

An "Evangelist's" Educational Theory.

Referring to a recent article in the Catholic Record in which we vindicated the inherent right of Catholics to give their children a religious education, the CANADIAN EVANGELIST of Hamilton admits that the public schools of Ontario are not "non-sectarian," and adds that "under present circumstances in Ontario public schools (non-sectarianism) is altogether impossible."

We do not doubt that our evangelical friend honestly states his sentiments, but we call his attention to the fact that when he proclaims that religion ought to be excluded from the school room, the evangel he teaches is quite a different one from that of the New Testament, wherein we are told to "seek first the kingdom of God and his justice," and wherein also the apostle of Christ commands the constant teaching of God's Word: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time when they shall not endure sound doctrine. . . . but be thou vigilant."

Similar to this was God's teaching under the old law. This religious instruction of children was not to be confined within the walls of home, or even of the temple; but, "Teach your children that they meditate on them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest on the way, and when thou liest down and risest up. . . . That thy days may be multiplied, and the days of thy children in the land which the Lord swore to thy fathers, that he would give them as long as the heaven hangeth over the earth."—Deut. xii. 11.

As our contemporary makes great professions to teach only gospel doctrine in its columns, we have some curiosity to know in what part of the gospel it is taught that education ought to be entirely godless; or is his evangel a purely imaginary one? With the best good wishes to our neighbor we cannot trust to the infallibility of his teaching until it be backed up by some authority of yet more weight than he has adduced for it.—Catholic Record.

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Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness.—Exchange.

The Confession of Faith.

The chief topic of the day's discussion then came before the Presbytery. It was "an overture on the confession of faith," conducted by Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, and was as follows:—"Whereas it is very desirable that the confession of faith should be the actual expression of the living faith of the church; whereas it is important that the confession when used as a test of admission to office in the church should deal only with matters that are vital, and should not include matters on which the opinion of Christian men are and may rightfully be divided; whereas the Westminster Confession of Faith includes many statements on matters that are non-essential; whereas it is much to be desired that there should be one creed for office-bearers and for private members of the church; whereas there is at present no document subordinate to the Scriptures which can be appealed to, as containing an authoritative statement of the faith of private members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; whereas there is a growing desire in many branches of the Church of Christ for greater unity, which can hardly be hoped for unless by a simplification of the distinctive creeds of the several churches; whereas the Presbyterian Church in Canada has indicated its desire to come into closer relations with some other branches of the church; whereas the inviting of ministers of other churches to occupy pulpits in the Presbyterian Church without any restriction being placed upon their teachings has become so common that it no longer occasions remark; it is humbly overtured to the venerable, the General Assembly that such action be taken in the premises as the assembly may deem wise for the shortening and simplifying of the Westminster Confession of Faith, or substitution for a shorter and simpler creed, for the said Westminster Confession of Faith, so far as its use as a test of admission to office in the church is concerned."

In opening his remarks in support of his overture, Mr. Macdonnell said he had tried to put into these eight sentences eight indisputable propositions. In its general use a confession of faith served two purposes: In the first place it was a declaration of the faith of the church, that was of the members of the church, and in the second place it was a test of admission to the offices of the church. These were the two purposes it ought to serve, but, as a matter of fact, the first of them was practically set aside as far as the Westminster Confession was concerned. Personally, he did not know of a single session in Canada which asked a declaration from one who was to become a communicant. So, practically, the Westminster Confession had ceased to be a declaration of the common faith of the members of the church. It had ceased to be put before either the young or the old people as a set of articles to which they were expected to give a rational consent. He had no hesitation in saying that when this confession had been framed it had been intended for all the members of the church, and not for the officers only. If, he went on, a declaration of faith was to be the actual expression of the faith of the church at stated periods, it must be subjected to periodical revisions. But how often had this confession been revised in the last two and a half centuries. He argued that, except in one unimportant point, that of the power of civil magistrates, which did not affect the people here at all, the confession in Canada remained in its original integrity. He would not hesitate to say that it was not the faith of the church.

Unless the human mind had actually stood still in its interpretation of the Bible, it was impossible that the confession made in the sixteenth should be identical with that entertained in the nineteenth century. At the present time there was in the Presbyterian Church no document except the Shorter Catechism which could be fairly said to be an expression of the faith of the average member. The ministers and elders, in subscribing to the confession, did so with reservations, and everybody understood that they did. There was no document which could be produced as a standard of appeal of what the faith of the Presbyterian Church in Canada was. The speaker held that the declaration should be the same for ministers, elders and members. It was not so, it would simply result in a chasm which, indeed, partly existed in the church now, and which would widen. In speaking of the expression, "non-essential," in the third clause, he said that what he meant by being essential was that it must be essential to Christianity, not to Presbyterianism. The more he thought of it the more he saw that it was not only inexpedient but unjust, to exclude a man who was a good member of the church, Godly, capable and fit—to exclude such a man from office in the church because he would not assent to articles which were not vital to Christianity. He did not mean that he must hold what is vital to Presbyterianism, to Calvinism, but what was vital to Christianity. If a man in his spiritual life held fast to Jesus Christ he had hold of the vital principle. The choice which the Presbyterian Church had been accustomed to make was that he must hold fast to Calvinism. "I want to say this," said Mr. Macdonnell, "that the church at its peril puts Calvinism in place of Jesus Christ." In speaking of the efforts towards union, he said that simplification of creeds was one way, but the only real union could be by holding the great simple truths which were common to all. This effort to union was an argument in favor of the revision and simplification of the Confession of Faith. "We must take care that we exclude no man from the Church of Christ who has been chosen by Christ."

Rev. Dr. Gregg led the attack against the overture. He said before he had heard Mr. Macdonnell's address he had been considering which one of the three courses he should pursue in regard to the overture. It might be endorsed by the Presbytery and not sent; it might be sent simpliciter, or it might be opposed. Had he not heard Mr. Macdonnell's speech he might have thought favorably of sending it to the Assembly, but he could not now, as he felt certain it would create discord. Mr. Macdonnell virtually excluded Calvinism from the church. He combatted the argument that one creed should exist for members and office-holders. We read in the Scripture of babes in Christ, and of others who were full-grown men. Ministers should be full-grown men, and it was hardly to be admitted that the creed of the dying malefactor would have sufficed for a minister of the Church of Scotland. The result of the adoption of a similar stand for ministers and members would be that there would be no particular system of doctrine, and that this, instead of uniting, would break up the church. There had to be a system, and if a man did not hold Presbyterian views he need not join the ministry; but there was no reason why, because he refused his belief in certain things, that he should be refused membership, although he would not be admitted to

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the ministry. To bring in all people into the Presbyterian Church simply because they professed Christianity would be to produce anarchy. It would be to break down the bulwarks, and that form of doctrine which Presbyterians hold to be according to the idea of God.

Revs. Peter Lindsay, J. A. Turnbull, Dr. Parsons, R. P. Mackay, Wm. Burns, Dr. McTavish and John Neil also opposed the overture, and followed closely on the ideas thrown out by Prof. Gregg.

Revs. J. A. Grant and W. A. Hunter gave a modified assent to the overture.

Rev. Mr. Macdonnell answered the arguments and recapitulated his former statements.

Rev. Prof. Gregg moved an amendment to the motion, seconded by Rev. Mr. Mackay, that the overture be laid on the table. This was carried.

An amendment that the overture be transmitted to the General Assembly simpliciter was lost and the Presbytery adjourned.—Daily Globe.

As one who entereth by night a room Where sufferers lie, Shaded his lamp to suit the languid eye; So doth Christ draw nigh Unto our world of gloom. The light of life He beareth, and doth stand Shading it tenderly with pierced hand, Lest the full glare Should cause us not to see, but stare.

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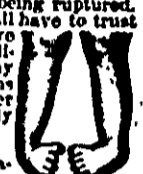
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