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## What Is Your Child Taught at School?

A Study of Public School Textbooks and Curricula

By NORMA REMSEN ELLIS

of Immanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, West Collingswood, N. J.

### PART ONE

**D**O YOU know what your children learn at school?

It is a sunny September morning. You kiss Bobby good-bye, brushing his hair back from his excited blue eyes, entrust him to Jane, and watch them both as they hurry down the street to a Big Adventure. It is Bobby's first day of school; Jane has really grown up—she enters high school this fall.

You close the door and hum contentedly as you clear up the breakfast dishes. It's a good school system, you muse. We are fortunate to be Americans and to have the privilege of free public education. The elementary school where Bobby will be spending eight years is housed in a friendly little building. Curtains blow at the windows and flowers bloom on the sills. The furniture is painted apple-green, and so are the book-cases where the children may go freely to get all kinds of gay picture-books. The teachers are friendly, too. Jane loved them all. The town is proud of these well-trained women who really have the interests of the children at heart.

The high school also is splendid. It offers so much for the young people. Jane is interested in going out for basketball. And the idea of belonging to the Glee Club thrills her! The high school building is new and has excellent equipment and a large, well-selected library. The teachers all have college degrees; the French

teacher studied abroad. The principal is an officer in the state education association.

Indeed—your thoughts run on—it is wonderful to be an American. The public schools are a blessing for which we should be truly thankful to God!

Are you sure of this, Mother? And Dad, you who love to sign those report cards that make you swell with pride, are you sure that the public schools are doing for Bobby and Jane what you expect them to do? In fact, do you know what your children learn at school?

As a Christian parent you should be well acquainted with this. The school has an influence upon the thoughts and conduct of your children that is perhaps greater than you would be able to imagine. For one thing, the time that they spend there is regular, set, definite. That time, furthermore, is greater than that which is spent anywhere else outside the home. More important than this, the school has behind it the voice of authority. Children believe that what they learn at school is final, ultimate truth. And lastly, the influence of the school is great because the school intends that it shall be great. The chief purpose of the school is to influence, to mold lives. It attempts with all its might to bring about a "change" in the children under its care, a development in mental, social, physical, and so-called spiritual realms. With a corps of trained

# The Light of the World

An Address Delivered Over the Blue Network on September 1, 1944

By the REV. JOHN MURRAY

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**U**LTIMATE questions of life and destiny have a strange way of thrusting themselves upon our attention. We may try to suppress these questions and silence their persistent demands by becoming absorbed in passing interests. But despite all our attempts to silence the voice that summons us to the tribunal of ultimate issues, there is a worm that does not die and it continues to gnaw at the root of our composure. This deep-seated dissatisfaction is in many people vague and inarticulate, in others it is very active and arresting. But in all it is indestructible. Oftentimes, the mysteries and uncertainties of life weigh upon our spirits and these mysteries become the occasion, at least, of compelling us to reckon with the gravity of the issues of life and death, of time and eternity. What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of death? What is the meaning of human history? Extend the horizon of the question still farther: what is the meaning and purpose of this wide universe in which we live?

There are many who have struggled with this question and have finally given themselves over to hopeless skepticism. Many others have committed themselves to an answer that has no basis in the certainties of ascertained truth. But many others have found the answer and their souls have come to rest in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty. They have found the peace that passes all understanding.

But why does so much mystery, mystery that creates perplexity in the human breast and that drives many to desperation, surround the life of humanity? Why so much darkness with respect to the ultimate questions of life and destiny? It is strange indeed that the human race should be caught in the grip of such bewilderment and oftentimes even of despair. Surely there is something wrong. What is it? To discover the wrong would itself inject some ray of light into our bewilderment.

When human speculation addresses itself to the task of explaining the mystery, whether it takes the direction of probing the past or of searching the present or of peering into the future, it leaves us in the mists of uncertainty. If we are to find the answer to the question that the mystery of life compels us to ask, we must turn to the witness of Him who is God over all, of whom and through whom and unto whom are all things. In His abundant mercy and grace He has spoken to us in our perplexity and His witness has been brought to us in His own Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. God has been pleased to illumine our darkness with the light of His own infallible revelation. He has disclosed to us that there is wrong, He has unveiled the secret of our wrong, and therefore has provided us with the explanation of our very darkness. And so we listen to the simple word that teems with light while it also overflows with the severest indictment of the human race. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). That is the reason for our painful perplexity. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It is by sin that we are lost, lost in sin, and lost to light; lost to light because we are lost to Him who is light and in whom is no darkness at all. We are lost with reference to God, alienated from Him and from the light of His knowledge and fellowship.

Now this is by no means a pleasing truth: it is the most distasteful condemnation. But it is incomparably better to writhe under the verdict of truth than to be complacent in the chains of error. To accept the verdict that sin has separated between us and our God and that iniquity has hid His face from us is the only way into that liberty that is grounded in the certainty of truth.

God has not only illumined the mystery of our darkness but He has

also brought us the light of life. Some nineteen centuries ago there walked this earth One who said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). It was Jesus of Nazareth who spoke these words. And he also said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). These are stupendous claims, and it is useless, yea, it is mockery, to profess the discipleship of Jesus if we do not accept His testimony with all its implications. Candid examination of the evidence upon which our Christian faith rests leads to one conclusion, namely, that He spoke the truth, absolute truth, that He was Himself that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person, the image of the invisible God, God manifest in the flesh. He came into this world to redeem from sin and iniquity, to give His life a ransom for many, to redeem to God by His blood out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue. In the one word that is most relevant to our topic, He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

It is the glory of the Christian revelation and redemption that light and life and the light of life have been thereby brought into this world. Herein is the solution of our perplexity, because herein is redemption from sin. Life's urgent and unavoidable question is answered, not in the anguish of eternal dismay but in the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, for we receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. Then life receives its meaning in the combination of the highest human blessedness and the glory of the triune God. This is life eternal that we may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. It is in the faith of Jesus alone that we come to walk in the light as He is in the light.

And if we are still haunted by the question of the meaning of this wide universe in which we live, it is in Christ also that we find the answer. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or

principalities, or powers . . . He is before all things and in him all things consist" (Col. 1:16, 17). He is the head of all principality and power, and at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

## Is Arminianism the Gospel?

By the REV. EDWARD J. YOUNG, Ph.D.

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**I**N ORDER to answer the question, "Is Arminianism the gospel?" we must first obtain definitions of both Arminianism and the gospel. Many definitions of the gospel might be adduced, but the following one will, we believe, suffice for our purpose: "The gospel is the good news that the eternal Son of God has died on the cross in the stead of sinners, thus satisfying on their behalf the justice of God, rendering God propitious toward them, obtaining for them pardon and forgiveness of all their sins". This is by no means all of the gospel, but in these words its heart is set forth.

Historically there have been two principal types of Arminianism.

In Holland, Arminius introduced a system of doctrine which was condemned by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). The adherents of this doctrine were first called Remonstrants and later Arminians. The Arminians taught that the corruption of man's nature derived from Adam was not of the nature of sin. Hence, man by the fall did not lose his ability to do good. In other words, man is not really totally depraved, as the Bible teaches. God gives to all men grace in sufficient measure that all are enabled to repent and to believe the gospel. Man has the ability to cooperate with this grace, and all who, by their own free will, do cooperate with this grace are saved. It is this doctrine which the Synod of Dort rightly condemned.

The second type of Arminianism is that which is popularly known as Wesleyan. Wesleyan Arminianism teaches that man really did fall in Adam. This fall was more than a mere physical degeneration. It was a fall into total moral pollution and depravity. Consequently, man in his lost estate can do nothing to save himself. Christ has rendered satisfaction

for the sins of all men, and to all men such a measure of grace is given that, if it be improved, it will lead to salvation.

Of these two systems, it will at once be clear that Wesleyan Arminianism is far closer to the teaching of the Bible than is the Arminianism of the Remonstrants. Nevertheless, it must be apparent that in each of these schemes the one who determines who is to be saved is man. According to the Bible, it is God who determines who shall be saved. To quote but one passage, "He has chosen us in him [i.e., in Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4a). The Bible teaches that it is God alone who saves; the Arminian schemes teach that man contributes to his salvation. The Bible teaches salvation by grace alone; Arminianism does not teach salvation by grace alone. The gospel, as we have seen, is good news that God has actually saved man, has actually set him free from his lost estate, actually done everything that must be done if man is to be saved. Arminianism, at its best, really teaches that God has done almost everything that is necessary to save man. And, as Spurgeon put it, "If there be but one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we ourselves are to put in, we are lost". Arminianism, at its best, teaches that there is at least one stitch which we ourselves are to put in the celestial robe of our righteousness. Hence, we conclude, that Arminianism, even at its best, is not the gospel.

The grace of Arminianism is not almighty grace and, in the golden words of Warfield, "It is only in almighty grace that a sinner can hope; for it is only almighty grace that can raise the dead. What boots it to send the trumpeter crying amid the serried

ranks of the dead: 'The gates of heaven stand open: whosoever will may enter in?' The real question which presses is, Who will make these dry bones live? As over against all teaching that would tempt man to trust in himself for any, even the smallest part, of his salvation, Christianity casts him utterly on God. It is God and God alone who saves, and that in every element of the saving process".

## The Practical Fruits of Arminianism

What have been the practical fruits of Arminianism? Has it led men to Christ? Has it strengthened the faith of God's elect? The following statement by an observing liberal will be of interest in this connection, "The advance guard of American Unitarianism was known as Arminianism. This was a left wing Reformation movement which emphasized the rational spirit, natural laws, and the application of criticism to the Bible. It was more than a sect or a set of dogmas; it was a school of thought midway between Deism and orthodox Unitarianism and may be said to have served as a transition from one to the other. It was a liberal interpretation of life, rational in temper and inclusive in spirit. The followers of Arminius distinguished between the Bible as external authority and as an inspiration to moral conduct. With them it was not a fetish or a tyranny but a source book in ethics to be used with discrimination and reason".<sup>1</sup>

This statement obviously does not apply to all forms of Arminianism. In this country many evangelical preachers hold to a form of Wesleyan Arminianism. Their preaching, at any rate, leaves the impression that salvation is, in the last analysis, dependent upon something that man does. Do not these preachers have great zeal and passion? Do not they win many converts? Are they not alive and warm whereas for the most part Calvinists are dead and cold?

It is perfectly true that many men who hold to an Arminian theology are themselves zealous Christians. But this is in spite of, and not because of, whatever elements of Arminian-

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, from *The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit* by Fred Gladstone Bratton, New York, 1943, p. 190.