

tions, so far as the school system is concerned. No branch of the church, Protestant or Catholic, can feel that another is getting the advantage of it, when all are treated alike, the religious opinions of all being equally ignored. Within one domain, at least, there is absolute freedom from ecclesiastical quarrels, the bitterest of all quarrels as our legislators are accustomed to say, with that happy blindness to the character of their own contentions which is so common. Now, even admitting that the statement proceeds on a somewhat exaggerated estimate of the danger to peace and good feeling arising from religious instruction finding a place in the public school, it is an obvious gain to have in its exclusion the door shut against one element of jealousy and discord. It may be added as another advantage, that with religious teaching relegated to the home and to the church, so much more time is left for those secular branches which all admit ought to form the staple of public school instruction, and which in our day have become numerous enough to tax the brain and time both of teachers and pupils. In the light of such considerations as these, it is not, perhaps, astonishing that a purely secular system of public school instruction should present itself to many persons as the best, or if not the absolutely best, yet the best practicable in a community where such diversities of religious opinion exist as exist among ourselves. Is it the best, then, or even the best practicable? Is it good at all? I do not think so, and it will be my aim in the first part of this lecture to support this opinion in the calmest and most dispassionate manner in my power. First, then, I ask you to notice that, when the purely secular system of education is supported on the plea that it is no part of the function of the State to teach religious truth, consistency demands

the exclusion of all religious ideas from the authorized text books, even to that of the Divine existence, which is not only a religious truth, but the fundamental truth of religion. If there must not be religious instruction in the public school, if the reading of the Bible even must form no part of the exercises, because the State, which sustains the school, transcends its legitimate and proper sphere when it undertakes to teach religious truth, then, on the same ground, any literature which expresses religious opinions or appeals to religious sentiments or enforces religious obligations, must be excluded from the books used in the class-room, or these must be purged of the obtrusive if not obnoxious element prior to their admission. The principles of morality, if enforced at all by the teacher, must be enforced by considerations altogether distinct from the authority, the character or the will of the Creator. The Ten Commandments, giving the summary of the Divine will in relation to man, and the basis for over three thousand years of human morals, cannot be taught. Such are the conclusions which we are compelled by a resistless logic to accept, if we adopt the fundamental principles of secularism, viz., that the State oversteps its proper sphere when it undertakes to teach religious truth, and on that principle argue for the exclusion of the reading of the Bible or any definite religious instruction from the exercises of the public school. And some have not hesitated to accept them in their entirety. France, logical, if anything, has done so. It has not, indeed, adopted the blasphemous atheistic catechisms which have been long current among a certain class of the population, but it has, if I am rightly informed, with an unhappy consistency, entirely removed the name of God, and the whole group of ideas connected therewith, from the