

WESTMINSTER REVIEW

D. A. CHALMERS, Managing Editor

Published at Vancouver, B. C.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL BETTERMENT, EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS,
AND RELIGIOUS LIFE.
INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS

VOL. IX.

JULY, 1916

No. 5

Education With or Without Religion

[By Rev. John T. McNeill, M. A., B. D., Westminster Hall]

The problem of religious education cannot be discussed apart from the larger problem to which it is incidental, that of education in general. In this larger field there is so much of experiment in progress that the whole subject of education may be said to be in a state of upheaval and transition. As this process of transformation proceeds it is possible, however, to discern certain definite and substantial changes that have without question come to stay. If we speak of education from the two points of view of what it is to consist of and how it is to be imparted, it may be said that in the latter, in the *method* of educating, the transition seems to be about completed. It seems agreed upon that Shakespeare's schoolboy, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school," is to become a bygone character. The educator now endeavors to have nothing done unwillingly by the pupil, but in all things to enlist his will. The process is one essentially of development, not of repression. The master ceases to be a taskmaster and becomes a leader. He respects the mind, and even the person of his ward. Ferule and taws are relics for the museum. The persecution of the younger generation by the older, which has been so marked a feature of history, seems coming to an end, like that of the "weaker" by the "stronger" sex.

But when we touch the subject of what shall constitute the *materials* of an education, we observe no such definite progress to report. The problem, *what shall the child be taught?* has become indeed increasingly difficult of solution. This is due of course largely to the fact that the range of human knowledge has so vastly increased in recent decades, that the educator is increasingly embarrassed by the multitude of subjects, worthy in themselves, that press for recognition on every curriculum. Bergson tells us to specialize, but to specialize as late in life as possible. The trouble is that in a sense we are obliged to specialize very early in life. The expanse of human knowledge has become so immense that even a survey of the field in general is more than the business of a life-time. Most of us must live and die familiar only with a narrow portion of it. This was not always so. An ambitious