

**Bibles in Public Schools.**

Headquarters American Secular Union and Freethought Federation.

Chicago, December 1900.

Mr. J. H. Ackerman,  
State Supt. Public Instruction,  
Salem, Or.

Dear Sir:

This society is informed that the Attorney General of your state has given an opinion authorizing the use of prayers in the public schools of the state of Oregon. We earnestly protest against this action and give a few of our reasons why the people of your state should refuse to act upon this opinion further than to obtain its reversal before your legislature or courts.

Secular government says: "Afford to every child growing up in the land opportunity of a good common school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan, or atheistical tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church or the private school, supported entirely by private contribution. Keep the church and state forever separated."—President U. S. Grant, Reunion of the Army of the Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, 1875.

Said the Supreme Court of Ohio through Mr. Justice Welch:

"If it be true that our law enjoins the teaching of the Christian religion in the schools, surely, then, all its teachers should be Christians. Were I such a teacher, while I should instruct the pupils that the Christian religion was true and all other religions false, I should tell them that the law itself was an UNCHRISTIAN law. One of my first lessons to the pupils would show it to be christian. That lessons would be: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." I could not look the veriest infidel or heathen in the face, and say that such a law was just, or that it was a fair specimen of Christian republicanism. I should have to tell him that it was an outgrowth of false Christianity and not one of the "lights" which Christians are commanded to shed upon an unbelieving world. I should feel bound to acknowledge to him, moreover, that it violates the spirit of our constitutional guarantees, and is a state religion in embryo; that if we have no right to tax him to support religious instructions, that to tax him to put down his own religion is of the very essence of tyranny; that however small the tax, it is the first step in the direction of an "establishment of religion;" and I should add that the first step in that direction is a fatal step, because it logically involves the last step. \* \* Government is an organization for particular purposes. It is not almighty, and we are not to look to it for everything. The

great bulk of human affairs and human interests, lying outside the true and legitimate province of government."

Another judicial opinion: Justice H. S. Orton, concurring in the opinions of Justices Lyon and Cassady, all of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin (1890), said:

"The common schools, like all the other institutions of the state, are protected by the Constitution from from all "control or interference with the rights of conscience," and from all preferences given by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship. As the state can have nothing to do with religion, except to protect every one in the enjoyment of his own, so the common schools can have nothing to do with religion in any respect whatever. They are as completely SECULAR as any other institution of the state, in which all the people, alike, have equal rights and privileges. The people cannot be taxed for religion in schools, more than anywhere else. Religious instruction in the common schools is clearly prohibited by these general clauses of the Constitution, as religious instruction or worship in any department of the state, supported by revenue derived from taxation. The clause that "no sectarian instruction shall be allowed therein" was inserted "ex industria" to exclude everything pertaining to religion. They are called by those who wish to have not only religion but their own religion, taught there in "godless schools." They are godless, in the same sense that the executive, legislative, and administrative departments are godless. So long as our Constitution remains as it is, no one's religion can be taught in our common schools."

"It is said: If reading the Protestant version of the Bible in schools is offensive to the parents of some of the scholars, and antagonistic to their own religious views, their children can retire. They ought not to be compelled to go out of the school for such a reason, for one moment. The suggestion itself concedes the whole argument. That version of the Bible is hostile to the belief of many who are taxed to support the common schools, and who have equal rights and privileges in them. It is a source of religions and sectarian strife. That is enough. It violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution. It requires but little argument to prove that the Protestant version of the Bible, or any other version of the Bible, is a source of religious strife and opposition and opposed to the religious belief of many of our people. It is a SECTARIAN book. The connection of church and state corrupts religion and makes the state despotic."

The New York "Independent" (Christian), commenting on the

decision of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin that the Bible had no place in our common schools, said:

"How any other conclusion could have been drawn from the premises, we are not able to see. We see no escape from the conclusion reached, and have no desire to escape it, since we thoroughly believe in its correctness everywhere. It remits the question of religious instruction, as to what it shall be, as to the agency giving it, and as to the cost thereof, to voluntary private and individual effort, and devotes the public school, created and regulated by law, and supported by a general taxation of the people, exclusively to Secular education. This principle is in harmony with the nature and structure of our political institutions and is moreover just and equitable as between religious sects.

There is no other basis on which the school question can be justly settled as between different religious sects.

First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

"Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of the press; or the right of the people to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances.

This gives the citizens of the United States complete religious liberty. It is claimed that the states are NOT bound by this inhibition that THEY CAN legally deny equal rights to the citizens. But read this:

Part of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the state in which they reside. NO STATE SHALL MAKE OR ENFORCE ANY LAW WHICH SHALL ABRIDGE THE PRIVILEGES OR IMMUNITIES OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

That settles the question of state sectarian legislation.

We trust our protest will receive due consideration by you, and be fully submitted to the people of your state before action is taken.

Yours very truly,

J. B. WILSON, M. D., Pres.

E. C. REICHWALD, Sec.

**The Immortality of the Soul.**

Concluded from Page 3.

murder of war unfold his rich, unused mental powers in Walhalla? Will the feeble, childish old man, who has filled the world with the fame of his deeds in the ripeness of his age, live forever in mental decay? Or will he return to an earlier stage of development? If

the immortal souls in Olympus are to live in a condition of rejuvenescence and perfectness, and then both the stimulus to the formation of, and the interest in, personality disappear for them.

Not less impossible, in the light of pure reason, do we find the anthropistic myth of the "last judgment," and the separation of the souls of men into two great groups, of which one is destined for the eternal joys of Paradise and the other for the eternal torments of hell—and that from a personal God who is entitled the "Father of Love"! And it is this "Universal Father" who has himself created the conditions of heredity and adaptation, in virtue of which the elect, on the one side, were BOUND to pursue the path towards eternal bliss, and the luckless poor and miserable on the other hand, were DRIVEN into the paths of the damned?

A critical comparison of the countless and manifold fantasies which belief in immortality has produced during the last few thousand years in the different races and religions yields a most remarkable picture. An intensely interesting presentation of it, based on most extensive original research, may be found in Adalbert Svoboda's distinguished works, "The Illusion of the Soul" and "Forms of Faith." However absurd and inconsistent with modern knowledge most of these myths seem to be, they still play an important part, and, as "postulates of practical reason," they exercise a powerful influence on the opinions of individuals and on the destiny of races.

The idealist and spiritualist philosophy of the day will freely grant that these prevalent materialistic forms of belief in immortality are untenable; it will say that the refined idea of an immaterial soul, a Platonic "idea" or a transcendental psychic substance, must be substituted for them. But modern realism can have nothing whatever to do with these incomprehensible notions; they satisfy neither the mind's feeling of causality nor the yearning of our emotions. If we take a comprehensive glance at all that modern anthropology, psychology, and cosmology teach with regard to athanatism, we are forced to this definite conclusion: "The belief in the immortality of the human soul is a dogma which is in hopeless contradiction with the most solid empirical truths of modern science."

Among the people with somewhat peculiar ideas of morality must be included that West Virginian minister who thought it shameful sin to dance, and yet did not hesitate to carry a pistol and shoot down a man who protested against that view of the question.—Louisville Courier-Journal.