

TEACHING OF RELIGION

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Teaching of Religion by P. C. Yorke

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By REV. P. C. YORKE, D. D.

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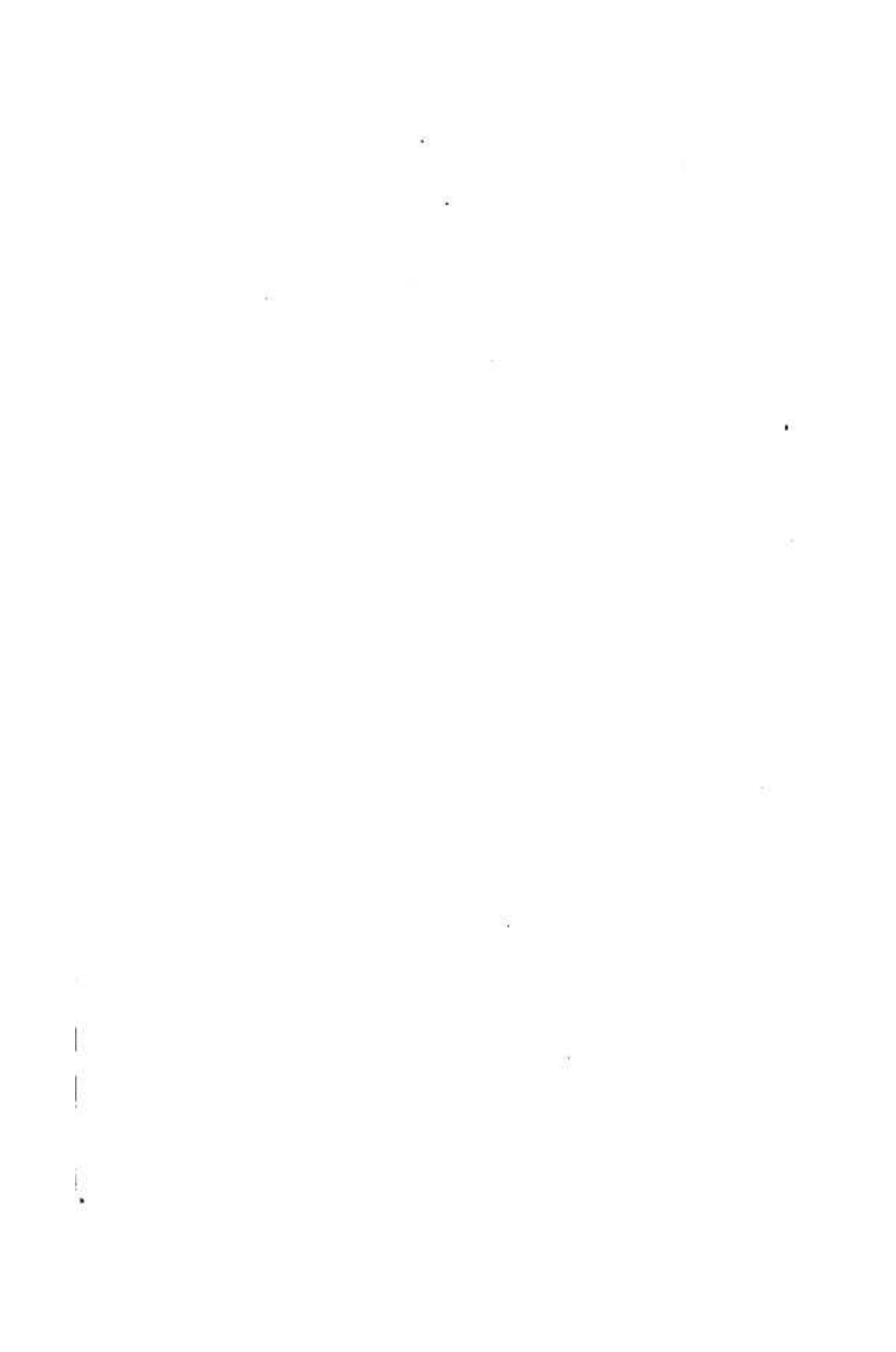
AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL
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IN our Church legislation concerning Catholic schools the chief reason given for their necessity is our duty to safeguard the faith and morals of the children. In this country and in our day there is another and a positive reason for the establishment of Catholic schools, namely, that without such schools we cannot teach religion at all. Hence, putting aside the intrinsic value of religion as the greatest thing in the world, and looking on the matter from the purely scholastic standpoint, the teaching of religion is the most important function of the Catholic school. Any Catholic school that does not give to the teaching of religion at least the same care, the same skill and the

Importance of Religious Teaching.

same efficiency that it gives to other subjects, is like the fig tree the Lord cursed, not only because it bears no fruit, but because its very verdure is a snare to the parents that trust it, and a fraud on the Church that maintains it.

Therefore, in taking up the subject of the "Teaching of Religion," I am deeply conscious of its importance on the one side, and on the other I realize my personal limitations in giving it adequate treatment. Many large books have been written on the subject, and more and larger books might well be written. I do not pretend to the pedagogical equipment necessary to produce such works, and, besides, on an occasion like this, a paper is limited both by the patience of the audience and the time at our disposal. For those reasons and others, I will confine myself to a plain, untechnical consideration of the problem as viewed by one who has no theories to propound and no particular methods to advocate, but is chiefly interested in the aim that the children under his care are taught religion, and are taught it as well as it should be taught.

Teaching of Religion in Higher Schools.

I do not intend to discuss here the teaching of religion in High Schools and Universities. High School methods and University methods are entirely different from primary methods. The New Code of Church Discipline says in Canon 1373: "*Juventus quae medias vel superiores scholas frequentat, pleniore religionis doctrina excolatur, et locorum Ordinarii curent ut id fiat per sacerdotes zelo et doctrina praestantes.*" That is to say, "The young people who attend High Schools and Universities shall receive fuller religious instruction, and the local Bishops shall see to it that such instruction is imparted by priests who are distinguished by their zeal and learning." The question of teaching religion, therefore, in High Schools and Universities is beyond the scope of this paper, and may be safely left to the departments of Pedagogy, which, in accordance with the decrees of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, are established in our ecclesiastical seminaries.

Neither will I inject myself into the controversy about the place and function of the