

this purpose in the various schools by the State, not by the Church. The appointment is made on the ground of intellectual fitness and moral character—a living faith not being an essential condition. It is not surprising, therefore, that the instruction is often mechanical, calculated to deaden rather than to enliven religious impressions; and it is evident that the historical and doctrinal teaching on the subject of religion bears but little fruit in life.

In the intermediate schools, usually entered at the age of nine, and with a course of nine years, three hours a week are devoted to religious instruction during the first year, and two for the other eight. The official programme states that the instruction of Protestant children shall include the biblical history of the Old and New Testament, particularly the latter; the Catechism, with the Scriptural passages necessary for understanding it; explanation of the Church Year; committing important hymns; the contents of Scripture, with the emphasis on the N. T., together with the established facts pertaining to the writing of the various books; the principal points in dogmatics and ethics; the leading epochs of ecclesiastical history and the chief actors in the same. These rules apply likewise to Catholic children; but they are also to be taught traditions explaining their Catechism; and in Church history special attention is to be devoted to the lives of the saints. It is the avowed aim of the instruction to make the pupil familiar with the doctrines, precepts, and historical development of his Church, and to enable him to form a correct view of its relation to other Churches and to peculiar tendencies of the day. The memory is not to be burdened with dates without religious significance; and the teacher is reminded that the school does not teach theology, but aims at religious instruction which promotes calmness and depth of spirit.

The idea of universal, national religious culture during childhood and youth is grand; and if realized, it would exert a powerful influence on the Church and the nation. Universal efforts are now made to give more religious life and spirit to this instruction. The literature on the subject is not only extensive and rapidly increasing, but also in demand. One writer declares: "Perhaps never before was there such active and thorough work on the part of Christians to furnish the religious instructor of children with helps to make the Kingdom of God accessible to their hearts."

The first of a series of articles by H. Keferstein in *Rheinische Blätter fuer Erziehung und Unterricht*, Jan. 1886, discusses religious training in general. In order to determine the aim of religious instruction, we must first answer the question, whether religion is a matter of the feelings or of the intellect, or whether it belongs to both spheres? The author decides in favor of the last, since religious feeling and thinking supplement each other. Religious feeling may

be regarded as the primitive form of religion; but it must be properly developed in order to bear the right fruit, otherwise it will degenerate into fanaticism. Emotion should be made subject to the thinking spirit. "The feeling must not be dark and indefinite; neither should it be raised to unhealthy excitability, still less to fanatical passion; for in such cases its influence is likely to be destructive rather than beneficial." The essence of religious emotion is the consciousness that we depend on an ever-present, omnipotent, wise and good God, and a pious reverence for His will, whose indications we seek, and whose transgression we dread. Connected with this dependence on God is the consciousness of our own weakness; hence the longing for communion with God in prayer, the desire to offer Him something (sacrifice), even the best—namely, our hearts; that is, there is a desire to become holy, and to consecrate life to Him. On the view of God, of His relation to the world, and of our duties to Him, all that has worth in religion depends. It is base to drag God down to the level of human passions and selfish interests. The essence of religion is most fully expressed in what is termed *faith*. This faith cannot be strictly separated from religious feeling. Both are, however, distinct from knowledge and exact demonstration; yet faith approaches knowledge more closely than it does feeling. Faith is not created by merely presenting dogmas, or by teaching the belief of the fathers. With such instruction the heart may remain godless. The essence of faith does not consist in confessing certain dogmas, and is not a mere acceptance of their truth; it consists in a complete surrender of the believer to the object of faith, so that he is wholly possessed by that object. Thus faith in God is more than a recognition that He exists and is related to the world; it is being filled with a living consciousness of God and referring all things to Him, and adapting the whole life to His will. With such a faith the whole life of the believer receives the stamp of piety and of that freedom which is the product of this piety. Christian faith is simply a full surrender of self to the only true God revealed in Christ, and to the new moral law revealed in Christ's person and doctrine. The genuineness of this faith must be proved by the life. Doctrinal contentions cannot produce this faith—certainly not in children. They need the great essentials of religion. "In its deepest essence, religion depends on a few cardinal points, in which the religious consciousness reveals itself." Among the means for promoting religious training so as to awaken this faith, the author emphasizes the life at home—namely, family worship, grace at table, the recognition of God in the events of life, and the religious conduct of parents. Then in the school, the religious spirit inculcated in the home is to be developed by the conduct of the teachers, and by beginning the exercises with devotion—say a hymn and the Lord's Prayer.