

HINTS ON COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION. No. II.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

DEAR SIR,—By attending to former hints on the subject in hand, a protection will be placed over the character of the profession of a common school teacher. The respectability of the calling will give laudable emulation to excel, and the consequences cannot be anything but happy, being most beneficial to the generation that is now rapidly rising to fill the place we occupy. Permit me to drop a few hints further, particularly addressed to religious parents.

1st. Be careful to give a religious education to your children. There is an opinion abroad rife with the most dangerous consequences, if practically applied, i.e., that school teachers should not be required to impart any other than scientific and literary knowledge to their pupils. The advocates of this pernicious sentiment, defend it by saying, that they can teach their offspring the principles of religion at home; that the fireside is the best (and they convey the idea that it is the only proper) place, where sentiments of piety are to be instilled into the young mind. I would ask such men, if they have properly and seriously studied the nature of children? Have they not forgotten that there is an innate depravity in every child, which if not restrained in every condition, under every circumstance, will lead to the worst results? How often is disobedience to the faithful admonition of pious parents—disregard to the serious impressions of sacred truth—induced by school-day associates, and the unhallowed example, and injudicious license, of those teachers who are employed under the restriction of not teaching religion to their pupils. But it may be urged, that in a mixed community, like that of the greater part of Canada, the thing is impracticable; owing to the many conflicting opinions that are held on the subject of religion. I think it is not:—

2d. If all Christians would consider this as candidly as its importance demands, they would soon come to the conclusion, that the precepts and principles of Christianity ought to be brought to bear upon the unfolding energies of the young mind in the schoolroom, as well as at the fireside; amid the busy scenes of the schoolboy play, as well as in the retirement and privacy of the family circle; they would then decide upon having their children, without intermission, under the influence of truth, and the power of pious example, through all their education. Should we not be shocked to hear of a College, or any respectable institution of learning, going in operation without having any reference to the moral and religious welfare of both principals and students? Now is not the same, or even a stronger, necessity for moral and religious restraint felt, when we speak of those institutions in which the mind receives its first, its most indelible impressions?

3d. Let Christians then unite upon this point, and determine that their Common Schools shall be of a religious character; let them be willing to make some sacrifice to obtain this object; and though infidels may rage, and the irreligious may scoff; though bitter opposition may await their first efforts, yet, the principles of truth, and virtue, and piety will triumph, and correct moral religious sentiments, and propriety of deportment, will, as a consequence, characterize the rising generation. Much of the licentious scepticism, the heartless selfishness and laxity of morals which are found in our own day, is attributable to the faults of early education: and this, the entire absence of religious influence at school, is the greatest.

4th. This would be striking at the root of the evil. This would be beginning in the right place to ensure what every Christian wishes to see, a religious and virtuous, as well as an intelligent community. I have often been pained to notice instances like the following. A man is arrested for crime—he has committed an atrocious murder, under aggravated circumstances, perhaps a parent, a wife, or a child, and this after a long life of outrage and wickedness. He is tried—convicted—sentenced—the day of his execution is fixed. What then? Christian sympathy, that till now has

been dormant, is aroused—Ministers of the Gospel crowd round him, to prepare him for his exit. The warm sensibilities of woman are enlisted for his salvation—a general anxiety is felt among Christians about the soul. Until this hour, he who now awakens their anxious solicitude has been hated, despised, shunned. But, alas! those who long before should have stretched forth the hand of charity and peace to rescue him from falling into vice and ignominy; now only, when too late, seem by their resolute efforts to try to atone for past neglect, by being able to balance the added catalogue of his crimes in testifying to a dungeon confession, and a gallows repentance. What will be the nature of such a culprit's feelings, when he reflects upon the neglect of those same Christians in past life—when he remembers that it was in his school-boy days that he first imbibed a predilection for vice, under the influence of an ungodly and vicious master whom they had placed over him—the withering enmity he experienced on account of his first crime—despised, and shunned as a candidate for the scaffold—cut off from religion, from Christian effort, from sympathy? He had no alternative presented by the pity and compassion of those who ought then to have exerted themselves for his salvation;—the consequence was, that, in desperation, he rushed headlong into vice, and now he must expiate his crimes upon the gallows, and consummate a life of outrage by a death of ignominy. The picture is faintly drawn; but is it not a correct transcript of what too often occurs?

If we do show pity for those who have committed violence, let it be shown towards the young. It may, it will do good—it will ransom from the scaffold, it will redeem from iniquity. To do this effectually, let us so guard the education of our children, by the restraints of religion, and the influences of Christianity, that there will be no inclination in them for such crimes, as lead eventually to such awful punishments here, and the more fearful retributions of hereafter.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours respectfully,

EUGENIUS.

Richmond Square, }
Feb. 23, 1844. }

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

LETTER XIII.

SUBJECT IN DISCUSSION: THE GENERAL SCOPE AND BEARING, ON THE QUESTION, OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS:—No. 2.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

SIR,—The endangered purity of the early church at Rome imperiously demanded that some suitable effort should be made for its more perfect unity. As “the apostle of the Gentiles,” the case seemed most properly to fall within the immediate jurisdiction of St. Paul; since it was ONE OF THE FIRST churches which were gathered from among the uncircumcised. [A man, who can read the New Testament for himself, must be “a fool” to pronounce the Church of Rome to be THE FIRST church. This quite explains the burning of the Bibles by the Jesuits, at COREAU, in our neighbourhood, last year.—Those only are AGAINST THE BIBLE, who find that the Bible is AGAINST THEM!]

It is an affecting thought, that of the various primitive churches to which the apostolical epistles were addressed, that of Rome is the only one that makes any considerable figure in the present day: and she remains but as in lamentable contrast to the various truths here specially taught her by St. Paul. Nor will it be deemed otherwise than mournfully remarkable, that the ample and sufficient remedy divinely furnished against all her subsequent widely-wasting errors, may be found in the neglected instructions and admonitions of this invaluable epistle to her early membership. The Church of Rome could never have been in her present apostate condition, had the epistle to the Romans continued to be the text-book of that church.

St. Paul was inspired to see both the state of the primitive Roman church, as requiring his aid, and also the precise nature of the assistance which it was most important to render it. And it is very observable with what consummate and supernatural skill he has composed this epistle; with what fidelity, and yet with how much of

kindly regard, he speaks “the truth,” to both parties respectively—“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek;” and how largely adapted it was to have rendered the most essential service to the church for whom it was specially and providentially designed.

It is supposed to have been written but a short time before, in the course of events which were divinely over-ruled to that end, St. Paul became himself a resident in the imperial city. (See Acts xxviii.) And its faithful and yet conciliatory character, must have tended not a little to promote the subsequent usefulness of his personal ministry among the Roman Christians of that generation.

The pious and intelligent reader will find the key to the correct understanding of this epistle to the Romans, in the fact that it was composed—with especial reference to the unity and edification of the Jewish and the Gentile followers of Christ, of whom that church was composed—with an eye to the doctrinal and practical errors into which they either had fallen, or were each respectively liable to fall—and in view of probable if not actual causes of unhappy collision of feeling and disaffection of heart among them.

This dictated the general scope of the epistle—the introduction—the salutation—the recapitulation—the digression—the illustration—the argumentation—the exhortation—and the conclusion. In each of these departments, it is easy to discover that “as a wise master-builder,” St. Paul well laid the good “foundation” for their ultimate unity and perpetual purity—by a separate dealing with the understandings and consciences and affections of each—by a yearning expression of ardent love for both—and by a common and undistinguishing enlistment of them all, each in his own proper vocation, in the “reasonable service,” the saving and harmonizing enterprise, of LIVING TO GOD!

Since writing the foregoing, it has been most satisfactory to meet with the following sentiments on the subject, from the pen of a highly talented and learned writer, quoted by Dr. Adam Clarke in his Commentary on the place:—

“We cannot enter into the spirit of this epistle, unless we enter into the spirit of a Jew in those times, and have some just notion of his utter aversion to the Gentiles; his valuing and raising himself high upon his relation to God and to Abraham; upon his law and pompous worship, circumcision, &c., as if the Jews were the only people in the world who had any manner of right to the favour of God.

“And let it also be well noted, that the apostle in this epistle disputes with the whole body of the Jews, without respect to any particular sect or party among them, such as Pharisees, Sadducees, &c.; for the grand proposition or question in debate is, ‘Are we Jews better than the Gentiles?’ (Chap. iii. 9.) And one argument in proof of the negative which the apostle espoues, is this, (chap. iii. 29,) ‘Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.’

“These are the two points, through which the line of the apostle’s discourse in the third chapter, and consequently in all the argumentative parts of the epistle, must necessarily run. And as, both in the proposition and in the argument, he evidently means the whole body of the Jews in opposition to the whole body of the Gentiles, he who doth not give such a sense of the apostle’s discourse, throughout the argumentative part of the epistle, as exactly hits and suits the general, collective notion of Jews and Gentiles, certainly misses his aim, and shoots wide of the mark.

“Lastly, the whole epistle is to be taken in connection; or considered as one continued discourse; and the sense of every part must be taken from the drift of the whole. Every sentence, or verse, is not to be regarded as a distinct mathematical proposition or theorem, or as a sentence in the book of Proverbs, whose sense is absolute and independent of what goes before or comes after; but we must remember that every sentence, especially in the argumentative part, bears relation to, and is dependent upon the whole discourse, and cannot be understood unless we understand the scope and drift of the whole. And therefore the whole epistle, or at least the eleven first chapters of it, ought to be read over AT ONCE—without stopping.”

From the general tone and composition of this apostolical letter, it appears natural to suspect