

THE
RELIGIOUS ELEMENT
IN
EDUCATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION,

AT

PORTLAND, ME., AUGUST 30, 1844.

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BOSTON:
WILLIAM D. TICKNOR & CO.,
Corner of Washington and School Streets.
1844.

At a meeting of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION, it was Voted "to print for gratuitous distribution five-thousand copies of the Address delivered by CALVIN E. STOWE."

SOLOMON ADAMS, Secretary.

Portland, Aug. 30, 1844.

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IN every civilized community we observe striking diversities among individuals of the same nation, and even of the same parentage. In uncivilized communities these differences are far less observable. This single fact shows that such diversities, however great they may be, are much more the effect of education than of any original, constitutional difference made by the Creator.

Why is it that in all the towns of our own country, there are some men uncouth in manner, rough in speech, and brutish in thought, while others are refined in manners, easy in language, and of intelligent and elevated minds? Not generally because they were born different, but because the one class has been educated and the other

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not. Why is one woman engaging in person, pure in thought, agreeable in manners, an object of affectionate pride to all who know her; while another, born with a mental and physical constitution in all respects equal, is disgusting in person, impure in thought, licentious in manners, an object of mingled pity and abhorrence to all who behold her? Because the one was reared in the bosom of a pious, pure-minded and virtuous family, the other was cast in early life among the very dregs of society, and exposed to all their increasing abominations. Look over the surface of society, and see the immense diversities that exist, and notice how few of them can be traced to constitutional differences, and how many to education; and estimate if you can, the invaluable importance of a right education in early life. In many cases it is all, humanly speaking, that makes one man a benefactor of the human race, and another a drunkard or a thief; all that makes one woman the pride and ornament of society, and another an outcast and a prostitute. Who of us can say, that if our early education had been like that of thousands of others, we should not now, instead of sitting here in this quiet and respectable assembly, surrounded with circumstances of comfort and respectability, have been wallowing in debauchery, the degraded inmates of a prison or a brothel?

It is true that some break through the restraints of early habit, and become good and great in spite of a vicious or defective education; and that others, notwithstanding the influence of an education apparently good, become vicious and perverse. But these examples, especially of the first class, are extremely rare and remarkable exceptions to the general rule; and where they

do occur, there can generally be discovered, on close examination, some hidden cause that has produced the good,—some hidden defect that has occasioned the bad result.

Who, then, I say again, can estimate the unspeakable value of a right education,—the deplorable evils of a wrong one, since the whole existence of an intelligent, conscious, feeling, immortal soul, for time and for eternity, so essentially depend upon it ?

It is true there are individual diversities of character and capacity, which no education can equalize or assimilate ; but the whole difference which exists between classes is made by education, and by education it is perpetuated. Wherever there is a domineering class and a degraded class, wherever there is an intelligent class and an ignorant class, it is education and education alone that makes the difference. Reverse all the circumstances of the two, and in one generation, the domineering would become the degraded, and the degraded the domineering, the intelligent would become the ignorant, and the ignorant the intelligent class. So far as God is concerned, *He fashioneth their wants alike* ; and there is the same regular distribution and apportionment of talent in the different classes of society, that there is of the sexes. It is not the arrangement of God, but the wickedness of man, that has kept, generation after generation, whole classes of human beings in a condition of hopeless barbarism and ignorance. How can we estimate the wickedness of this kind of oppression ? When we see a well developed, vigorous, intelligent young man, or a graceful, accomplished, refined young woman, we involuntarily do them homage as among the noblest of God's

works ; and when we extend our view to eternity, and reflect that the spirits which animate those forms and gives them all their interest, will continue to exist and expand and become more and more interesting through all eternity, we are compelled to feel that one such young man, or one such young woman, is worth infinitely more than all the products of the earth besides. Why then, should not every child that is born into the world, and endowed by his Creator with an immortal spirit, have the opportunity to become such a man or woman ? What right has any one human being to prevent, or hinder any other human being from becoming as intelligent, as interesting, as lovely as his nature is capable of becoming ? What so profitable, so advantageous, so conducive to the prosperity of a community, as a continually increasing number of such men and women, from whatever class they may spring ? and what so profitless, so destructive, as men and women of the opposite character ? The necessity of labor creates no necessity for ignorance or degradation. The most industrious states of this Union are also by far, a hundred fold, the most intelligent, the most refined, the farthest advanced in everything which constitutes civilization. In point of general intelligence, compare Massachusetts with proud old Virginia, or any part of New England with imperious South Carolina. By the returns of the last census, the amount of ignorance among the free white men of South Carolina, whose labor is all performed by slaves, is forty-fold greater than it is among the free white men of Vermont who cultivate their own farms with their own hands and never talk big of nullification. In South Carolina, the proportion of free white persons over twenty years

of age who can neither write nor read, is one in seventeen, in Vermont it is one in 493! The necessity of hand labor, creates no necessity whatever, constitutes no excuse whatever, for the existence of an uneducated, brutified class of human beings; on the contrary, the existence of such a class in the bosom of any community, is a hindrance to all good, a fruitful source of every kind of evil.

The Bible, in several expressive texts, gives emphatic utterance to the true principle of all right education. For example, Prov. 9: 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.* Religion must be the basis of all right education, and an education without religion is an education for perdition. Religion, in its most general sense, is the union of the soul to its Creator; a union of sympathy, originating in affection and guided by intelligence. The word is derived from the Latin terms *re* and *ligo*, to *tie again*, or *reunite*. The soul, sundered from its God by sin, by grace is *reunited* to Him; and this is *religion*.

There is but one form of true religion on earth, revealed by God to man, and that is the form contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, commonly called the Christian religion. In regard to religious instruction, the question, at least throughout Christendom, plainly is between the Christian religion and no positive religion; for no one with whom we are concerned, will contend that any other system of positive religion ought to be taught in preference to the Christian.

It is my object in this lecture,

I. To exhibit some of the reasons why instruction in

the Christian religion should make an essential part of every system of education, whether in the family, the critical school, the high school, the university, or the professional seminary.

II. To answer some of the more plausible objections which are usually urged against such instruction ; and

III. To show how such instruction can be given faithfully and efficiently in our common schools and other public institutions, without violating any of the rights of conscience.

I. Why should instruction in the Christian religion make an essential part of every system of education,—whether in the family, the district school, the high school, the university, or the professional seminary ?

1. The nature of the mind requires it.

The mind is created and God is its Creator. Every mind is conscious to itself that it is not self-existent or independent ; but that its existence is a derived one, and its condition one of entire, uniform, unceasing dependence. This feeling is as truly a part of the essential constitution of the mind as the desire of food is of the body, and it never can be totally suppressed. If it ever seems to be annihilated, it is only for a very brief interval ; and any man who would persist in affirming himself to be self-existent and independent would be universally regarded as insane. The sympathy which attracts the sexes towards each other is not more universal nor generally stronger than that inward want which makes the whole human race feel the need of God ; and indeed the two feelings are in many respects so analogous to each other, that all ancient mysteries of mythology and the

Bible itself, have selected this sympathy as the most expressive, the most unvarying symbol of the relation between the soul and God.

Till men can be taught to live and be healthy and strong without food ; till some way is discovered in which the social state can be perpetuated and made happy with a total separation of the sexes ; till the time arrives when these things can be done,—we cannot expect to relieve the human mind from the necessity of having some kind of religious faith. This being the fact, a system of education, which excludes attention to this part of the mental constitution, is as essentially incomplete as a system of military tactics that has no reference to fighting battles, a system of mechanics which teaches nothing respecting machinery, a system of agriculture that has nothing to do with planting and harvesting, a system of astronomy which never alludes to the stars, a system of politics which gives no intimation on government ; or anything else which professes to be a system, and leaves out the very element most essential to our existence.

The history of all ages, of all nations, and of all communities is a continued illustration of this truth. Where did the nation ever exist untouched either by religion or superstition ? which never had either a theology or a mythology ? When you find a nation that subsists without food of some sort, then you may find a nation that subsists without religion of some sort, and never, never before. How unphilosophical, how absurd it is, then, to pretend that a system of education may be complete, and yet make no provision for this part of the mental constitution ! It is one of the grossest fooleries which the wickedness of man has ever led him to commit. But it

is not only unphilosophical and foolish, it is also exceedingly mischievous,—for where religion is withheld the mind inevitably falls to superstition ; as certainly as when wholesome food is withheld, the sufferer will seek to satisfy his cravings with the first deleterious substance which comes within his reach. The only remedy against superstition is sound religious instruction. The want exists in the soul. It is no factitious, no accidental or temporary want, but an essential part of our nature. It is an urgent, imperious want ; it must and will seek the means of satisfaction, and if the healthful supply be withheld, a noxious one will be substituted.

2. The condition of society requires it.

Every one knows that men are continually subject to impulses and passions, exceedingly dangerous and mischievous if not controlled and suppressed. Control and suppression can be effected only by one of two methods, namely, either by the energy of external force or the power of inward principle. The former is the method by which the mass of men have usually been controlled ; a method which has led to infinite abuse, and for ages the many have groaned under the irresponsible tyranny of the few. But a revolution, mighty, irreversible, irretrievable, has commenced—it cannot go back—it will go on to its consummation. The many will no longer be in subjection to the few, the masses feel their power and will exercise it ; the people swear with their millions of tongues and with their millions of eyes and millions of hands, that they are the sovereigns, and that as such they will be revered and obeyed. This revolution began in the Anglo-Saxon race, but with them it will not stop. It pervades every race and every clime, and is rapidly

undermining the best established and the best regulated thrones of the old world.

It is not long since I saw a letter from a gentleman of high standing in Berlin, the capital of Prussia, who is strenuously opposed to democracy and warmly attached to the monarchical system of his native land, in which he expresses himself to the following effect : “ Some begin to clamor for a constitution. How foolish ! The character of our reigning sovereign is the best constitution. Compare the good order, the quiet, the security for life and property, the universal public instruction of the Prussian monarchy, with the disorders, the riots, the lynchings, the slavery, the popular ignorance, of the so-called constitutional states, and tell me what we can gain by the change. Yet the mania is so wide spread, so deep, that I have no hope we shall long escape ; and even Prussia, and that too at no distant period, must be afflicted with a democratic constitution.”

Such testimony from such a man, in the capital of the best administered and most benevolent monarchy in existence, speaks volumes as to the present aspect of society in the world. The decree has gone forth. The people will free themselves from external, political restraints ; they will govern themselves, or they will not be governed at all. Now, what is the substitute when external power weakens its hold ? Nothing, nothing but inward principle ; and that principle, in order to be effective, must be religious principle.

Some rely for the security of society upon the principle of self-interest ; and it is true that an enlightened regard to self-interest in a society of equals does demand the security and good of the whole. Hence it is that

democratic governments, though in the hands of inferior and selfish men, often conduce more to the good of the people than aristocratic governments, even when controlled by superior and benevolent men. But are people generally governed by an enlightened regard to their own interests? Do they even know, in many cases, what these interests require? And admitting that they are acquainted with their own interests, and when calm always willing to be guided by them, how much are they controlled by such considerations in the hour of tumult, and excitement, and passion? In a government of law, it is notoriously for the interest of every good citizen, that the law should not be impeded in its regular operation; and every impediment thrown in the way of the regular operation of the law, is exceedingly hazardous both to the property and life of the citizens generally. Yet, what influence have these considerations in quelling the numerous riots which disgrace our land, some of which have been openly countenanced and abetted by men calling themselves respectable? To pass by more recent instances, what influence had such considerations on the mob in Kentucky, which called itself the people, and deliberately murdered two men uncondemned and untried by any form of law? And what was worse, their conduct was approved by many in the community; under the wretched plea that that was a case to which the law could not reach, and therefore *the people* did right to take it into their own hands! Now what enlightened regard do such men show either to their own interests or to moral principle? And what safety can there be in a community where such notions gain ascendancy? It is the easiest matter in the world for a few artful villains to get up an

excitement against any man, under pretence that he has been guilty of some offence which the law cannot reach ; and he too may be hung without trial, jury, or judge. The murder of the Vicksburg gamblers several years ago was a case of the same kind ; and that too, with burning indignation and irrepressible contempt I heard justified on the same miserable plea, by men who ought to hang their heads for shame all the days of their lives ! “ The people, *the people* (said they) had a right to take such fellows in hand, and supply the deficiencies of the law.” It is the most outrageous calumny on free institutions that can be conceived, the most tremendous satire on constitutional governments that can be uttered, to call such mobs *the people*, and such acts a supplying of the deficiencies of the law.

In a government of law there is no safety for any man but in a strict adherence to the principles and forms of law—and yet this notorious fact is not sufficient to hinder thousands in our country from violating all the principles of law themselves and justifying their violation in others. Passion is always stronger than reason ; religion, and religion only, can control it. What unprincipled wretch in a fit of rage was ever deterred from abusing his family, or beating his horse, or torturing his defenceless slave, by the consideration that it was not for his interest to do so ? What cares he for interest while flaming with anger ? Self-interest is no security at all against the influence of passion ; least of all against the passions of the multitude. It is only by religious principle that popular governments can be secured against the outbreaks of popular fury ; and he who discourages or opposes religious education, stands, as an enemy of free institutions, only next to him who countenances or justifies a mob.

Now, since all the world is so fast hastening towards the establishment of free institutions, since we see in the case of our own country the abuses and perils to which such institutions are liable from a want of religious principle among the people—who that has any benevolence, any desire for the good of the human race, but must earnestly wish to see religious institutions make a part of every system of education, from the elementary school to the professional seminary of the highest grade?

A government of equal rights, under the control of sound moral principle—this is the highest form of human society—the form in which every individual is an intelligent and self-governed man, capable of acting his own part in the machinery of life. Towards this the human race has been struggling from the earliest period of its history; and to this in our own country we had hoped soon to arrive. But unless we have a larger infusion of religious principle, it is a goal we shall never reach; and the revulsion whenever it comes, will be tremendous. Our institutions grew out of religious principle, from religious principle they took their form, by religious principle they have been thus far sustained, and in respect to them the checking of religious principle is like girdling the tree of the forest—stop the sap, and the tree is dead.

Shall the best hopes of man be annihilated, shall the human race be stopped in its onward career when so near the goal, and thrown back on despotism and barbarism, by our recreancy to religious principle?

3. The religion of the Bible is worthy of such a place in every system of education.

This would be true if all claim to divine inspiration

were abandoned. The peculiar character of the book, its antiquity, the influence which it has exerted, and which it still exerts, the place which it holds in the history of civilization, the part which it has had in the education of the human race, are enough of themselves to make it the most important and interesting educational book in existence ; and no system of education can be regarded as complete, even in a secular and scientific point of view, unless it includes a thorough study of the religion of the Bible. Almost all the education which exists, or ever has existed, among the people at large, has come to them through the Bible. Scotland and New England and Germany, the countries where the Bible is the book of the people, are the countries in which the common school system originated, and where it has been perpetuated. Besides, what learning in the history of man, what knowledge of human nature, what ethics, what poetry, what eloquence, we find in the pages of the Bible ! And all this expressed in a form so admirably adapted to interest and improve the young and opening mind ! He who rejects the Bible from a system of education rejects the very best means which the whole circle of literature affords for the establishment of his work.

4. Human life without religion is so utterly empty and worthless.

If this life be the whole of our existence, we may well say : *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* There is not enough of this life alone to afford to any reflecting man a sufficient motive for exertion ; and every great mind which sets itself to make effort with views confined to this world, is always obliged to go beyond the limits

of the present life for motives, and maintain itself by the delusive dream of posthumous fame. And how can any mind, elevated at all above the animal, be satisfied with what this life can afford? What is it? Or how long can it be enjoyed? Or what certainty is there of attaining it, even such as it is?

What is that which this life alone can give? A mere momentary gratification, like that which the drunkard feels while swallowing the intoxicating draught, succeeded by feverish restlessness and indescribable misery. Man was made for eternity, and time is not his element.

How long can it be enjoyed? We cannot be assured of it even while life lasts—and if we could, what is our life? *It is even as a vapor which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

What certainty is there of obtaining it, even such as it is? of the thousands who devote themselves to this world, scarcely one in a thousand ever obtains the object of his pursuit; and every one that does obtain it, is disappointed after he has it within his grasp.

A striking and melancholy proof was not long ago exhibited to us of the vanity of this life. We saw General Harrison, in the flush of health and hope, leave our shores at Cincinnati, amid the acclamations of a grateful and sympathizing people, to take the station most coveted by ambition, and conferred on him in the manner most flattering to every feeling of personal vanity. He had spent a long life of hard service. The peculiar circumstances of his early career, the people among whom he was thrown, the great simplicity, disinterestedness and energy of his character, were all most favorable to the elevation which he attained. After many years of ob-

scurity and despondency, a combination of favoring influences, such as rarely occurs once in the course of centuries, gave him the reward which his services and character deserved, and elevated him with unprecedented unanimity to the highest post in the gift of the people. But immediately on his entering the capitol, death follows him and tears him away, and he is brought back to us a lifeless corpse ; and the same landing, which a few weeks before had resounded with acclamations at the sound of his living voice, now witnesses the same dense crowd in silence and in sorrow, attending his lifeless form to the lonely tomb.

George IV. of England possessed the most magnificent, the most coveted throne on earth. He seemed to think himself exempt from all law, human and divine ; whatever he pleased to do, that was right to him. But nature regarded not his regal pride ; his debaucheries brought disease as if he had been but a vulgar laborer ; and when in his weakness and distress he asked his attendants to move him, he felt a change coming over him which he could not control, and in alarm he cried : “ Ah, what is this—this is not right—oh, this is **DEATH!** ” and expired.

The late queen of Prussia had all for this world that a human being could possess. Beautiful, accomplished, the object of universal admiration for her personal qualities, united in the most intimate bonds with a sovereign who made her his idol, surrounded by obedient and interesting children, beloved by a grateful people, in the enjoyment of every thing which a throne could give,—she too must experience the utter emptiness and vanity of the world ; she too must sink under an accumulation of

sorrows so great, that the last words she uttered, were : “ O God, forsake me not ; O Jesus, shorten my sufferings ”—just such a prayer, and for just such a purpose, as any poor slave might utter while writhing under the agonies of torture.

Such is the world ; incidents of this sort are continually occurring in it ; and what can any deeply reflecting mind consider the world good for without religion ? what motive to such a mind for effort without a hope in eternity ?

II. We proceed now, as was proposed, to answer some of the more plausible objections which are usually urged against religious instruction in a system of general education.

1. It prejudices the mind, and closes it against the free admission of truth.

This objection is of force in respect to wrong instruction, but certainly it is of no avail against that which is right, for right instruction is truth. Now it is not wrong religious instruction which we advocate, but that and that only which is right.

But this, the objector contends, does not fairly represent his meaning ; his idea is, that amid the variety of conflicting opinions which exist in the world, the mind should be left free, without prejudice against or in favor of any, to choose unbiassed for itself, when its powers shall have become fully developed, and it shall have capacity to make an intelligent choice. I will remark in passing, that it is no privilege so much to be coveted to choose falsehood and error even with a fully developed mind. If the objection refers merely to the external

form of religion, it is not of very great importance any way ; but if it refer to the inward surface, the essential element of religion, it rests on a view of the human mind which is entirely erroneous, which has no foundation whatever in nature. It supposes that if the mind be left uninstructed on a particular point, it will on that point have no prepossessions. This may be true in respect to subjects in which the mind has no constitutional interest, and of which it never thinks till they are brought to it from without ; but it is not true in respect to a topic in which the mind feels an interest from its very nature, and which it will think of, whether brought to it from without or not. I once knew an old man who insisted that there was no need of eating ; it was, as he expressed it, “ only a sort of a notion that people had got into, and they might as well be rid of it as not.” So some people seem to think, and with equal reason, in respect to religion. Religion is a part of this human institution ; the wants on which it is founded are intrinsic, within the mind itself, and we are not brought into it from without. Accordingly, the mind, whether instructed or not, will have its religious impulses and reflections ; and if these are not absorbed and guided by sound instruction, they would grow rank and wild and prepossess the soul, and that too in the worst manner possible. The soil that is left uncultivated, will be overgrown with weeds and brambles. This is seen abundantly in the monstrosities which everywhere grow up in the unoccupied pagan mind as respects religion ; and leave every active, fertile intellect in Christian lands untaught, and it will have a false religion of spontaneous growth. The poet Goethe when a child had very little religious instruction ; but his

mind felt the want, and when not more than ten years of age, he took it into his head to worship the sun, and erected a little altar in his chamber window, on which at the first ray of dawn he burned incense with intense delight. Every mind is not so active or so fertile, but every mind feels the same want in a greater or less degree, and will contrive means to gratify it according to its powers.

Besides, in every state of society, people will talk on the subject of religion, books will be written on theological topics, children will hear some of this conversation and read some of the books, and thus their minds become in some degree prepossessed, without the advantage of system and completeness. The only alternative is to sow the field well, to cultivate it, and keep out the weeds, so as to secure a good crop—or leave it to the chance seeds which may fall to grow up with weeds and come to no good. The only way to prevent prejudice and prepossession, to leave the mind free to choose and give it the power of intelligent choice, is to imbue it early with the right kind of religious instruction.

2. Sects in this country are so numerous and diverse, that religious instruction cannot be given in public institutions without violating the rights of conscience.

The parent undoubtedly has the right to control the religious education of his child, and he is responsible to God for the manner in which he exercises the right. If a parent objects to the religious instruction of any institution, he has a right to take his child away from it, or require that he be excused from the religious exercises. But where religious instruction is judiciously given, this right will not be asserted by one parent in a thousand,

even of those who are violently sectarian, or destitute of all religion.

A man who has no conscience, certainly has no right of conscience to be violated ; and a man who has a conscience has necessarily some religious principle ; and notwithstanding the infinite diversity of forms which religion assumes, the principle of true religion is under all forms essentially the same. If one can detect, explain, and illustrate this principle in its unsullied purity, it will recommend itself alike to every man who really has a conscience, to every heart that has sympathy with religious principle, whatever may be the external form in which that sympathy usually manifests itself to observation.

Religion, if one has it, generally manifests itself in some individual form ; but there is such a thing as religious principle abstracted from all form ; there is such a thing as the science of anatomy, in which every idea that is expressed applies, not to any particular individual of the human race exclusively, but to the whole race generally ; and the anatomical subject which lies on the dissecting table can be completely described in all its bones and muscles and tendons and nerves and arteries and veins, without saying a word which is applicable exclusively to that particular subject, and not to the whole human race collectively. Yet not one of the principles ever existed in life, not one bone or muscle was ever put in motion, except in the case of some individual, who was distinguished from all others by his own identity and idiosyncrasies ; and that very subject which lies on the dissecting table is not mankind in general, but it is the body of some particular person, who had his own name, and his own character, and his own personal peculiarities,

which distinguished him from all others and made him different from everybody else. After this illustration I hope I shall not be misunderstood when I say, that though religion in real life and as applied to practice must always exist in the character ; yet as an object of contemplation, and as matter of instruction, there may be religion in the abstract.

It would be very easy in a lecture on anatomy, to go beyond the general truths and come to the individual peculiarities, to describe not the human anatomy generally and in the abstract, but the person of John or Peter or Sarah, or whatever individual the body on the dissecting table might have belonged to ; but this is not the object of the lecture, and it is not done. The intelligent anatomist has no difficulty in drawing the line between the personal and the general ; the former lies mostly on the surface, the latter comprehends the whole essential structure. He may first describe what belongs to the whole race as a race ; he may go further and describe the peculiarities of the two great divisions of the race by sex ; still further, to particular portions of the race, as black and white ; and so on till he comes to individual persons ; and all this without the least danger in any case of confounding the boundaries between any two of the divisions.

So in religious teaching, instruction may be confined to the great principles, which are always the same in all forms of true religion, though it may be that not one of those principles was ever active except under some particular form ; or the teacher may go into the three great leading divisions, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian ; or he may be still more minute, and divide

the Christian church into the Greek, the Romish, and the Protestant ; or more minutely still, he may speak of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists ; and with still greater minuteness, he may talk of high church and low church, old school and new school, regular and radical, down even to the most microscopic sectarianism ; and without the least danger, if he understands himself, of confounding the boundaries between any two of the divisions. Notwithstanding, then, all the diversities of sect, there is still left open for religious instruction, a wide field which need not touch on those diversities.

3. It is difficult to draw the line between sectarian and general religious instruction.

The remarks already made, are enough to prove that the practical difficulty is not an insuperable one. The line must be drawn by the direction and good principle of the teacher. A little, mean, sectarian mind, will always run into sectarianism, whatever lines you may draw in theory ; while a man of magnanimous and expansive mind, whatever latitude be allowed him, while he professes to be guided by general principles, and to teach in such a way that different sects may safely trust their children to his charge, will never make his religious instructions sectarian.

Some people make a wonderful business of drawing lines, as if nothing must ever be attempted unless a suitable gird line can be accurately drawn beforehand to define its boundaries with exactness ; so that all on the one side shall be exactly right and all on the other entirely wrong. But this in practice is what can never be done ; there is always something left for reasoning and the exercise of judgment. Who ever pretended to draw the line

between murder and manslaughter so accurately that nothing need be left to the discretion of judge or jury? What is the fixed line in law between *compos* and *non compos mentis* which precludes the necessity of discretionary power? In cases where the line is necessarily definite, it is always so at the expense of metaphysical truth. The law declares a man of age at 21, because it is necessary to have a fixed line, and this is the one most generally convenient, though it is notorious that some men are better able to take care of themselves at 15 than others are at 25. How easy, on the principle of the objection we are considering, to raise a clamor against the law, and exclaim, "How can you draw the line? Will you say that the man who is twenty years of age, 364 days, 11 hours, and 59 minutes old, is not capable of taking care of himself, but if he lives one minute longer he is capable? Was he not as capable two minutes before the time as two minutes after?" Does any one think the less of the propriety and necessity of the law in consequence of such an objection?

A man offers to sell a piece of land for a thousand dollars, and one of these sagacious line-drawers wonders why he is not willing to sell it for 999 dollars, 99 cents, and 9 mills! He wonders what reason he has for drawing the line just there, rather than a little way on the right hand or on the left! Truly these men, who would draw lines so accurately, must be wonderful men!

The general principle, not at all difficult of apprehension, can be clearly stated; and the application of this principle to particular cases, must be left to the sound discretion and honest-heartedness of the teachers and managers of the schools.

III. We are now prepared for our third inquiry, to wit, how can religious instruction be faithfully and efficiently given in our common schools and other public institutions, without violating the rights of conscience ?

In order to accomplish this most desirable end, three things must be done. 1. There must be excited in the community generally a whole-hearted honesty and enlightened sincerity in the cause of education. 2. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, without note or comment, must be taken as the text-book of religious instruction. 3. Instruction in those points which divide the sects from each other, must be confined to the family and the Sunday school.

A few remarks illustrative of these several points will close the present discussion.

Of the seventeen or eighteen millions who compose our population, not half a million pretend to have any serious objection to the Christian religion as exhibited in the New Testament. Of the thousands of youth in the process of education, not one in a thousand has really any objections which appear rational to himself against Christian instruction. If there be, then, generally in the community a whole-hearted honesty and enlightened sincerity in the cause of education, it cannot be impracticable to devise some method of Christian instruction which shall be very generally acceptable. It is true there are difficulties, but those difficulties ought not to be regarded as insurmountable.

The progress of society has created a new exigency which must be provided for, has opened new ground which must be occupied. Generally in the world's history there has been but little of individual freedom or in-

dividual thought on the subject of religion, and consequently but little of individual peculiarity. Religion has been generally a national affair, and men instead of reasoning and deciding for themselves, have believed according to law. In most of the countries of Europe, in consequence of the restraints upon religious liberty, the sects are still very few ; and when you have provided for Papists, Protestants, and Jews, you have no further trouble. But in this country, in consequence of our unbounded religious freedom, the subdivisions of sect are almost innumerable ; it is impossible in a system of public instruction to provide for them all ; and unless religious instruction can be given without sectarianism, it must be abandoned.

In this country the rights of all sects are the same, and any denomination that would have its own rights respected, must respect the rights of others.

The time which can be devoted to religious instruction in schools is necessarily very limited ; and if there be an honest and sincere desire to do right, the whole of this time certainly can be occupied, with efficiency and profit, without encroaching on the conscience of any sect which really has a conscience.

These are facts which show plainly, that notwithstanding the diversity of sects, there is common ground, on which the sincerely pious of all sects substantially agree. For example, the most acceptable books of practical piety, which even now are oftenest read by Christians of all denominations, have proceeded from about all the different sects into which Christendom is divided, and are read by all with scarcely a recognition of the difference of sect. Such are the writings of Thomas a Kempis and

Fenelon, who were Roman Catholics ; of Jeremy Taylor and Bishop Hall, who were churchmen ; of Baxter, Watts and Doddridge, who were Presbyterians or Congregationalists ; of Bunyan and Andrew Fuller, who were Baptists ; of Fletcher and Charles Wesley, who were Methodists. This fact alone shows that there is common ground, and enough of it too to employ all the time which can properly be devoted to religious instruction in our public institutions.

Yet, practically, there may be serious difficulty in leaving it to the intelligence and discretion of the teacher to select and occupy this common ground ; it may be difficult to find a sufficient number of well qualified religious teachers, and religious instruction given by an irreligious man, may be not only useless but in some cases positively pernicious ; and it may not be possible to contrive a text-book of religious instruction which shall be acceptable to all.

Happily, for all these practical difficulties there is a remedy, which requires nothing more than real honesty and a hearty zeal in the cause for its successful application.

All Christian sects without exception recognize the Bible as the text-book of their religion. They all acknowledge it to be a book given of God, and replete with the most excellent sentiments, moral and religious. None will admit that it is unfavorable to their peculiar views, but on the contrary all pretend that it promotes them. To the use of the Bible, then, as the text-book of religious instruction in our schools, there can be no serious objection on the part of Christians of any sect ; and even unbelievers very generally admit it to be a very good and useful book.

But shall it be the whole Bible ? or only the New Testament ? or selections made from one or both ?

A book of mere selection would be very apt to awaken jealousy ; and the exclusion of any part of the Scriptures would to my mind be painful. Let every scholar, then, have a whole Bible. The book can now be obtained so cheap that the expense can be no objection.

How can the teacher instruct in the Bible without coming on to sectarian ground ? He can teach a great deal in regard to its geography and antiquities ; and can largely illustrate its narrations, and its moral, rhetorical, and even religious beauties. An honest, intelligent teacher can find in this way abundant employment for all his time, if he be himself a lover and student of the Bible, without ever passing into sectarian peculiarities, or giving any reasonable ground of offence.

But apart from all this, the chief business of instruction in this department may be the committing to memory of portions of the divine Word. The most rigidly orthodox will not object to this, for they believe every portion of the Bible to be the *word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*, and that *all scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness* ; and the liberal, though they may not sympathize in the high orthodox view of the divine excellency of the word, yet regard it as on the whole the best of books, and the more of it their children have treasured up in their minds, the better it must be for them. If the parent chooses, he can always himself select the portions to be committed by his child, or he may leave it to the discretion of the teacher, or he may give general directions, as selections from the Gospels, the Proverbs, the Psalms, etc. It is

not at all essential that all the children of the same school, or even of the same class, should recite the same passages. Each child may be called upon in turn to recite what each one has committed, and the recitation may or may not be accompanied by remarks from the teacher, as circumstances may seem to justify or require. In some such way all the time which can properly be devoted to this subject, may be most profitably and efficiently occupied ; and surely no reasonable parent will ever object to having his child's mind richly stored with scriptural truth expressed in scriptural language.

But there is another difficulty. The Roman Catholics, it is said, do not desire that their children should be instructed in the Scriptures ; they receive the apocryphal books as a part of scripture, and contend that we have not the whole Bible unless we include the apocrypha ; and they object to our common English translation.

In reply to this, I remark, in the first place, there are many parts of our land where there are no Roman Catholics, and of course the difficulty will not occur in those places.

Secondly, if Roman Catholics choose to exclude their children from a knowledge of the Bible, they have perfectly a legal right to do so, and we have no legal right to prevent it ; nor should we desire any such legal right, for the moment we desire any such legal right, we abandon the Protestant principle and adopt the Papal. Catholic parents are perfectly competent to demand that their children should be excused from the Bible recitation, and this demand, if made, should be complied with ; but they have no right to demand that the Bible should be withheld from the schools because they do not like it,

nor do their objections render it necessary or excusable for Protestants to discard the Bible from schools.

Again, if Roman Catholics desire that *their* children take *their* Bibles into the schools, and recite from them, by all means let them do so ; and so of Jews, let them recite from the Old Testament, if they choose, to the exclusion of the New. We allow to others equal rights with ourselves ; but we claim for ourselves, and shall insist upon having, equal rights with all. I am perfectly willing to give to the Roman Catholics all they can justly claim, but I am not willing to encroach on any one's rights, or the rights of any Protestant denomination for the sake of accommodating the Roman Catholics. Nor do I suppose that the Romanists have a claim to any special accommodation, for they have never yet manifested any particular disposition to accommodate others. Let them have the same privileges that our Protestant sects have—that is enough ; and they have no right to demand, our legislators have no right to grant, any more ; and we Protestants will be perfectly satisfied when Protestants can enjoy as great privileges in Italy as Roman Catholics now enjoy in the United States. In judicious practice I am persuaded there will seldom be any great difficulty ; especially if there be excited generally in the community any thing like a whole hearted honesty and enlightened sincerity in the cause of public instruction.

It is all right for people to suit their own taste and convictions in respect to sect ; and by fair means and at proper times, to teach their children and those under their influence to prefer the denominations which they prefer ; but further than this no one has any right to go.

It is all wrong to hazard the well being of the soul, to jeopardize great public interests, for the sake of advancing the interests of a sect. People must learn to practise some self-denial, on Christian principles, in respect to their denominational preferences, as well as in respect to other things, before pure religion can ever gain a complete victory over every form of human selfishness.

Happily there are places where religious instruction that is purely denominational can be freely given, so that there is no need whatever of introducing it into our public schools. The family and the Sunday school are the appropriate places for such instruction ; and there let each denomination train its own children in its own peculiar way, with none to molest or to find fault. It is their right, it is their duty.

As to the objection, that the use of the Bible in schools makes it too common and subjects it to contempt, as well might it be objected that the sun becomes contemptible because he shines every day and illumines the beggar's hovel as well as the bishop's palace. Where is the Bible most respected, in Scotland and New England, or in Italy and Austria ? The works of man, the robed monarch, may make themselves contemptible by being too often seen ; but never the works of God, or the true God-man. The children may and ought to be taught to treat the book with all possible reverence, and to preserve it as nice and unsullied as the Catholic preserves his crucifix ; and in this way, I am sure, on all the principles of human nature with which I am acquainted, that the Bible can be no more likely to suffer from the habit of daily familiarity than the crucifix.

Let no one say, that the religious instruction here

proposed for schools, is jejune and unprofitable. I do not so view the words of God. In any view, if the child faithfully commit to memory so much as the single Gospel of Matthew, or the first twenty-five Psalms, or the first ten chapters of Proverbs, or the first half of the book of Genesis, those divine sentences will be in his mind forever after, ready to be called up to check him when any temptation assails his heart, to cheer him when any sorrow oppresses his soul, to be a lamp to his feet and a light to his path ; to be in all respects of more real and permanent value to him than any creed, or catechism, or system of theology, or rule of ethics, of merely human origin, ever can be.

Why should we prevent so great a good by claiming what we have no right to claim ? Are we not willing to trust the word of God to cut its own way ? Or can we claim to be Christians at all, while we consent to have the word of God and all Christian teaching banished from our institutions of public instruction ? Let not infidel coldness, jesuitical intolerance, or sectarian jealousy, rob our schools of their greatest ornament and most precious treasure, the Bible of our fathers. Let not denominational feeling so far prevail as to lead us to destroy the greater good while attempting to secure the less—as has so often been done in the Christian world heretofore. We are willing to give up much for the sake of peace and united effort ; but the Bible, the word of God, the palladium of our freedom, the foundation of all our most precious hopes, we never can, we never will give up. Let all who love the Bible unite to defend it, to hold on upon it forever.

Matthias Claudius, a townsman of the astronomer

Tycho Brahe, represents the state of the Christian world by the following significant allegory.

There was once a sovereign whose subjects by their own folly lost their freedom, and were shut up in a doleful prison in a foreign land. His heart was moved by their sorrows and he determined to release them. The prison was built very strong, the doors were locked, and no one had the key. The prince, with great self-denial, labor and trouble, went on foot and in disguise to the country where they were, bound the jailer hand and foot, made a key for the door which he was obliged to temper in his own blood, handed it to the prisoners through the grate, and told them to unlock the door and come out ; for the lock was so contrived that it could be unlocked only on the inside.

But they took the key and sat down, and began to look at it and to talk about it, and to wonder what it was made of ; and not agreeing in their conjectures, they fell to disputing ; and instead of opening the door, they began to beat each other with the key. In vain did the prince cry to them from without that the time was short and the danger pressing ; that the key was made to unlock the door with ; and if they would apply it to its proper use they would find that it would answer the purpose for them all equally well, however they might differ as to the material of which it was made, or the form which it bore.

Still they went on disputing till some took the jail fever and died in prison, and others grew so stiff and feeble with their long confinement that they were no longer capable of moving, even if the door were opened—(yet some of these felt exceedingly proud and self-satisfied, because they were sure that they knew what the key was

made of and how it was finished,)—and many who really desired to get out could not get hold of the key because the disputants held it up out of their reach.

And thus, though all might have escaped if they had obeyed the voice of the prince at first, it was a long while before the door was opened, and then but a feeble and halting remnant made their way back to their native land.

The Censors of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION have published five thousand copies of the preceding Lecture, in accordance with a vote of the Institute, passed at the Annual Meeting, in Portland. They give notice that all who wish to obtain copies may have them without charge by application to William D. Ticknor, corner of Washington and School Streets.

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