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ART. I.—CHRISTIAN OBLIGATION WITH RESPECT TO  
THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

No creature of God was made for itself alone. The flower of the field, the oak of the forest, the sun in the firmament, and “the cattle upon a thousand hills,” were all formed that they might be instrumental in promoting the welfare and comfort of each other. To suppose, then, that MAN, who occupies so conspicuous a place in this great system; *man*, who is endowed with a rational as well as an active nature; who is made capable of acting upon a *plan*, and living to an *end*, was made, or is at liberty to act for himself alone; to make, each one, his own enjoyment and glory the ultimate purpose of his being;—would be to adopt a sentiment as unreasonable as it is degrading. The powers which God has given us; the relations which we bear to him; the benevolent activity of which we are obviously capable; and the rich and unremitting goodness of which we are the subjects, and of which we have ever been the subjects since we had a being;—all demonstrate that intellectual and moral action is our appropriate sphere; and that either indolence, or a course of action which does not embrace the good of

cond coming of Christ, in the display of Millennial glory, as an event near at hand. French and German philosophy predicts a new religion and new social state, as the grand result of all preceding changes. The wisdom of the philosopher will doubtless disappoint him—the faith of the Christian may, as it respects the precise time, but cannot in the end. “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

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#### ART. IV.—THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

MEN often come slowly to the adoption of the principles of the merest common sense, even in the doctrines and duties of religion. How much Christianity has lost whilst its disciples have been dallying in hesitation about obeying the simplest instincts of duty, we believe to be incalculable. They never ponder so deliberately, and with such cautious progression, as when an effort is proposed to take advantage of the very postulates of reason in promoting the triumph of the Gospel. The strongest illustration of this most anomalous fact is furnished by the history of the Church in regard to its efforts to control the education of the young. For it is no late discovery that the mind of childhood is *susceptible* of permanent moral impressions. No theme can claim a more venerable prescription to the last honours of triteness than this. And if the world are really ignorant of the connexion of early education with the destiny of the individual, it is for some other reason than the want of common fame to proclaim it: for it has been set forth in all conceivable forms, from the Proverbs of Solomon to the distich of Pope, and from the staring apophthegm of the copy-book, to the rant of the college rostrum. It is thus that the great truth has been suffered to evaporate, even since the dispensation of the Gospel. The praise of education has echoed from the pulpit too, in good set phrase, but the Christian world slumbered upon the sermons until the Archbishop of Milan showed that the subject was capable of some practical inferences. But even this hint, like many others from that

disfavoured quarter, was despised by Protestant Christendom for more than two hundred years, and we have only just now celebrated the lapse of the first half century since the introduction of a universal system of religious education for children.

And yet it has taken that half century to carry the Church through the first process of awakening. We allude not to the agitation of contingent questions of lawfulness and expediency, to the suspicions and misgivings, or to the positive opposition and denunciation, which the *Sunday School* system encountered. For, that there prevailed during that period a singular frigidity on the general subject of the moral training of children, is shown by the absence of all effort to furnish a substitute for the plan of Raikes, acknowledged to be worthy of all commendation in its design, but which, it was pretended, could be prosecuted only by desecration, and the accomplishment of which was, after all, essentially impracticable. But, confining our observations to the earliest features of the plan itself, and to the Christian zeal which it enlisted, we say it is surprising, that it is only since the late Jubilee that the Church has seemed to begin to be aware of the divine designs in this new organization. Cases of—what may be called, in reference to the efforts of teachers—*accidental* conversions of children, occasionally occurred, and they were proclaimed abroad as unprecedented wonders, and received with doubt or incredulity by the religious public. But when the Spirit of God moved through a church, the Sunday-School room presented itself in a new light to the revived Christians and the recent converts. Instead of being looked upon as a receptacle for street-idlers; a penitentiary; or, at best, as a place where the rudiments of reading might be conscientiously tasked into a child by making the Bible his horn-book, it presented the aspect of a gate of heaven; and teachers felt the appalling truth that the *souls* of these children were committed to them, and that there was no other way opened for their deliverance from hell than had been opened to themselves. They were led to a more solemn consideration of the nature of the office itself; and it soon becomes evident to a candid mind, that when Providence has assigned any moral field to its culture, there is a responsibility connected with the trust proportionate to the interest involved. They had, heretofore, been too apt to consider that it was a business of generous self-denial that they had assumed, and that the service

was so wholly gratuitous and voluntary, that it was something like a Roman Catholic supererogation to attend to it. But when they found that they were, as Christian subjects, bound to this duty as strongly as any *other* missionary, or minister is to his charge, the trust was seen to be as serious as any that could be committed to them, and that they were held by their fidelity to their Redeemer, to bend themselves to this commission until their Master should designate some other service. Thus, at length, there has arisen a dawn of promise that the true fundamental principle of the Sunday School institution is about to be extensively understood, and made the object of direct aim in all its provisions.

It has resulted from the recognition of this character of the service, that the efforts of teachers to become more practical have been directed to simplify and adapt the system of instruction. According to the ancient mode of practice (we speak, of course, generally,) it seems to have been considered that the injunctions of the Gospel are not intelligible by children. The precepts of morality and the ceremony of prayer were strictly enjoined, but the duties of faith and repentance were, tacitly, postponed to a season of more intellectual maturity. Children were practically considered as placed by their minority under a religious disability. The mode of teaching, the phraseology in which they were alluded to, the absence of direct endeavour to bring them to God, all showed that their training was prospective. It is true, the Church and pious parentage provided for their religious instruction, but it was after a manner which insured in many cases a lasting repugnance to the obligations of religion.

To how few of the present generation are the religious reminiscences of their childhood delightful! How many of us now recur, with no agreeable associations to the Sunday penance of reading the Bible and reciting the catechism, with the impression still vivid in the memory that the tedious intervals of the Sabbath services were to be *killed* by a course of reading which it was not expected we should understand! And yet all this waste of time and application was unnecessary, and these remembrances of the Sabbath days of childhood might be universally, as, in many instances, they are, cherished with unmingled feelings of happiness, had parents been alive to the fact that no book is more easily made entertaining than the Bible, or more intelligible, by familiar ex-

planation, than most doctrinal catechisms. But the secret lies in a short line—the conversion of children was not expected and laboured for as a direct object. With a selfishness, like that of the apostles who would have restricted the announcement of the Gospel to the lineage of Abraham, the Church has comparatively disregarded, not only the claims of Paganism, but of its own children (as a class) on its guardianship. And God seems to have chosen, by a dispensation more evident and striking than even Peter's vision, to awaken Christians, as he did the Jews, to the conviction that they have taken a narrow view of his benevolence. There is credible evidence for the belief, that during the year ending in May last, the Holy Spirit has been "poured out also" upon five thousand Sunday School pupils. The announcement has created as much astonishment as did the calling of the Gentiles; but the mere statement of such an unequalled accession to the visible Church from the ranks of youth demands the attention of that Church, and an inquiry into the nature of a system which must produce such an influence upon its future history. It is a subject for deliberate investigation, whether it be of God or not; and the decision should be made whilst its infancy may be taken advantage of to dispose of it in the easiest and most effectual manner. If the fact be admitted, all the abstractions of the argument are superseded, and we had better imitate our mother of Jerusalem, "hold our peace and glorify God," and obey his Providence.

In our judgment, the system of Sunday School instruction is a means, favoured by God, of supplying the deficiencies of ordinary ministerial duty, and of carrying into more extensive effect the designs of his mercy. It is not necessary to suggest any hypothesis respecting the moral and intellectual points of difference in the character of the people addressed by the apostles and of those of our day, which have caused a change in the style of preaching and in the discharge of other ministerial functions. Nor need we stop to fix the charge of delinquency upon the Church for not providing for the instruction of every class of the community. Taking admitted facts, we may, without prejudice, assert, that owing to the general character of preaching, the mixed nature of our congregations, their number, variety of employments, peculiarity of situation, and other causes, it is impossible for a single individual to apportion his services to all. This could not be effected unless every minister had a number of lay assistants,



of suitable age and qualifications, who should devote themselves exclusively to the business of private visits and meetings for instruction, whilst he should direct their labours, and give his chief care to the preaching of the word. Such an organization, we fear, is generally impracticable. Scarcely a congregation could be found where there is a sufficient number of pious men disengaged from business, who could do the service acceptably. The nearest approach to this desirable system is furnished in the adaptation of Sunday Schools to the distinct objects contemplated. In this manner, the intelligent members of every church might be employed, on the Sabbath, in superintending classes of domestic servants and other adults, white and coloured, male and female; in Bible classes, comprehending *all* the young persons of the congregation, and in similar classes for others out of it. It is easy to see how much a *pervulgate* of instruction would change the face of the Church, by making its members personally active in the great duty of teaching the ignorant, simplifying the instructions of the desk to the young, and diffusing the influence of the Bible directly amongst all classes and conditions. This subdivision of labour should have been learned long since by the Christian ministry, from Jethro, "And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, the thing that thou doest is not good; thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee; for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice; I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: be thou for the people toward God, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. *Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*" Such a band of efficient assistants to the ministry might well be included under the denomination of "teachers," in the apostle's catalogue of the agents delegated by Christ for the edifying of his body—the Church. *Eph.* iv. 11, 12. *1 Cor.* xii. 28.

The Church has commenced, and in some portions made some progress in filling up this large design. But as a faithful prosecution of that branch of it which is applied to chil-

dren will naturally result in its gradual extension to all grades of the destitute, it will be sufficient to limit our attention to this preliminary stage. And yet we must, in deference to human sense and the weakest Christianity, spare an elaborate argument to prove the value to individuals, to families, churches, neighbourhoods, and society universally, of having children taught stately the principles and practice of religion from the Scriptures; watched over; and visited with affection and interest, followed in sickness, misfortune, and separation; by kind, prudent, and intelligent Christian friends. The proposition is too self-evident to need an argument, and, as one should think, the object of too much self-interest to require enforcement. These services in detail are beyond the power of any minister, with whatever variety of gifts he may be endowed, unless he superadd the faculty of collecting all these classes of persons together in one place, and instructing them with adaptedness to each case. To a minister, a faithful association of Sunday School teachers is the hundred eyes and hundred hands he is often disposed to wish for, and no human agency is capable of yielding him such efficient assistance. They supply the loss children have long sustained in the services of the sanctuary, by imparting a knowledge of the history and doctrines of the Bible in a manner which their immature minds can comprehend. They thus prepare a generation of hearers who are more likely to attend to, and understand the discourses of the pulpit, in consequence of their noviciate in the schools, and give the best security for becoming intelligent, stable, and useful members of the Church.

If the institution be recognised in the rank of importance to which we have assigned it, it is easily seen that the Church, as a body, has a deep interest in it, and is called on to be vigilant of its course. It must cease to be considered an adventitious appendage to the house of worship. Teachers must be regarded in another light than as amateurs of the science of school keeping, and must meet with some more cordial recognition than the unmeaning complacency with which they are commonly greeted as engaged in a harmless employment, for which they have some whimsical predilection. The Sunday School must be identified with the Church as positively as any of the other external means of grace. It claims the patronage and prayers of every Christian, and should enlist their active interest in its support. In it is their

hope for their own children, and there is the best cooperation they can have in training their families. In it are educating their successors in the visible church, and *there* is the strong-est human guaranty for its continued purity and prosperity. Individual members should well and prayerfully deliberate, before they relinquish the privilege of guiding these minds, and decide that Providence does not call them to be efficient agents in the cause. They well know that Christ denounces unprofitable servants, and before a professed follower determines to avoid the duty, or is contented to spend the Sabbaths without being engaged in some scheme of benefiting others, let he or she be certain that the reason is such as will bear the test of the Gospel requisitions.

We are commonly left to our own perceptions to judge when circumstances indicate any special duty as the assignment of Providence. If we seriously consider the history and present attitude of Sunday schools, we suppose it impossible to come to any other conclusion than that they have been sanctioned by the Saviour, not only as a means of hastening his triumph, but that none of his followers might be without a field for active and direct service. Its operations are so multifarious, that we can scarcely imagine a case of total disqualification. If precluded by any circumstances from direct teaching, the private member may still exert a general influence in furtherance of the design. One of the concurrent blessings of the plan is, that it opens so wide a door to practical benevolence, and such a person may be excellently employed in visiting the poor and the ignorant, to inform them of the advantages of the school, to impress them and their children, by their kind familiarity, with favourable ideas respecting it. If poverty or sickness prevent their taking advantage of the offer, an opportunity is afforded of giving the most conclusive evidence of sincerity and disinterestedness, by guiding them to means of relief. In like manner they may make friendly visits at the homes of those who are already scholars; where they are sure of an unaffected welcome. By this proof of earnestness they open a way to the confidence and the consciences of the child's family, whom they may persuade to an attendance on the means of grace, and encourage to the pursuit of holiness. *Secular* and moral reformation, at least, will be easily



promoted in this way; and there is no surer pioneer of religion, among the uncultivated, than philanthropy. Its whole range is opened to the person who is willing to be the friend of the Sunday scholar's family, and an entire neighbourhood may be blessed for the sake of the youngest of its inhabitants.

The office of teacher or any other agent in the Sunday school is an unquestioned passport to any household, poor or rich, and the latter rank of the congregation, as well as the former whether in or out of it, are accessible to such visitors. Sensible parents, and well meaning people generally, will not deem such attentions intrusive. The persuasion that the welfare of their own offspring is an object of a stranger's solicitude, will soften many a rugged disposition, and open the heart to unwonted emotions. And in spiritual humanity it will be difficult to decide which is the stronger claimant for Christian compassion, the child of the poor or rich.

Energetic action is one of the best means of promoting healthful personal piety. It is the indolent professor who is most liable to despondency, and to a disrelish of spiritual duties. The prescription of the apostle springs from the principles of nature, as well as religion, that if Christians expect to be otherwise than 'barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of their Lord,' they must add 'energy' to their 'faith.' In the words of an eminent philosophical and evangelical observer of the times, "there is, manifestly, something which requires to be balanced or adjusted, and kept in equipoise, between the principle of faith, and the principle of action. The one has a tendency to exclude the other, or to overpower it. But Christian excellence consists in the preservation of this balance; and the preservation of it, we must add, greatly depends upon the circumstances of the times. Now, perhaps, for a season, faith and energy are both strongly stimulated; and the highest style of Christian heroism is reached. Again, the inducement of action being slackened, faith is deprived of the invigoration it had received from the contest with the antagonist principle; it triumphs, or rather seems to triumph, for a moment; but presently becomes extravagant, then imbecile; and at length, utterly inert. We need not be surprised to find that faith, though heaven-born, can neither live nor be productive alone. Excellence of all kinds, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, is the product, not of the simple operation of some one principle; but of the op-

pugnant forces of two or more powers, which have a natural fitness to counteract each other.”\*

We think this remark pertinent to our argument, as furnishing the highest motive next to the immediate desire of glorifying God, that can be presented to stimulate the zeal of the disciple, and as another incentive to the Church to seize with eagerness any new mode that is offered of elevating the standard of piety.

Collectively, the Church is bound to provide for this department upon an adequate scale. The necessary accommodations and facilities should be furnished by it; and the care of these details should not be superadded to the duties of the teachers, any more than the financial concerns of the congregation should be laid upon the minister. The time ought long since to have arrived when every house of worship should have a separate building for its Sunday Schools, admitting of the necessary subdivision of pupils, in distinct apartments, with a chapel for at least occasional services for the children exclusively. A small fund would furnish an amount of moral and religious reading sufficient to benefit many hundreds of families at once. Over these circles of subordinate agency, the minister and other ecclesiastical officers should maintain a kind superintendence. They should consider it part of their pastoral and official duty to inspect their operations; to be familiar with the process and nature of the instructions afforded. The maintenance of purity and orthodoxy requires that they should not be ignorant of the character, capacity, and views of those who have the almost exclusive care of a large portion of their rising charge. The schools constitute, literally, the nurseries of the Church: from them are continually presented applicants for union with it, and their character will soon determine that of the whole body. The official guardians of the young, no more than parents, should feel that this part of their charge is alienated to the teachers. Parental fidelity is important to maintain the influence of the teacher, and the spiritual officers are bound to extend their episcopacy over persons holding such responsible stations as the directors of the minds of the young.

In most churches at this day, (we again remind our readers that our observations are general, and refer to the Christian community at large,) the only ecclesiastical provision made

\* ‘Saturday Evening,’ Art. xii.

for the benefit of the children, is the requirement of a regular recitation from the catechism of the denominations to which they are attached. These examinations occur, commonly, at intervals of several weeks, during which there is no pretence of actual supervision by the official overseers. The formularies which are to be repeated by rote, mostly comprise a system of theology arranged as a science, and composed in technical phraseology. When these sententious definitions are duly committed and rehearsed, the maternal offices of the Church are discharged, and the nurslings are dismissed, with perhaps some common-place advice, until the next recurrence of the ceremony. Now, we have no hesitation in saying that such exercises, unaccompanied by plain exposition calculated to enter the understandings of the young, and without a faithful aim to reach their hearts, are not only without any present profit, but are likely to engender an aversion from them which may end in an invincible misesteem of this portion of the standards. Under the most faithful and popular conducting, these brief examinations must be meagre and superficial, and in all respects inferior to the practical, constant, and exclusive services of the Sunday school teacher. Formerly many children in our congregations had no opportunity of access to religious influence, excepting such as the catechetical class might afford. Their parents, even the pious, were often satisfied that they had met their obligations by requiring their preparation for their tasks; and if not pious, they sent them as one of the acts of courtesy, which the moral world deems fit to be occasionally shown to the institutions of religion. For all these deficiencies the Sunday School should be welcomed as a relief, and if not adopted as a substitute, yet admitted as a better scheme, to the spirit and mode of which the old one should be made to conform.

As a means of grace, too, which has been peculiarly blessed to the teachers who undertook the service before their own conversion, it is of great moment that an anxious eye should be kept upon this class of the congregation. To decide that professors only should have charge of the schools, would discard a vast number of efficient teachers, and remove them from an influence which has been so remarkably favoured. Besides, a disposition that inclines persons to engage in a service of this nature, almost certainly implies the existence of some degree of inclination to attend to the claims of religion, and in this state of mind they are most likely to be

faithful to their charge, and to be led to set an example of submission to Christ. But it is, undoubtedly, prudent that these individuals should not be unknown, and that they should be the objects of special watchfulness and spiritual anxiety.

The ministry have not yet exhibited the intimate and active connexion with this department of their charge that is expected from them. The general system owes much to their approbation and encouragement, but they have not begun to consider it is a prominent part of their pastoral duty to take care of their schools. Would they be content to have several hundreds of their congregation taken from their immediate control, and taught by thirty or forty individuals, of whom they know little more than that they are communicants in good standing? And is it lawful for them to be indifferent to, or ignorant of, the nature of the course of teaching which is applied weekly in the training of the most important portion of their people? How deeply must those principles be fixed which a zealous teacher plants in the mind of a young scholar! The circumstances of this education are infinitely more favourable for the success of his efforts than those of a pastor can ever be. Each of *these* ministers has a congregation of but eight or ten, whose attention is necessarily concentrated on him; he has the facility of direct personal appeal to each one, and this for a length of time equal to that employed by the minister in the public services; he is able to visit them every week, to follow and direct them in all their pursuits, and confirms his official authority by the affection which his kindness and interest have excited. Under such care his mind is formed, and the impressions can hardly be counteracted. The sermon from the pulpit is not adapted to his capacity; and even should he comprehend it, and hear the doctrines of the school-room controverted, he would be apt to satisfy himself in the conclusion, that his teacher was the oracle after all. The pulpit-minister is to him a comparative stranger; he is the man in black whom he holds in mysterious awe; he does not know him as a private friend, an affectionate adviser; and he always associates him with the desk and the rites of the sanctuary, as a personage who is not to be thought of in any other connexion. Thus the mind is preoccupied, and thus it will grow up and strengthen, and take its character from the inflection the teacher has given it, whatever that character be. If there be a variance with the opinions of the minister, there must be a

contest with the prejudices thus instilled that will make a change of views at least difficult and perplexing. But it is more probable that it will result in dissatisfaction, or confusion, if not in an entire theological revolution in the character of the Church. For such an issue the ministry should be held in a great degree responsible, if they have thus permitted a whole generation to go through a course of indoctrination from year to year, without inquiry or interference on their part.

It will certainly be admitted that such an issue is possible, where there is no pastoral supervision, and that the Church may thus be said to be in the hands of Sunday school teachers. Let the constituted guardians of its peace and purity, then, see that they are not cherishing an infant Hercules for its own subversion. The surest way of guarding against all such possible evils is, that the teachers should feel that they are recognized as co-pastors, and that they are held by some responsibility to the Church of Christ. A minister may, by the indifference he manifests to the state of his schools, the formality of his visits to them, and the avoidance of all intercourse or pastoral duty with the teachers as such, so effectually repel them as to be considered to have refused their control. Left in this way to their own course, discouraged from going to their natural adviser, they are compelled to be their own guides, and to go on in their labours unnoticed and forgotten, excepting perhaps, to be classed in an occasional paragraph of prayer with the 'ancient covenant people,' Ethiopia, and other expletory topics.

An inversion of this would, of course, insure an auxiliary in his functions whose efficiency will tend more to lighten his burthen, and promote his success, than many clerical colleagues. By devoting a regular service to the instruction and advice of teachers; by mingling so much with the business of the school as to have his connexion with it felt, without involving him in the peculiar duties of the teachers; by combining it as an integral portion of the general interests of the Church; by keeping parents in a right estimation of its privileges, and their corresponding duties; by connecting it in prayer, and preaching, and pastoral visitation with the most prominent means of promoting religion; by all such methods as he employs in impelling his people to duty, he may and should elevate in their consideration the system of youthful religious education. The ministry is the proper source of



knowledge to which teachers look. If their views of truth are to be clarified, established, and made consistent, it is the province of the ministry to do it. To qualify them properly for their station, something more than the proficiency of catechumens is necessary. Some intellectual discipline is required to prepare them for a systematic study of truth; and they need habits of regular thought and judgment. These may or may not have been parts of their education, but they should be applied to religious investigations with skilfulness. The minds of the children, too, will claim their study, if they hope to mould them, and prepare them for substantial exercise. Children should be guided in the art of thinking, as well as supplied with subjects of thinking; and that scholar will, through the grace of God, be the most intelligent, stable, and useful Christian, whose mind was disciplined whilst his soul was subdued. There is now also great need of biblical knowledge of all kinds amongst teachers. They should be well furnished with the variety of information necessary for the exposition of the Scriptures: yet out of the clerical order how few have taken any pains to study their chronology, geography, antiquities, and evidences? They need too, no small imbuing in polemic theology to meet the inquiries and remarks which are constantly presented by intelligent scholars. Every instance of doubt or ignorance on a doctrinal, casuistical, or historical question, makes an impression of incompetency very prejudicial to the influence of the person thus found at fault. Children assume that one who undertakes to teach, virtually professes to know, and they are quick at detecting deficiencies. Yet their speculations are usually within a compass that something less than a Doctor of theology can satisfy; and a wise minister can easily prepare his teachers for such emergencies. This whole duty, of biblical instruction, however, pertains directly to the ordinary functions of a minister, and he would do well to keep all his congregation qualified to explain the literature of the Bible, as well as intelligently and scripturally to give a reason of the spiritual hope they profess to indulge.

Without some uniform plan of study on these topics, there may be a very unfortunate diversity of explanations in the same school. Each may have 'a doctrine, a revelation, an interpretation,' of his own, if the results of longer study are not furnished by the minister and adopted by his agents. Besides, his course of reading enables him to gather all ac-

cessible information, and he may communicate it with more ease and advantage than it could be derived by the consultation of original sources of knowledge. It is the best expedient a minister could adopt of refreshing his memory with his early theological and biblical studies, to give his teachers, if not his whole congregation, an introduction to the learning connected with a full understanding of the Bible. He may, at least, be always ready to refer the studious to authentic sources of instruction, and furnish every facility to enable them to make their own acquisitions.

An intimacy with the school also commends itself to a minister as creating a new tie between him and his people. It connects him with the teachers and learners, in a manner which greatly strengthens the affection and promotes the influence of their mutual relation. The indication of an active interest on his part in their plans, has a natural tendency to persuade them of his earnestness in the service of the Redeemer. His countenance and assistance encourage them in their labours, and an assurance of his sympathy relieves them amidst many trials of faith and patience. The members of the classes are more deeply impressed with the importance of their privileges, when they see their clergyman putting a high estimate upon them. The same remark may be applied to the Church at large, and children will be likely to undervalue the institution when they see Christians, both minister and people, keeping aloof from them, or viewing them occasionally, as they do a curious exhibition. No set rules are desirable to regulate the manner in which the proper interest should be manifested. We know that there are some ceremonious assemblings of the schools in presence of the congregation; that a church-member sometimes accidentally strays into the school-room; and sometimes a regular delegation makes a perfunctory progress through the apartments. Even these cold recognitions are better than total neglect; but let Christians determine the value of the institution as a means of glorifying God; let them pray for it with the energy that a conviction of its true nature would inspire; and then shall they find appropriate methods of efficient patronage: then shall be seen more enduring and extensive results than the amplest pecuniary endowment can buy. The minister must guide the faith and charity of his people into this channel. His mere declamatory sanction will avail little; but let him be seen as an active member of the organization; let not

only his prayers and sermons, but his whole pastorship, testify that the Sunday School is, in his estimation, a concern of the Church, and the Church will be led to their duty. Parents will not be brought in any other way so strongly to realize their obligations, and to feel the magnitude of the results dependent on the manner in which their children are instructed.

But besides the duty of carrying it into immediate effect, there is much required of the Church in perfecting the system itself. For the former services, we need the heart and hand; in this, the efforts of the Christian *mind* are most particularly required. The whole scheme of religious education needs improvement. The minds of children have never been sufficiently studied, so as to facilitate the adaptation of a system of teaching to the moral and intellectual diversity which characterizes the juvenile mind. Christian philosophers are needed to trace the principles of reason from the most plastic stage of their germination through all their development. Men are needed to take advantage of the results of such observation, to suggest the proper modes of applying instruction to the respective cases. This would open the whole science of efficient teaching. Sound minds are wanted to prepare books on these principles for the use of children, fitted not only to their comprehension, but to their reason, judgment, and conscience. The importance of the agency of the Sunday School library can hardly be spoken of in extravagant terms. It is enough to say, that an opportunity is offered by it of supplying the daily reading of the six hundred thousand pupils connected with the schools in this country, and of every family to which these pupils are attached. It is not, therefore, sufficient to furnish books of innocent amusement to keep improper publications out of their hands. There should be books for their study; elementary works in all the departments of useful learning and information, books that should invite the exercise of thought, and lead to a standard of correct moral judgment. A large field for this kind of labour is still open in the science of biblical elucidation. The histories and characters of the Bible are themes which might well attract the attention of pious authors. There is no way so effectual of recommending the revealed word as by showing its excellencies and beauties distinctively, in the separate condensation of its endless topics of usefulness. Children are in this manner more sensibly impressed with the reality and force of the incidents and morals of the Bible, than

by being confined to the text of our version. Every illustration of its geography, civil and natural history, and antiquities, is a cause of attraction to the volume itself; and no class of publications is so favourite with ingenuous children as those devoted to its simplification and elucidation. There is scarcely any species of useful literature which may not be accommodated to the taste and capacity of children and youth, and, at the same time, be profitable to a very large class of adults. The whole range of moral biography, especially, should be reduced to this service; for, on no minds is example more potent in its impressions. How vast would be the moral effect of bringing up children to read all history with reference to the providence of God! If Christian historians have so long confined their ambition to the bare chronicling of facts, and seen no other than their political and philosophical connexions, it is time that our children should be taught to read on better principles.

The next generation of teachers will be principally composed of the present scholars; and this fact increases their claim for adequate preparation at our hands. Such have been the deficiencies or trammels of the early religious nurture of most of us, that we go to the duty of teaching comparatively awkward. Our scholars, on the contrary, will have the advantage of teaching to children what they have learned as children; and when this is effected, the success of the system will be increased in a manifold degree. To us, however, it falls to be the pioneers, and on our age it is incumbent to furnish the ablest agents for a new era in the enterprise. These are offices for the pious and intelligent in the Church. The late accessions to it from the ranks of intellectual men is unprecedented, and we would earnestly direct their faculties to a work which is not unworthy of their powers. There are men of this class who could give a more decisive impulse to the cause of Christianity, by bending their minds to the promotion of religious education by such means as we have designated, than by entering the ministry, or devoting their time to oral teaching in Sunday Schools. The employment of a few leisure hours might result in modifying the reading of multitudes of the three millions of children in the nation. Can a brighter and more enduring laurel be held up than would be accorded to success in this field? Can the men, advanced in life, and full of honours, who have at last yielded to the claims of God, better redeem the scores of years they



have lost, than by concentrating their force upon a measure which may place the interests of religion many years in advance of its ordinary progression? There are also many other persons in the Church who could readily contribute to this cause. The ministry, and men of talent in other professions, would consult their own religious improvement, and be acting an important part in the moral enterprise of the day by making their intellectual resources contribute to the advancement of Christian education. Female talent is peculiarly fitted for this service; and at this day a fairer opportunity is afforded them of obeying the apostle's exhortation to be *καλοδιδασκαλεις*, "teachers of good things," than they have enjoyed since he intimated it to Titus.

In the view of the present condition of this cause, there is, surely, reason to fear that its pretensions have been overlooked. It is a great scheme of domestic missionary enterprise, and is the conservative of all the other branches of evangelical effort. Establish schools in every church for the religious education of all classes, from infancy to old age; make every qualified member an agent in some department of the operations, and a large number of ministers will be raised up for the service of Pagan nations. Form a great Christian bond of fellowship to unite the various sections of the Church in holy concord and combination, and every teacher and thousands of scholars will be gratuitous agents for the dissemination of the Bible and of tracts. On this ground the hostilities of sectarism may be slain, and the universal Church ally for Christ and for the cross. "No such singular conjuncture of symptoms throughout the world, has ever before invited the activity and zeal of Christians. And if the pressure of responsibility is at all times great upon them, in this behalf, it has acquired now a treble weight; inasmuch as it seems as if the antagonist powers were fast drawing off from the field. Looking out to the long and many-coloured array of ghostly domination, as it stretches its lines across plains and hills, we discern movement; but it is the stir of retreat. Encampments are breaking up; barriers are trampled upon; standards are furled; the clarion of dismay is sounded. This—this then, is the hour for the hosts of the Lord to snatch their weapons and be up!"\*

\* 'Saturday Evening.' Art. ii.