

[Lockport, Niagara Co. NY]

REV. WRIGHT MAKES REPLY

Says Evangelist in Error on Universalist Creed

Parable of Rich Man and Lazarus Not "Death Blow" to His Church, Declares
Universalist Pastor, Who Corrects Mr. Miller's Impression and Condemns no Church.

Editor: the Journal:

Sir:—In behalf of the Universalist denomination of the Christian church, I wish to say a word through the courtesy of The Journal to those of Lockport and vicinity who have either heard or read the statement of the Rev. Mr. Miller at the Baptist church in this city Tuesday evening of this week regarding the teaching of Universalism. Quoting from the reported language of Mr. Miller:—"Whether the story of the rich man and Lazarus, which is found in St. Luke is a parable or not, it is a death blow to Universalism and Unitarianism and the theory that the good and bad are all saved."

As to the position of Unitarianism in this matter, I have nothing to say, but in behalf of the denomination of which I have both the joy and the honor of being a minister, let me say that it does not, nor to my knowledge ever has, proclaimed to the world through any authoritative source that both good and bad are saved; on the contrary, it has ever held and most emphatically declares that no man can ever be saved in his sin. It believes rather, that Jesus came to save men from their sin, and that only as man can and will forsake his sin, "cease to do evil and to learn to do well" can he enter the joy of Christian salvation either in the life that now is or in that which is to come. It holds that salvation or entering the Kingdom of God is not simply getting to some place when we die, but is getting into right relation with God and walking the path of righteousness while here in this present world.

All the teaching of Jesus as to the Kingdom of God reveals that kingdom to be a condition of life and spirit within the soul and not a place to which one shall go, but growth in righteousness builds for eternity and alone can lift man to the real heaven.

The parable to which Mr. Miller referred, instead of striking a "death blow" to Universalism, as he expresses it, is rather a graphic picture drawn by the master to show the proud, ungracious Scribes and Pharisees, the godlessness and selfishness of their partialistic theology, and if you will notice carefully this parable, you will see that it is the last of a series of parables, the first of which is found beginning with the third verse of the fifteenth chapter of Luke and was prompted by the fact that the Scribes and Pharisees found fault with Jesus, saying: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Then follows the parable of the "ninety and nine"—"the lost piece of silver"—"the prodigal son"—"the unjust steward"—and last of all the parable of "the rich man and Lazarus." The teaching in all of these parables is clear and direct and aims at the narrow partialism of Jewish theology and teaches the universal fatherhood of God and of His concern and care for all of His children. The last parable being a scathing rebuke to the partialist who must some time beg for mercy of those he has despised and wronged.

Whether here or hereafter just retribution must follow every act for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.

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Now Universalism stand for:

1st, The Universal fatherhood of God.

2nd, The spiritual authority and leadership of his son Jesus Christ.

3rd, The trustworthiness of the bible as containing a revelation from God.

4th, The certainty of just retribution for sin.

5th, The final harmony of all souls with God.

By a careful reading of the parables referred to you will see that Mr. Miller could not well have selected from the Scripture any portion which more profoundly echoes the sentiment expressed in all five articles of faith above quoted. I do not mean to criticize Mr. Miller's application of the parable, only so far as he relates it to the theological position of Universalism. In this, I seek to correct his error[,] for no church more fully enters into the warfare against sin and unrighteousness or more strongly commends humanity unto the Lamb of God.

Its inspiration to make a better world here on this earth and to lift manhood and womanhood to the highest moral level is not more strongly emphasized, however, than its desire and effort to quicken the spiritual vision and deepen the faith of mankind in the Holy Spirit of God, the ever living, ever working friend of man. That Spirit which shall reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, the risen Christ, who declared that "if he be lifted up from the earth he would draw all men unto him." We believe He will do as He said, Therefore, do we preach it and that if " God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He knew, even in the sending that the Son would not give up the fight and has not yet given it up and will not until "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Christ is the Son of God," and every soul shall be brought to the light and into obedience with the will of God.

We believe that the good Father who loves us is often severe and in our finite judgment almost harsh, yet we know that whom the Lord loveth he chastens that He may win us to obedience, and his Word, which was spoken by prophet and given to patriarchs long ago and in the person of Jesus "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," is the same word which Isaiah, the prophet said "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I send it."

"With malice toward none and charity for all," we condemn no church, but to all who misrepresent or persecute our cause, we would say in the language and spirit of our Master, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We have given to the world some of its noblest men and women who are living evangelists of the Lord. It is also well known to those familiar with the early writings of the Christian fathers that for the first 50 years after Christ the doctrine of the Universal Fatherhood of God and the final harmony of all souls with Him was an unquestioned Christian doctrine.

Clement Alexandrinus, who taught about 190 to 196 A.D. said of Jesus' "How is He Saviour of all? He is certainly the Saviour of those who believe and of those who have not, he is the Lord until by being brought to confess Him they shall be brought to receive the proper and well adapted blessing for themselves." One of Clement's pupils was

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Origen, who lived from 185 to 250 A.D. He was one of the ablest writers of the early church and fundamental to his teaching is the final restoration of all mankind to holiness and union with God. The teaching of this doctrine was universal in the church up to the year 544 A.D., when it was condemned by a special council quietly called together by Justinian.

In these days who can better represent the influence of our belief than one of its ardent numbers Clara Barton, known as "The Angel of the Battlefield," founder of the Red Cross Society? Who has not sung with joy and comfort the hymns of the Carey sisters? Mary A. Livermore, a Universalist, and the wife of a Universalist minister, both loyal friends of every noble reform and effort for the uplift into Christian freedom of mankind. These and many others whom we might mention are some of the fruits of that system of belief which has well nigh permeated all creeds, softened all dogmas, though still by a few like the blessed Master we all love, is hated without a cause.

Thanking the Journal for this valuable space in their paper, I am

Fraternally,
HARRY M. WRIGHT

Pastor of the Church of the Redeemer (Universalist)
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