

have noticed certain manifestations, seen its pendulum swing, heard its tick, but what is religion? A little boy asks his mother that question to be informed that religion is something that keeps people good, just as a clock is something that keeps time. Religion is as much of a mystery to him as the clock; yet he has some ideas of religion and can have some personal experience of it. What are those ideas, that experience? This is the teacher's problem. How may it be solved?

The readiest answer is: Put yourself back into your own child life, recall your own ideas and experiences regarding religion. But even if in your own care those ideas have been vivid, those experiences real, they have largely faded from memory, and also there is the exceeding great difficulty of reproducing the child's conditions, his atmosphere, his environment, his mental viewpoint. We fail to detach our later experiences, we carry back with us our present attitudes of mind.

The best autobiographies are the diaries and journals in which daily experiences from early life are recorded. An old man cannot sit down and paint a correct picture of his boy life. We believe a book has been written entitled, *The Autobiography of a Baby*. If such a book could be produced, true to life, it would be one of the most amazing revelations the world has ever known. It may be that a man can remember when he first tried to make straight lines and pothooks with a pencil, or when he first wrestled with the problem d-o-g, dog, and c-a-t, cat; but he fails to transport himself back to the pothook and alphabetic attitude of mind. Yet within its limitations such an endeavor to reproduce the conceptions of early life is highly valuable. It will reveal how crude, how fragmentary, and how true and real were many of our first notions about religious truth.

No theories are equal to personal contact with the child mind and personal discovery of its ideas. How much a child knows, how wise its thoughts! How limited is its knowledge, how mistaken are its conclusions! We cannot group children together and assume that they have a certain knowledge and ripeness of soul at a certain age. We must know them individually. This is true of people of all ages. "My early education was neglected and there are many subjects I cannot grasp," said a bright, intelligent man sitting in a public library with the treasures of literature banked about him,—a strong man in many respects; in others he was still a child. Is not this true of every adult? How careful we should be not to make unverified assumptions concerning a child's knowledge!

A child must understand religion as a child. We talk a great deal about faith and

its absolute necessity. What does faith mean to a child? He may possess it. A mere grain of mustard seed it may be, yet it may remove mountains. What does a child understand about prayer? We have endless books and sermons on it. A child may pray just as truly as the ponderous theologian. What is God? Who is Jesus? The child has its notions which may be as real and effective in his life as in the life of an apostle are his ideas on the same subject.

The very moment we attempt to test a child's religion by an adult's standard and compass it with an adult's definition, we fail. You cannot weigh a druggist's capsules on a hay scales, nor measure the diameter of an insect's eye with a surveyor's chain. A little boy or girl's religion has genuine weight and real dimensions. It will tax the teacher's best powers of thought and observation to rightly understand and appreciate it. He must never doubt, deny, or ignore it.

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Helping the Scholars to Give Attention

Professor Luther A. Weigle, in an article in a recent issue of *The Christian Educator* on how teachers may develop the habit of attention in their pupils, says in part:

"1. The teacher should help his pupils to grasp the idea of attention and to set it before themselves as an ideal. To know how to study, and what to do or not to do in class, is not natural endowment. Children must be shown how to go to work, and given right ideals of effort and standards of success. A young woman once entered a college course late enough to miss the customary talk on how to go at it and what instructor and students should expect of one another. She annoyed the professor for a month by a persistent habit of making little side remarks in a whisper to her neighbor, and finally was asked to remain after class to talk it over. "Why, I am very sorry," she answered. "I never dreamed that that was not all right. You can be sure that I'll never do it again." And she never did. The first step, then, is to make perfectly clear to the members of your class what sort of attention you want, and why they, too, should set that before themselves as an ideal of daily practice. This may best be done in connection with the general review at the opening of each new course. Don't be arbitrary about it; don't try to scare your pupils by too great a show of "stiffness." Simply try in a natural and wholesome way to enlist their interest and cooperation in the work of the course, making plain just what that work will involve and what they may expect of you and what you will expect of them.