

Christ. Drop a pebble on the quiet bosom of the ocean, and the circling wavelets soon die away, leaving the same placid surface, but the pebble has moved every particle of water to the depth and breadth of the ocean. So a kind word, a loving deed, a sincere unspoken prayer, though apparently making no impression, lives evermore, carrying its undying benison to the limits of the spiritual kingdom.—*Church News*.

### THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

In his address at the Diocesan Convention, the Bishop of Long Island discusses the matter of education in our public schools, with characteristic force and ability. A method of teaching which has no religious and moral basis is so one-sided and defective, and so contrary to the genius of our institutions, that he predicts a reaction against it. The nation was not conceived and born in atheism or paganism, and the Christian intelligence of the nation will not suffer it to assume any such shaping. Such shaping is abnormal and contradictory, and the tendency in that direction is sure to call out an earnest and vigorous protest on the part of Christian people at large.

As preliminary to that turn in the tide, which will set toward religion and not away from it, the Bishop says that public opinion must be 'taught to discriminate between essential Christianity and denominational Christianity.' This is a matter of great consequence. It is out of the question that denominational Christianity of any sort shall be taught in our public schools. Multitudes of Christian people not only take no interest in it, but they will agree with the Bishop that it is the denominational which has so largely sacrificed the essential in connection with the schools. The shadow, so to speak, has expelled the substance, and we are presented with the unique spectacle of a Christian nation which must say nothing about Christianity in the public teaching of its children, because it has been appropriated by so many sects of Christian people. 'That our schools should be threatened with practical paganism because of sect indifference, or sect jealousies, or sect disagreements, is the open scandal of religion in this land.'

But what are the essentials of Christianity which may be taught in our public schools, and which may be agreed upon in common? That is the question to which the Bishop addresses himself, and he calls attention to one answer which has been given by the Presbyterian Synod of the state of New York, while he ventures to suggest another. The Synod would recommend for its scheme of teaching in the public schools: The existence of a personal God; the responsibility of every human soul as made in the image of God, after the power of an endless life; and the reality of a future spiritual state beyond the grave, in which every soul shall give account of itself to God, and shall reap that which he has sown.'

Now it strikes one at a glance that for several reasons here is a way of putting things which the Christian public would never agree upon, as they might be put in a score of ways which it would never agree upon. It is not that anything is untrue in this scheme of teaching, or that it does not have to do with truths of the most serious consequence. But somehow it is not the thing, just as an unfitting garment is not the thing, and as so many garments may so easily fail for one cause or another. The Bishop, for instance, calls attention to the fact that in this scheme there is no allusion to Christianity, nothing which rises above the conception of natural religion, and nothing which may not be included in the limits of deistic worship and deistic morality. The question is about the

Christian religion and about Christian teaching for the young, as it surely ought to be at the hands of a Christian nation. What then, 'with all deference to the wisdom of the very influential synod' spoken of, would the Bishop venture to offer as a substitute? What but the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments? That seems to hit it exactly. That seems the precise thing, which is neither too full here nor pinched and uncomfortable there. It is not too much or too little, too inclusive or too exclusive, too abstract or too ample, too much above the young nor at all below them or apart from them. It is not probable that if for the next fifty years the wisest heads in any or all denominations should occupy themselves in devising the most suitable scheme of Christian truth to be taught in our public schools they would strike the average unprejudiced mind with anything like the appropriateness of this proposed substitute. One does not have to read laborious treatises and weary his brain with thinking before arriving at a conclusion in the matter. The thing is no sooner mentioned than one cries out instinctively: 'That's it; that's it, exactly!'

The Bishop enumerates the advantages of making the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, the scheme of religious instruction in our public schools. They are:

1. It is characteristically Christian.
2. It is absolutely non-sectarian.
3. It has had the undoubted consensus of all Christians from the days of the primitive and undivided Church.
4. It comprehends all the fundamental elements of Christianity that have entered into the formation of modern civilization, and especially of the Christians of this country.

5. It also has the merit of brevity and simplicity, and because of those qualities can be easily learned and easily held in the memory.

If a Christian and not merely deistic basis of national morality is to be provided for our schools, nothing less than what it contains can be satisfactory to the great majority of Christian people.

The Bishop acknowledges that this scheme may encounter the grave objection that in the present environment it is not workable, and that many will refuse to take any steps beyond the elementary truths of natural religion. He acknowledges even more than this, but it makes no less certain that no other conceivable scheme would have so many and great advantages, and would be fruitful of such excellent results.—*Living Church*.

### READING.

It is a very serious question what our young people are reading. The books a boy or girl is reading have a vast deal to do with his or her future mental and moral character, for good or bad. Unhappily, the outlook is not promising. Never before was reading matter so cheap and universal; and never before were there such floods of utter trash, worse than useless, poured upon a suffering people. It is a question whether for real moral and intellectual stamina the world was not better off a hundred years ago without such oceans of reading matter. Do our young people ever hear of such books as the Vicar of Wakefield, Paul and Virginia, or any of the English classics whose thought and literary character have stood the test of time? Do they ever pick up Addison or any of the standard literature, elevated in tone and strengthening to the mental and moral fibre? Do they read history, biography and travels? As a rule, these are all overslaughed by the mass of intellectual slush streaming from thousands of printing presses. Between the daily papers, the story weeklies, the wishy washy magazines and the shoals of stuff written

by bohemians and sentimental girls, there is no time or place left for reading anything of sterling and permanent value. Only here and there are the elect ones who have the proper guidance or the natural taste to pass them by. The prospects for the coming generation in the way of intellectual vigor are not encouraging. Even not taking into account books of an immoral tendency, the evil of too much of what is called literature is sufficient to cause alarm. The right place to stem the tide is in the home life; but unfortunately there are too many parents whose literary horizon is bounded by the Sunday paper, or bazaar of fashion. The educators in our higher institutions are our chief dependence in keeping alive a sure intellectual taste, but they can reach only a few. Teachers in all grades of schools and the clergy can do much. In a practical way the clergy in their pastoral visiting could do some efficient work in this direction by making it a point to find out what the young people in the families are reading, to show an interest in it that will gain their confidence, and to give them hints and suggestions as to the value of books, and by judicious counsel and direction lead them into the paths of a purer and nobler literature.

The fact is, reading has more to do not only with our happiness, but with the making up of our lives than we usually recognize. Great men almost universally attribute the inspiration of their best work to thought derived from books. Just as it makes all the difference in the world to a young person whether his life associations are with right-minded persons of pure and elevated tone of thought and morals, or with the vicious and depraved, so it is just the same whether the books he reads are right and good and upbuilding, or of the kind that pollute the imagination and enfeeble the intellect. It certainly is a blessing that few people fairly estimate that we can have direct communion with the grandest minds and the greatest men the world has known. It ought to be an inspiration, as it is to some men, that we can converse with, and take into our minds the thoughts of, such men as Plato, St. Augustine and Shakespeare. And since the noblest monuments of literature and the productions of the loftiest minds are so easy of access, it is sad and disheartening to think how many precious hours are wasted, how many lives made empty, or worse yet, dragged down into the filth by vapid and degrading books. This companionship with men of genius and intellectual strength which we may attain through the printed page, suggests a higher thought. If it be a privilege of higher value to listen to Socrates, it is worth a great deal more to listen to St. Paul; and when we remember that while we are reading him we are in contact not merely with the thoughts of St. Paul, but with the thoughts of God, one would think that men would spend their nights and days reading the Bible. Although many persons do not read the Bible, and some that do, fail to get what it really has for them, yet the thoughts of God in his revealed Word are the source and foundation of all that is best in the life of the individual, of society and the nation. And in spite of the higher criticism, the attacks of infidels and the neglect of the thoughtless and indifferent, all the books ever printed could not make up for the Bible in furnishing light in darkness, strength in weakness, comfort in trouble, satisfying rest in the present, secure hope for the future, and in enriching life with its true meaning and destiny.—*Church News*.

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