

A PLEA FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE SCRIPTURES TO THE SCHOOLS.*

Resolved, That the use of the Scriptures as a reading-book in common schools, is of such importance, as to deserve immediate and universal encouragement, in all our States and Territories.

Every people without exception, has thought it necessary to teach its religion to its children, as the basis of all other knowledge; and every nation that has been sufficiently advanced to have a written religion, and places for the regular instruction of youth in knowledge, has made the national religion a national study, in childhood. The sacred books of all heathen nations have been known of all, who know any thing whatever. The pages of the Koran, in every age and country, have been the first study of every follower of the false prophet. The very highest literature of all antiquity is thoroughly impregnated with the popular religion; so that every Greek and Roman youth was made a scholar and a pagan, by the self same process. The Hebrew parent, by the most express command of God, made his child from its very birth, by every outward mark and every inward accomplishment; at home, by the way-side, in the school, in the sanctuary, in the halls of justice, on the field of battle, and upon the throne itself, — thoroughly and intensely a Hebrew. The early Christian Church, was in no degree less assiduous, in the same devotedness to the exact and universal religious instruction of the young. Every corrupt and apostate sect which has forsaken or renounced our divine Redeemer—and most conspicuously those who thoroughly and openly rejected the Bible—has instilled each its own peculiar heresies, by every means, not excluding their schools, into the minds of their children. The leaders of the glorious reformation of the sixteenth century, and for two centuries and more, all their true followers, received as from God the solemn duty, of the public as well as private instruction of the young in the word of life.—The illustrious spirit of Luther as he drew near his rest, in a review of his literary labours, rejoiced the most in this, that he had written his book *De Serro Arbitrio* again. Erasmus, and had prepared his Small Catechism; a performance, which like the similar one of his immortal fellow-labourer, John Calvin remains, each, after the lapse of three hundred years, respectively the symbol of churches, states, and races. Nay, until a period so little remote that many who hear me, can recall it, the school-house and the church, stood side by side, throughout our country; and the Bible and the Catechism constituted, in both, the basis of perpetual instruction. * * * *

The protestant churches generally throughout Europe have made a more steadfast resistance, than ourselves, to the exclusion of the Bible from the course of general education; and are therefore, in this respect, generally, in a better condition than ourselves. In England, there is no school system of sufficient extent, to deserve the name of national; but the institution which has the oversight of what are called the National Schools, has introduced the Scriptures to them. The schools of Scotland, so far as they have been under the care of the national church of that kingdom, remain on their ancient model. In Ireland, a systematic attempt was recently made by a committee of the British House of Commons, which in 1825, 6 and 7 carefully investigated the whole subject of Irish education; with a view to provide a general and thorough system of popular instruction. The result is given in nine reports, which together contain considerably more than three thousand printed pages in folio; and the sum of all is, that the most ignorant and illiterate of all civilized states, absolutely repudiated by the high dignitaries of the papal church, every system of public, nay even of gratuitous instruction, which should not as a starting point, reject the Bible, and admit the dogmas of Popery.

For if we restrict our views of education so narrowly as to embrace in its scope, only that which is purely mental; no absurdity can be more audacious than to reject the Bible, even from such a plan. Is it of use to know what we are, what we can be, what we have been? To know what we can be and achieve

whatever is most excellent? Is it a part of instruction to set before us, the highest exhibitions of whatever is great and striking in the past? The greatness of virtue, the greatness of passion, of achievement, of effort, of transcendent civilization, of unparalleled crime? Well, what is the Bible? It is amongst other things, the record, the safety, often the only record, of the largest, the longest the most striking part of the history of genius, of knowledge, of sublime adventure, of all-glorious success,—yea of man himself! It is the text-book, out of which to unriddle the great mystery of God's providence in the government of the world! The greatest of all poets, philosophers, orators, moralists, lawgivers, rulers and conquerors, who have adorned those long annals which cover two-thirds of the whole duration of human existence here below; these are the men who have written this book! It contains their legacy of wisdom and instruction, to generations of generations! A legacy so vast and so enduring, that one single man, and he the beginner of the book, has bestowed in a few brief pages, the elements of civilization, or organized society, of law, of morals, and of religion upon every age that has succeeded him; and stamped the impress of his mind, upon the whole human race! Why, this book, which is the sum and substance of all literature more ancient than the Greek, is the substratum also of whatever exists in our modern tongues. The two great protestant translations of the Bible, the germanic and our own, formed, in truth, the two languages; and they reign over them still when centuries have passed, the highest classic respectively in each. In sober verity this book is not only the book of God, but also the book of the human race. So that to reject it is at once to be separated from the Lord and from enlightened man?

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It has been usual to recommend to intending communicants, and especially to those who are about to approach the table of the Lord for the first time, a particular course of retirement, meditation, reading, and prayer. In reference to this, I would venture to say to you, that I fear any short preparation of a character totally foreign to your habits, and to the habits you intend to pursue afterwards, can be of little avail. To assume for a week or for a month the external garb of severe piety, is no mark of an intention to lead a new life; nor has it, as far as I can see, any probable tendency to produce such an intention. The preparation which I am now recommending is simply a careful inquiry as to your actual state of fitness for communion. And in order to determine this, you have seriously to put the question to your own conscience, Do I so believe the Gospel as to act in accordance with my belief? Do I feel that I have no merit whereby to deserve heaven; nay, that my sins of omission and commission have justly and necessarily incurred God's wrath and condemnation? Do I believe that the fact commemorated in the Eucharist, was the purchasing of my redemption? and do I feel in my heart a sincere desire to devote myself in grateful obedience, as "a reasonable sacrifice, holy and acceptable," to Him who gave his life a ransom for me? . . . The first qualification for communion is a consciousness of your own unworthiness. But, then, there is a mere speculative conviction of sin, just as there is a mere speculative belief in redemption; and the one, like the other, is dead, and profiteth nothing. The most hardened profligate is ready, in full sincerity, to confess himself a sinner—perhaps to triumph in the boldness of his iniquity—perhaps to calm merit for the honesty of his confession. The consciousness of sin by which you must be fitted for communion, is not the bare consciousness that you have sinned, for that must be possessed by every human being that knows the difference between right and wrong; but it is a consciousness of your own actual sinfulness, combined with some perception of the intrinsic baseness, and some dread of the dangerous consequences of sin. These are the root of true Christian repentance; and without these there can exist no true Christian faith, because till they exist, the scheme of redemption will never appear of sufficient importance to have either its evidence or its contents fairly and thoroughly examined.

—Rev. C. H. Terrot.

GOD'S ORDINANCES.

For a constant and copious stream of grace and blessing to flow to us in ordinances—the appointed channels of Divine grace—we must apply to them in faith and use them with regularity and thankfulness. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."—The form profiteth nothing—the power of godliness is alone valuable. Ordinances are to be regarded as both ends and means—ends of glorifying God—means of benefiting man. In both respects faith is necessary. The empty homage of the lips brings God no honour, and man no benefit. The pure incense of the heart mounts up to the throne of grace, and whilst it gives honour, and praise, and glory to Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, brings down a rich blessing upon the faithful and spiritual worshiper.—Rev. Newton Smart.

THE HUMAN FRAME.

Whoever considers attentively his own frame, will read in it abundant evidence of the wisdom of God.—So much contrivance, such delicate workmanship, such intricacy in the parts, and yet such simplicity in the whole, it would be absurd to think produced by chance, and impious to ascribe to less than God. Nor are we only wonderfully, but also fearfully made; for every joint, sinew, nerve, and vessel of our body is liable to numberless disorders, which Providence only can avert; and, above all the rest, that mysterious harmony and correspondence which is maintained between two parts of our constitution which have no affinity or resemblance to each other, the body and the spirit, we can neither aid nor comprehend; but must owe both its existence and its preservation to the ever-watchful superintendence of the Almighty. It is he that contrived, and wrought, and preserves it; and if ever it is deranged or disorganized, there is none who can restore it but he.—Rev. E. G. Marsh
Note on Psalm cxxxix.

It is not a season to begin to turn to Christ, when we cannot turn in our bed.—Lacon.

The way to keep hope alive, is to keep its glorious blessed object in view.—Horne.

THE USE OF AFFLICTION.*

"Those afflictions which have their proper effect, and humble us into true resignation, are like storms which drive rightly-directed vessels onwards to their destined ports."

O who would shun affliction's rod
When wielded by Thy hand,
Thou art an all forgiving God,
With all at Thy command.
Thou rulest every tossing wave
Upon the bright blue sea,
Thou'rt lost and driven, Thou can'st save
And from destruction free.
O grant that those afflictions Lord,
Which late have been my lot,
Through inward grace may hope afford,
That I am not forgot:
Thou' darkness all my paths obscure,
And every hope seems wane,
Thy sacred word is pledged and sure,
That none shall ask in vain.
Then grant, O Lord, in mercy grant,
My bark may gently glide,
To where calm waters always flow
At morn and even-tide.
Our task then o'er, our race then run,
From care and sorrow free,
Thy smile shall be a changeless sun,
To sinners such as me.
Then blow ye storms, I heed ye not,
If guided by Thy hand,—
Afflictions ne'er should be forgot,
That leads to such bright lands.

* From the Banner of the Cross.

* From an Address delivered at the 23d anniversary of the American Bible Society, at New York, by the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge.