

The Bible in Schools of Learning.

We have heard much of late, in this latitude, of "Godless institutions," and a pious horror has been evinced at the bare idea of having a college, not without a Bible, but destitute of a teacher of sectarian Theology. In excluding from our halls of learning, official Puseyism, our Legislature has pursued an enlightened and equitable policy. It has not, thereby rendered the institution "Godless," unless Godliness and High-churchism are synonymous terms. The Bible, without human commentary to sway the young mind towards any particular sect, or human gloss to bewilder or mislead, is still there; and it is paying a poor compliment to that Book to affirm that its simple, unaided instructions are not enough to save an institution of learning from the appellation, "Godless."

The value of the Bible in all schools of learning, is placed in a strong light, in the following extracts which we give from an inaugural address delivered before the curators of the State University of Missouri by President Shannon:—

"President Wayland remarks:—'For beings who are willing to govern themselves by moral principle, there can be no doubt that a government, relying on moral principle, is the true form of government. There is no reason why a man should be oppressed by taxation, and subjected to fear, who is willing to govern himself by the law of reciprocity. It is surely better for an intelligent and moral being to do right from his own will, than to pay another to force him to do right. And yet, as it is better that he should do right than wrong, even though he be forced to do it, it is well that he should pay others to force him, if there be no other way of insuring his good conduct. God has rendered the blessings of freedom inseparable from moral restraint in the individual; and hence, it is vain for a people to expect to be free, unless they are first willing to be virtuous.'—*Moral Science*, p. 333.

To which give me leave to add a short extract from the farewell address of the illustrious Washington:—'Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness—these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connection with private and public felicity. Let it be just simply asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who, that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?'

If the foregoing sentiments be true—and in the present enlightened age, the man would be considered demented, who would seriously call their truth in question—then, indeed, it would be difficult to over-estimate the importance of the proper education of the moral feelings.

It is in this connection that the comparative value of the Christian Scriptures, in the work of education, becomes almost self-evident. As well might you expect to support animal life without food, as to maintain pure and permanent morality, in any community, without the Bible. Compare the condition of these United States, physical, intellectual, and moral, with that of Italy, Spain, or France. To what is our superiority, in every thing that involves true dignity and enjoyment, to be ascribed, if not to our greater familiarity with the Bible, and our superior reverence for the teachings of that Holy Volume? In every department of education, therefore, from the nursery to the common school, the academy, and the college, the Bible, and especially the New Testament, is of indispensable importance.

Some timid people, however, are alarmed, lest if the scriptures be admitted into educational establishments, they will be perverted to the vile purposes of sectarianism. That they may be so perverted, cannot be denied. So may every good thing and holy in the Universe. But this enlightened audience needs not to be informed, that the argument against the use, from the abuse, either actual or possible, is a sheer sophism.

In this instance the objection overlooks the fact, that whatever belongs to the essence of Christianity is not sectarian, but catholic in its nature and tendencies. The Bible is not a sectarian, but a catholic book; and he would be wholly unworthy to be trusted with the business of education, who would even desire to pervert it to sectarian purposes. Nay, more, he would manifest a profound ignorance of the spirit and power of Christianity. The very essence of piety, under every dispensation of religion, consists in a supreme regard for the divine authority. Consequently if any individual believes and acts religiously in a particular way, simply because I believe and act thus, he is worshipping me and not God; and, therefore, his religion, no matter what may be his zeal in its maintenance, possesses all the elements of idolatry.

A spirit of proselytism may be, and not unfrequently is, directly opposed to a spirit of piety. It always is so opposed, when it even encourages an individual to join our church, except so far as he is impelled thereto by an intelligent conviction of duty. The language of piety is: "Deny yourself, Call no man Master. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good." The language of proselytism is: Go with me, and I will show you a lucrative, an easy, or a fashionable road to heaven.

Impress upon the minds of men a supreme and self-sacrificing regard to the divine authority, as absolutely indispensable to the enjoyment of the divine favor, and you have done all that man can do to preserve them from a sectarian spirit.

If the foregoing views be not wholly erroneous, it is manifest that every system of education which does not regard Christianity as the one thing needful, is radically defective, and pernicious in its tendency. The scriptures alone "are able to make men wise unto salvation"—to conduct them to the perfection of their being—to the highest attainable dignity and happiness—in the world, and to glory inconceivable and everlasting in the world to come.

Every seminary of education, therefore, should be conducted with an abiding regard for the paramount authority of the Christian Scriptures. The evidences that Christianity is from God, should be thoroughly examined and taught. Its morality, also, and its motives, its precepts and its promises, should be habitually and distinctively impressed upon the minds of the students. Reading the Scriptures and prayer, should form a part of the daily exercises. There is nothing sectarian in all this, and in much more that might be specified. At the same time, enlightened piety, no less than common prudence, will require the teacher in even

a private school, and still more in a public seminary, to abstain from the official inculcation of sectarian peculiarities.

I rejoice to think, that the correctness of these views is now generally admitted. Even in Girard College—into the precincts of which no ecclesiastic can ever be admitted without a violation of the will of the founder—the Trustees have recognized, in the management of the institution, the soundness of the foregoing principles. In this they have acted wisely; for no seminary of learning can flourish—none ought to flourish—that aids in propagating the miserable delusion, that the proper training of the moral sentiments is not the chief business of education; or that this training can be successfully conducted, except in harmony with the sublime, the heavenly precepts and promises of the Christian religion.

Towards the close of the last century, in the most literary and polished nation then in existence, an attempt was made to dispense with the Bible. With what success, let the appalling scenes of the 'Reign of Terror,' which baptized Paris in the best blood of her citizens, bear witness. Forewarned, it would indicate a most extraordinary lack of common prudence not to avoid a rock on which others have so fearfully made shipwreck."

☞ We learn that the Rev. A. F. Spaulding, a graduate of Brown and Newton, has accepted a call from the St. Helen Street Baptist Church, Montreal, to become their pastor, and has entered upon his labours. We bid him a hearty welcome to Canada, and hope occasionally to hear from him.

COLPORTAGE.—The young men connected with the Bond Street Baptist Church in this city, have for some months past kept a colporteur (Rev. J. Oakley) preaching, and distributing religious books and tracts in some of our back settlements. We are happy to be able to record the fact, that the labours of brother Oakley have been most signally blessed. In one township, where he found, on his first arrival, nothing to encourage the hope that his efforts would prove successful, there is now a most gratifying religious interest. At our last advices, sixteen happy believers had been baptized, while others were expected soon to follow. Brother Howd of Newmarket, has, we learn, rendered efficient service in this work. May the Lord spread the sacred influence.

BOARD OF THE UNION.—The Board of the Regular Baptist Union, held its second session on the second Wednesday of December, at Toronto. Little business was transacted. The most important matter which came before the Board, was the fact, that one of our brethren has been compelled to pay three hundred dollars on the Union's account; and that, in order to do this, he has been constrained to sacrifice some of his property! Will the Baptist Churches in connection with the Union, stand quietly by, and allow this sacrifice to be made? We cannot believe them to be composed of such materials. The Board appointed the Rev. Messrs. Boyd, Davidson, and Pyper, to act (gratuitously) as their agents, and to make a personal appeal to the Churches, to take up collections, and thus wipe away at once, and forever, the indebtedness which hangs upon the Union like an incubus. The different routes of these agents, with the time when they will visit each Church, will be indicated in the next number of the Observer.