

its own idealization. The church lives by the power of the Spirit, but the Spirit does not work *in vacuo*. "When we look back from the Christian religion as the New Testament exhibits it and as it is still exhibited in the Christian church, to the historical Jesus, we see a Person who is not only equal to the place which Christian faith assigns him, but who assumes that place naturally and spontaneously as his own."

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The Child and His Religion. By GEORGE E. DAWSON. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909. ix + 124 pp. Postpaid 82 cents.

If anyone is perplexed about the new science of religious education and seeks a brief statement of some of its main positions, Dr. Dawson's little book will answer his need. With some historical treatment of educational theory, he discusses the natural interest of the child as fundamental for all education. He then shows how this factor of interest is determinative of a perfectly natural religious development of the child, and how it must condition the methods and materials of education, including especially the Bible curriculum.

But in addition to providing a convenient introduction for the layman, these studies offer data upon some difficult questions. The subject of the natural religion of children is of the greatest importance, and if we could be sure with this writer that the child has a spontaneous interest in the idea of ultimate causality and of immortality, we should be on firm ground at a very critical point. Does a child ask, apart from adult suggestion, Who made the sun? And, if he does, what does he mean by it, and what does the answer in terms of deity mean to him?

The study of children's interest in the Bible has been based on a large collection of data. It would be more valuable and convincing if we could be quite sure that the children had really had a proper opportunity of choice between the different parts of the Bible. In other words, the study may reveal quite as much regarding inadequate presentation of the Bible as regarding natural interests of youth. The graph shows a culmination of boys' interest in the historical books at the eleventh year, markedly declining from that point. If the fascinating biography of the Old Testament were presented apart from doctrinal deductions, the returns might be different. At least two years later would seem to be the culmination. The very slight interest in prophecy culminating in boys at fourteen and disappearing at fifteen, although the study includes the twentieth year, would seem to

indicate the presentation of this intensely social material at too early an age, and probably from the wrong point of view. The prophets can be very dull or very fascinating according to the method of approach.

One might question the inclusion of all Old Testament biography and history (two distinct interests) together with apostolic history under the one title of historical books, and the treatment of the story of Jesus and the life and teachings of Jesus, not as biography or history, but as gospel. As the children would not make these same distinctions, the deductions are somewhat invalidated.

Dr. Dawson has largely made allowance for the various elements entering into his wide study of children's interest in the Bible. His conclusions indicate the basis upon which modern scientific Sunday-school curricula have been formed.

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