

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

In December, 1914, The National Education Association of the United States offered a prize of \$1000 for the best essay on "The Essential Place of Religion in Education, with an Outline of a Plan for Introducing Religious Teaching into the Public Schools." 432 essays were sent in. The prize was awarded to Charles E. Pugh, University of California. Several essays were given special mention, among them the one written by Anna B. West, of Newburyport, Mass, which we have read with great interest and sympathy. The conditions of the contest, "to define religion in a way not to run counter to the creeds of Protestant, Catholic or Jew" made the task a difficult one, and we confess to some surprise that the writer has succeeded in presenting so promising a plan as she has, under the severe disadvantage of omitting all references to what seems to us, and we presume also to her, the central and essential fact of Christianity.

Mrs. West recognizes the difficulties of organized religious teaching in the public schools. "It is an educational enterprise only a little less difficult than it is important." It would seem that she has slight hope of seeing such an enterprise seriously undertaken. But we are grateful that she has made her contribution towards it, and glad to bring some passages of her essay to the notice of our readers. We believe that a thoughtful reading of the whole essay would be helpful to all teachers, whether giving technical religious instruction or not, who desire to give "such moral training to a thinking being as will enable him to live in harmonious relations with God and in unselfish co-operation with his fellowmen."

This is Mrs. West's definition of teaching, and it underlines her whole plan. The child's thought is to be directed towards God who loves him and gives him all, and secondly, as a consequence, towards his fellows, whom he is to love and serve. The rule of conduct for the little children is — Give. The three ideas to be illustrated are: God as our Father. God's creatures His children. God's children are brothers. The Bible stories to illustrate this are. 1. Joseph, son and brother. 2. Moses, leader of his people. 3. Samuel hearing his Father's voice. 4. David and the victory God gave him over the giant. The writer advises teachers to "prepare story telling carefully.

It is well to write the four stories and commit them to memory. Always tell stories in the same language or the children will be disappointed. Make them simple and vivid. If the children like one story much better than another, work over the condemned story until the children are won to it. Satisfy your critics. You will be repaid." The suggestions for memory work are: The Lord's Prayer, The Great Commandment (St. Matthew, 22: 37-39), Little Children and the Kingdom of Heaven (St. Matthew 19:14) and selections from Psalms 103, 104, and 23. "The teacher should not be denied the privilege of choice. There is a wealth of passages in the Psalms suitable for young children. But only those that express beauty in nature, beauty in human acts, joy in the thought of God, trust, confidence and the worship of praise should be selected for the kindergarten or Grade I."

In grades I, II, and III, obedience as an expression of love is the virtue to be kept before the children. To be obedient the child must be punctual, patient, persevering, industrious, truthful. The Bible stories to be told are the four previously used. completed as illustrating obedience as holiness, that is, as wholly loving God. "But do not call them illustrations; simply stories." Then come the stories of Abraham and the offering of Isaac. The Siege of Jericho, Story of Daniel, Story of David and Jonathan. Parts of the 29th Psalm are added to those already memorized, and passages from St. Matthew 5 and 6, and the first four commandments are also to be learned.

In grade IV, where the study of history begins, the children are to be led to reason with themselves on the evil of disobedience, to see that it comes of selfishness and want of love, that it leads to hatred and other sins, and that it brings suffering. Later on, their sense of personal responsibility is to be developed, and from that, the desire to contribute to the good of others, and an ideal of citizenship. Historical characters are to be tested by their value to their fellowmen. More historical setting is to be given to the Old Testament stories already known, and the stories of Saul and David, Elijah and Elisha are to be told, as well as the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. The Lives of Solomon, Josiah, and Isaiah are studied as biography. Psalms from which passages are learned are 5, 8, 27, 42, 46, 63, 91, 96, 139. Lastly, in the High School, there is to be studied