

no open vision, there was no mighty human voice to echo the call of God. Samson was fitful and Eli feeble—such men could not be a help and a hiding place in the great storms. In the fulness of time God's highest revelation came to the world as a little child.

So here in one of Israel's darkest hours the voice came to a ministering boy. The first message was indeed a sad one, and it is a sorrowful thing to see such a burden of responsibility placed upon the heart of a child. Not seldom, however, is it the fate of children to learn the terrible reality of sin and the stern righteousness of God through the misery that comes upon those whom they love. The story of Samuel's youth is a beautiful one. Hardly anywhere else do we find set forth in such lovely forms the sacredness of motherhood and the consecration of childhood. It is so full of sweet suggestions that we are tempted to linger over it, especially as the heavenly light that is in it is made so much brighter by the surrounding darkness.

We set out with the purpose of emphasizing this one fact: that in beginning a new era of hope and progress God provided a man who was open to inspiring influences and who knew the value of education. It was a transitional time, when the nation was in danger of falling into separate tribes, because the common faith was weaker than the conflicting interests. Samuel became a power for political and religious unity. We are not likely to forget that he was an inspired man. That is impressed upon us by the narrative which tells of the awakening of his prophetic consciousness, and by the words, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," which strike the keynote of his life. We believe also that he did much towards organizing the prophetic schools. One of the men

who is most distinctively inspired is the leader in the organization of religious teaching. Inspiration and education ought to be in harmony. When God chose men for battle He chose strong, able men; and when he chose men for teaching, men were selected who were endowed with rich mental capabilities. Every kind of strength may be consecrated to the service of God, and as a rule the leaders of great religious movements which have left an enduring influence in the world's life, have been men of wonderful powers of mind. Intellectual pride may be a hindrance even as other forms of pride, and a dry intellectualism is a poor thing anywhere. But while Amos teaches us that the spirit of God is not monopolised by any class or profession, we learn from Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and Paul that the same spirit can chasten and consecrate the highest culture. Those who talk as if study and education were in themselves a hindrance to spirituality, do not know as much about their Bible as they think they do. In the schools of the prophets there were doubtless many who were formal and perfunctory, possessing little of intelligence or fervour; but there were also many whose names we do not know who quietly helped to sow the seeds of a nobler faith, and out of those schools there arose strong men who fearlessly rebuked the sins of princes, and taught to the nation new visions from God.

We are thankful for all healthful excitement and strong impulses that tend towards a higher life, but not by these alone does a nation grow in purity and power; we need the steady working of the forces of enlightenment which draw out and discipline the noblest powers. Our thoughts of education to-day are larger, the world of knowledge is widening in all directions, and some are afraid that all this