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SCRIPTURE PROOF IN THE VIEW OF MODERNISTS.

That the views which modern critical theologians hold of the origin of the Scriptures practically destroy both the causative and the normative authority of the Bible, and render it useless—except in a secondary manner—for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, has been pointed out long ago by the opponents of modernism. It was reasonably claimed that men could not consistently collect proof-texts for divine things from the only Book in which those things are propounded, if they do not believe that Book to be divinely originated and divinely effectual. With the passing of the old Bible, plenary inspired and inerrant, the old *Schriftbeweis* must go; the support is knocked from under systematic theology; the study of Bible-history becomes a study of Hebrew folklore, and preaching from Bible-texts an act of pious reverence for the past.

What Bible Christians have anticipated and feared is declared with appalling candor by a representative of the critical school of modern Protestant theology. At the "January Conference" at Dorpat Prof. Dr. Karl Girgensohn, of the local university, spoke to the pastors present on "Scripture Proof, Formerly and Now, in Evangelical Dogmatics."¹) He beholds "a grave inner crisis" in Protestantism, "so powerful and thorough that disinterested bystanders—Catholic critics and

1) *Der Schriftbeweis in der evangelischen Dogmatik einst und jetzt.* Leipzig, 1914.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

OF THE CHURCH.

Marks of the Church. (Concluded.)

1 John 4, 1: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

The "spirits" mentioned in our text are men of flesh and bone, *prophets*, as the context discloses. Some "spirits" "are of God," and hence are to be believed; others, and there are many of them, "are not of God," v. 3, and are to be shunned. "*Beloved*,"—love for your immortal souls impels me to warn you,—"*believe not every spirit.*" These spirits, prophets, manifest their wisdom by preaching, and demand *belief*, acceptance. But be on your guard. The very doctrine they preach manifests their spirit. "*Try the spirits*"; there is great danger: "*many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" Try them, "*whether they are of God*," or whether they breathe the spirit of Antichrist, v. 3. How are you to know whether they are "of God"? This is the test: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," v. 2. If these spirits publish a wisdom contrary to "the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 2, they are not of God, not actuated by His Spirit. They are false prophets. Beloved, believe them not!

In 1529, at Marburg, Luther was face to face with such a false prophet—Zwingli. Despite the grave differences between his doctrine of the Lord's Supper and that of the Bible, which Luther upheld, Zwingli offered Luther the right hand of fellowship. Luther refused, saying: "God's Word and His truth are dearer to me than the friendship of the whole world. You have a different spirit from ours."

Indirectly there is a *consolation* contained in the present

passage. If the apostle in his days saw the necessity of warning the Christians against "*many* false prophets," need we marvel that we must combat with so many to-day? Moreover, does not our Lord say of these last sad times: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before"? Matt. 24, 24. 25.

Rom. 16, 17: *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.*

Who causes "divisions and offenses" in the Church? St. Paul says they are caused by men that teach things "*contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.*" From whom had the Christians at Rome learned *the doctrine*? From Paul the Apostle. From whom had he received it? He says to the Galatians: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ," Gal. 1, 11. 12. When, therefore, the apostle writes to the Romans of "*the doctrine which ye have learned,*" that doctrine was the doctrine of Jesus Christ, "the truth," in which we are to continue, according to the exhortation of our Lord, John 8, 31. 32. It is the Word of God, of which Peter says: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. 4, 11. This Word of Truth does not cause divisions and offenses; it unifies. By the devil's deceit and craftiness, however, men arise and teach *contrary to* the true doctrine. Arius denied the deity of Christ, and thus caused divisions in the Church and *offenses*, that is, causes for stumbling, so that people departed from the Truth. Pelagius denied the doctrine of original sin, and thus caused divisions and offenses. Thus Nestorius, Zwingli, Calvin, and a host of others taught "*contrary to the doctrine*"; thus "divisions and offenses" were caused.

The text says the false teachers teach “*contrary to*” the doctrine. The translation is good; Luther’s translation, “*neben der Lehre,*” is better. The Greek text reads: *παρά τὴν διδαχὴν* = “*beside the doctrine which ye have learned.*” This closer translation of *παρά* = *beside*, gives us an insight into the method of the false teachers by which they endeavor to gain adherents for their false doctrines. They do not say: “Scripture teaches this and this doctrine, but we teach *contrary to* the explicit words of Scripture.” No, the method of causing divisions and offenses is a subtle one. The false doctrines are taught *beside* the true doctrines. Apparently the false teachers adhere to the Word of God; they use the words of Scripture; but *beside*, under cover of, the Scripture they smuggle in their erroneous doctrines. In 2 Pet. 2, 1 we read of false prophets *ὅτινες παρεισάξουσιν αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας*, “who privily,” stealthily, “will bring in damnable heresies.” The word “privily,” stealthily, is to translate the *παρά* in the composite word *παρεισάξουσιν*. With keen insight into the text Luther happily translates thus: “Sic werden *neben* einfuehren verderbliche Sekten.” In Galatia the perverters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to gain a hearing, and to make converts to their views, taught that the doctrine of justification as taught by St. Paul was good. Justification by faith in Christ Jesus—why, sure, that is a good doctrine, as far as it goes, but it doesn’t go far enough. In order to be saved, you must also be circumcised, you must “observe days and months and times and years.” Thus, “*beside the doctrine*” the Galatians had learned, these perverters taught their own perverse things: Justification by faith + circumcision; justification by faith + observing days and months. By teaching this “*beside*”-doctrine, they mixed error with truth. And the result? The truth was destroyed. What does Paul say to this plus annexed to the doctrine of justification? “I marvel that ye are so soon *removed from Him* that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is *not another,*” *i. e.*, which is not Gospel at all, Gal. 1, 6. “If any man

preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," v. 9. Again: "Christ is become of none effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; *ye are fallen from grace,*" Gal. 5, 4.

The Pope hypocritically avows full acceptance of the Scriptures as the Word of God, but *beside* this statement he places that other one: The traditions are of equal authority with the Bible, thus making the Word of God of none effect. And when the synergists say that conversion and salvation indeed depend on the grace of God, but to some extent also on the conduct of man, the latter assertion is an assertion *beside* the doctrine, and annuls the former.—Let these instances suffice.

Now, when we observe such deviations from the truth, what are we to do? Are we to view them with indifference? No. The apostle is very earnest in his appeal: "*I beseech you, brethren,*" for there is great danger for your souls' salvation; "*mark them*"—consider attentively them—"*which cause divisions and offenses.*" For what purpose? "*Avoid them,*" ἐκκλίνατε ἀπ' αὐτῶν, *i. e., turn away from them, give them no hearing.*

In the light of this passage judge of the union services as practised by various denominations. Observe, too, how strongly it condemns pulpit-fellowship and altar-fellowship with errorists.

It pains us, it is true, to keep aloof from all other denominations, but here is the command of God: "Avoid them!" This command is clear; we cannot refuse obedience to God.

2 Cor. 6, 14—18: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and*

walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

It required a great deal of self-denial on the part of the Corinthian Christians to sever all fellowship with those former friends and associates who had remained unbelievers. This the apostle knew; but it must be done.—In order to gain a favorable hearing, he assures them of his love, vv. 11—13. He speaks to them as to “his children.” Children will listen to the warning of a loving father. And warn them he must—their salvation was at stake.

The *warning* reads: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” The *reasons* for this warning follow in five rhetorical questions, which appeal to their Christian consciousness, and admit of but one answer. We observe that the idea “yoked together” in the topic sentence is developed by the words: fellowship, communion, concord, what part, agreement. The accumulated contrasts in the questions are most impressive, and were to convince the Corinthians of the fact: it is wrong to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers”; hence the *demand* is made: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate.”

“*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*” Paul has in mind the yoking together of an ox and an ass, of a clean and an unclean animal, in violation of the Law, Deut. 22, 9. 10. An apt portrayal, indeed, of a Christian having fellowship with an unbeliever. The two are too unlike to be put under one yoke.

Why should the Corinthian Christians not be yoked together with unbelievers? “*For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?*” None. The one is the very opposite of the other. The believer, doing righteousness, running the way of God’s commandments, cannot, at the same time, “walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of

sinner, nor sit in the seat of the scornful," Ps. 1. — "*What communion hath light with darkness?*" Light and darkness exclude each other. The believers are the children of light, the light of the world, John 12, 36; Eph. 5, 8. 9; Matt. 5, 14; the unbelievers are darkness, love darkness, walk in darkness, and hate the light, John 3, 19. 20. What communion between the two? None. How unreasonable, therefore, for Christians to be yoked together with them! How unreasonable, for example, for a Christian to belong to the godless lodge! — "*What concord hath Christ with Belial?*" Is a greater contrast imaginable — Belial, the devil, the father of lies, the murderer of men's souls, and Christ, the Truth, the Life, the Savior? You cannot serve two masters. Like master, like servant. Hence, ye Christians, the redeemed of Christ, be ye not unequally yoked together with the slaves and tools of Satan. — "*What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*" To the believer the Gospel is "the wisdom of God," to the unbeliever "the things of the Spirit," the Gospel, are foolishness, 1 Cor. 2. What have the two in common? Nothing. Hence, be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. — "*What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God.*" Idols are *dead* things, — these the unbelievers serve, to such they offer their sacrifices. You Christians serve the *living* God; He dwells in you, walks in you, He is your God, and you are His people. And you, "the temple of the living God," would be yoked together with unbelievers, the habitation of Belial? Impossible! Since you are *internally* separate from them, you should and must be *externally* separate. A fellowship, a communion, a concord, an agreement, with them is out of the question. There is but one course to take: "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate.*" This is the Lord's command. (Cf. Eph. 5, 11.)

What holds good concerning our attitude over against unbelievers holds good also towards those of a false faith. They are simply unbelievers regarding those doctrines in which they differ from the Bible. Methodists, Baptists, *et al.* do not be-

lieve, *e. g.*, the words of Christ: "This is My body." Hence, in so far and inasmuch as they do not believe these and other words of Scripture, they are *unbelievers*. "Be not unequally yoked together with them." All false doctrine comes from Belial, not from Christ; false doctrine is darkness, sound doctrine is light from above. True doctrine and false doctrine are separated from each other as far as are heaven and earth, Christ and Belial. Hence, be separate, go out from among them, do not participate in their services; in church-affairs have nothing in common with them. (Cf. *Smalcald Articles*, p. 337. Study 1 Cor. 5, 9. 10.)

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(*To be continued.*)
