



the
**MISSION
DRIVEN**
mom

‘The Reign of Law’ In Education

By Charlotte Mason

'The Reign of Law' in Education

Common Sense and Good Intentions.—Besides, though this physical culture of the brain may be only the groundwork of education, the method of it indicates what should be the method of all education; that is, orderly, regulated progress under the guidance of Law. The reason why education effects so much less than it should effect is just this—that in nine cases out of ten, sensible good parents trust too much to their common sense and their good intentions, forgetting that common sense must be at the pains to instruct itself in the nature of the case, and that well-intended efforts come to little if they are not carried on in obedience to divine laws, to be read in many cases, not in the Bible, but in the facts of life.

Law-abiding Lives often more blameless than Pious Lives.—It is a shame to believing people that many whose highest profession is that they do not know, and therefore do not believe, should produce more blameless lives, freer from flaws of temper, from the vice of selfishness, than do many sincerely religious people. It is a fact that will confront the children by-and-by, and one of which they require an explanation; and what is more, it is a fact that will have more weight, should it confront them in the person of a character which they cannot but esteem and love, than all the doctrinal teaching they have had in their lives. This appears to me the threatening danger to that confessed dependence upon and allegiance to Almighty God which we recognise as religion—not the wickedness, but the goodness of a school which refuses to admit any such dependence and allegiance.

My sense of this danger is my reason for offering the little I have to say upon the subject of education,—my sense of the danger, and the assurance I feel that it is no such great danger after all, but one that parents of the cultivated class are competent to deal with, and are precisely the only persons who can deal with it.

Mind and Matter equally governed by Law.—As for this superior morality of some non-believers, supposing we grant it, what does it amount to? Just to this, that the universe of mind, as the universe of matter, is governed by unwritten laws of God; that the child cannot blow soap bubbles or think his flitting thoughts otherwise than in obedience to divine laws; that all safety, progress, and success in life come out of obedience to law, to the laws of mental, moral or physical science, or of that spiritual science which the Bible unfolds; that it is possible to ascertain laws and keep laws without recognising the Lawgiver, and that those who do ascertain and keep any divine

law inherit the blessing due to obedience, whatever be their attitude towards the Lawgiver; just as the man who goes out into blazing sunshine is warmed, though he may shut his eyes and decline to see the sun. Conversely, that they who take no pains to study the principles which govern human action and human thought miss the blessings of obedience to certain laws, though they may inherit the better blessings which come of acknowledged relationship with the Lawgiver.

Antagonism to Law shown by some Religious Persons.—These last blessings are so unspeakably satisfying, that often enough the believer who enjoys them wants no more. He opens his mouth and draws in his breath for the delight he has in the law, it is true; but it is the law of the spiritual life only. Towards the other laws of God which govern the universe he sometimes takes up an attitude of antagonism, almost of resistance, worthy of an infidel.

It is nothing to him that he is fearfully and wonderfully made; he does not care to know how the brain works, nor how the more subtle essence we call mind evolves and develops in obedience to laws. There are pious minds to which a desire to look into these things savours of unbelief, as if it were to dishonour the Almighty to perceive that He carries on His glorious works by means of glorious Laws. They will have to do with no laws excepting the laws of the kingdom of grace. In the meantime, the non-believer, who looks for no supernatural aids, lays himself out to discover and conform to all the laws which regulate natural life— physical, mental, moral; all the laws of God, in fact, excepting those of the spiritual life which the believer appropriates as his peculiar inheritance. But these laws which are left to Esau are laws of God also, and the observance of them is attended with such blessings, that the children of the believers say, Look, how is it that these who do not acknowledge the Law as of God are better than we who do?

Parents must acquaint themselves with the Principles of Physiology and Moral Science.—Now, believing parents have no right to lay up this crucial difficulty for their children. They have no right, for instance, to pray that their children may be made truthful, diligent, upright, and at the same time neglect to acquaint themselves with those principles of moral science the observance of which will guide into truthfulness, diligence, and uprightness of character. For this, also, is the law of God. Observe, not into the knowledge of God, the thing best worth living for: no mental science, and no moral science, is pledged to reveal that. What I contend for is, that these sciences have their part to play in the education of the human race, and that the parent may not disregard them with impunity. My endeavour in this and the following volumes of the series will be to sketch out roughly a method of education which, as resting upon a

basis of natural law, may look, without presumption, to inherit the Divine blessing. Any sketch I can offer in this short compass must be very imperfect and very incomplete; but a hint here and there may be enough to put intelligent parents on profitable lines of thinking with regard to the education of their children.

