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A

DISCOURSE

ON

EDUCATION.

DELIVERED AT

BRAINTREE, THURSDAY, OCT. 24, 1839.

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BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

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BOSTON:  
PRINTED BY PERKINS & MARVIN.  
1840.

To the Hon. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

RESPECTED SIR,

The undersigned, a Committee chosen by the citizens of the town of Braintree, tender to you their respectful considerations for the eloquent and valuable Address delivered by you on the important subject of Education, on the 24th ult., and request a copy of the same for publication.

With sentiments of sincere regard and respect,

Your obedient servants,

MINOTT THAYER,  
JOHN HOBART,  
SAMUEL HAYDEN,  
JOHN M. HOLLINGSWORTH, } Committee.

BRAINTREE, Nov. 20, 1839.

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MESSRS. MINOTT THAYER, JOHN HOBART, SAMUEL HAYDEN, and JOHN M. HOLLINGSWORTH,  
a Committee of the Inhabitants of the Town of Braintree.

GENTLEMEN,

A copy of the Address delivered by me, on the 24th of October last, before the inhabitants of the town of Braintree, is, in compliance with their obliging request, submitted to your disposal, by your friend and fellow-citizen,

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

DECEMBER 10, 1839.

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TO THE  
INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE,  
THIS  
DISCOURSE ON EDUCATION,  
DELIVERED AT THEIR REQUEST BEFORE THEM,  
IS INSCRIBED AND DEDICATED TO THEM AND THEIR CHILDREN,  
BY THEIR NATIVE TOWNSMAN,  
AND AFFECTIONATE FELLOW CITIZEN,  
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

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## DISCOURSE.

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THE celebrated Historian of England, David Hume, in the account of his life written in the 65th year of his age by himself, says, "I am, or rather *was* (for that is the style I must now use in speaking of myself, which emboldens me the more to speak my sentiments); I *was*, I say, a man of mild disposition," &c. then giving his own character, according to his own estimate of it.

Men and women of Braintree! I have lived eight years longer in this world of vicissitudes and cares, than David Hume had lived when he felt himself bound to assume this style, and when he considered it as investing him with the privilege of speaking more boldly his sentiments, than he might have done while speaking in the present tense.

Am I not then authorised by his example, to invert the order of his transition from the present to the past, and to say—I *was* or rather I *am* one of yourselves? I *was* born at Braintree; and in the revolution of time, I *am*, one of the oldest inhabitants of that Town. In Braintree I first beheld the light of Heaven—first breathed the atmosphere of your granite rocks—first sucked with my mother's milk the love of Liberty, and the reverence for the Gospel of truth. In early childhood, in the midst of the storm of the war of Independence, in the dead of Winter, I embarked at the very spot where your forefathers landed

B.B.R.

at the foot of Mount Wollaston—I embarked, with a father, upon the tempestuous ocean, for realms beyond the Atlantic tide; defying the battle and the breeze for the cause of your Country. Since then, for a space of forty years I led a wandering life, in distant regions; always in the service of your fathers or in yours; always grateful to Heaven for having made me a Braintree boy, and always feeling the sentiments, which once on losing sight of the blue hills in your neighborhood, I committed to paper in the following lines:

And you, ye distant hills of blue—  
 To whom I bid, with bosom burning,  
 When wending far, my last Adieu;  
 And first to greet mine eyes returning;  
 Oh! how shall speech in words convey,  
 Words, the heart holds not in derision,  
 The pang that points your parting ray,  
 The bliss that wings your meeting vision.

Let me then in addressing you, fellow citizens of Braintree, say I *was* or rather I *am* a native of the town of Braintree, and let that be your motive for indulging me with the freedom of speech—with more boldness than I might presume to use, if I came among you as a stranger.

And I make this appeal to your kind and indulgent feelings because I shall need it. David Hume took it as a warrant of authority to speak his sentiments boldly, because at the age of 65 he claimed to be a man of a former age; restrained by none of those prudential considerations which admonish a speaker in addressing the public to abstain from exciting topics, and to say nothing with which the prepossessions of his hearers might not cordially sympathise—Yet he had not then attained, and never reached the allotted boundary of old age to man—the three score years and ten of his earthly pilgrimage; which I have already passed. I have then a stronger claim than his upon the mere score of age to speak my sentiments

boldly, and that which is thus my right, becomes my imperious and overruling duty, towards you the inhabitants of my native town, of which through all the wanderings of a long and eventful life, I have never ceased in the sincerity of my soul to say,

“Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,  
My heart untravell'd fondly turns to thee.”

When I undertook the arduous, but not unwelcome task of addressing you in public, it was intimated to me that it might be agreeable to you to hear me upon that most interesting subject to you and to your posterity, the education of your children; and the desire of discoursing to you upon the theme, not less than in the manner the most acceptable to yourselves, was of strong prevailment to induce a ready compliance with that intimation.

But what could I possibly say to you for the advancement of the cause of education which you do not habitually say to yourselves?—We are almost daily celebrating in every part of New England, the accomplishment of two centuries since the first gathering of a church or the incorporation of a town. A few weeks only have past away since the filial reverence of the descendants from the first founders of the church and religious society at Mount Wollaston, paid this tribute of commemoration to the virtues of their forefathers—and within the compass of another year it is your purpose to strew flowers over the sepulchres of those patriarchs of our land by a similar festival to keep in remembrance the founders of our primitive town of Braintree. We have embalmed anew the venerable remains of our first Pastor and Teacher William Thomson and Henry Flint; but there is an incident connected with the history of the latter, not less precious than any other memorial in his individual life. On his grave stone, yet standing in the cemetery of the church in Quincy, of which he was a principal founder, is yet legible



the following record—"Here lies interred the body of the Rev. Mr. Henry Flint, who came to New England in the year 1635, was ordained the first teacher of the church of Braintree 1639, and died April 27, 1668. He had the character of a gentleman, remarkable for his piety, learning, wisdom and fidelity in his office." Men and women of Braintree! had the monumental inscription upon the tomb of the beloved *instructor* and spiritual monitor, counsellor and guide, of your forefather pilgrims of the first cisatlantic generation terminated here, might I not have invited you to pause and meditate—to inquire how much of the peace, how much of the earthly happiness, how much of the piety and virtue, how much of the eternal welfare of your ancestors of five generations, of yourselves, of your children and your children's children to the end of time, may be directly and indirectly traced to those qualities thus testified as characteristics of this venerable man?—But the blessed memorial stops not here, it proceeds—"By him on his right hand lies the body of Margery, his beloved consort who died March 1686-7. Her maiden name was Hoar. She was a gentlewoman of piety, prudence, and peculiarly accomplished for instructing young gentlewomen, many being sent to her from other towns, especially from Boston." Women of Braintree, let me now appeal to you! If I was authorised to inquire how highly is to be estimated by your townsmen of the present generation, the blessing of being descended from fathers who were fed with the nourishment of the bread of life by a shepherd of souls so distinguished as the first teacher of the Braintree Church, how much more emphatically may I ask the same question of you, who in addition to the enjoyment of the same benefits, may look back to the matrons of the town from its first foundation, as blest with the means of education suited to the tenderness, the refinement and delicacy of their sex. The solicitude of the first fathers of New England for the education of

their sons has been among their brightest claims to renown in all succeeding ages. And shall it not be among the garlands of glory to the women of Braintree, that in the roll of their primitive mothers, the wife of their first pastor was not only eminent as an instructress of wisdom and virtue, but that her services to the age and land in which she lived, were so worthily appreciated by her surviving cotemporary inhabitants of the town, that their grateful acknowledgment and remembrance of them yet lives and breathes and speaks to us all, from the assembled multitude of the surrounding dead, and from the voice of her husband's tomb.

It is an opinion universally entertained that the first and great impulse to the settlement of New England was *Religion*. But has it been sufficiently considered, and may I be permitted to inquire, whether Religion is not herself the child of *Education*, and whether it would not be more proper to say, that *Education* was from its first origin the governing principle of the settlement of New England, or in other words that Education was the mother of New England?

What is *Religion*? Is it not the sentiment in the heart of man, of his own immortal nature, and of his responsibility to a tribunal not of earth for his conduct upon earth. The existence of a God; the immortality of the human soul, and future retribution, are the elements of what is called Natural Religion—but even these first principles are not of spontaneous growth in the human heart. They are the fruits of *Education*—they must be taught. They were revealed by God himself to the first created man, and to his partner in the Garden of Eden, and they are still taught to Christians of all denominations in the Mosaic narrative of the Creation.

But this is not the Religion which prompted the settlement of New England—for this is a creed common to the Christian, Mohammedan and Jew throughout the habi-

table globe. The first settlers of New England were *Christians* of the most straitest sect. Their text-book was the Bible; a book written by various authors—in different periods of the world—the latest, sixteen hundred years remote, at the time of the settlement of New England, and all, in languages no longer extant save in the memory of the profoundly learned.

In this book were contained the history of the human race from the creation of the world; a rule of faith, for the relations between man and his Maker; a rule of life, for the government of his relations with his fellow creature man—and the glorious gospel of the blessed God. But in the wise and inscrutable dispensations of Providence, this book of divine inspiration for its composition, had been committed to the uninspired intellect of man for its construction. What the meaning was of any one statement of fact, principle, sentiment or opinion contained in it, was to be ascertained by the ordinary operations of the human mind. It was mind impressed upon paper, in the characters of the alphabet. But the first five books of this compilation, the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, had been written very recently after the first invention of alphabetical writing, and contained in that mode of incorporating thought two thousand years of history before the existence of that invention; when the narrative of events, and the lessons of morals, and the precepts of instruction must necessarily have been delivered from mind to mind, by some other mode of conveyance. It is well known that before the invention of alphabetical writing, the Egyptian records were kept in what was called hieroglyphics, or an art of expressing thought by imagery. Writing was the picture of thought. Material substances were thus represented by their portraiture, a man, a horse, a bird, a fish. The sun, moon and stars, mountains, trees and rivers, every object in nature visible to the eye, could be represented to the eye, by imitation.

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In the progress of human improvement certain properties were observed invariably to belong to certain material substances, and by common agreement the material substance was exhibited for the property belonging to it. Hence the extension of the art of hieroglyphic writing, and I submit to your consideration a conjecture which has often occurred to me, that the account of the creation in the book of Genesis, was only a transfer to alphabetic writing, of more ancient Egyptian memorials in hieroglyphics. For we are expressly told that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and this may account for the representation of the Spirit of evil in the form of a Serpent, and for that of life, and for the knowledge of good and evil, abstractions of the mind, in the shape of trees growing in the garden of Paradise.

Be this however as it may, the books of Moses are written in the Hebrew language, a dialect of the Phœnician; as it was spoken by the children of Israel at the time of their emigration from Egypt about fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ. The subsequent historical books, from Joshua, the immediate successor of Moses, to Ezra and Nehemiah, contain the history of more than one thousand years, in the same language, modified from age to age, through the long lapse of years, and by the intermixture of the children of Israel with the various nations of Palestine, and with the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, by whom they were successively subdued and carried into captivity. The Psalms of David, as they are called, but really of him and of several other writers ranging through a period of a thousand years, the Proverbs, the Canticles, and the Ecclesiastes of Solomon, and the solemn and awful revelations from Heaven committed to writing by seventeen prophets, are in the same language, with an intermixture of the Chaldaic in the books composed after the Babylonian captivity. All the Books of the New Testament, as originally composed, are

in the Greek language, and there are translations of all the Books of the Old Testament into the Greek and Latin languages, of so great antiquity, that by the vast majority of the Christian world they are considered in all respects of equal, and in some passages of superior authority to the Hebrew.

These books, thus composed, are universally admitted, by all Christians of all denominations, as containing a rule of faith and a rule of life for all human kind. But, considered merely as history, they relate a series of events almost entirely miraculous, that is of special interpositions of divine Providence, suspending the ordinary laws of physical nature, and operating by preternatural agency. Considered as prophecies, their predictions are darkly and mysteriously blended with their history—and there is among Christians great diversity of opinion, with regard to the import and meaning of the prophecies—diversities which have given rise to bitter controversies, to furious dissensions, and to cruel, bloody and exterminating wars.

The Founder of the Christian religion himself, promised as a Redeemer of mankind from the transgression of their first parents in paradise—promised by a covenant of Almighty God with Abraham the father of the faithful, in the clear, explicit and repeated declaration that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed—promised again to his son Isaac, and to his son Jacob—promised through a long succession of ages, to Moses, to Daniel, to Solomon, to a long line of prophets and of kings—the Founder of the Christian religion himself, was crucified as a malefactor—numbered with the transgressors of that very law which he came to fulfil and to abolish. He suffered the ignominious death of the Cross, by the sentence of the law, delivered from Sinai, as understood and expounded by the high priest instituted by that divine dispensation.

But this crucified Galilean, was the Saviour of the world—the Redeemer promised at the expulsion of

Adam from Paradise. In a career of four years of manhood immediately preceding his death, he had unfolded to the world of mankind a new *rule of life*—a complete system of morals, founded upon two first principles; two elementary ideas. The one, was life and immortality, or in other words, the resurrection. The other, was the law of brotherly love, founded upon the principle of the natural equality of mankind and the resulting principle of peace on earth, good will to men, and the duty of universal application of doing unto others as you would that they should do unto you. In these two elementary principles, all Christians of all denominations concur. Whoever derides or disbelieves them or either of them can have no claims to the title of a Christian. It was not indeed for the promulgation of either of these doctrines that he suffered death. It was for the assertion of his own authority as the promised Messiah, for the declaration that he was the Son of God—that he possessed and exercised the power of performing miracles, and of forgiving sins; and for the unqualified assertion, that if they should put him to death he would by his own resurrection and ascension within three days, prove the truth of his doctrine of immortal life. He was accordingly sentenced to death, and the sentence was executed in strict conformity to the Law of Moses as it was understood by the Priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, the Ministers and Interpreters of the Law. And as he had foretold, on the third day from his crucifixion he rose again from the dead, was seen and conversed with by hundreds of his disciples for the space of forty days; and then leaving them with the explicit declaration that all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth, and with the express command *therefore*, to go and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—*teaching* them, to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded the disciples, and with the promise

that he would be with them always, even unto the end of the world.

Christian brethren and sisters! when I undertook to discourse to you upon the subject of *Education*—upon the first superficial survey of my subject, under a sort of prepossession, that considerations connected with your temporal and worldly welfare would be the only motives proper to be presented by a layman to your minds, I naturally inquired of myself, as at the entrance of this address I have inquired of you, what I could possibly say to you for the promotion of the cause of education, which you do not daily and habitually say to yourselves? But when, desirous of presenting in front the arguments which could operate at once upon your hearts and minds, I turned my thoughts to the principles and impulses which had influenced and directed your venerable ancestors, the first settlers of New England, the first and overruling motive, which stood forth in prominent relief as the corner-stone of their History was *Religion*—the Christian *Religion*—And as this was not simply the Religion of Nature, but peculiarly the Religion of a *Book*, the first reference to that Book, its history and character, immediately disclosed the source of that deep and intense interest, that fervid and unceasing anxiety, which glowed in the bosoms of all the first founders of New England. The Religion of the Bible must be *taught*. It must be instilled into the mind of childhood, and believed even before it is understood. Worldly motives and interests, have been the exclusive or the predominating influences to the settlement of all other colonial establishments known to the history of mankind. The only exception of ancient history was the emigration of Abraham from Ur of Chaldea, and the subsequent exodus of his descendants, the children of Israel, from Egypt to settle in the promised land. They carried with them a Code of Laws delivered by God himself to Moses upon Mount Sinai, which they accepted by an express

and formal covenant, often repeated by their posterity, and binding upon them through all the vicissitudes of their fortunes, till the promised Mediator of the New Covenant appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He came among them, declaring himself as having existed before Abraham, as commissioned expressly by his Father and their Father, by his God and their God, to deliver to them a *New Law*, to fulfil and partially to supersede the Law delivered from Sinai. He came claiming to be their prophet, priest and king—but he declared that his kingdom was not of this world—It was the kingdom of Heaven—It was the resurrection from death to immortal life,—and his new Law—his new command—first to his own people, the children of Israel, and then to the whole race of man in that and all succeeding ages—was the Law of Love, That they should *love one another*.

This simple and all-pervading principle was not in the Law of Moses. It was not in any preëxisting code of Laws ever imposed upon men. It was buried in the heart of man, blended and surrounded with every selfish and sordid passion to which his fall from Paradise had surrendered him. But it was *there*, and Jesus who knew what was in man brought it forth, and proclaimed it as the transcendent and paramount Law of man's nature. At the same time he told his disciples, that as a test of his principles he must himself suffer a cruel and ignominious death—a death reserved for malefactors and slaves. He told them, that they must all expect for proclaiming the glad tidings of his gospel to share his fate and suffer like him—That their own hearts were so incrustated with evil passions, and perverse customs and traditions, that they themselves did not fully comprehend the extent and universality of his Law—That to conform their practice to it, they must be regenerated, must be born again, and become entirely new men—That they themselves knew not what spirit they were of, and that devoted to him



and his doctrines as they declared and believed themselves to be, they would all desert and deny him at his last hour—as they did.

But he gave in his own person the proof of his doctrine of resurrection from the dead—and after that event, he promised them the Holy Ghost, as a Comforter for all they had suffered, and all they had yet to endure, and commanded them to go forth and *teach* all nations to *observe* whatsoever things he had commanded them.

Now this *teaching* of the commandments of Christ, to be observed by all nations, was by the express terms of the commission, recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, to continue to the end of the world—and wherever the Christian religion is established, this *teaching* must be to *children*, and it must continue through life. For it is not only doctrine but observance that must be taught—Faith and Works.

The doctrine of immortal life, is so congenial to the heart even of unregenerate man ; it is so soothing even to his selfish passions, that it is easily believed by all to whom it is *taught*. Though not explicitly revealed in the Old Testament, it was believed, not as an article of faith, but as a speculative opinion by the generality of the Jewish nation ; excepting by the sect of the Sadducees, who denied it altogether. A clear, undoubting conviction of it, is the first article of the Christian faith, and it is accordingly taught by Christians of every denomination. A future state of retribution, a resurrection of bliss to all who have done good, and of condemnation to all who have done evil, is also a fundamental article of Christianity, although the particular nature of the happiness to be enjoyed, and the nature and extent of the condemnation to be endured, have not been explicitly revealed.

But the doctrine of eternal life, is not the only lesson to be taught by the disciples of Jesus to all nations, to the end of the world—it is to be taught in connection indis-

soluble with the new commandment, to love one another. Among his last words at the table of the passover immediately before his death, he gave this *new* commandment—and repeating it expressly said, “by *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

This precept, too, was understood by all his apostles, as embracing the whole substance of his commands—nor has it ever been questioned by any human being, recognizing his authority as a divine teacher of religion and morals.

And with these two principles universally received by all who call upon the name of Christ, and acknowledge him as their Lord and Master, how is it comprehensible, that this religion of awful responsibility to God for the observance of universal benevolence to man, should have been for more than sixteen hundred years, from the day of Christ's passion till the settlement of New England, the source and cause from age to age of the bloodiest and most desolating wars that ever afflicted the human race. By what unaccountable perversity in the composition of the animal man, the only animated being on the face of the terraqueous globe, endowed by his Creator with the faculty of reason, is it, that the religion of Conscience and of Love, of glory to God in the highest, and of peace on earth, good will to men, should in the process of its operations on the heart and mind of man towards that consummation of its destiny, promised and intended by its Founder, when the practice of Christians shall correspond with the Christian faith, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ, have been doomed to make its way through oceans of blood—through ages of persecution, through hatred and revenge, through bigotry and superstition, through avarice and ambition, through fraud and hypocrisy, through lust and pride, through fanaticism and delusion, through all that the Spirit of evil can devise and all

that fallen man, the compound of the tiger and the fox can perpetrate, to that serene empyrean of Heaven upon earth, when the Lion shall lie down with the Lamb, when the swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning hooks—when nation shall no longer rise against nation, neither shall they learn war any more?

Christian Friends!—The radical cause of this deplorable inconsistency, and of all this melancholy depravity in the History of Mankind is defective *Education*. That the human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, had been said by divine inspiration, hundreds of years before the birth of the Redeemer, nor until his appearance upon earth had there been any improvement in its condition. Jesus was a *teacher* sent from God, to *reveal* the doctrine of immortal life and future retribution, and to *teach* the way on earth to eternal blessedness in Heaven.

But when the *teacher* has done his part, there remains to be performed the part of the *learner*. It was never promised by Jesus or his Apostles that the system of faith and of morals which he *taught*, should be forthwith received, understood and practised upon by all mankind. In confirmation of his doctrine of immortality, and to authenticate his mission from heaven, he performed miracles, or as he called them, mighty works. In illustration of the practice which he commanded his disciples to observe and to teach, he spoke in parables for the space of four years, disclosing even in minute detail the practical application of his *new* commandment of mutual love, to all the ordinary concerns of human life. But he came to *teach*, and not to compel. His Law was a Law of Liberty. He left the human mind and human action free, and the first lesson that he gave to his disciples was that he came to revolutionize the very nature of man—to regenerate him from the womb—to extirpate from his bosom all the evil

passions to which he had been surrendered by the disobedience of his first parents to the commandment of God, and to *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. But he gave them no encouragement to hope that this revolution in the very nature of man would be immediately or even speedily accomplished. He forewarned them that he must himself suffer death in confirmation of his mission by the treachery of one of themselves. He announced and bewailed the impending ruin and destruction of Chorazin, of Bethsaida, of Jerusalem herself, for the hardness of the hearts of their people, who despised his authority, and rejected his commands. He told them plainly that they should have persecution in the world in proportion to their fidelity to him, and that he came not to bring Peace upon earth but a sword.

A sword say you? for what? for what but for self-defence? He brought it not for conquest—for tyranny or oppression—but he brought it to be used by his disciples for their own defence, in their conflicts with the world against the tyranny and oppression of others. He was himself put to death, as he had foretold he should be, and upon his trial, rebuked one of his earliest disciples, for using the sword that he had brought, not in self-defence, but in useless and furious animosity against a servant of the high priest.

In the execution of the command which he gave them after his resurrection and immediately before his ascension, to go forth and *teach* all nations till the end of the world to observe all the commands which he had delivered to them—they went forth and *taught*. For the space of more than three hundred years, they met in return for this teaching, persecution, martyrdom, and cruel death. Still they taught—and still according to that beautiful parable of their Lord and Master, of the sower and the seed—although much of their seed fell by the way side and was devoured by the fowls of the air, much upon

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stony places, where it could take no root, but sprang up and under a scorching sun, soon withered away; much among thorns, which sprang up and choked them—yet other fell upon good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. And thus, under ten successive merciless decrees of so many Roman Emperors, masters of the world, prohibiting upon pain of death, this *teaching* of the disciples of Jesus, it was still making its way into the heart of man, irresistibly superseding the institutions of the Levitical Law, undermining and overthrowing the idolatrous worship of the Roman Empire, and prostrating before the simple command of mutual love from the lips of the Teacher of Nazareth, all the thrones and dominions, principalities and powers of the Earth.

At length after more than three hundred years of proscription and persecution, the religion of Jesus ascended the imperial throne of the Cæsars, and was proclaimed mistress of the world. But alas! the seed which until then had fallen by the way side and been devoured by the fowls of the air, was now destined to fall upon stony places, to spring up without root, and to wither away under the scorching sun of imperial power. Constantine adopted and professed and ordained the Christian religion, not in its own spirit of obedience to God and love to man, but as an instrument of conquest—as a weapon of war. He had seen or pretended to have seen a vision of a crucifix, at noon-day, transcending the light of the sun, and bearing the legible inscription in the Greek language —“By this, conquer.” It was in the midst of a formidable war that this supernatural apparition presented itself to his eyes, which a cotemporary Christian historian, Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, declares was related by Constantine to himself many years after, confirmed by the solemnity of an oath. But whether this vision was the result of a fanatical delusion imposing upon the optical nerves of

Constantine himself, or whether it was a fraudulent and deliberate imposture, it carried with it internal evidence, that the establishment of Christianity upon the throne of the world, was not in the true spirit of the Redeemer, life, immortality and brotherly love, but war, hatred and *conquest*. Constantine therefore stripped from all the warlike standards of the empire the bird of prey, the Roman Eagle; and supplied his place with the Labarum, the conquering and unconquerable emblem of the cross—and thenceforth the banners of the cross themselves became the banners of fraud and imposture, and the standard of a crucified Saviour, was waved over embattled legions marching to conquest, instead of peaceful disciples *teaching* all nations the law of immortal life and of brotherly love.

And upon this vicious foundation was soon erected a system of ecclesiastical hierarchy, in the progress of which the bishops of Rome, assuming to be the successors of Saint Peter, with the pastoral staff of a shepherd and the ring of a fisherman, arrogated to themselves a dominion over their brethren of the Christian faith, to which no sovereign of earthly origin ever presumed to aspire. From *teachers* of the gospel of Christ they were gradually metamorphosed by the ascendancy which they acquired over the minds of men, not only into sovereign temporal princes, but into superior beings, exempt from all the infirmities of human nature, invested with absolute and uncontrollable power, armed with the authority of setting up and putting down kings, of absolving subjects from the ties of allegiance to their sovereigns, of laying whole nations under interdict, and of distributing at their discretion all the territories of the earth; and to cap the climax of blasphemy, not only to forgive and redeem from punishment the transgressions of men, but to grant for money indulgences for the perpetration of crimes. Can it be conceived as possible that this abominable

system of fraud and imposture was actually consummated, originating in the adoption of Christianity by Constantine, commencing by small and imperceptible beginnings, but swelling and expanding into portentous immensity, for the space of nearly twelve hundred years, till the appointed day of Martin Luther.

And during the same period, some of the seeds fell among thorns, which grew up with them and choked them—thorns of internal dissension and thorns of external war. Rival ambition had manifested itself among the twelve apostles of Jesus, even while he lived; nor was it wholly extinguished by his severe admonition that they knew not what spirit they were of. Immediately after his decease, irritating debates and sharp animosities sprung up among them—multitudes of the Jewish converts maintaining that the whole Levitical law continued unrepealed, and the proselytes from the gentiles inflexibly refusing to submit to the rite of circumcision, or to restrict themselves to the distinction between clean and unclean meats, or to encumber themselves with the burthensome ritual of the Mosaic law. In the Instructions of Jesus to his disciples, he had dwelt with emphatic solemnity upon the indispensable necessity of *Faith* in him and his doctrines, for admission to the kingdom of Heaven and for salvation to their immortal souls—but the law which he gave was a law of universal love, and no stronger evidence of Faith in him could be exhibited than by implicit observance of that Law. Now *Faith*, in the sense in which it was required by Jesus of his disciples, has been defined by the Apostle of the Gentiles “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” It is *belief*—a property of man’s immortal soul, possessed by no other being upon earth. For belief gives to future time the anticipated certainty of the past—it annihilates time and space, and is the most powerful of all the arguments of natural religion to prove

the immortal nature of man. Well then might Jesus and his Apostles, in their teaching of mankind, dwell upon the transcendent importance and irresistible efficacy of this *passive faith*, this firm belief in the divine mission of the Saviour and in the promises of his gospel, for there is another property of *faith*, by which it regulates the conduct of men. This is active faith, and is the foundation of all the moral relations between man and his fellow-creature man. This faith in action, is the adamantine chain which holds the moral elements of the world together. Faith in its passive sense may be considered as synonymous with confidence—in its active sense with *fidelity*. The definition of faith by St. Paul in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is of passive faith—and he says elsewhere that it comes by hearing—and hearing by the word of God. But all the illustrations throughout the whole of that chapter of the unbounded power of faith, consist of its efficacy to the production of works; as confidence in God; as passive faith—*belief* in the omnipotence and goodness of God.

You have all observed, my friends, in reading and comparing together the strong language of St. Paul in urging this all comprehensive power and influence of faith, with that of his brother Apostle James in the second chapter of his Epistle, where he seems to represent *faith* as altogether subordinate to works; there is an apparent difference between the two Apostles, as to the sense in which they understand the term Faith. The difference is only apparent. The definition of St. Paul is strictly confined to faith in its passive sense, as synonymous with *belief*—confidence in God—but all his illustrations, both special from Abel to Samuel and the prophets, and general, of the sufferings endured and of wonders performed by the faithful, are all, without a single exception, instances of faith manifested by works. So that St. James, who so emphatically declares that faith without



works is dead, and that the devils *believe* and tremble, manifestly refers only to that faith which is synonymous with *belief*, while St. Paul as manifestly refers to that faith which is synonymous with *fidelity*—the faith which is manifested in action, by the performance of good works. There is therefore no real difference between the doctrines of the two Apostles; but need I tell you that there was a difference, a deep and radical difference of impression upon the minds of the disciples who heard them, with regard to this doctrine of faith and works, which after a lapse of nearly nineteen hundred years yet remains unadjusted, and which even now may expose me to the suspicion of heresy for this simple statement of my own views of the case. I pray you to understand that I am not about to involve myself or you in the controversy between Faith and Works—that I only speak historically; only point out to you some of the thorns of internal dissension among which the seed of the blessed gospel fell immediately after it had been sown, and in the first century of the Christian era. And then came the trials of the Apostles; the repeated imprisonments of Peter; the martyrdom of Stephen by a frantic multitude, and of James by the tyrant Herod; the cruel persecutions first inflicted and afterwards endured by Paul; the charges against the Christians of setting fire to Rome by Nero, and the long train of ten Persecutions from that time till the conversion of Constantine—while at the same time from the teeming fancies of the converts to Christianity multitudes of wild, extravagant and absurd sectarian creeds sprung up in the rank soil of the human heart, to obscure the divine light of the gospel and to choke the seed of the sower. The time will allow me barely to glance at the melancholy fertility of the successive growths of thorns which choked the seeds of the truth as it is in Jesus, for many centuries by the imposture of Mahomet founded upon the principle of inextinguishable War, in

direct opposition to that of perpetual and universal Peace, the pure and simple doctrine of Christianity—or by that perversion of Christian principle generated by the false religion of the Koran, the Crusades for the recovery of the Sepulchre of Christ from the infidels, and the short lived establishment of a Christian kingdom in what was termed the holy land.

Of all these obstructions to the establishment of the peaceful kingdom of Christ upon earth, the most terrible and the most fatal, was the dominion which the bishops of Rome, in the name and as the pretended successors of Saint Peter, had usurped over the minds of men. Instead of *teaching* all nations the observance of the commands of Christ, the bishops of Rome had in a long succession of ages erected a Sovereignty for *ruling* all nations, and teaching them only the commands of men—and they ruled with a rod of iron. We all know that the reformation of this anti-Christian system was commenced by Martin Luther, and that although for ages before, ineffectual struggles against it had been crushed by its power, it was the monstrous pretension and practice of selling indulgences for the commission of crimes, which was first contested and then assailed by him as a *teacher* of nations to the observance of the commands of Christ, according to the commission given by the Saviour to his disciples at the moment preceding his ascension.

Of the progress of the Protestant Reformation it is impossible for me here to speak; but in discoursing to you upon the importance and the transcendent duties of education, I pray you to remark that the direct issue between the Protestant reformers and the papal usurpations was *education*. It was the freedom of thought against organized power. It had been established as one of the fundamental articles of the Catholic faith, that the Roman Pontiff—the head of the Church—was infallible—that his will was law. That the keys of Heaven had been

transmitted to him in uninterrupted succession from Saint Peter, and that all other powers upon earth, were bound to implicit obedience to his decrees, issued with a fraudulent semblance of humility in the professed capacity of a servant of servants. To secure this implicit obedience to his will, the word of God itself, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, were withheld from the inspection of the People, and reserved to the exclusive possession of the Priesthood—for many ages not only the great mass of the People, but the Rulers of the earth, kings and emperors, were not even taught to read, and when in the revolutions of time, the languages in which the Oracles of God had been composed became extinct, no translation of them into any of the languages of modern Europe had been published, until Luther with his own hand, in defiance of the papal law, made the first translation of them into German.

Thus one of the first consequences of the Protestant Reformation was to unlock the Holy Scriptures to the understandings of the people—but that they might be qualified to receive them, it became indispensably necessary to *teach* the great mass of the people the art of *reading*. It was also necessary that this art should be taught in childhood; not only because childhood is the period of human life best adapted to the reception of all religious impressions, but because the tenderness of affection for children had been signally manifested throughout his life by the Founder of Christianity, and because one of his most peremptory and affecting commands to his disciples had been, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.”

*Education*, then, the education of children, and the art of reading, was the primary impulse to the Protestant Reformation. The right of reading the Bible, was the first privilege secured to every follower of Christ, by the successful assault of Martin Luther upon the supremacy of the Church of Rome.

But the Reformation was the work of ages—it is not yet consummated. The Bible is the word of God, the seed of righteousness upon earth, and of blessedness in the world to come. But of this seed, much still falls by the way side, much on stony places, much among thorns; and even of that which falls upon good ground, the returns are unequal, according to the richness of the soil and the variety of the seasons. Luther translated the Scriptures into the German language, and made them thus accessible to all his countrymen who could read. He was followed by a host of pious and learned men, of the other European nations, who translated the holy writings into the several languages of their respective countries, and thus the study of the Scriptures became the universal occupation of all the Christian nations. The invention of printing, which had preceded only by a few years the daring innovations of Luther, multiplied as the sands of the sea, the readers of the canonized books, and the splendid Polyglott Bible, compiled with immense labor, and published with princely magnificence by Cardinal Ximenes, furnished the learned patriarchs of the Reformation the means of correcting and improving their versions of the Old and New Testaments in the modern languages, by collating and comparing with each other not only the text of the Scriptures themselves, but the commentaries upon them and expositions of their contents, as well by the Doctors of the Jewish Sanhedrim, as by the Fathers of the Christian Church.

The seals of divine revelation were thus broken, and the Bible was opened to the inspection and examination of the Protestant Christian throughout the world. But two steps further became indispensably necessary to the full enjoyment of the inestimable treasure thus dispensed to all classes of the community. The first was *education*—by dispensing to the whole people, the knowledge of the art of reading—and the second was the right of private judgment, or in other words the privilege of every reader,

to exercise the faculties of his own understanding in the interpretation of what he reads.

And here we find the source of that inseparable connection between knowledge, and virtue and liberty, which characterized your forefathers, the Puritan settlers of New England, beyond every other people upon earth. Other Colonies have been settled under the impulse of worldly interests—of commercial enterprise—of romantic adventure for the search of gold or silver mines, or from the baser motive of ambition varnished over with zeal—the conquest of unoffending nations under the hypocritical pretence of converting them to the Christian faith.

The transcendent and overruling principle of the first settlers of New England, was Conscience. All the monarchies of Christendom resisted the reformation of Luther. A war of thirty years was the immediate consequence of his secession from the Church of Rome, in his native land—a war, the ravages and desolation of which still arrest the traveller over those regions in his path, with the melancholy reflection that the ruin inflicted by the hand of man, as it surpasses the destructive power, bids defiance even to the repairing hand of time. The wars of the Reformation extended over all Europe. They were modified by the political agitations and convulsions of the age. The spirit of reform was arrested in its progress by the apostacy of Henry the 4th in France—it severed from the crown of Spain the Provinces of the United Netherlands, and converted them into a Republic. It overthrew the dynasty of the Stuarts in Great Britain; brought one of its monarchs to the block; and expelled another and his family forever from the throne. In the process of these convulsions a portion of the people of England, withdrew from the field of persecution and of blood; not from any motives of worldly welfare, but to the total sacrifice of them all, for the uninterrupted enjoyment of the rights of conscience; for the privilege of holding the Holy Scriptures as their

only rule of faith, and of interpreting them by the dictates of their own understanding.

Now to a colony thus composed, the education of their children was a necessary of life more indispensable than food, or raiment, or shelter. Their bodies might perish by famine, or by nakedness, or by exposure to the inclemency of winter snows and barren rocks, in a region where it has recently been said that granite and ice are the only productions of nature—but animal life, the preservation of their bodies, was to them but a secondary concern. The food for which they hungered and thirsted was for the nourishment of the spirit, and the preservation of the never dying soul. This was the Faith that came by *hearing*. The first of all their wants was *teachers*—teachers for themselves—teachers for their children.

Was I not then justified in saying that *Education* was the mother of New England?—that the predominating and controlling impulse which brought our forefathers from a land where they were in the enjoyment of every temporal blessing, and which they tenderly loved, as their country, to a howling wilderness where they could enjoy nothing but Conscience and Freedom, was *Education*? Such is the testimony of their History—what is the language of their Laws?

With the first settlers of the Massachusetts Colony, there came over learned and pious men, educated at the English Universities, and some of them among the most eminent divines of the age. On board the *Arabella*, the vessel in which Governor Winthrop came, religious worship was regularly performed, every Lord's day, even in the most tempestuous weather; and immediately after their departure from the coast of England, they appointed two days in the week, upon which Mr. Phillips, their minister, catechised the people.

On their arrival in this land, their first care was to keep a day of thanksgiving in all their plantations, and no

sooner had they fixed upon the three hills as the spot for their settlement, than they formed themselves into a church, and chose Mr. Wilson their *Teacher*, Mr. Newell an Elder, and Mr. Gager and Mr. Aspenwall, Deacons. Nor is it to be forgotten that in our own town of Braintree, the gathering of the church preceded the incorporation of the town—that the primary cause of the formation of the church, was the inconvenience and sometimes impossibility for the inhabitants of Mount Wollaston to attend public worship at Boston, and that small as their numbers were, they chose two persons for the administration of their spiritual concerns, one under the denomination of Pastor, and the other of Teacher.

Within six years after their landing in the wilderness, four hundred pounds were given by the General Court of the Massachusetts Colony towards the establishment of a public school at Newtown, afterwards called Cambridge; and two years later, a *teacher* of the word of God, John Harvard, self-expatriated from England, as if by an express dispensation of divine Providence, came, for one short year to break the bread of life to the Church at Charlestown, and then to depart for the world of spirits, leaving his whole fortune for the foundation of a College which will bear his name in reverence and honor on the wings of Time to the end of the world.

In the same year in which that illustrious body sent forth the first fruits of New England education to the world, the General Court enacted a law declaring, that “For as much as the good education of children is of singular behoof and benefit to any commonwealth—that the selectmen of every town, in the several precincts and quarters where they dwell, shall have a vigilant eye over their brethren and neighbors to see, first, that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach, by themselves or others, their children and apprentices, so much learning,

as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and knowledge of the capital laws.”

Also that all masters of families do once a week (at the least) catechise their children and servants *in the grounds and principles of religion*.

There are other provisions in this law, all adapted to the purpose of carrying it into full execution.

Four years later (in 1646) in the enactment of a code of criminal law, it was provided, that if any child or children, above sixteen years old, and of sufficient understanding, shall curse or smite their natural father or mother, he or they shall be put to death, unless it can be sufficiently testified that the parents have been very unchristianly negligent in the education of such children—and a law in the same words was some years afterwards enacted in the Plymouth Colony.

And in May, 1647, in addition to all these preceding enactments for the teaching of religion by the organization of Churches, and for the instruction of children in their families, a general law was passed, requiring of every township within the jurisdiction, consisting of fifty householders, to appoint forthwith, a teacher of *all* such children who should resort to him, to *write* and *read*, to be paid either by the parents or masters of such children or by the inhabitants of the town. And further, that every town consisting of one hundred families or householders should set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university.

And listen to the beautiful—may I not say sublime preamble to this law, declaring the motive and purpose of its enactment.

“It being one chief project of Satan to keep man from the knowledge of the Scripture, as in former times keeping them in unknown tongues, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at least the



true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded and corrupted with false glosses of deceivers ; to the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers, in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors. It is *therefore* ordered by this court and authority thereof," &c.

Here then, in the Laws enacted by the first settlers of New England, is a complete system of instruction, based upon the principle that human life, from the cradle to the grave, is a *school*—That at every period of his existence, man wants a *teacher*, and that his pilgrimage upon earth is but a term of childhood, in which he is to be *educated* for the manhood of a brighter world. Let the scoffer at the demure spirit and austere manners of the Puritans, survey the history of mankind—let him ransack the annals of every gathering of man into society from the confusion of Babel to the settlement of Sierra Leone, New South Wales or Liberia, and find a parallel to this primitive code of New England Colonial Law !

This system continued in full force until, in the progress and vicissitudes of the reformation in the parent country, the charter of the Colony was annulled by the despicable tyrant Charles the Second. Immediately after the revolution of 1688, a new Charter was obtained from William and Mary, including the Colonies of Massachusetts and Plymouth as well as the District of Maine and Nova Scotia. By the vacation of the Charter, all the preceding Colonial Laws were understood to have been superseded with it, and as the jurisdiction of the New Province extended over several preceding Colonies, which had been governed by different laws, an entire new system of Legislation became necessary. Hence, among the laws of the very first sessions of the General Court under the new Charter, was an Act for the Settlement and Support of Ministers and Schoolmasters.

This Statute preserved and fortified the system of

education which sixty years before had been established by the founders of the Colony—the system of universal education, providing at once for the support of the Pastor and the Schoolmaster, the teacher of adult age and the teacher of children, by the common contributions of all. In proportion as the population, and the worldly wealth of the Province increased, this system was expanded and enlarged by subsidiary legislation, till the revolution which severed the North American Colonies from the British Empire. At that time, when the People of the Commonwealth were called upon in their sovereign capacity to form a Constitution of Government for themselves, they declared by a special Article in their Declaration of Rights, that as the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion and morality; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community, but by the institution of the public worship of God, and of public instructions in piety, religion and morality, therefore the Legislature were authorized to require the several towns, parishes, precincts and other bodies politic or religious societies, to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of God, and for the support and maintenance of public Protestant *teachers* of piety, religion and morality, in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily.

Such was the opinion and such the ordinance of your fathers in the days of their severest trials, and when their afflictions taught them to place all their reliance upon their Creator. The people of Massachusetts in their days of prosperity and enjoyment have seen fit to repeal this Article of their Bill of Rights, and to leave the support of religion and morality, and of their teachers to the voluntary contributions of the People alone. Fondly would I hope that this constitutional alteration has proceeded from no growing indifference to the cause of piety, religion and

morality, but from a firm conviction that they will be as liberally and effectively supported by voluntary contribution, as they ever have been by legislative enactment.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth had also a special Chapter, for the preservation, protection, and promotion of all the rights, privileges and immunities of Harvard University; and the general encouragement of Literature—making it the special duty of Legislatures and Magistrates in all future periods of the Commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them: especially the University at Cambridge, public schools, and grammar schools in the towns.

From these provisions in the Constitution of the State, we have ample evidence, that at no period of our history has the interest of the People in behalf of education been more ardent and intense than it was at the time when in the midst of a most calamitous and terrible civil war, they were first summoned to exercise the rights and to wield the powers of an Independent People.

I have already detained you too long to protract the call upon your attention, by entering upon a detail of the legislation of the Commonwealth on the subject of education since that time. It is no pleasant recollection to bring to your minds, and it is yet a duty with which I cannot dispense, to remark that the very first act of legislation under the government of the Commonwealth, for the instruction of youth, and for the promotion of good education, presents a painful relaxation if not an inexcusable dereliction of the spirit which until then had animated all our forefathers. The act of 1693, merely repeating the provisions of that of 1647, required that every town having the number of fifty householders, or upwards, should be *constantly* provided of a schoolmaster to teach children to read and write, and that in every town of one hundred families, there should be kept a grammar school, by a person well instructed in the

tongues. In the act of 1789, the duty required of towns of fifty householders is only to have schoolmasters to teach reading and writing, for such term of time as shall be equivalent to six months for one school in each year. Towns of one hundred families only, were required to keep a teacher of reading and writing the year round ; and only towns of two hundred families to keep a grammar school.

You will observe that by this alteration of the law, one-half the time of all the children of the Commonwealth, of teachable age for learning to read and write, was taken away, and the same principle as might easily be shown pervaded the whole law, diminishing the facilities for acquiring education, provided by the law, at least by *one-half*. What were the motives for this change I presume not now to inquire ; but I cannot otherwise than consider it as evidence of an unhappy decline of that fervid spirit, for the education of children, which was so signally characteristic of the Pilgrim fathers of the Colony—of the native fathers of the Province—and of the founders of the Constitutional Commonwealth. The general spirit of your laws relative to education, since that time, has been to multiply the *objects* of study upon your children, and to diminish the time which you allow them for making the acquisition of learning. This evil has not yet been removed. You may be startled at hearing that since the act of 1789, you yourselves have enjoyed facilities of learning at most half equal to those which your forefathers enjoyed from the first settlement of the Colony—and that your children now enjoy no more than you have possessed yourselves. I speak not now of private schools and academies endowed by the beneficence of individuals, or accessible to the children of opulence ; but of schools provided by law, and accessible to the children of all. In very recent years, the People of the Commonwealth have kindled with a fresh ardor

in the cause of education, and their Legislature have shared largely of their noble enthusiasm. The annual returns of schools, from all the towns of the Commonwealth ; the institution of a liberal and enlightened Board of Education ; the annual reports and indefatigable labors of their able and eloquent Secretary ; and the provision made, by an affecting union of individual munificence with public bounty, for normal schools, to elevate the standard of instruction by the education of accomplished teachers—all these are pledges of delightful promise for the improvement of the rising and future generations.

But my friends and brethren of my native town, to return to the radical thought upon which I invited you to consider this subject, and which you may perhaps think more appropriate to the religious exercises of the Lord's day, and to the hallowed lips of your reverend pastor, than to the amusement of a weekday, and the discourse of a man of the world, let me close as I began with intreating you to bear in mind that the invincible spirit which brought your Puritan fathers to New England, was *Education*. Let us impress it indelibly on our own minds ; let us impress it to the extent of our ability upon others, that *Education* is the business of human life—that our religion is the religion of a book—and that the meaning of that book is intrusted by divine Providence to the deliberate judgment of our own understandings. That as the child must be educated for manhood upon earth, so the man must be educated upon earth, for heaven ; and finally that where the foundation is not laid in Time, the superstructure cannot rise for Eternity.

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