answers immediately, saying, "*Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*" Christ's kingdom is Paradise. "Paradise," we are told, is a word of Persian origin, signifying a magnificent garden, a garden of pleasure. Whatever its etymological meaning may be, in its New Testament usage it is a synonym for heaven, connoting heavenly bliss and glory; it is the abode of the

blessed. (2 Cor. 12, 4; 1 Cor. 2, 9; Rev. 2, 9.) Into this heavenly glory I shall enter, says Christ to this criminal, and thou shalt be with Me. — When was that happy event to take place? “*To-day.*” Whilst his body would still be on the cross or consigned to the grave, his *soul* would be with Jesus, would exist separately from the body. This is the plain meaning of the text, and the truth to be pointed out in reference to the thesis in the Catechism, which says: “All believers, when they die, are, according to the *soul*, at once present with Christ.”

But, sad to say, even this plain passage has been tortured, *e. g.*, by the Adventists, who deny the immortality of the soul. To cloak their antisciptural doctrine, they punctuate Christ’s answer thus: “Verily, I say unto thee to-day, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” How absurd this procedure is becomes apparent at once when we observe the idea contrasted. The dying thief had said, “Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,” the petition implying that he thought of some *future* time when the Lord should remember him. Emphatically Jesus places the word *to-day* in opposition to this erroneous notion, saying, *To-day*, — not in the distant future, — but *to-day*, this very day, thou shalt be with Me. — Again, looked at from another view-point, how utterly nonsensical the sense: “I say unto thee to-day, Thou shalt,” etc.! The culprit well knew that Jesus did not speak these words yesterday or to-morrow! But observe the audacity of the tactics of the errorists: contrary to text and context, contrary to even the elementary rules of exegesis, they boldly put their gross perversions in cold print, relying on the old dictum: *Semper aliquid haeret.*

And now as to the Catholics. If any one needed a cleansing according to papal doctrine, surely this thief stood in need of it. Jesus says nothing of a purgatory. The pope and Scriptures never agree.

Finally, we must pay our respects to the modern theologians. We ask, Where is their Sheol or Hades in the light of this passage? As is well known, they have gone the Catho-

lies one better. The Catholics dream of three places in the hereafter: heaven, hell, and purgatory; the modern theologians, of four: heaven, hell, and Hades with two apartments — Paradise and a place of preliminary torture. Now, where did the repentant criminal go? To this third place, Apartment I of modern theological construction? No. He was *with Jesus*: "Thou shalt be *with Me* in Paradise." Not even modern theologians have the temerity to assert that Jesus was in their self-constructed Hades. This miracle of God's grace, the repentant thief, was *with Jesus*. To be *with Jesus* is the chief glory of eternal life. St. Paul, filled with longing for this blessed state, declares: "I desire to depart and *to be with Christ*." (Phil. 1, 23; cf. Rev. 21, 23.) This was the bliss granted this penitent criminal: "Thou shalt be *with Me*."

Rev. 14, 13: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.*

According to the text in its context, to "*die in the Lord*" means to die professing the Lord, to die because one is a Christian, to die for faith's sake. Such, *e. g.*, was the death of the martyrs. Deny the Lord, they were told, and you live; confess Him, and you die. They preferred death to denial; they "*died in the Lord*" to live with Him eternally. "*To die in the Lord*," therefore, in general means to believe steadfastly in Him despite all trials and tribulations of this present time, till death calls us hence. — Now, what is predicated of such as "*die in the Lord*"? They are *blessed*, *i. e.*, eternal bliss is theirs. (Cf. Matt. 5, 8 ff.) They are *in the Lord*, closely united to Him by faith, and death does not and cannot sever this union, but, dying "*in the Lord*," they are forever with Him — *blessed*. — When does this glorious state begin? "*From henceforth*," ἀπάρτι, *forthwith*, from the moment the soul departs from the body.

Again we call attention to the fact that this passage, too, deals a death-blow both to the purgatory of the Catholics and the Hades of the modern theologians. They that "*die in the Lord*" are *blessed forthwith*; they need no purgatory-cleansing;

they have been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. (1 John 1, 7.)

John 10, 27. 28: *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life.*

A gracious promise, indeed, it is the Lord Jesus here makes to them that are His. — It was at the Feast of Dedication that His opponents, the Jews, who reproached Him for holding them in suspense as to whether He were the promised Messiah, were flatly told by Jesus: “Ye are not of My sheep.” (v. 26.) He goes on to describe His sheep, showing that they have certain characteristics. — We ask, Who are His sheep? “*My sheep*,” τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἐμὰ = *the sheep that belong to Me*, says Jesus, have this mark, — they “*hear My voice*,” that is to say, they hear My voice not externally only, as you, My enemies, do, but they hear it *believingly*, trustingly (ἀκούειν c. Gen.). They know My voice to be the voice of the Good Shepherd, whose leadership they can implicitly follow. This they do: “*They follow Me*,” — that is another mark of “*the sheep that belong to Me*.” They are absolutely assured of the fact that I will lead them to green pastures and beside the still waters. — The Good Shepherd’s voice is heard to-day. He assures us: Who heareth you heareth Me.” The Gospel is Christ’s voice. His sheep, the Christians, hear and read this Gospel. In it Christ speaks to them, exhorts them. They know it to be His voice and put their hearts’ confidence in it. Gladly, too, they follow Him whither He leads them. They know Him. — “*And I know them*,” Christ says. “*I know them*,” γινώσκω, says more than, I know of them, I have a knowledge of them, I know who they are, and how many there are of them, I know all their trials, difficulties, etc. All this is true. But this saying, “*I know them*,” goes deeper; it means, I know them *with love and affection*, I know them *as My own*. And to all these He makes this promise: “*I give unto them eternal life*.” “*I give*” is present tense; eternal life is theirs now already. Man, by nature, is spiritually dead. Unbelievers are walking and breathing corpses. Life, true life, they have not. The

sheep of Christ, the Christians, of whom Jesus speaks, have life through Him who is Life. He knew them, foreknew them, and this is the reason why they possess life. It was a gift of His. This true life manifests itself: they "hear His voice" believably; they "follow Him" trustingly. This is proof positive that they possess life, true life. Believers, "born of God" (John 1, 13), possess true life now in time, life of God, life in God, life with God. Temporal death does not destroy this life, but, on the contrary, brings about a full, perfect fruition of this life with God, with Christ, never to cease—*eternal* life. And all sheep that are His receive this gift; not one shall be lost; no one shall be plucked out of His hand. Said Jesus to Martha: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11, 25. 26.)

1 John 3, 2: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*

There is a peculiar emphasis upon the word "are" in this text: "Now *are* we the sons of God." The reason thereof becomes evident from the preceding verse. There the statement is made: "We are the sons of God," and the thought is added that to the eyes of the world this great blessedness is not apparent. "The world knoweth us not"; the world looks upon us Christians as being of all men most miserable, and the faith that we profess of being God's own it sneers at as a delusion. But what of it? The *fact* remains: "Now *are* we the sons of God." Our sonship is a reality; great is our present blessed condition, but far greater things are in store for us. This sonship, hidden now, will one day be revealed. "*It is not yet manifest what we shall be.*" What great blessedness awaits us even we Christians cannot apprehend. But some things we do know because revealed in Scriptures, and among these is: "*We know that we shall be like Him.*" *We know*,—it is not fiction, fancy of the mind; *we know*,—here is absolute

knowledge. What do we know? One day "*He, Christ, shall appear*" in great glory with all His holy angels and with the trump of God. (1 Thess. 4, 16.) Then all that are in the graves shall come forth; we Christians, the sons of God, will meet the Lord in the air. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15, 51.) Our bodies will be like unto Christ's glorious body. (Phil. 3, 21.) *We know we shall be like Him.* The image of God, lost through the Fall, and renewed according to the beginning in this life, in yonder life will be fully restored. (Ps. 17, 15.) *We shall be like, ὁμοιοι, Him.* We do not become gods; we remain "children of God," but children, sons, of God, glorified. This *we know* to be true. Why? "*For*"—reason why we know it to be so—"we shall see Him as He is." With the eyes of our glorified body we shall see Him, Jesus, Lord, Jehovah, "*as He is*"; we shall see Him as to His essence and as to His properties. All the glory of yonder life St. John compresses into this one clause: "*We shall see Him as He is.*" We shall know and see, *e. g.*, the mystery of the Trinity in unity, the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, *et al.* How do we know? "*For we shall see Him as He is.*" And His ways, so often past finding out here below, will be manifest to us. Here the questions often occur to us: Why must I go through this suffering? Why did this calamity befall me? But there is no answer. Then, however, we shall know and see, what we here believed, "that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8, 28); "*for we shall see Him as He is.*" "Now," says the apostle 1 Cor. 13, "we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know according as also I am known." In yonder life soul and body will be reunited and live with Christ in eternal joy and glory. And this beatific seeing of Him "*as He is*" will be the acme of heavenly bliss.

Ps. 16, 11: *In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

Ps. 16 is a Messianic psalm. (Cf. Acts 2, 25—28; 13, 35—37.) The words of v. 11 are words of the suffering Savior.

And the believers in Christ repeat these words after Him, and console themselves therewith. Language is inadequate to express the blessedness awaiting us in yonder life. "*Fulness of joy,*" "*pleasures forevermore,*" — such and similar expressions, indicating the abundant quantity and the endless duration of the joys of heaven, must suffice us here below. And when we consider that these joys and pleasures are in God's "*presence,*" "*at His right hand,*" we know that the splendor and glory awaiting us will far surpass all our fondest anticipations, and we confidently say with the Psalmist: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." (Ps. 17, 15.)

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(To be continued.)
