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THE PROTESTANT, AND EVANGELICAL WITNESS.

I left, promising to repeat my visit. The next day found me climbing again the path which led to this mountain home. When I reached the cottage-door there was bustle within. I lifted the latch; the poor woman was in the act of dying; sight, speech, sense—all had gone, and the heaving breast just told that the spirit still hovered in its tenement of clay. A few struggles more, and all was over. The death-spirit had passed from time into eternity!

Reader, the last words of this dying woman still echo in my ears, "Tell, oh! tell me, am I lost?" and never, never shall I forget them. Absorbed with the things of earth and the cares of life, we had neglected the great salvation, and had lied, as it afterwards followed, concerning about her soul, until disease with rapid steps had laid her low; and now, is the moment of death, the all-important question, "What is to become of my never-dying soul?" forced itself upon her agonized spirit.

She died with closing eyes and dying breath, in his who has said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved" (Isa. viii. 23); but she left the world with this tremendous question hanging over her head, and this awful doubt upon her mind, "Am I lost?"

Oh! reader, give the question for thyself now: "Look the Lord while he can be found, call upon him while he is near" (Isa. iv. 6), that so in thy dying hour you may hear the sweet whispers of his love, and be able with holy confidence to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12). You are not yet lost—shall you be?—Churchman's Penny Magazine.

THE
Protestant & Evangelical Witness.

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1860.

The Bible in School.

The line of demarcation, where liberty ends and oppression begins, is not easily definable. A government in its desire to secure the civil liberty of its subjects, may find it difficult to avoid interfering with the religious opinions and practices of some who are under its authority. For example, the horrid custom of sacrifice infants to the gods forms a part of Hindooism; Mormonism permits polygamy; a man, under the impression that he is doing God service, may apply a lighted torch to a building set apart for the worship of those whom he believes to be heretics; but no government which fulfills the principal design of its institution—the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty—can tolerate such practices, though performed under the cloak of religion.

Yet while it is the duty of the state to prevent certain principles, though termed religious, from being reduced to practice, she must not, on the other hand, consider it her prerogative to dictate to her people what shall or shall not be their religious belief. We are instructed to propagate religion by preaching, and not by the sword.

It is God, not a mortal of earth, who commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel;—to obedience, he has attached a promise; to disobedience, a penalty; but both are infinitely beyond the power of man to fulfil or inflict, therefore he has no right to dictate in the matter, nor do ought but deliver the message and pray for a blessing. Though the civil magistrate should not employ coercive measures to propagate religion, yet he ought neither to place, nor allow others to place an impediment in the way of its progress. Here lies the difficulty. Since it is impossible, in a community like ours, composed of diverse branches of the Christian Church, for the state to allow each denomination full liberty to enjoy and teach its own creed without one encroaching upon the other, what course should pursue? Our government, in its judgment on such form of Christian belief and practice, inclined to the true religion, gives its adherents free scope to propagate it, by all except forcible means? This we cannot decide, for we are places, such as the public schools, where the liberty ought not to be granted. Should the civil ruler, then, as such, entirely ignore religion—never utter the name, nor acknowledge the existence or supreme governing power of that Being whose minister he is for good? This also we cannot admit. In short, we believe that in a mixed community, it is the duty of government, to allow each denomination the free enjoyment of its creed and worship, providing that none of these tend to interfere with the liberty of the subject; and instead of conferring peculiar privileges on any particular church, see that the great principles of morality, respecting which there is little difference of opinion, are inculcated among the people. If the state neglects this means of preventing lawlessness and crime, she fails to employ the best branch of social police. But some may ask, why need the state attend to this matter? do not the different churches teach their own people respecting their duty to both God and man? They may, or may not; but this we know, that there are persons in almost every community, who neither attend nor belong to any church, consequently they are not in a position to receive moral instruction from this source; and as government has no right to control the movements of religious bodies, by directing them to occupy this or that field of labor, no effort may be put forth for the moral elevation of a part of the population. What means, then, should government employ to morally enlighten the people? We unanimously answer, the public School. Moral education, in our opinion, should form a part of common school instruction, for two reasons. First, because as the state, fully carrying out the principle of religious liberty—her bounden duty—cannot call upon the church to attend to this branch of education, she must employ some local planter wherever the great principles of morality, respecting which there is little difference of opinion, are inculcated among the people. If the state neglects this means of preventing lawlessness and crime, she fails to employ the best branch of social police. But some may ask, why need the state attend to this matter? do not the different churches teach their own people respecting their duty to both God and man?

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