

Bible Teaching in State Schools.

(By the Ven. Archdeacon Willis.)

ARTICLE II.

THE NECESSITY FOR THE SCHOOL FUNCTION.

In the first chapter I dealt with the importance of Bible knowledge. I have now to show the necessity for the School Function. The late Anglican Primate of New Zealand, Bishop Cowie, who was Bishop of Auckland for 30 years, saw this necessity very clearly. He wrote to his people the day before he died: "It is a primary duty of all Christian parents to teach their children the leading facts of holy Scripture, especially those of the New Testament; but

THE INDIFFERENCE OF MANY PARENTS

is such that without the help of the day schools we cannot expect much teaching to be given." It seems only too probable that in more than half the homes in the Dominion there is no Bible teaching worthy of the name.

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Neither do Sunday Schools meet the want. Even if it can be shown that a goodly number of children of the Dominion attend Sunday Schools, how little can Sunday Schools do! At best they afford but an hour's teaching weekly, given for the most part by untrained teachers to scholars who attend irregularly. There is hardly opportunity to teach even the bare historical facts, to say nothing of the application and edification which should follow. The only assured way to provide that all children shall have an opportunity of being taught the Bible is by having the Bible taught in the only places in which the State compels all children to assemble daily.

THE SCHOOLS AND THE CHURCH.

It is a common saying that "to teach religion is the duty of the Church." It is a true saying, yet withal, a misleading one, because it contains at best only half a truth. The foundations of religion should be laid in the home and in the school. The know-

ledge of the Bible, as far at least as its literature and history are concerned, should be learned in the school day by day as part of the regular teaching. The late Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod early saw the part which the schools might be expected to take in laying these foundations without the fear of giving offence to any. When the Education Act for Scotland was under discussion

THAT WELL-KNOWN SCOTTISH MINISTER

wrote as follows: "There is a great talk about education, but why not religious instruction, if religious education is too glorious a thing to aspire after? Surely the facts of the Bible, what it records and says (whatever value individuals may attach to them) should be given to our children. Give me the alleged facts, I shall then have the skeletons which I can, through the Spirit, quicken into a great army."

ROMAN CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES.

"A Christian people," wrote Cardinal Manning, "can be perpetuated only by Christian education. Schools without Christianity will rear a people without Christianity. A people reared without Christianity will soon become anti-Christian." At the Roman Catholic Conference on Education, held in Sydney this year, the leading resolution adopted (as given in the newspaper telegram) was this: "That intellectual education must not be separated from moral and religious instruction."

THE GREAT AGNOSTIC SECULARIST,

Professor Huxley, bore the following testimony to the importance of having the Bible taught in the schools: "I have always been strongly in favour of secular education in the sense of education without theology; but I must confess that I have been no less anxiously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling which is the essential basis of conduct is to be kept up in the utterly chaotic state of opinion in these matters without the use of the Bible." This view is set out still more clearly by an undoubted authority, the late Mr Matthew Arnold, for so many years Inspector of Schools. In the preface to his little book, en-

titled "A Bible Reading for Schools,"

THIS LEADING AUTHORITY ON EDUCATION

says: "There is a substratum of history and literature in the Bible which belongs to science and schools. There is an application of the Bible and an edification by the Bible which belongs to religion and churches. Some people say that the Bible altogether belongs to the Church, and not to the school. This is an error. The Bible's application and edification belongs to the Church, its literary and historical substance to the school. Other people say that the Bible does indeed belong to the school as well as to the Church, but that its application and edification are inseparable from its literature and history. This is an error. They are separable, and though its application and edification are what matter to a man far most (we say so in all sincerity), are what he mainly lives by, yet it so happens that it is just in this application and edification that religious differences arise."

ONE OF THE GREATEST OF IMPERIALISTS,

Mr Cecil Rhodes, who has proved himself one of the most cosmopolitan friends of education the world has seen, in an address at Bulawayo in 1901, spoke as follows:—"In England a Board School is not bound to have any religion. I think it is a mistake, just as I think it is a mistake in Australia that they have excluded history and religion from their schools. I am quite clear that a child brought up with religious thoughts makes a better human being. I am quite sure that to couple the ordinary school teaching with some thoughts of religion is better than dismissing religion from within the walls of the schools."

For obvious reasons I have taken as my authorities men of very diverse views,

BOTH ORTHODOX AND UNORTHODOX,

and I could, of course, multiply the number infinitely did space permit. Surely the importance of the school function ought to be beyond dispute; yet the State ignored the school function as far