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The Church Today Series—Education
AN EDITORIAL

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THE CONTINENT

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The Church as an Educational Force

THE MOST POTENT AND PERVASIVE EDUCATIONAL FORCE IN THE MODERN WORLD IS THE CHURCH.

To justify this saying, it is required, of course, that the word "education" shall be taken in its largest and most vital meanings.

The superficial idea which rates education as simply the imparting of knowledge and no more, would necessarily give the palm to the public schools.

Not merely diffusion of knowledge, however, but the culture of a wise and discriminating understanding of life must be the object of adequate education.

And it is in regard to that right understanding of life that the church can truthfully be set above every other educational agency.



In its large educating effect on society, the church's greatest instrument has been and is the Sunday school.

It is just now the fashion to decry the Sunday school for educational inefficiency. Without question it might be vastly more efficient. But the just observer must, none the less, insist that the Sunday school, despite many a deficiency, has been in actual educational result a marvel of accomplishment.

Boys drift out of the Sunday school indeed who ought to be kept in. Even so, they do not go out unshaped by its teaching.

Even though suppressed and unadmitted, the Sunday school impressions of early days continue in such lives to assert themselves, for both restraint and constraint, in manifold moralizations.

Add to this vast influence over what are considered the Sunday school's failures, its gratefully acknowledged power with the multitudes of men and women who have entered through its door into Christian life, and what a mountain of good piles up!

In a word, the thorough permeation of the present American mind, whether religious or irreligious, with honest respect for integrity of character, fidelity to trust and rigid personal morals, is a tribute, above all things else, to the service of the Sunday school.



Yet those who point out the importance of doing the educative work of the church still better should be heard and heeded.

The widespread, diverse, and now strongly emphasized movements in the church to develop better instruction in Sunday schools are impulses starting from the soundest Christian discretion.

Strangely foolish is the opposition to such efforts set afoot by those who assume that the educational ideal of Christianity antagonizes its evangelistic ideal.

No such antipathy can be traced in the ideas themselves or in any implication drawn justly from either.

It is perfectly logical for earnest men whose first concern is the soul's regeneration, to apply themselves next to maturing the Christian life through the discipline of religious education.

Indeed, they only who labor thus are in perfect accord with the invariable method of the divine Creator—first the germination of the seed and then the cultivation of the growing plant.

Instead of venturing then on better Sunday school education with fear and dread lest something good from former days be forfeited, the crusade for it should be pressed in the faith that

it means simply a bettering of things done well in the past.

Preeminently in this spirit of faith should pastors and Sunday school superintendents look on teacher-training, graded lessons, departmental organization and similar progressive innovations.

There are, indeed, Sunday schools which in all this mechanism are superbly up-to-date, yet are painfully void of the stir that generates enthusiasm or the power that creates character.

Over against these instances it is the joy of the conservative-minded to cite old-fashioned schools where no new method has been brought into play for a generation, and yet there is in them the dynamic which shapes young souls into stout Christian personality—the very flower of ideal educational effect.

But it does not follow even from multiplied cases of both sorts that excellent organization is unimportant—still less, detrimental.

Concerning all these things the sensible disposition of the wise is to be sure of the power first, and then to study every bettered means of bringing that power to bear on life in need of it.



About church colleges much is to be said along parallel lines to what is here said about the Sunday schools.

In respect to colleges too there are those who fear to see these institutions of the church become thoroughly scientific lest by some subtle means they may be rendered thereby less Christian.

Here the same logic is employed and it fails in the same way. Some church colleges highly scientific and deeply saturated with culture, have lost former sight of the simple verities of the gospel. And other institutions rating low in elements of learning rate high in earnestness for religion.

But the conclusion is not that evangelical zeal and scientific or philosophical proficiency can never go together. The conclusion is simply that not enough effort has yet been put forth to bring them together and make them stay together.

Colleges that study what God has done and is doing with the reverent fear of God before their eyes, are schools of a distinctive sort which the present world needs immeasurably.

And to furnish them in an embodiment strong, capable, equipped and substantial should be one of the church's highest resolves.

Let it be understood, however, that the kind of religious college which the present day asks for is the Christian college—not the denominational college.

Colleges will doubtless, indeed, continue in the future as in the past identified officially or sentimentally with the various Christian bodies that founded them. But there is this difference between the present and the former bearing of such a connection:

Once the church college was founded and kept up by the denomination for its own good. Now the church college is a contribution which the denomination makes to the well being of society.

That form of higher education which conscientiously devotes itself to the culture of balanced and weighty Christian lives, to be sent out into the world bent on the militant and aggressive establishment of Christian ideals, each new year grows more imperative.

And the church today will be fatally lacking in foresight if it does not persistently strive to increase the thoroughness and perfection of the way in which its colleges do this necessary work.

THE CHURCH TODAY

Fifth article in series

THE RECENT BOOKS

"THE BROOK KERITH"—FICTION, NOT HISTORY

THE BROOK KERITH, by George Moore. Macmillan Company, New York, \$1.50.

Eighteen years ago a friend of George Moore, casting about for some Christmas gift that would be suitable for him as a literary man, presented to him a Bible. It became his "constant companion and chief literary interest." Itself a literature, it has "led him into many various literatures and into the society of scholars." This fact, recorded by Mr. Moore, needs to be kept in mind as one reads "The Brook Kerith." It is a piece of literature, not at all a history. Complaints about its cavalier handling of the figures of Jesus and Paul are based on the question whether fiction has the right to do just as it may please with historical characters.

The publishers speak of this book as "a new life of Christ in fiction form," but it is not that. It is a story, largely manufactured from Mr. Moore's vivid imagination, which uses the figures of Jesus and Paul, the Essenes, Jerusalem, the brook Kerith, Herod and other persons, events and places which appear in the New Testament. Nowhere does the writer suggest, except by continuous implication, that he would substitute this story for the New Testament account of the facts. Yet this is the impression which most readers will receive. In that case, it need only be said that Mr. Moore has made a poor reproduction of Renan, Strauss, et al., at their poorest. As a story, it is interesting, written in excellent and unusual style and attractive but for its free use of historical events. As a life of Christ or account of New Testament events, it is weirdly inaccurate and inadequate. It will be attractive from that point of view only to those who are willing to make the least of Christ and the events surrounding his life on earth.

The story opens in the boyhood home of Joseph of Arimathea. Restless for something better than the "law" offers either at home or in Jerusalem, Joseph goes beyond the Jordan to the desert dwelling of the Essenes, from which Jesus (whose birth at Nazareth is taken for granted) is just departing for the baptism of John. Joseph follows, seeking prophetic messages that may satisfy him. When he reaches the Jordan, Jesus has disappeared, and he does not find him until his return to the sea of Galilee, where at last he joins the group of disciples, an increasingly interested follower.

It requires the Bible narrative to explain the story at this point. The Jesus of the gospels could have captivated Mr. Moore's Joseph of Arimathea but not the Jesus of "The Brook Kerith." This Jesus has a "scrannel peacock throat," smells of "rags and raw garlic," is so ignorant that he has never heard of Egypt until Joseph tells him of it, and under the telling of Mr. Moore makes up some very inane parables and sayings, works some petty wonders and breaks down at every crisis of character.

Mr. Moore's Jesus is not even a strong character, but a dreamer who wakes from his dream only to regret it. When he is crucified, he swoons, but revives before Joseph can get away from the tomb where he has laid him. The story of the spear thrust is a convenient lie told to secure the release of the body by Pilate. The disciples, of course, think he has risen. He recovers in the home of Joseph and goes back to his former shepherd life among the Essenes at the brook Kerith.

Twenty-five years later Paul comes, fleeing from danger, fanatically convinced of the resurrection and refusing to listen to Jesus as he tells him the truth. He counts Jesus a madman, saying that even if he were Jesus of Nazareth he was not the one whom Paul had accepted as Lord and Master. He explains his wound-prints by the remark that Pilate had crucified many men beside Christ. At first, surprised that such a mistaken notion had got abroad regarding him, Jesus thinks of going to Jerusalem and letting the truth be known. Then, seeing how

unconvinced Paul is and knowing that he has only his own word to prove the facts, he decides not to do anything about it. Paul goes on to Rome, and the story closes.

It is Mr. Moore's story. If it were history it would make Christian history impossible. Nothing could have kept Mr. Moore's Jesus nor his Paul alive in human thought through these centuries, and certainly nothing which weighs as heavily as the church and its life could have been erected on any such vaporous foundation. If the greatest moral superstructure of history, the Christian religion, is really built on an imagination regarding a fraudulent story, then we are in a morally chaotic world. Instead of praying that truth may be known, we might more profitably pray that more such falsehoods could come to be believed; in which case we would become immoral also. CLELAND B. McAFEE.

Designed to Aid Efficiency

EVERY-DAY WORDS AND THEIR USES, by Robert P. Utter. Harper and Brothers, New York. \$1.25 net.

If every one knew by heart all the dictionaries and books of synonyms, to say nothing of the grammars of the English language, there would be no need for such a book as this. But so long as it remains impossible to carry an unabridged dictionary in the mental vest pocket, compendiums like his will be prized by all who aspire to use English as most persons do. The author has had the advantage of access to the uncompleted Oxford dictionary, and as associate professor of English at Amherst College comes in contact with English as the American college boy manufactures it. His book comprises explanation of nearly a thousand words and phrases which are in common use, many in common misuse. The derivation of a word, its similarity to one of similar sound or appearance, probable errors of grammar in connection with it, these and other facts are gathered in brief compass so that the writer, speaker or ordinary business man can quickly find authoritative information.

FROM NATURE FORWARD, by Harriet Doan Prentiss. J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia.

This book is designed to be a help to those who are living irresolute, fearful lives, beset by uncertainty and driven by fear. It outlines a system of psychological reform which shall lead every person adopting it to a return to buoyant physical health, release from mental irritation and an enlarged and happy outlook on life. It will be recognized by the above signs as one of the New Thought books. Its reading will prove a source of great benefit to many persons though that benefit may be somewhat less than the author expects from it.

RETAIL SELLING, by James W. Flisk. Harper and Brothers, New York. \$1 net.

Retail merchants, clerks and salesmen will find this volume full of practical help. It is written by a man who has had wide experience and writes with the authority that comes from knowledge. The author deals with all phases of merchandising and brings into strong relief that accurate knowledge of conditions and goods which is the foundation of successful storekeeping.

Of Ethics and Religion

CONSCIENCE: ITS ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY, by G. L. Richardson. E. P. Dutton and Company, New York. \$1.75.

Christian ethics labors under the disadvantage of being a border subject; philosophy on one side and theology on the other have claims upon it. Yet in the judgment of the author of this book neither philosophy nor theology has done justice to it. Accordingly, he has stepped into the breach with a theory of conscience designed to relate the subject both to the philosophical and to the theological discussions of recent years. In

fact, the author views the field of ethics not only as affected by evolutionary thought and historical and critical research in the realm of the Bible, but also from that of developing views on church and state. Particularly interesting, though not convincing, is argument in support of the thesis that the Anglo-Catholic view of the church is vital to the integrity and authority of Christian ethics.

EPOCHS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST, by William Evans. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York. \$1 net.

In a series of addresses prepared for and delivered before popular audiences Dr. Evans, formerly of Moody Bible Institute, discusses such subjects as the birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, death and resurrection of Christ. It will be seen from this list that Dr. Evans aims to call attention to the events in the life of the Lord which, because of the occurrence in them of the miraculous element, have become points in dispute between those who are endeavoring to explain Jesus and his life upon purely naturalistic grounds and those who cling to the supernatural in the New Testament. Dr. Evans' arguments are not always couched in the most winning form, but his stand is invariably that of the uncompromising advocate of miracles.

HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY, by Charles A. Briggs. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 2 vols., 75 cents net each.

In the last years of his career as a teacher of theology, the late Dr. Briggs had come to single out the subject of theological encyclopaedia as his specialty in the classroom. Since this subject is capable of being presented either in the frame and order of logical rubrics or in those of history, he worked it over from both points of view. And in these two volumes, now edited by Miss Emille Grace Briggs, his daughter, the results of his historical studies are placed before the world of scholars and students. The work is the result of much research and patient study and will be of great value to those who desire accurate and comprehensive information on the study of Christian theology in the past.

With Various Themes

ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON THE UNITED STATES, by W. Cunningham. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. \$1.25 net.

The origin of such widely separated elements of American life as types of architecture, college courses and form of town government here receives exhaustive treatment. The author is an English divine who has been lecturer on economic history at Harvard. His book bears the imprint of wide scholarship, and if his application of English principles in the various lines of research to their counterparts in America seems foreshortened to students in the United States, he will be forgiven because of the clarity and fullness of his exposition. The work shows in a striking way the extent of the ties which bind America to England. The average American will understand his own country and its life much better after having read this concise summing up of the varied English influences on the present life of this country.

BODY AND SPIRIT, by John D. Quackenbush. Harper and Brothers, New York.

A lengthy discussion written by a physician, of hypnotic sleep, with suggestive therapeutics, autosuggestion, suggestion in the treatment of various mental diseases, metaphysics, telepathy, X ray vision, prescience and an argument for immortality. The book will be of value to persons interested in nearly all of the subjects treated, though it reads rather slowly. The "proofs," however, are not entirely convincing in every case.

THE WILLOW WEAVER, by Michael Wood. E. P. Dutton and Company, New York. \$1 net.

Hidden away in most of us is a mystic and dreamer who delights in the symbolism of fairy tale and legend, and who understands child and poet and their vision of glamour land. For that dreamer there will be both beauty and significance in "The Willow Weaver" and the seven other strange tales in the book. These stories were first published in the *Theosophical Review*.