

The Western Churchman

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Among the many important questions that have lately been taken up by the various Diocesan conferences in England, none is of greater or more far reaching importance than the question of the religious education of the young. It is, in the estimation of many, the church question of the day, because upon its solution depends to a large extent the future character of the church. We are approaching a very important crisis in the history of Christendom—a crisis when it will be necessary to see who are really churchmen in word and deed, and who are only nominal, outward adherents of the one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic church; and, the result will depend largely on the training in the Faith that is now being given to our young people. Many there are among us who are quite content to send their

children to a public school, where the teacher does not hold his appointment because he is a churchman, or even because he is a Christian attached to any of the many bodies into which Christendom has been rent, but simply because he or she has attained to a certain standard of efficiency in secular knowledge. Such parents are quite satisfied to know that the day's proceedings in school are opened with prayer and that occasionally a portion of the Bible is given as a reading lesson. They are of opinion that all the religious instruction required can be given in church or in Sunday school—they leave all these things to the parson of the church with which they are connected. If we look at this matter calmly, thoughtfully, and dispassionately, we cannot help seeing that here there is nothing like an adequate fulfilment of Our Blessed Lord's command—"Feed my lambs." Can any sane person imagine for a moment that in the short time at his disposal on one day of the week a parson can give the same careful, systematic religious instruction that is given in a church day school, where the Apostle's creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments are regularly taught day by day? Such a thing cannot be. It is altogether a mystery to me how so many really devout Presbyterians can stand out for the secularization of our day schools, when I remember that John Knox, the Apostle of Presbyterianism, laid down as a necessary and vital part of his system, the establishment of parochial schools, where the imparting of religious knowledge formed an integral part of every day's work. And this feeling is all the more accentuated by the fact that it was the religious training in these old parochial schools which gave to the Scotchman the moral stamina that made him a success wherever he went. The same thing applies to the English church schools. A clergyman of our church who has had any experience at all will at once admit the difference he finds between the candidate for confirmation who has been educated in a church day school, and the one who simply passed through the curriculum of a Board school. Even if there was nothing else, the church day school pupil had the actual text of the fun-

amentals of religion at his fingers' ends; and, it is easy to build a good structure on such a sure foundation. In this Canada of ours, the question of religious teaching has caused a great deal of heart burning. The struggle for existence—the race for wealth and position, and influence, is so keenly contested, that men seem altogether to ignore the spiritual aspect of the question. But the day will come, and that soon, when the people of this Western land will realize that education without religion is a sham and a delusion, ay more, that it is a sin, because it is only putting weapons into hands that have no guiding influence to control them. However the school question in Manitoba may be settled, one thing is certain—eliminate the church and her influence from our system of education, and we shall speedily find ourselves on the down grade—morally and intellectually. On the other hand, let the Christian Faith have its full share in the school programme; let the clergy have their part in the daily education of the young; and, we shall soon see a Province second to none in the Dominion—aye, in the world, in respect of progress of every kind—a more general distribution of wealth and real lasting prosperity.

THE NORTHWEST REVIEW ON SCHOOL CONTAMINATION

Our attention has, on several occasions lately, been drawn to an editorial in the Northwest Review of Nov. 4th, in which the writer criticises somewhat severely the attitude, on the Manitoba school question, taken by the Hon. Israel Tarte, during his recent visit to Winnipeg. Mr. Tarte professes to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church, but states that he is so by the mere accident of birth and environments, and, it may therefore be reasonably presumed that he is not to be in any way regarded as a fair exponent of the views of earnest conscientious Roman Catholics. All the same, he speaks as if he were expressing the opinions of a large proportion of his co-religionists as well as of himself when he says that Catholic children ought to associate at school with Protestant children,