

by self-confidence, feels little compunction at unpleasant facts, since respect for God has long passed into special regard for ourselves.

We should hedge around religious truths with whatever honours God and proclaims His presence. Our Churches, too, in their arrangement and in the manner of conducting public worship should be ordered to show that while we believe the Divine Presence is everywhere, yet to us at least It is especially so in holy places set apart for His name—His dwelling-place. In our teaching the privileges of the believers should not be insisted on so as to ignore the mercy and favour of God. In our hymns, instead of exalting our goodness and lecturing sinners, we should either entreat for forgiveness or attempt adoration as honest worshippers. In personal conversation we should prepare the ground of the heart before we cast truths among thorns or on rocks. In fact, there is often more moral force in pointing heavenwards than in uttering holy names; and while we don't want to idolize the Bible, we think its teaching would be more effective, were there due reverence for the holy book itself. What must be the impression on thousands of school children when leaves of the Bible are strewn about in the school-room, or trampled under foot in the yard? What should be the influence of the truth on us all if approached with the reverence becoming its source?—*West Indian Guardian*.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

### (CHURCH BELLS.)

"It is lamentable to know that a 'Secular Education Act' for primary schools is the law of the land in Australia, and that it is so secular that, in order to give full effect to it, even *Nelson's Readers* are found to be too religious—so much so, that a special edition has been produced, from which every mention of Christ and Christianity is excluded."—*Church Bells*.

On reading the above some weeks ago, I determined to give the views of a schoolmaster of more than forty years' experience as soon as the summer vacation gave me a little leisure.

I remember that, when I sent for my certificate at Salford (Easter, 1849), there had been a large meeting a week or two previously in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester, which had been convened by the secularists of Manchester to pass some resolution in favour of their system being recognised by the Government in distributing the annual grant for education. Whatever might have been the object of the conveners of the meeting, I remember that the late Canon Stowell proposed an amendment, which was seconded by a Wesleyan minister of the name of Osborne, and it was carried by a great majority.

Times have, indeed, changed since then, and on the subject of education, not for the better.

Let me try to show that all education not based on religious teaching must largely be a failure, as it is as true now as ever that 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

Why do we spend so much money upon the education of the masses? Is it not that we hope to make them better men and women—better citizens? How can we hope to do this if we ignore the Bible as the basis of our teaching?

How is it that a country like our own, that boasts of the many thousands of Bibles which it circulates at home and abroad, should ever come to a decision that Bible-teaching may be dispensed with in our schools?—still more, that professed ministers of religion should be found to support such a scheme? Yet so it is. I am convinced of one thing, that it has not been done in compliance with the wish of parents, for in all my experience I have never met with any parents who objected to it for their own children. I have heard parents say again that whatever they may have been they should like their children to live better than they have done.

Well may parents do so; they know from sad experience that whatever their children may become, that seasons of sorrow, sickness, and trouble will come, and that, if they have no religious hopes to fall back upon at such times, it will be indeed bad for them, and no wonder if they seek present relief in suicide or crime. They know that any religious teaching they may have had never stood in their way unless to check them when tempted to do evil. They know, too, that a wise or good son makes a glad father; but that a foolish or wicked son is a trouble, not only to his mother but all connected with him. They know from which class they themselves may most confidently expect love and kindness in old age.

Never did I know one who suffered from early religious training, but, alas! many who ruined themselves by not practising what they had been taught.

We do not expect all pupils to be religious when they grow up, whatever training they may have had—or, at least, to exhibit it—any more than we expect to reap a harvest as the seed has been sown—and the time of education is sowing-time; but no man in his senses would expect to reap a crop which he had not sown, except a crop of weeds.

I know the opponents of Bible teaching say that it is not religion which they oppose, but Sectarianism. As a practical teacher, I say you cannot teach dogmas peculiar to any sect except by way of catechism, and catechisms are forbidden. Where have the Nonconformists of past generations had their teaching? Mainly from the Church of England schools; but it did not make Churchmen of them. For many years the 'conscience clause' has been in force in all schools aided by Government grants, but very, very few have ever availed themselves of it—why? Because there was nothing taught at which parents could, or wished to, cavil, and I have ever found that a well-given Bible lesson has generally been an interesting one to the pupils. The good old Saxon and the poetical language of the authorised version possess a great fascination for children, and there is no subject which is more valuable as an intellectual aid for developing the mental powers of a child.

I would, then, appeal to all parents. If you have any love for your children—if you would wish to see them do well in life, if you would have them strong to resist temptation to evil, if you would have them loving and kind to you in old age, if you would provide a source of comfort to them in the days of sorrow, which you know will surely come—see to it that you get for them Bible teaching in their youth, see that they learn something of the Divine love, self-sacrifice, and willing death portrayed in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Do not be led away by fine-sounding phrases of 'liberal' and 'unsectarian' dangled before you at School Board elections. There is nothing liberal in depriving children of the best of all knowledge; there is nothing liberal in depriving them of that knowledge for which many thousands are spent yearly to send Bibles to heathen and foreign countries. By all means do the latter, but see to it that you do not neglect the former.

There is nothing sectarian in teaching your children to understand the Bible any more than in teaching them to understand any other book. The seed sown in school may in after years spring up to life eternal; but, if the seed is not sown then, it may never be sown at all. A single gospel and some carefully selected passages for repetition will demand all the time the schoolmaster can spare for this one subject in a year.

I grant that, where catechisms are taught as in Roman Catholic schools, dogma may be taught to children if not understood by them; but Bible teaching implies nothing of all this. It means giving the same kind of attention to the teaching of some defined course of study in the Bible as would be given to a play of Shakspeare

or some English history. We indeed hope that this will prepare the mind for more definite instruction later on which, by the help of the Holy Spirit, may teach the heart as well as the intellect, and that our pupils may grow up Christians, *i.e.*, true followers of Christ, and that they may be prepared to answer those who would undermine their faith in the Gospel.

Will parents, then, who have any love for their offspring, any desire to see their sons and daughters happy or contented in life, and prepared for that event which sooner or later overtakes each one of us—death—refuse to insist that in all schools there shall be definite religious teaching in that in all schools there shall be definite religious teaching in that best of all books—the Bible? Remember, parents, that so-called Bible-reading is only a farce; and, moreover, do not rest till it again forms part of the Inspector's examination, because then, and the only, will proper attention be given to it. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.' Again, 'Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee.' Again, the Psalmist prays, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.' Once more I would appeal to all parents to see to it that they send their children, if possible, to schools where Bible-teaching is carried out, and so to exercise their votes at School Board elections as to confer on others the same blessing which they try to secure for their own children. No word has been more misused of late years than the word 'liberal'; it has been made to cover all sorts of abominations and misrepresentations.

Secondly, I would appeal to all patriots or lovers of their country. Remember that 'righteousness exalteth a nation,' and, if we would see our country prosperous, we must place God and his Word first in our scheme of education. The nation, as a nation, can have no future existence; consequently national sins must bring—and, as history tells us, have ever brought—national punishments in this world in the shape of war, pestilence, or famine; and, if these fail to bring the nation back, is will in time inevitably bring national ruin and overthrow, as surely as night follows day.

The Bible teaches us that it is better to suffer an injury than to do one; but is this the teaching of modern agitators? No, their doctrine rather teaches to do all sorts of injury, no matter how devilish, in the hope of effecting some chimera of good. Have we not seen the most fearful crimes committed in the sister country of Ireland for the basest ends? Have we not known still more recently the most stupid lies told to ignorant voters to beguile them of their votes? Shall this tampering with truth bring no evils in its train—no confusion to those who have profited by them? I cannot but think it will bring an abundant crop of evils upon the country at large; and, further, that those who prefer expediency to right will sooner or later find, to their own confusion, that honesty would have been the wiser policy. I cannot but think that they who corrupt a nation by lies are more seriously injuring that nation than they would have done by bribery, and therefore that the one ought to be as fatal to an election as the other, if proved. It also shows that statesmen need a more practical knowledge of their Bibles, as well as the masses of their countrymen. There is no sin more severely condemned in the Bible than lying—no sin in the present day more common.

Finally, I appeal to all parents and patriots to exert all the influence which they possess to secure for the rising generations the opportunity of acquiring a sound knowledge of Bible truths, and then we shall find that the education given at so great a cost will be money well spent, that lying at elections will fail to secure the votes of the masses as much as those of their more intelligent countrymen.