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WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SECURE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?*

THE greatest of all questions for Church or State is the question of education—greater than legislation or commerce or military defence. In a Christian country the education should be Christian. Protestant Christianity, and rightly, places the Bible at the heart of its religion. It is the revelation from God of His will and purpose of grace—a book for all, a knowledge of which is essential to an intelligent, free and triumphant faith.

The Bible is not studied as it should be by the Christian people of this country. Our children are not taught the Bible. They do not know it as those brought up in a Christian country should know it.

In that excellent periodical THE CANADA EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY, edited by Mr. A. MacMurchy, an article appeared in the November number which puts this beyond the shadow of doubt. The article described the result of an experiment made by Mr. Wright, a teacher in the High School, Galt. He submitted to a hundred and seventy two pupils of various High Schools in Ontario a series of twenty questions upon the Bible. The pupils were from fourteen to eighteen years

of age. The questions were fair ones to test their knowledge of Bible history, geography and biography.

The result was startling and has had a good effect in awakening many to this momentous question. (Dr. Armstrong gave the substance of the article)

I submit these results to you showing how lamentably defective our young people are in Bible knowledge. These pupils, presumably the best that our High Schools produce, could answer only about forty per cent. of the questions and some of the answers indicate an ignorance ludicrous, if it were not so sad.

Several years ago Mr. MacMurchy himself published a similar test made in Toronto with similar results.

The testimony of a number of leading High School teachers of literature is also given and the uniform verdict is that very few of the High School pupils understand the simplest allusion to Scripture in the literature they read.

I have spoken to those in this city who have passed through the Public and High Schools and who stated that they never

*Paper read by Rev. W. D. Armstrong, M.A., Ph.D., before the Ministerial Association of Ottawa, Feb. 5th.