

## KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

against all other sects and give rise to the fearful religious wars that form the saddest pages in the book of history. And all the time the unprejudiced "critique of pure reason" teaches us that all these different forms of faith are equally false and irrational, mere creatures of poetic fancy and uncritical tradition. Rational science must reject them all alike as the outcome of superstition.

The incalculable injury which irrational superstition has done to credulous humanity is conspicuously revealed in the ceaseless conflict of confessions of faith. Of all the wars which nations have waged against each other with fire and sword the religious wars have been the bloodiest; of all the forms of discord that have shattered the happiness of families and of individuals those that arise from religious differences are still the most painful. Think of the millions who have lost their lives in Christian persecutions, in the religious conflicts of Islam and of the Reformation, by the Inquisition, and under the charge of witchcraft. Or think of the still greater number of luckless men who, through religious differences, have been plunged into family troubles, have lost the esteem of their fellow-citizens and their position in the community, or have even been compelled to fly from their country. The official confession of faith becomes most pernicious of all when it is associated with the political aims of a modern state, and is enforced as "religious instruction" in our schools. The child's mind is thus early diverted from the pursuit of the truth and impregnated with superstition. Every friend of humanity should do all in his power to promote unsectarian schools as one of the most valuable institutions of the modern state.

The great value which is, none the less, still very