

MORAL EDUCATION — ITS IMPORTANCE—THE BIBLE.

From the Teacher Taught.

Plato, in his writings, teaches that the end of education and of the instruction of youth is to make them better; not simply more intellectual, but more moral. He says of Pericles, he "filled Athens with temples, theatres, statues, and public buildings; beautified it with the most famous monuments, and set it off with ornaments of gold; but can any one name the man, native or foreigner, old or young, that he made wiser or better?" From the time of Pericles, the Athenians began to degenerate; they become idle, effeminate, babblers, and busy-bodies, fond of extravagance and vain superfluity.

Education, in the common and popular sense, is limited to the cultivation of the intellect, and to an acquaintance with the elements of useful knowledge. One is said to be well educated who has been accurately taught the rudiments of what is called learning. Let it be remembered that he is not in the true sense educated who is not made wiser and better.

Man has not only an intellect, but a heart: not only reason and judgment, but passions. In childhood and youth, the emotions are strongest; the faculties of the understanding are not developed until a later period. In the infant, the lowest active emotion, such as a desire for food, is first developed; at a later period, the passive emotions, as fear, love, anger, &c., begin to be developed. Every thing around children is calculated to call forth and exercise the passions. We do not find it necessary to strengthen them; the great thing is to guard, control, or direct them properly; they must be curbed, and brought under the dominion of the understanding, the faculties of which would unfold more slowly. Education has something to do with the heart as well as the head.

In educating the understanding, we teach children the principles of science, both the theoretical and practical; but what shall we teach children in order to elevate the tone of their moral feelings, and qualify them to act well their part in the various relations of life? A knowledge of geography, arithmetic, and philosophy, will not make children more honest, nor more fond of truth. Every day's experience gives proof of this. The fraternity of forgers, swindlers, and cheats, so numerous and formidable, consists for the most part of those whose intellects

have been cultivated by science: but their moral education having been neglected, their learning is a curse to them and all about them. What book shall be used as a text-book by those who would give moral instruction? A high tone of morals cannot be expected in any community from which the Bible is excluded. The principles inculcated in this book, coming, as they do, from "Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being," and being enforced, as they are, by such powerful motives, cannot be taught without producing some beneficial results. The truths contained in this book, God has directed us to communicate to children. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."—(Deut. vi. 7.) Children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," i. e., they are to be brought up "in the instruction and information of the Lord," in a knowledge of the Scriptures. All men are required to search the Scriptures, to adopt them as the rule of life. If it be asked, "How shall a young man (a youth) cleanse his way?" the answer is, "By giving heed thereto according to thy word." If God designed the Bible to be a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path of children, then we have no right to withhold it from them. It has been the text-book of morals to the children and youth of New England, from the beginning, and it has been like salt, preserving the people from corruption. Its principles wherever faithfully inculcated, have produced internal quietness, sweetened all the relations of social and domestic life, imparted moral courage for the discharge of difficult duties, smoothed the pillow of the sick and dying, and thrown a light upon the darkness of the grave.

All who have read this volume with diligence and care, I have no doubt, are fully convinced that its influence upon the moral condition of the community is highly beneficial. Boyle, an English philosopher of the 16th century, testified that "the Bible is a matchless volume, which it is impossible to study too much, or to prize too highly." Sir Isaac Newton said, "We account the Scriptures the most sublime philosophy." Sir Christopher Hutton, an eminent statesman, advised his friends to study the Bible seriously; for, said he, "it is deservedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to understand the laws of the land and the customs of a

man's country; how much more to know the statutes of Heaven and the laws of eternity, those eternal and immutable laws of righteousness!"

It is easy to collect testimonies in favor of the study of the Bible. Not only philosophers and statesmen, but judges, poets, orators, and indeed men in all ranks of life, have found it an antidote for moral evil. Lord Byron recommends the Bible, in the following lines:—

"Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries;
O! happy they, of human race,
To whom our God has given grace
To hear, to read, to fear, and pray.

* * * * *
But better had they ne'er been born
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."

The Bible is the book from which those lessons of moral instruction are to be derived, with which the minds of children and youth ought very early to be imbued.

Some perhaps may say, that school teachers are hired to teach the elements of human sciences. It is true, but this is not all; correct moral principles must be inculcated in the Common School; for a portion of the children, in almost every school district, will grow up under the influence of immoral instruction, if they do not receive it from the school teacher.— Their parents will not teach them, and they seldom if ever attend a Sabbath school; unless, therefore, moral and religious instruction be made to bear upon them in these nurseries for training the young, they will be nuisances to society. The State very wisely directs the Teachers of Common Schools, "to exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth, committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth; love to their country, humanity, and universal benevolence; sobriety, industry, and frugality; chastity, moderation, and temperance; and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which a free constitution is founded; and it shall be the duty of such instructors to endeavor to lead their pupils, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of the above-mentioned virtues, to preserve and perfect our free constitution, and secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness, and also to point out to them the evil tendency of the opposite vices."

I am aware that there is a great diversity of opinion in regard to the manner in which the Bible ought to be used. Some would use it as a reading book; but