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FUTURE PROBATION.

A contemporary says: – "ONE seemingly plausible argument in favor of a future probation is the alleged fact that a large percentage of the race are cut down in infancy by the scythe of death before accepting or rejecting the offers of salvation; and this is coupled with the claim that faith is essential to salvation in all cases. At first glance, this surface claim may be deemed reliable; but candid reflection will spoil it in a moment.

"1. While there is death among children in *this* age, the theory of probation in the next age insists that there will *also* be death among children born in *that* age: so those children dying *there*, will as really [R2062 : page 270] be entitled to *another* age of probation as those who die [R2063 : page 270] in this age; and so on indefinitely. This proves too much or proves nothing.

"2. While faith is required in adults, unaccountable infants are never placed under that law: 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' We cannot go back of this divine rule: 'Thy children shall come again.'"

(1) This is poor logic as well as poor exposition of Scripture. If it were true that all children dying in infancy are saved eternally without a future trial or risk of the Second Death, it would follow that Herod of old, who slew so many infants, was the greatest, the most successful missionary of his day; for he made sure work of it. If the writer of the above believes what he says, he should follow the example of some who, becoming mentally unbalanced under such false teachings, have killed their children "to insure their going to heaven," as they expressed it. If this writer's theory be true, laws should be passed to hinder physicians from exerting their skill to keep alive young children, because they thus more than double the number which reach maturity, and according to this theory are keeping many from reaching eternal bliss. According to this theory *infanticide*, instead of being punished,

should be encouraged by rewards and premiums; and no doubt such false and irrational teachings as the above quotation do act as a premium, and encourage the mentally and physically weak and depraved.

The theory is illogical, further, in that it presupposes that God is acting irrationally, in placing millions on millions of human beings under present conditions *for no reason or useful purpose*; because, if there be no necessity for the development of character by experience and trials, so that a blank is more desirable in God's esteem than the painstaking and tear-washed, though imperfect, page of Christian character, it would seem very cruel and loveless, if nothing worse, on God's part, to expose so many millions to the buffetings of the world, the flesh and the devil; – especially with the foreknowledge that "few there be that find" the strait gate and narrow way in "this present evil world."

As to the Scripture passage cited: We hold that it is here and frequently given a false interpretation. We hold that our Lord did not mean to be understood that the blank of childish character is the ideal standard of God's Kingdom. Another of the Evangelists tells that our Lord, coming to his disciples, found them disputing as to which of them should be considered greatest or chief, and that he, setting a child in their midst as a sample of guilelessness and humility, told them that, unless they became *as* a little child, they should have no share in the Kingdom; – not *as* a little child in stature, nor in blankness of undeveloped character, but in humility, simplicity, guilelessness. "Of such [*like*] is the Kingdom of heaven." As the Apostle urged, "Be not children in knowledge [character], howbeit in malice be ye children." (1 Cor. 14:20.) And this evidently covers the point of our Lord's remarks about children, as understood by the Apostles; for surely they never expressed such ideas as we are here criticizing.

Our Lord frequently spoke of his followers as "children," "little children" and "little ones." See the following instances: John

13:33; Matt. 10:42; 18:6,10,14; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2. These were the "little ones" in malice and pride and in the world's estimate, among whom there would not be many great or wise or learned, according to the course of this world; – these were to overcome the world by faith and faithfulness, even unto death; and as "overcomers" were to share Christ's throne as heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they would suffer with him that they might also be glorified together. – Rom. 8:17.

The promise concerning Rachel's children is mentioned as a proof that they will have no trial, but *are saved*; however, a reference to the prophet's words (Jer. 31:16,17) shows that in this Scripture, also, the writer has made a misapplication; for so far from the children being saved or in the Kingdom, the prophet declares, "they shall come again *from the land of the enemy*" – the general prison-house of death. They shall indeed come therefrom, thank God! Our Lord Jesus gave himself *a ransom for ALL*, and hence in due time, as our Lord declared, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth;" some to the first resurrection and some unto a "resurrection by judgment;"* – and then "they that hear [*obey*, see Acts 3:22,23] shall *live*" – everlastingly. – John 5:25,28,29.

*See our issue of Oct. 15, page 246, and our issue of Aug. 15, '95, for explanation of "Resurrection by Judgment."

(2) Faith in the promise of God, that Christ and the Church constitute the true Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16,29), and that in and by this Seed, according to the Lord's promise, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed;" and that it is for this purpose that the Kingdom – the Millennial Kingdom – is to be given to Christ and the overcoming Church (Rev. 2:26,27; 1 Cor. 15:25), makes no claim such as this writer suggests, namely, that infants will die during the Millennial age as now.

On the contrary, it claims in the words of the Prophet Isaiah (65:17-20) when describing the new heavens and new earth conditions, that "There shall be no more thence an infant of days,...for as a lad shall one

die a hundred years old; and as a sinner shall he be accursed who (dieth) a hundred years old."

This is in agreement with the Scriptural assurances that, when the Kingdom of God is established in [R2063 : page 271] the earth, the high-way of life will be made clear and open to all (Isa. 35:8), and that only such as wilfully refuse to walk therein shall die at all, and they the Second Death; from which there is no resurrection, no recovery, provided. "Every soul which will not hear [obey] that prophet [the great prophet, Christ Jesus the head and the Church his body, – the antitype of Moses] shall be *destroyed* from among the people." – Acts 3:23.

Thank God for a good hope, a Scriptural hope, a reasonable and logical hope, – for the Church now a high calling to a joint-heirship in the Kingdom with immortality; and for "whosoever will" of "all the families of the earth," when in due time the grace of God shall be extended to them, a restitution of all that was lost in Adam. And, let us not forget it, "He that [truly] hath this hope in him *purifieth himself*, even as he [Christ, his redeemer and exemplar] is pure."
