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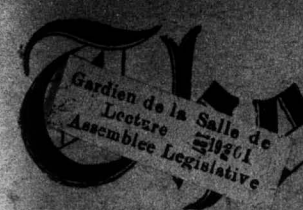
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# True Witness

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## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTIONS IN THE SCHOOLS

In the June number of the "Educational Review" religious instruction in the schools is made the subject of an editorial. However complicated the subject and divergent the views of those who treat it, there ought to be no insuperable difficulty in the way of a solution. If the question could be dealt with on its merits and removed from the atmosphere of prejudice and mutual distrust, the American people have solved greater difficulties than this. It would be vain to disguise the fact that the vast majority of citizens are opposed to the introduction of religious teaching into the schools. The real question, however, is whether their opposition is justifiable, their position tenable; whether they can sustain their opinion by argument, whether reason and experience will support their contention, whether the present system is founded on justice.

**INCONSISTENCY OF IT.**—The editor touches the root of the difficulty when he suggests that those who deal with the question "should guide the discussion to questions of principle rather than detail and in a spirit of reason rather than of passion." What he considers essential is precisely what has not been done. In fact, it is not quite clear that the editor himself, whose fair-mindedness is above temper, shows the requisite judicial temper. He says "in the United States public education is unsectarian and universal and wholly secular. It can never be made otherwise." Why? he is apparently anxious for discussion to be absolutely closes every avenue by his last sentence, "It can never be made otherwise." If that be the case, what use is there attempting to harmonize conflicting opinions? But why can it never be made otherwise, except because the majority are determined that it shall be their way and no other, and no notice shall be taken of the reasonable protests of a respectable minority who claim that their clear rights are violated? The majority simply will not allow that there is any possibility of their being wrong. Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat prout voluntas. Why should they determine a priori that secularism pure and simple is the only right method? No attempt has been made to give any plan a trial; preconceived opinions have been allowed to prevail; it has been assumed a foregone conclusion that secularism alone is right and that things must go on to the end just as they are now. This indicates a narrow and illiberal spirit, out of harmony with American ideas of fair play.

**CHRISTIANITY LOSING.**—Catholics have a well defined suspicion that what stands in the way, is the apprehension felt by many Protestants that Catholics could derive greater benefit than they, from any concession to religious sentiment. Some would prefer to see a whole generation growing up without religion, than that Rome should profit by a new departure. If Protestantism alone could profit, it would not be long before it would be found to make religion a powerful factor in education. The Catholic opposes the present system for the same reason that the Protestant unholds it, because it undermines the faith of the Catholic child. The danger is that Protestants will find out, too late that they have made a mistake in not allowing us to be their allies for the preservation of Christianity. Ultimately they have more to lose than we have. By means of our private schools and our stupendous sacrifices we are holding out people together; they are not. The most far-seeing among them deplore the results. They regret the unquestionable elimination of religion from the minds and hearts of the young, the rising tide of unbelief, the denial of a personal God, the illogical and growing contempt for the Bible as the inspired word of God, the disregard of moral principles.

**TAXATION WITH NO RETURN.**—On the simple score of justice, why should twelve millions of Catholics be shut out from any benefit of the taxes they pay for the support of the school system? Why should a million of children be educated in private schools at the expense of their parents, who have already paid their share of taxes for the maintenance of schools to which they cannot conscientiously send their children? Every parent should be allowed to select the school in which he believes the temporal and eternal welfare of his offspring will be best secured, and he should not, in addition, be compelled to pay for schooling other people's children. The same

is "The Right Use of Liberty." What a splendid subject for an article, as it is a grand one for meditation! "Liberty" is a gift of God, but the abuse of liberty is one of the greatest of crimes—for it affects our relations with God, with society, with our families, with our own souls. The last issue of the "Messenger of the Sacred Heart" contains a splendid article upon the "Right Use of Liberty." From it we will take a few extracts that may serve to show the importance of the subject, and at the same time, help all those who desire to pray or offer up their good works or acts of devotion for this July intention.

The following extracts do not require any comment or explanation: "We are all free agents. We are masters of our own actions; we can determine our own conduct; we can of our own volition decide to act or not act in a given case, or choose one course of action in preference to another. We can act on such decision or choice and adhere to it in spite of every solicitation to the contrary. This does not mean that we are independent of all law, relieved of every restraint. We are subject to laws divine and human, and liable to restraint physical and moral; we are bound to obey just laws and submit to reasonable restraint; but we can disobey the one and resist the other; no despot can force the consent of our wills, no chain can fetter our power to choose between right and wrong."

"If it does not startle us to consider that we dwell in a world which denies the freedom of the human will, and which, therefore, denies any such thing as obligation, merit, retribution, repentance, remorse, and all moral responsibility, it is because we have to some extent either wittingly or unwittingly suffered the baneful influence of this denial. Without careful circumspection it is impossible to escape it. Entire nations of men live and die believing in fatalism, in some external cause or combination of causes which determine or necessitate their actions, and their literature helps to spread their fatalistic belief. A number of religious sects, notably the Lutherans and Calvinists, profess to believe that human nature is so corrupt and perverse that it could not exercise freedom rightly if it were not, or that God so predestines our actions as to make it impossible for us to determine them freely."

School after school of so-called philosophers and political economists, pantheists, materialists and utilitarians, have been busy, the past century more than ever before, proclaiming that some hidden and unknown cause regulates our actions, either a self-determining will or inconceivable, a contradiction in terms, that the strongest motive, desire, the character, or peculiar physical temperament, determines it in every case. The books and lectures of these schools spread their pernicious doctrine, and a glance at the books commonly recommended for psychological study or reading in our own universities, colleges, and particularly in our teachers' colleges and normal schools will be convincing to anyone that we are training a generation of young men and women, many of them the leaders of the future, to deny the existence of this greatest of God's gifts, the one which all the others, reason, imagination, sense—nay, the very soul and body, but itself—need for its preservation and protection. Without which there can be no solid progress, material or spiritual, no merit, no human satisfaction here, no hope of reward hereafter.

"It is not very reassuring, truly, to know that the only motive which prevents my most respectable neighbor, virtue or property, is dread of the penalty of the criminal law, and that the courts which judge him are only too ready to accept pleas of temporary insanity, momentary aberration, irresponsibility, irresistible impulse, lack of moral sense, and the like. It may be true that all do not act on their principles."

## TOPICS IN CURRENT CATHOLIC MAGAZINES.

**PURITAN LAW IN TEXAS.**—One would conclude from the reputation Texas has acquired in the outside world, that it would be the last place to tolerate a sample of the colonial laws referred to in Donahoe's for May.

In Texas, there is a little town called Alvin, the home of flowers and strawberries. It has a population of nearly one thousand souls, and is seemingly the refuge of the lingering shadows or resuscitated ghosts of Puritanism.

In Alvin the restaurants are not allowed to keep open on Sunday, to the great chagrin of the weary traveler, who comes a long distance, tired with the rumors of oil, and gets neither oil nor dinner. In Alvin the harmless vendors of ice-cream are not allowed to ply their craft on Sunday, to the great annoyance of impatient children, whose restless nicks are almost as liquid as the ice-cream itself before Monday morning.

Some time ago a lineman on the railroad in poor circumstances, with a large family, having no time during the week, went out on Sunday morning to split some wood, probably to get his breakfast; he was arrested and given accommodation in the penitentiary for three months. After the Galveston disaster, last September, all the available mechanics of the adjoining territory looked to Galveston, where they worked day and night almost; consequently the outlying towns and country were left with scarcely anyone to carry on the work of repairs. By persistent begging, a citizen of Alvin persuaded one of the contractors in Galveston to do some repairs for him on Sunday, to keep out the wind and the weather for a time. The work went on every Sunday in Galveston with-out let or hindrance. In Alvin the whole transaction cost him his employment, and he lost his livelihood. There are about half a dozen churches in Alvin, but amongst them no Catholic Church. Like the colo-

nial laws, the laws in Alvin are operated to a great extent by the influence of the churches.

On investigation it would, no doubt, be discovered that the conscientious people of Alvin are enthusiastic about enlightening the benighted Cubans and Filipinos. John T. Nicholson, in Donahoe's Magazine.

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**—In an able and interesting manner Rev. James A. Burns, C.S.C., refers to some features of the Catholic secondary schools in the United States. He writes:—

"Catholic secondary schools for boys belong to three widely different classes. There is, first of all, the secondary school proper, represented by academies and high schools, whose curriculum as a rule extends no farther than the freshman year, although in the other direction it generally includes the studies of the grammar school. Many of the institutions of this class are of long standing, but a large number are of a comparatively recent date, probably one-third having been established within the past decade. Most of them are conducted by religious orders, and are entirely independent of parish control, deriving their means of support from the tuition fees of their pupils. Then, there are the high schools attached to parochial schools. These high schools consist of one or more grades of secondary work, serving as a sort of appendix to the ordinary work of the school, although they often carry the pupil as far as the freshman year. The number of these schools has increased very rapidly of late, and although their total attendance is comparatively inconsiderable and their methods often open to criticism, yet, as instancing an increasing popular demand for secondary education, and as pointing the way to a possible solution of problems of the future, they are worthy of serious study. Finally, there are the preparatory departments of our colleges, which still contain the majority of Catholic secondary students."

With the view of ascertaining some facts not otherwise attainable, I sent a letter of inquiry to each of the ninety secondary schools of the first class, and received replies from forty-nine. In these forty-nine schools the number of students of high school grade was given as 2,947, and of elementary grade 4,917. There were 992 boys studying Latin, and 244 in Greek. The average age of pupils in forty-seven schools when entering the high school curriculum is 14.7 years. The average annual tuition fee, if we exclude those schools that aim at educating only the wealthy classes, was found to be \$36.85 in forty schools. The number of schools not answering my letter of inquiry was forty-one. The total number of students in these last year, as given in the Catholic Directory for 1901, was 6,706. Assuming that the ratio of secondary to elementary pupils obtained in the case of the schools heard from holds good for these also—although I think it is somewhat too high for the latter—we get for these forty-one schools 2,413 of elementary grade and 4,193 of secondary grade, or a total of 5,606 students of secondary grade in the ninety Catholic secondary schools.

**A GRAND ORGANIZATION.**—There are 63 conferences and 1,372 active members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Switzerland.

This, the birthplace of the society, has a conference in every parish, and many parishes have more than one. In that city, too, in fact in all parts of France, the numbers and variety of the special works are very great, and serve to emphasize the axiom of the society, that the work of charity is foreign to its purpose. A list of the special works of the society in Paris alone would fill pages of the Quarterly. The work of the gardens appears to be particularly active and successful, and the same may be said of the circulating libraries and the schools.

Ten years ago the Society in Beirut, Syria, established a school for poor boys, employing the Christian Brothers as teachers. It now has two schools with nearly 600 pupils.

In Syria, too, there are several schools maintained by the Society including a technical school, which teaches carpentry and bookbinding.

A new work of charity at Rovigo, Italy, is called the Trucolo, which consists in preparing willow twigs for making mats. With the aid of six machines used for the purpose, the material is supplied for about 6,000 mat-weavers. This charity is of great benefit to the working classes of the place, and has the hearty commendation of the Bishop of the diocese.

Sailors' homes and refuges is a work that is receiving increased attention from the conferences in all the seaport cities of Europe. This is particularly true of Great Britain and France.

The purpose of these refuges is to protect sailors against extortion, cheating, and fraud, to encourage them to save for themselves and their families the wages, so hardly earned by them; to help to improve them morally and intellectually, and, finally, to facilitate for them prompt and remunerative re-employment in the merchant service.

The refuges provide board and

lodging at a moderate price; have a reading and smoking room; a library and savings bank; and assist the sailors in getting work.

Out of this movement at Bordeaux has grown "the Mass on the river," which is thus described in a recent report:—

"From the end of September until the end of November, the port of Bordeaux is crowded with boats returned from the cod fisheries off the coasts of Newfoundland and Iceland which come there to sell their fish. The fishermen, the majority of whom are Bretons, would perhaps miss hearing Mass in that large town which they do not know very well. So, every Sunday, the Rev. Father Fabre goes to say Mass on one of the fishing vessels anchored in the harbor. The captains enter their names beforehand to secure the favor of receiving the priest. The vessel on which the sacred ceremony is to take place is decorated with flags from early in the morning, and a bell is rung for an hour to announce that Mass is to be celebrated. The ships' boats arrive while the altar is being received, then comes the priest, dressed in his missionary's case. The Holy Sacrifice begins; the crew are collected on deck, the captains being in the foremost rank. They all chant together their hymns. In the minor key peculiar to their country, then they hear a homely sermon, a few wholesome truths told in heartfelt words by the officiating priest, and the congregation go their various ways, appointing to meet again on another vessel the following Sunday."—The St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly.

**SACRED ART.**—Eliza Allen Starr contributes a very instructive article to Moshia's Magazine, under the title "The Priest and Sacred Art," from which we take the following extract:—

"Beautiful ages," as Keats has said, so often exclaims in his eloquent compendium of all that is most attractive in the ritual of the Church, entitled, Ages of Faith: beautiful ages, when the imaginations of men were occupied with the things of God; when dogmas blossomed into forms of beauty, or were breathed forth in melodious hymns; when the senses of men were mediums of heavenly delight, and when we might say, with truth, the Creator glorified by His intelligent creatures."

The story of Christian art is the story of Christianity itself, told in words, but in monuments, which outlive words; save as words become fruitful in the minds of men, making the study of Christianity through her monuments one of increasing interest to us of to-day, inasmuch as her history, for nineteen hundred years has been committed to a degree we seldom realize, to works of art which have come down to us through these centuries in a way to be studied; preserved, too, as they have been in several instances, almost miraculously, and in others concealed by circumstances over which rulers had no control, until their testimony should come forth as a revelation, and at the time when most needed.

This is true especially of the art of the catacombs; for, as we see immediately when entering on the study of Christian art, it was to the walls of subterranean cemeteries, popularly called catacombs, that the early Christians committed the expressions of their beliefs and sentiments.

## CONSECRATION OF A BASILICA.

The most important event, of the last few days in the religious world, says the Paris correspondent of the Liverpool "Catholic Times," has been the consecration of the Basilica of Notre Dame du Bréviaire, Amiens. It called to the spot thirty bishops and archbishops and 50,000 persons, and made itself felt throughout six departments. The new Basilica is a stupendous monument which consecrates a fresh form of devotion to Our Lady which has been alive in the hearts of the people of the north of France for many centuries. One of the principal preachers was the Rev. Pere Goube, S.J., who said: "The Church, full of young, strong, and sure of living as long as humanity lives; consequently she raises fresh temples in every direction. At no time since the Middle Ages has she erected so many buildings as she is erecting now. Mgr. Touchet, Bishop of Orleans, being one of the preachers at this grand celebration was as optimistic in his views respecting the Church of France as Pere Goube had been respecting the Church in general. He said: "Never on the part of bishops, clergy, or people has she given such proofs of activity as during the last quarter of a century."

## A STRANGE HAPPENING.

A singular accident recently befell Miss Emily Roberts, residing in Warwick street, Liverpool. She was going down stairs fully dressed to go out when she tripped over the front part of her dress and was precipitated to the bottom. Two hatpins, each about six inches long, penetrated her head for some depth. She was immediately rendered unconscious, and was conveyed to the Southern Hospital, where she lies in a somewhat serious condition.—London Universal.

## THE RIGHT USE OF LIBERTY.

For each month in the year certain special intentions are proposed for our prayers and acts of piety. In a particular manner does the League of the Sacred Heart, through upon all its members the advisability, and even necessity of keeping in mind the intentions indicated, and what stands good for members of the League usually corresponds with the needs of all Catholics outside that