

# Educational Literature

## NOTES ON RECENT BOOKS

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THIS article is intended to illustrate the present stage of educational thought in the English Reformed Churches in general, and in the National Church in particular. It therefore begins with recent expressions of church policy and then proceeds to indicate some recent additions to the literature for the religious education of adults, young people, and children.

### *I. Church Educational Policy.*

Last year was noteworthy for the publication of the Selborne Report, which is now in the process of consideration by the Church Assembly. The Selborne commission was concerned with the central administration of the Church of England's educational work and in some respects harks back to the Hadow Report of 1929. It has repeated its predecessor's call for a *real* Central Council for Religious Education, but it discounts the view, taken in 1929, that a reconstituted National Society can fulfil this role. In general the plan recommended is the setting up of five big "Departmental Councils" responsible respectively for (1) Schools (Primary and Secondary); (2) work among children in home and Sunday School (the voluntary aspect of child religious training); (3) Youth Work; (4) Adult Education; (5) Training Colleges. Diocesan representatives are to sit on these Departmental Councils, and in each case they form a majority over the members representing central church bodies. The National Society is to lose its recently acquired responsibility for Adult Education, but will retain its control of child education by affiliating Departmental Councils (1) and (2) and recognising them as its own committees for these two purposes. Over the five Departmental Councils stands the Central Council—a smaller body containing representatives of the Departments, of the Church Assembly, and of other central bodies. Strangely enough the Report makes but a passing reference to the secretaryship of the Council, yet if the Report is implemented the Secretary of the Central Council will hold one of the most responsible positions in the machinery of central church administration. The existing system whereby half the Standing Committee of the National Society has been elected by the subscribers to the society has proved to be heavily weighted against Evangelicals, but Evangelicals can afford to rejoice at the proposed reform only if they are redoubling their efforts to play their full part in the educational work of the dioceses, so that they may be counted worthy to be elected to the new Departmental Councils of the Church.

Of perhaps more direct interest is the Report of the National Society's Education Committee on the subject of Voluntary Religious

Education. The subject is really the church's responsibility to the child when he is out of day school, though naturally what is accomplished, or not accomplished, in day school is seen to affect the plan for Church, Sunday school, and week-night. So the value and limitations of the Agreed Syllabus are outlined and the point is stressed that exclusion of denominational teaching does not mean exclusion of doctrine. The opportunities opened up by a right use of "Withdrawal" are well explained. What a pity that more Evangelicals are not alive to the possibilities of the Withdrawal Class! Not that Withdrawal can ever be a final solution. That can only lie in an adequate supply of converted teachers who know the value of churchmanship. The Report underestimates the value of the Children's Church—largely because of a manifest desire to see children at the adult services—and fails to see that a Children's Church can be the best possible training for church membership.

Quite rightly the Report points out that secondary education for all at eleven plus means that the Sunday Schools cannot hope to retain children past that age, and a new organisation must supply the needs of the secondary stage. There follows a reference to the "Companionship Method," which is described in full in the appendix and which is an adaptation of the methods of Baden-Powell to the teaching of churchmanship and of the Christian life. The scheme is in its experimental stage. At the end of the Report is another appendix of special interest entitled "A Scheme of Training for Church Children." This is really the best part of the Report, and the National Society has since produced an excellent *Handbook to the Scheme of Training for Church Children*. The Handbook ought to enable many a vicar to ensure systematic Christian education for the children of his parish.

## II. Adult Education.

The recent enlarged edition of J. R. Lumb's *The Teaching Parson and His People* (National Society, 6/-) is a splendid investment for any vicar who wants to fulfil his teaching ministry more adequately. The author has a wide knowledge of educational practice and of educational psychology and it is here made available in digestible form. Apart from the excellent chapters concerning the Sunday School and the Day School, Mr. Lumb is mainly concerned with adult work. His refreshing emphasis on visiting as an educational opportunity, his two chapters on Adult Education, and his thoughts on the Parish Syllabus will recall many a clerical reader to his vocation as a presbyter "apt to teach" and supply a programme for a "balanced diet" sadly lacking in so many parishes—Evangelical and otherwise. Evangelical vicars will miss a vision worth seeing if they allow Mr. Lumb's sacerdotal emphasis or his "dim" view of Calvin and the Reformation to blind them to the real worth of this book.

## III. Religion amongst Youth.

Those interested in study groups will already know of the Anglican Young People's Association's productions under the general heading "Unto a full grown man." Volume VI entitled *The Word of God*

appeared last year. There is—as in all these volumes—a well balanced scheme for each study. Evangelicals will find much usable material here, provided they are forewarned of a “catholic” bias in matters of churchmanship, and of a higher critical approach to the Scriptures.

Youth leaders are continually faced with the problem of making Club prayers worshipful, attractive and instructive. Recent publications of merit include *The Altar of Youth* by Dr. Dunning (Religious Education Press, 3/6), *Prayers for Club and Hostel* (S.C.M. Press, 2/-), and *Hiking the Shining Way* by K. Ellicott (Religious Education Press, 1/6). The first of these contains carefully prepared programmes for worship sessions in clubs whose personnel have little or no religious background. The last booklet is intended for private devotion, and provides daily readings and prayers for a month.

#### IV. *Religion in the Day School.*

There have been two Agreed Syllabuses published recently. That for Durham County is published by the London University Press at 5/-. In many respects an advance on previous syllabuses, it has taken six years to produce. The approach to Scripture identifies higher critical hypothesis with scientific fact, and the ecclesiastical bias favours the Oxford Movement rather than the Evangelical Revival; but there is a welcome emphasis on Church History and Christian worship, and a real recognition of Christianity as a religion to be lived in membership of a worshipping and witnessing community. The bibliography, unfortunately is inaccurate and already out of date.

The most satisfactory Agreed Syllabus from the stand-point of definite Evangelicals is the smaller production (at 2/6) of the Bootle Education Committee. The Conservative Evangelicals represented in both the Church of England Committee and the Teachers' Committee have plainly been active, and for the first time conservative scholarship finds a place in the bibliography and is allowed as an alternative position in the approach to Scripture. There is an excellent section on Church History and some plain words on Roman Catholic teachings.

Teachers of Scripture in the Day Schools will doubtless know of the “Teachers' Guides to Religious Education,” published by the Religious Education Press. A recent addition to this useful series is *Christianity Goes into Action* by E. H. Hayes (5/-). It contains twenty four lessons on Church History beginning with the Gospels and Acts, and moving down the centuries to portray great Christians from Ignatius to Aggrey. Intended primarily for the secondary schools, the book is valuable even for lower age groups.

Finally should be noticed a recent publication at 4/- by the National Society, entitled *Voluntary Schools*. This is an excellent and systematic summary of the Education Acts of 1944 and 1946 in so far as they relate to Church Schools. As the author, James Laidler, is both a barrister and senior Administrative Assistant to the Kent Education Committee, his glosses on the Acts will be invaluable to all church school managers.