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The Sabbath school as it
should be

THE
SABBATH SCHOOL

AS IT SHOULD BE.

BY
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P R E F A C E .

THE following work originated in a course of lectures on Sabbath schools, given in Dedham, Mass., during the last winter, after many years of practical acquaintance with the subject. They do not, indeed, appear in the shape of lectures, having been revised with a view to present them to the public in a form more popular and more acceptable.

As there are already before the public several books of merit on Sabbath schools, the question may naturally arise in the minds of many, why I should have thought it advisable to add another to the list. It cannot surely be my expectation, some may say, to excel those who have gone before me in this important work.

Now whether I have had right or wrong feelings in regard to this matter, I am by no means certain ; yet I can truly say that it has been no part of my object to excel those who have gone before me. Some fifteen or twenty years of intimate acquaintance with Sabbath schools, either as a superintendent or a teacher, have forced upon me many reflections which I have been desirous of communicating to the world. Whether there are few or many works of the kind before the public is, moreover, a question which, in the preparation of this, I have scarcely agitated.

The best reply I can give to the inquiries which have been alluded to, may be found in the language of Rev. Jacob Abbott, in his preface to the "Teacher," a work designed, it is true, for the instructors of primary and common schools ; but one, nevertheless, to which the same objections might have been made, which I have supposed likely to be made to this. The paragraph to which I refer is the following :

"From the very nature of our employment, (as teachers,) and from the circumstances under which the

preparation for it must be made, it is plain, that of the many thousands who are, in the United States, annually entering the work, a very large majority must depend for all their knowledge of the art, except what they acquire from their own observation and experience, on what they can obtain from books. It is desirable that the class of works from which such knowledge can be obtained should be increased.

“Some excellent and highly useful specimens have already appeared, and very many more would be eagerly read by teachers, if properly prepared. It is essential, however, that they should be written by experienced teachers, who have for some years been actively engaged and specially interested in the work.”

There are fewer books, as yet, to guide the Sabbath school teacher, than there are to guide the teacher of the common or district school. I feel assured, therefore, that if this book should not be well received, it will be owing to some fault in itself, and not to the fact that books on this subject are not wanted. I believe that more even are desirable ;

and I most earnestly hope that some half a dozen or a dozen of our superintendents or teachers, of long experience and tried wisdom, will ere long follow in the same train. Perhaps they may not only follow, but correct errors and supply the defects of at least *some* of those who have preceded them.

Dedham, May, 1841.

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THE
SABBATH SCHOOL AS IT SHOULD BE.

CHAPTER I.
OBJECT OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

§ 1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

The "hearts of the fathers turned to the children."—Explanation.—Sabbath schools.—General plan of the following work.—Freedom in the expression of opinions.

DURING the last fifty or sixty years it has pleased God in a remarkable manner "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." Hence our infant schools, and infant school books; our Sabbath schools, and Sabbath school books; and a multitude of devices to gain the attention and the hearts of the rising generation. Hence, in fact, the efforts which have been made, so extensively, to improve and elevate the common school, and extend its blessings.

By these remarks, however, it is not my design to affirm that every individual concerned in these efforts in behalf of the young, has been moved by divine love, or a divine impulse. In all things, even

the best men are very probably governed by a mixture of motives—some good, some bad; some selfish, others benevolent. What I mean to say is, that God has been pleased so to control and order men's minds, that the result has been a degree of attention to the rising generation, for good or for evil in its results, which the world had never before witnessed, at least on any considerable scale. "Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined," seems now to be generally understood and admitted, and to have its influence, to some extent, on nearly all.

Especially has it had its influence on churches of professing Christians. There are few of these, at the present time, who have not, in one form or another, a Sabbath school; and most of them a Sabbath school library. Connected with each school is from one to three superintendents, and a number, greater or smaller, of teachers—making in all quite a considerable army. And what strikes us or might strike us with surprise, we find this host of teachers laboring, as no other body of men in such large numbers have ever before labored—so far as I know, gratuitously—by Sabbath and by week-day, for the children assigned them. The number of teachers and pupils in organized Sabbath schools, in the United States alone, to say nothing of other countries, is immense, and is rapidly increasing every year.

My purpose in this work will be to point out in the first place, what is the legitimate object and end of Sabbath schools; in other words, what they are good for; secondly, on whom their organization and responsibility should devolve, in order that their true object may be best accomplished, viz. on the members of our churches; and thirdly, the manner of organizing and conducting them. I shall then proceed to speak of *methods* and principles of instruction. Having done this, I shall speak of the particular duties of superintendents, teachers, and ministers in relation to Sabbath schools; and lastly shall say something of Sabbath school books, and of the most useful ways of managing libraries.

In all my remarks, whatever may be the topic, I shall endeavor to be free and unshackled. What I say will be my own; and for it, I am alone responsible. If I should, in any instance, say that which to some minds may seem unsupported by fact and experiment, let it not be charged on any particular denomination of Christians in the community to which we belong, and above all, on the whole Christian world. It cannot I am sure be forgotten by any, that I am but one individual; and though a humble inquirer after truth no less than anxious to lead others into the same path of inquiry, that I am by no means infallible. "To the law and to the testimony."

§ II. WHAT SHOULD NOT BE THE OBJECT OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Not solely to keep children out of mischief—Not as a substitute for family instruction.—Not merely to train the intellect.—Not to be in fashion.—Not to make proselytes. Not to make bigots.—Not to promote skepticism.

It may be well to treat of this subject, in the first place negatively ; that is, by considering what *is not*, or at least *should not be* the end and object of Sabbath schools, among Protestant Christians.

1. Their sole object is not—should not be—to keep their children out of mischief. That this is, to some extent, their object, and properly so, I will not deny. It is no light thing, either in regard to the effort which it requires, or the results which follow, to keep some of our race from doing harm. He who induces a boy to come into the Sabbath school and spend an hour there, in quiet, even though not a word should be said to him, when otherwise he would be in the society of the indolent, the profane, the obscene or the fraudulent, has probably done good in two ways.* First, he has prevented evil ; and secondly, he has prevented the confirmation of those habits which repetition always strengthens.

When Sabbath schools were first instituted, both in this country and the Eastern world, it is well known that they were designed, chiefly, for the children of the poor or the vicious. The children

* A few exceptions to this rule will be noticed in another place.

of the wealthy and the virtuous, it was thought, were already well provided for. But the Sabbath school was soon found to be happily designed for the children of the rich, as well as for those of the poor ; and for those of the virtuous as well as of the dissolute. And though they are indispensable to the latter, they are much prized by many of the former.

I have admitted that though Sabbath schools are not designed to keep children out of mischief, they do some good even in that way. How much good is it possible they may have done already, even in a single township in New England? How much more good, in this way, might they be made to do? There are hundreds of children among us who would be far better off were they brought under the influence of good Sabbath schools than they now are. Blessed is he—blessed I mean, would he be—who having heart and hands for this work should go forth into our streets and lanes and gather into the Sabbath school some scores—I was going to say hundreds—of the young of various ages, and keep them out of mischief but for a single hour. And not the hundreds of the young alone, is it, who need this sort of interposition—the errands of mercy—there are not a few adults among us who set the young a most unhappy example on the Sabbath. How much do we need men or angels among us to go about, as did the Savior, and lay hold of the hands and

hearts of the vicious and the miserable, and by any thing short of mere brute force, bring them within the sound of the voice of instruction!

Nor are men or women or children always so inaccessible, on this subject, as many suppose. They who have, in large measure, the spirit of doing good—the spirit of our Savior—find very little difficulty in gaining access to the most careless parents; and if they cannot persuade *them* to enter the Sabbath school, they find far less difficulty in persuading them to send their children. Many a parent who is vicious himself, will be willing his children should be made virtuous, especially when it is done gratuitously, and his own good example is not required. And though little can be done in one hour of the week—that is, comparatively—for such children, yet, as I have already insisted, something is done when they are kept out of mischief but for one hour.

2. Sabbath school instruction is not to be a substitute for family instruction. The family, like the church, is God's own institution; nor besides these two does he appear to have established any other.* Whatever, therefore, tends to weaken the power or lessen the influence of the family and the church, or of either of them, must needs be of evil tendency.

* The terms family and church are however used, here, in their larger sense; the Sabbath being regarded as an institution—not a school—closely connected with the church; and the district or common school as a part of the family.

Let me not be understood, however, as derogating from the excellency of an institution merely because it is human. I care not that an institution is human, if it is a good one. In fact there are many human institutions upon which God has condescended, in a most signal manner, to shed down his blessing. Such most undoubtedly, among others, is the Sabbath school. What I mean to say is, that to answer a valuable purpose it must be made to co-operate with the family and the church; or at least never to interfere with them, or retard their operation.

So far as the pupils of our Sabbath schools consist of the children of the vicious and the miserable, no one will contend that their instruction in the Sabbath school interferes with the family or the church; for neither of these has much influence over such children. But there are those who send their children to these schools, who have been in the habit of giving them religious instruction in the family. Such parents should be exceedingly cautious, lest while they avail themselves of the privileges of the Sabbath school they remit their diligence at home, especially as the hours of home instruction will be somewhat narrowed by the hour spent in the Sabbath school. On all these points, however,—those points I mean where the family, the church and the Sabbath school seem to be in danger of trenching upon each other,—I may have occasion to speak hereafter.

3. It should by no means be the object of the Sabbath school to train the *intellect* merely, to the neglect of the feelings and affections. It is quite enough that the instruction of six days in the week, as we too often find it in our schools,

“Plays round the head, but comes not to the heart.”

Here, let the heart be reached ; and, if possible, affected. And yet, if I do not much mistake, I shall be able to show, in another place, that little is done with any thing but the mere intellect of the pupil, in the best of our Sabbath schools. To love one another, to love our parents and friends, and to love God, or to elicit the practical evidences of such love, is almost utterly unknown in our modern education ; and thus far, for the most part, in our Sabbath schools. This is a painful concession ; but is it not a just and proper one ? All our education, or almost all, is mere *word* education—the study and remembering and reciting of words. Grant that they are, some of them, sacred words, they are still *words*. They do little to form character. They do more to cultivate the memory, or perhaps in the end to destroy both the memory and the rest of the faculties, than to make us better—the great end and object of our existence.

4. Nor is it the legitimate object of the friends of the Sabbath school to be in fashion. Many individuals are sustained in this apparently benev-

olent work by a sort of indefinite idea that they *must* do it, in order to be on a par with their brethren, or their sister churches. Baptists have Sabbath schools, and therefore the Methodists must have; the Congregationalists, and therefore the Universalists; the churches in the neighboring towns, and therefore the churches in our own town.

Few individuals or churches are probably conscious of being influenced in any considerable degree by such unworthy motives. They have very little thought that while they fancy themselves the servants of Christ, they are the slaves of fashion; I mean of fashionable opinion. But painful as must be the concession, fashion very often sways her sceptre where her power should least of all be acknowledged.

Some may startle at these assertions, as not a little slanderous. I do not think they are so. I am certainly willing to give credit to whom credit is due; and am well aware that much credit is due, as a general fact, to our Sabbath school teachers. We have as good evidence that their labors are disinterested, as we have that the labors of any class of our citizens, taken as a whole, are so. And yet, after all, take away the unworthy motive to which I have alluded—I mean a regard to the good opinion of fellow Christians and sister churches around—and we should soon find that a large proportion of those who now call themselves

the friends of Sabbath schools would disappear; and not a few of the seats of our teachers themselves would be vacant!

Some, says Paul, "preach Christ of contention," as others do in love; and this is very nearly the case with some of the friends of Sabbath schools. They do what they do in mere competition, or as Paul would say, contention. But what then? Though this is wrong, in itself considered, yet let us rejoice as Paul did, that the truth is in any way promoted. The Deity is said to cause even the wrath of man to redound to his own praise. Can we not so far imitate him, as to be willing the cause of Christ should be promoted, even though it were done with some regard to fashionable opinion; especially as we cannot help it?

5. Nor is it the proper object of Sabbath school instruction to make proselytes to a particular sect. How exceedingly little, in the eye of the Deity, must be our sectarian feelings and controversies! "Is Christ divided?" Is he the God of the Jews alone? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Is he the God of the Presbyterian, and not of the Quaker?

But if the spirit of sect seems narrow and wholly unworthy of the rational mind, in its ordinary manifestations in the great world, how much more so is it, when manifested in the Sabbath school?

I am ashamed of those individuals—for a few

such there certainly are—who can demean themselves in this way. I would say to them: “Now, brethren and friends, whenever you find yourselves inclined to indulge the spirit of sect—the disposition of the Pharisees to compass sea and land to make a single proselyte—be prevailed on to suppress it. Above all, put it off when you enter the Sabbath school. Remember that the moment you have passed the threshold of the Sabbath school room, you are on holy ground; and let nothing enter therein that maketh unworthy or unholy; or as the Scriptures say, that “defileth.”

I would not, of course, that an individual should have no preferences, in this matter. This were, in all probability, impossible. How could a person thus divest himself? What I mean to say is, that his preferences should not appear, without necessity, in the Sabbath school room. If, in the usual course of explaining a passage or chapter in the Bible, it becomes necessary to speak to children of the peculiar opinion of different sects as a mere matter of information, let it be done; it certainly ought to be done. But there is a wide difference between forcing these matters forward, and merely disposing of them properly when they come forward in a natural way.

6. Nor is it the legitimate purpose of the Sabbath school to make bigots of the pupils. A bigot is one who is obstinately attached to a particular

mode of belief;—who believes *because* he believes, he hardly knows or cares why. Indeed the more bigoted a person is, the more unwilling, as a general fact, is he to have the grounds of his belief questioned.

It is as unworthy a business to make bigots as proselytes. Our great purpose should be to make Christians, rather than either. Above all is it both unwise and wicked to make bigots of children and youth. Yet some there are whose instruction in the Sabbath school, whatever may be their intention, has this tendency.

I have already intimated that nearly all our Christian sects are availing themselves of the benefits of Sabbath schools. They have all learned that “just as the twig is bent the tree’s inclined,” and are making untiring efforts to bend the “twig” to suit their various purposes. I am quite confident that a *little* of the bustle which we witness in regard to early religious instruction, is excited by a desire to forestall the youthful opinion, and bend it into the desired channel—to seize on the minds of the young and make proselytes—not to say dupes of them.

7. Lastly, however, Sabbath schools are misdirected, or at least fall short of their best effects, when they are made the instruments, willing or unwilling, of promoting skepticism.

I say *willing or unwilling* ; but I do not believe one teacher in a thousand would willingly suffer his labors to become auxiliary to the cause of skepticism. Yet I greatly mistake human nature if such is not sometimes the result of our labors ; and that too, in a far greater proportion than that of one in a thousand. When I say this, however, I refer to our labors as they have been hitherto applied. The Scriptures are a savor of death unto death when they are misapplied, as surely as of life unto life, when a proper use is made of them. And a savor of life unto life or of death unto death they always are, whenever they are read, heard, recited or meditated upon. There is here no neutrality.

Let him who doubts whether the Sabbath school ever tends to make the pupils skeptical remember that when the Scriptures are studied over chapter after chapter, with little attention to their sense—the only object being to recite them verbatim, or at best to answer a few questions in the most mechanical manner conceivable—and the heart remains untouched, there is very great danger of becoming unsusceptible or callous to their influence. So unhappy have been many of our efforts in behalf of the young in the Sabbath school, thus far, that not a few of the present generation, as I greatly fear, will grow up to manhood not only unaffected and likely to remain unaffected by religious truth, but

absolutely disgusted with and even hostile to it. Nor am I alone in this fear. Many good men—some even whose labors and whose praise, in behalf of Sabbath schools, are in all the churches—have publicly declared their fears in this respect, many years since.

For remember, the Sabbath school is not strictly speaking one of the Creator's own institutions, as are the family and the church; and what God has not established He has not bound himself, amid all the errors and corruptions of humanity, to preserve and to make an instrument for good. The family state, under the worst circumstances, is better than celibacy; and what is true of the family in this respect is still more true of the church and its primary institutions. Let Christians but assemble together as the manner of some is, on the Sabbath, and let them come together often at the table of their Lord, and if they have but a barn to meet in, and a very indifferent minister for their leader, the result is great, unmeasurable, incalculable good: so God has ordered it. I do not say that it is not better, far better, that the minister should be of better character—and the better the character the better the tendency—doubtless it is so. What I mean to affirm is, that since God has ordained the Christian church, and put the treasure in earthen vessels, he has so ordered things that it shall not be

wholly spoiled thereby ; while for the preservation of the Sabbath school, he has given, in his arrangements, no such pledge.

And when I see what sad work is made by many Sabbath school teachers, for want of that *wisdom*, both human and divine, without which the most benevolent and pious persons are often found totally unfit to be the instructors or directors of the infant and juvenile mind, I am sometimes constrained to feel if not to say, that if what has been already done in the way of Sabbath schools were to be the sum total and end of the matter, it would favor the cause of infidelity, almost as much as that of true religion. It is impossible for children long to reverence mere machinery ; and in losing their reverence for that which they have hitherto regarded as sacred, it is next to impossible—such is human nature—to avoid going to the other extreme, that of disregarding and perhaps despising it.

And yet I would not that the Sabbath school system were banished from among us. Every thing must have its infancy. Man must creep and totter, before he can walk. Suppose it were susceptible of proof that human existence, up to the time when the individual can walk, were so beset with dangers of various sorts, that infantile life at this period were absolutely nothing worth ; would it therefore follow that it were better to abolish infancy en-

tirely? Pray what would become of manhood if there were no infancy or childhood?

Children, both in infancy and childhood, learn much by their mistakes and failures; and so do not a few adults. It was Fellenberg, I believe, the Swiss educator, who said, that, *as* an educator, he usually learned most by a succession of failures. Teachers and superintendents are beginning to find out their past errors, and to correct them. And when the reign of error shall be over, and that of truth begin, and when we come to maturity in our moral stature, I cannot help believing that the Sabbath school will be found to be a highly valuable aid, in the promotion of virtue and happiness. Nor can I forbear the expectation that we shall see the wisdom and goodness of God illustrated by the infancy of the Sabbath school system, no less than by that manhood by which it is to be followed.

§ III. WHAT THE OBJECT OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL SHOULD BE.

The Sabbath school should be an aid to parents.—It is a great assistance to ministers.—Is, especially, an aid to the conversion and sanctification of the child.—May prepare the way for extraordinary progress in the divine life. Tends to elicit thought and inquiry.—May be made a means of teaching the laws of God, in the human frame.—It is a blessing, also, to teachers themselves.

Having shown, briefly, what is *not* the legitimate object of the Sabbath school, let us now consider,

affirmatively, what may and what indeed ought to be expected from it.

1. The Sabbath school should be an aid to parents. True it is, that many of the children who may be brought under the influence of the Sabbath school, and who perhaps most need it, have no parents; or if they have those who are nominally such, they are but little better than none. Still, in our own United States country towns, as well as in most of our villages and cities, it is otherwise. Indeed it is quite seldom that you find members of the Sabbath school who have not parents—real or adopted—or at least masters or guardians, through whose influence they are brought into the school.

In short, as a general fact, the result seems to be about this. The Sabbath school is composed, with few exceptions, of the best children of our best and most pious families—the very families who feel most desirous of instructing their children properly both at home and abroad.

Now it is to such families, I say, that the Sabbath school comes in—or might come in—as an efficient aid. No such parents or masters as I have here alluded to, ever fear that the religious education of their children will be too thorough. If those to whom they intrust them for an hour or so of each Sabbath, are the men and women they ought to be, and if they feel a full and entire confidence in their

instruction, they will rejoice in the privileges thus afforded them ; and by co-operating with the efforts of the Sabbath school to the best of their power, render it a most efficient and important aid in the performance of their own duty. Even the errors of the Sabbath school will often prove the occasion of good to the children by leading the careful, watchful parent to those explanations, illustrations and corrections which otherwise would not have been made.

2. A good Sabbath school is a great aid to a good minister. The labors which a faithful minister of Christ might perform, in an ordinary country parish, had he heads and hands enough, are exceedingly numerous and weighty. Any thing, therefore, which as its result, accomplishes a part of this labor, is an aid to him.

How the Sabbath school most aids the minister may not be equally clear to all. Nor shall I be prepared to make it intelligible to all, till I come to speak particularly of the proper methods of conducting the religious instruction of the young in these schools.

For the present it may be sufficient to say that I do not entirely concur in the opinion of those who tell us that the great business of the Sabbath school teacher is to take the truths which the minister has already uttered in the ears of his more advanced

hearers, and bring them down to the juvenile capacity. That this is a part of his duty, I admit ; but by no means a considerable part of it.

Nor do I believe that the minister should be aided by having the young taken entirely away from the congregation to be instructed, while he is instructing adults, in another apartment ; though I am fully aware that this scheme has many advantages, as the experiments that have been made in some of our cities have fully proved. It seems to me that parents and children should not be separated for religious instruction, during the regular church service.

Nothing should be done, as there is good reason for believing, which shall relieve the minister from the necessity of making himself intelligible to all his hearers, except the merest infants. It is a mistake to suppose that if a minister were to preach in such a manner as to render himself intelligible to children, older people would as a general rule be disgusted with him. For though there might be a few such individuals in a congregation of some hundreds, yet I think the number must be very few indeed. Nearly all persons with whose feelings on this subject I have ever yet become intimately acquainted, have confessed themselves best pleased with that instruction from the pulpit which is adapted to the com-

prehension of children. And so of books as well as sermons. The writings and sermons of such men as Todd and Gallaudet for children, are nearly as much relished by parents as by the children themselves. It is not so much the adaptation of style to the young at which these and other kindred spirits have aimed—and so successfully too—as the adaptation of their ideas to the juvenile capacity. And while every child or almost every child can understand every thing or nearly every thing for which his mind is prepared, provided it is in plain English—without any descent to childishness in the style—so, on the other hand, few parents can be found who would feel that an arrangement of ideas which was adapted to their children was too simple for themselves. It appears to me that a great many ministers have yet to learn from the life and character and discourses of our Savior, from the practice of successful Sabbath school teachers, and from the study of the human heart, what that true gospel simplicity of style is which is at once dignified and manly, and yet plain and simple. Our Savior has said, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven; and I have often and again thought that no men among us more need, for the sake of their hearers, to become as little children than ministers.

I think it will be seen that these remarks are not wholly a digression, but have a bearing on the subject before us.

3. The great object of all religious instruction whether from the pulpit, or in the family or the Sabbath school, is the holiness of those whom we instruct; or in other words, their conversion and sanctification.

There seem to be two different views on this subject, both among ministers and teachers. Some of both classes leave the immediate conversion of children almost wholly out of sight. They scarcely expect it. And what they do not expect, of course, seldom happens. They would even be surprised should such a thing take place, as the conversion of a child under their care. Others, however, make it their whole business to effect the conversion of their pupils, and appear to think all their labor lost, if not worse than lost, when no such conversions take place. Indeed there are not a few who are almost impatient with their classes because they cannot have them at once become disciples of Christ; and I have known them really complain about it, with a good deal of bitterness.

Now it appears to me that in both of these courses of conduct there is error. No doubt the great object of every teacher—the ultimate object I mean—should be to effect the conversion of his pu-

pils, and to lead them onward in the path towards heaven. There is no reason why the youngest child ordinarily found in the Sabbath school should not give his heart wholly to the Savior, as much as if he were older. Indeed the difficulties increase with every year, after a sense of right and wrong begins to be manifested, and are fewest at the first. Still repentance and faith must be voluntary, as well in the child as in the adult, nor should the former—nor can they in fact—be driven into religion any more than the latter. The child is a free agent, as well as the man.

It is greatly to be regretted, therefore, that not a few Sabbath school teachers, as well as ignorant parents, though possessed of the very best intentions in regard to their pupils or children, do as certainly defeat their own dearest purposes, as can be. How have I been pained to see excellent men and women sit for a whole half hour, after their pupils have recited their lessons, and lecture them on the depravity of the human heart, the necessity of regeneration, the influences of the Holy Spirit, the certainty of the everlasting punishment of the wicked, &c. ; and this not merely for once, but every time they meet them. It is exceedingly strange to me that these teachers and parents do not see their error. For how important soever it may be to present these doctrines to the understanding of the

young, this perpetual bringing them up and placing them before their minds, and always in nearly the same order and succession, if it does not at once induce abiding convictions of sin—which it very seldom does—as inevitably hardens the human heart, young and tender and susceptible though it may be, as if this were the whole intention.

My readers will now be likely to understand me, when I speak of making infidels in the Sabbath school; for the process to which I have alluded is one of the most efficient instruments to this effect. And I often tremble when I see the machinery to which I allude, in effectual operation. One of the more painful considerations, however, is that they who move it are only doing that which, in the benevolence of their hearts, they suppose to be right. If there be men and women of prayer among us, it is they. If there be those who desire to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and to finish the work he has given them to do, it is they. If there be benevolence among us, it is theirs. In short if there be real, devoted, effectual piety among us, it is often found to be in the possession of the very class of Sabbath school teachers I am now describing. And yet their piety will not prove a perfect guide to the understanding. There is much of ignorance yet clinging to the best of men. There is much of ignorance abroad everywhere, in all society, es-

pecially in regard to the structure of the human mind. But, as I was about to say, the worst difficulty we have to surmount, in all our attempts at improvement, is the self confidence of these very persons. Just as certainly as you find a person, whether in the Sabbath school or elsewhere, who *is* thus sadly deficient in the most important qualifications of a teacher, just in the same proportion does he value himself on this very trait or qualification. You may allude to his ignorance of *science*, or indeed of the *Bible*, or of every thing else, and he may bear and perhaps admit it. But the moment he knows you suspect his want of knowledge of the human mind, or as he himself calls it, of *human nature*, that moment he loses confidence in you, and it is well if he do not think himself traduced or slandered.

I never yet knew such a teacher, who would not attribute all his want of success—for a want of success is sometimes admitted, i. e. a want of success in his efforts to convert the child—to something of defect in the things or arrangements around him, rather than himself. The lessons are not such as they should be, they are too long or too short, or too difficult; or the superintendent does not pursue the right sort of method or plan, or does not use the right books; or the parents do not co-operate with him in his efforts; or the pupils are unmanageable.

A thousand complaints will he make, and in a thousand forms, and yet not one of them will be uttered against himself. Whereas the good teacher attributes his want of success, even when his sole aim may be to produce an immediate effect, to his own want of skill or tact to apply the truth—to his want of knowledge of himself or of the children whom he instructs—to any thing, in fact, connected with himself, rather than throw the blame on others. Others may indeed be at fault, but he will first look for the fault in himself. There are no circumstances so unfavorable but that the teacher, who understands human nature as it is, may do something. And yet while I suppose one ultimate aim should be the conversion of the pupils, there is a great deal to be done in the Sabbath school short of immediate efforts in this particular direction.

For while it is most cheerfully admitted that knowledge—mere knowledge—never tends to save the soul, and that the humble follower of Christ, though ever so ignorant, is to be greatly preferred to the most learned philosopher, who is an atheist or an infidel, still I cannot help believing and insisting that even this same humble though ignorant disciple would be a thousand times more valuable as a member of society, to say nothing of an increase of enjoyment in his own bosom, were he properly instructed in the sciences,—such of them I

mean, as tend to expand the mind and give a clearer insight than before of the Creator's laws.

There is, therefore, a vast amount of what might be called collateral instruction, which, with a wise reference to the future conversion of a child, should be given somewhere. Much of it should indeed be given in the day school ; but some portions of it, if neglected there, should be given in the Sabbath school. I speak not now of the mathematics or the languages, or even of philosophy, chemistry, anatomy or physiology, so much as of those things and sciences which serve as aids in the reading and study of the Bible. I refer to a knowledge of ancient customs and manners, and of the history and geography of those countries which are mentioned so often in the Bible, and of which the large majority of a Christian community generally know so little.

It is indeed a well established fact that the work of conversion seems of itself to give an impulse to the intellectual powers. Forster, in his work on Popular Ignorance, in speaking of the results of regeneration to the intellect, thus observes: " We have known instances in which the change, the intellectual change, has been so conspicuous, within a brief space of time, that even an infidel observer must have forfeited all claim to be esteemed a man of sense, if he would not acknowledge, ' This that you call divine grace, whatever

it may really be, is the strangest awakener of faculties after all.' ” And he does not hesitate to draw, at once, the following inference ; that, “ if religion is so auspicious to the intellectual faculties, the cultivation and exercise of those faculties must be of great advantage to religion.” I believe this tendency of religion to enlarge the intellectual domain, to bring out and cause to bloom, in all the freshness of vernal beauty, a plant which has been ten, twenty—it may be fifty or sixty—years under a blast more malignant not to say destructive than the sirocco itself, has been very much overlooked ; and as a powerful internal evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, (to which it seems to me entitled,) I have never known it advanced or employed.

But this is not to be the subject of my remarks at the present time. I have only introduced it to show, incidentally, that piety without light to direct it, though it may save the soul which is warmed by it, is yet of comparatively little importance to the world ; and to prepare the mind of my hearers for the statement that one great object of Sabbath school instruction should be to lead the minds of the pupils into such a train as will render them ten times more useful in the cause of Christ, should they ever be converted to it, than otherwise they would become. It is one thing to be saved, as Paul expresses it, “ so as by fire ;” and it is quite another

thing to shine as the stars forever and ever. It is much, indeed, to become but doorkeepers in the house of our God; but it is infinitely better to be the favored and honored instruments of turning many to righteousness, and to reap the eternal reward therewith connected.

I must honestly confess, that in attempting the conversion of my fellow men to that low standard of piety, which Christian example at present often affords, I have at times many misgivings. The church seem to me, at times, to have gone through with what might be called the *stereotyping* process. And such too is the condition, very often, of our Sabbath schools. The effort seems to be to bring men and women and children into the kingdom, but having once brought them in, all our toils—and theirs too—are over. Then, having been the instruments of snatching them from the fire, we, no less than they, seem to think we may sit down and bask passively in the sunshine of the Redeemer's smiles, not only in this world but in that which is to come.

4. Now I would not only have our Sabbath school children become Christians, but Christians of a very different stamp from all this. I would have them grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, every day after their conversion. I should almost dread to have them converted, if they

must be converted to this stereotyped sort of Christianity—this halfway religion. I wish to have them not only brought within the kingdom, but led to make high advances, afterwards. It is something to escape, barely, from the flames of hell and to get within the courts of heaven; but it is much more to ascend to those points of excellence, now occupied by Gabriel and Raphael, and the whole host of celestial inhabitants; and to have even these heights but as the beginning of our progress.

I shall show, hereafter, what are some of the methods of preparing our youth of both sexes, by Sabbath school instruction, to be thriving Christians, should they ever become Christians at all. It is the thriving Christian who will be apt to glorify God, and who alone will truly enjoy him forever. But in order to thrive, he must have food. Neither the soul nor the body can thrive, or so much as exist long, without nourishment. But spiritual food will not be taken, in sufficient measure, unless it is relished. Now Sabbath school instruction, if it cannot quite impart this relish, can at least prepare the way for it. It can inspire the young with the love of improvement. Or should even this be denied, it can at least keep alive the youthful curiosity *to know* instead of smothering it, as has often been done by an improper method of communication.

5. Many of the efforts of our better and I may say more improved teachers—not certainly our stereotyped ones—are necessarily expended in endeavoring to lead their pupils to thought and inquiry. It would seem as if the hot winds of some eastern desert had passed over a large proportion of the ordinary young minds of our Sabbath schools, and scared them. The pupils will not think; and if they would, they cannot. This state of mind must be removed before much can be done in the way of improvement; and to effect this, nothing is better than Bible instruction, if it is properly and judiciously managed.

Nor is the task, as it seems to me, very difficult. I have never yet found a child, however much his mental faculties had been abused or perverted, who had no straggling remains about him of his native youthful curiosity. What is wanted in such a case, is to strengthen the things that remain, but are ready to die; to kindle into a flame the latent spark which seemed nearly to have disappeared.

6. Another object of the Sabbath school is to teach the laws of God in the human frame. For while I believe that “man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever,” as much as did the framers of the Assembly of Divines’ Catechism, I believe also with Paul that it is our duty to glorify God with body and spirit both, since both are alike his.

But what do we mean by glorifying God in our bodies? No doubt you will tell me, in the spirit of Paul and John, that it is to keep our bodies in subjection. But in subjection to what? Here is the question. The Bible determines it in part, but only in part; just as it only enjoins, in part, our duties to magistrates and others, although it encourages obedience thereto. Do you say that though I began by yielding my assent to the Catechism, I here depart from it; since that Catechism tells us that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the *only* rule to direct us *how* we may glorify God and enjoy him? I doubt whether there are many who esteem that Catechism more highly than I do. Yet it is by no means given by inspiration; and I must be permitted to claim the right of dissenting from a single paragraph or rather from a single clause of it. Many years ago, while I was a district school teacher and was accustomed to teach it to my pupils, I thought I discovered an error in the second response; I was accustomed to speak of it, to my district school people, as slightly erroneous, and to say to them, without any particular explanation or apology, that I could not receive it without substituting the word *principal* for *only*.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are *not* the *only* rule, to direct us in the business of glorifying God. They encourage obedience, I

know, to all the laws of God; since without this entire obedience God could not be so well glorified. But they by no means tell us, I say again, what all those laws are. There are the laws of gravitation, the law of magnetic attraction, the laws of electricity, the laws of human life, &c.; and it is as much our duty to study and obey these, when and where we can, as it is to study and obey the ten commandments. Especially is it our duty to study and obey the laws which obtain in and about the human frame.

This obligation, however, to study and obey the whole law of God, even his code of natural law, does not necessarily determine that we should study that law in the Sabbath school; and I would by no means encourage a practice of doing so if it could well be avoided. In fact I would gladly have a large part of what is now taught in the Sabbath school inculcated on week-days, in the district school and elsewhere, were it possible. Since this is not done, however, and since the work of religious instruction in the Bible is in these days of bustle and luxury and parade, almost crowded out of the family too, even on the Sabbath, I am in favor of the Sabbath school to make up the deficiency. But this same reason—I mean so far as this reason goes—why I would teach the moral and religious laws in the Sabbath school is equally good in favor of in-

culcating, in these same schools, the laws of the human frame.

Besides this, there is another reason why I would teach the laws of life and health, especially the laws of animal life, in the Sabbath school. And Archbishop Paley has told us—and I never heard the proposition disputed—that there is no habit so excellent as that of studying natural history—the history of men, animals, plants, etc., especially—and constantly referring the wisdom and goodness which we see manifested everywhere, to the Deity. Now there is no one of the animals more fearfully and wonderfully made than man; and therefore, in the study of none of them, would the habit of looking through nature up to nature's God, be more rapidly acquired than in the study of anatomy and physiology.

I say, therefore, that if both teachers and parents are known to neglect these studies, they should be attended to, if possible, in the Sabbath school. How to do this, that is, how to render it possible—for it is a work of some difficulty—will be shown in another chapter.

I would not, of course, introduce the study faster than I could prepare the way for it; for this would be to degrade alike the teacher and the law. I hold it however to be a self-evident proposition that whatever ought to be done can be done; and if I succeed

in showing that the natural laws of God ought to be taught in the Sabbath school, I believe there must be a proper way of *introducing* the subject.

Should a doubt still linger in the mind of any whether the study of the laws of the human frame—the study of anatomy and physiology—is not after all quite foreign to the Sabbath school, that doubt might possibly be removed by referring to the testimony of pious medical men. I will not indeed advert to the opinion of Paley, as developed in his *Natural Theology*, because he was not properly a medical man. I will refer you at once to Dr. Bell of Philadelphia, Dr. Reynolds of Boston, who, with a host of living authors and teachers, have given their testimony on the subject.

Dr. Bell has written a small volume entitled “Lessons on the Human Frame,” designed in part, as we may judge by the preface, *for* the Sabbath school. He there says: “In the following pages an attempt has been made to exhibit some parts of the curious workmanship of the human body.” The design of the volume is to impress on the mind the great truth that the self-existent God is the maker of all things, and that he has made them all well. The author uses the conversations of a pious physician with his son; and the topics and illustrations are believed to be generally intelligible to youth attending Sunday and daily schools. And you who are parents have

only to read the work to be convinced that it is not only intelligible to the youth of Sunday schools, but adapted to their wants, and that the author designed it to be so.

Here I might also present to you the contents of a letter, now in my possession, which I received from Dr. Reynolds of Boston a few years ago, while he was acting as superintendent of the Sabbath school connected with St. Paul's Church, in regard to my little book for juvenile students in anatomy, entitled "The House I live in." I will however merely make an extract or two from it, bearing upon the general principle which I am now defending.

"I think," says he, "just such books as this would form a valuable addition to our Sunday school libraries. In the selection of these has not the book of nature been too much overlooked; and have we not forgotten the deep interest with which children look over its pages? The obvious tendency of a series of little books like this upon anatomy, botany, and other kindred sciences, prepared with a reference to morality and religion, upon the minds of the young, would be to lead them from nature up to nature's God, and supply a deficiency in Sunday school libraries."

It is true that Dr. R. does not recommend the study of such books as class exercises; nor do I venture to do it at present. But if the information which they contain is as well adapted to the Sabbath

school library as he represents it to be, then is the communication of that information, in the Sabbath school class, and in connection with other topics as it may naturally come up, not only proper, but desirable. Children will hardly be likely to select or read such books, or their parents to encourage them to do so, till teachers have excited a thirst for the information they contain, by their occasional remarks and illustrations. On this point, however—the right method of communication—I shall say something when I come to speak of “Methods of Instruction.”

I greatly desire to see this bringing the body into subjection, of which I have said so much in my other writings, made a matter of conscience. But a matter of conscience I greatly fear it will *not* be made, until the sciences of anatomy and physiology are more closely connected with the study of religion, and regarded in fact, as religious things. I acknowledge, indeed, that many religious people try to obey the natural laws, as far as they understand them; that is, they have a confused notion that there is a sort of *propriety* in obeying them, and that it conduces to *health*, which they think it *profitable* to attend to. But to regard every departure from the natural laws of God, when the departure is voluntary, as offensive to God, and positively sinful, is exceedingly rare, even among our best people.

Some there are among us—men, too, whom I highly esteem and love—who think it decidedly wrong to speak of disobedience to the natural laws, especially the laws of the human frame, as sinful. They say it lowers down—secularizes, to coin a term—the sacredness of the moral law, and its sanctions, rewards and penalties.* Now if I believed in any such result as this—and even if I believed the result possible—I would put my hand on my mouth in this respect forever.

Such, however, it may confidently be believed, can never be the case. On the contrary one of the principal reasons why moral law has fallen into disrepute has been an obvious want of conscientiousness among Christians in regard to this very matter. The common sense of mankind, had Paul been silent on the subject, would tell them, plainly enough, that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God. But every observing person knows full well, that even the professing people of God do not make it the fixed purpose of their lives to do *every* thing in such a manner, that the glory of God will be promoted thereby.

The fact is—and I assert it with much confi-

* I have been cautioned, in this matter, both by private friendly letters, and in the usual way of criticism in the public journals, and have been entreated to desist; yet not a fact has been advanced to convince me I am wrong; and I can never yield the convictions of my judgment to mere opinion without knowing the grounds of that opinion.

dence—that the great mass of the Christian world, even here in the most enlightened part of it, do not believe that there is any right and wrong in the sight of God, in the common actions of life. A few of the more sacred duties of the week day, a few of its larger acts, and the duties and deeds of the Sabbath are thought to be holy or sinful, that is, pleasing or displeasing to God. But as for the rest of the actions of life, the majority of God's own people, though they might not be ready to express their unbelief in words, have no more idea—practically so I mean—that they are sinful or otherwise in the sight of God, than they have that the brutes around them, in their gambols and eating and drinking, are accountable to their divine Author.

Now I maintain—and I believe that, did the time and place admit, the belief might be sustained by evidence—that all this practical unbelief and voluntary and involuntary transgression of the laws of God, without regarding them as sinful, tends to benumb, or at least to blunt the conscience in regard to moral law. I believe that he who has the habit of looking at every thing—whatever it may be, and however large or small the act—as holy or sinful, positively so, that is either pleasing or displeasing to God, will find in himself a tenderness of conscience, a solemn regard to right and wrong as to the moral law of God, of which others have no conception. I

mean it will be so if his moral and religious character is in all other respects equal to that of those between whom and himself the comparison is made. So that instead of *bringing down* the moral law by teaching the sinfulness of disobedience to natural law, we actually elevate it. We extend the jurisdiction of the Creator over a part of his domain which had before been wrested from him ; and leave his sovereignty and his laws in greater respect and honor than they were before.

Let it not be said that I advise to a course of instruction which is secular. By no means. I encourage nothing which has not been done in our Sabbath schools, in a greater or less degree. All I do which has the least semblance of heresy in this respect consists in dwelling long upon and making much of parts which some teachers—and these not a few either—touch but slightly, though they seldom pass them wholly over ; and in introducing the study of the Creator's natural laws.

7. One advantage likely to be derived from Sabbath schools—one, in fact, which has always been secured, to a greater or less extent, by them—is the personal improvement of the teachers. I will not undertake to say, here, that Sabbath schools are a suitable means for the conversion of teachers ; for as a general rule I do not like the idea of having unconverted teachers employed in this work, although

in particular cases, it may be necessary. What I refer to is the progressive sanctification of the teachers. The Scriptures say, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

It appears to be a part of the constitution of things, as that constitution was established by the Creator himself, that man shall be happy in proportion as he seeks to make others happy ; and miserable just in proportion as he makes others miserable, or seeks their misery. But the phrase, He that watereth shall be watered also himself, is more striking in its application to benevolent efforts to make mankind *holier* or *better*, than to those efforts which are merely directed to the increase of human knowledge.

So far as can be judged from outward appearances, it is commonly thought that all benevolent effort is a work of self-denial or self-sacrifice. Very few, indeed, appear to understand the full intention of those portions of Scripture which assure us that "the liberal soul shall be made fat;" "he that watereth shall be watered also himself;" "give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed together and running over, shall men give into your bosom;" "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and "there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's,

but he shall receive a hundred fold, now in this time ;” &c.

Not only are all works of charity considered as so much loss of time and effort to the individual who makes them, but when money is included in the charity, this also is supposed to be lost. I have often wondered why it is that those who read the record of Jesus Christ, in their own native tongue, should fail to recognize this great doctrine of the blessedness of giving or communicating ; and thus by neglecting to do the good they have it in their power to do, lose more than half the blessedness to which, under the Christian scheme, they are fairly entitled. But so it is. Mankind do, *practically*, almost without exception—the gospel of Jesus Christ to the contrary notwithstanding—consider themselves not only deprived of their property to the extent of each individual act of pecuniary charity, but also rendered, in the same proportion, less happy on the whole. They suppose that the whole or nearly the whole of the blessedness of this world—I was going to say of the world to come—consists in *receiving* ; and thus make the measure of their receipts, the measure of their blessedness or happiness.

Perhaps it is idle or worse than idle to inveigh against so universal an error, especially in a work like this. And yet I wish the friends of Sabbath schools would try to get rid of it. Let them be

thankful to God that he has given them so glorious an opportunity of conferring happiness, or at least of attempting it ; and of securing to themselves so large an amount of blessedness.

If there are in the United States a million and a half of Sabbath school pupils—and I suspect there may be nearly this number—then the number of teachers, including superintendents, librarians, &c., cannot, one would be apt to think, be less than 200,000. Perhaps it would be found on a close inspection to be 250,000. A formidable host of benefactors, or at least a very numerous one. Would that they were all what they should be—as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves ! Would that, in addition to the love they now have for the souls committed to their charge, they could feel the full force of the words of the Lord Jesus, “ it is more blessed to give than to receive,” that they might seek, with greater diligence, to increase the flame of divine love in doing still greater good than they are now doing !

I have elsewhere more than hinted at the vast amount of labor which devolves on a minister of the gospel, in one of our New England parishes. But the Sabbath school comes to his relief, and brings a host of sub-ministers, as they might be called, who perform a great deal of work which but for their efforts must forever remain undone ; to say nothing of the tendency of the Sabbath school to raise up a

host of young men who will ultimately become ministers,—in the largest sense of the term—of the everlasting gospel itself.

One of the most distinguished divines in our country regards it as the business of the gospel minister, to make all his people ministers, that is, practically and really. And it was generally understood that what this able divine believed, he struggled hard against the native indolence of his people to put in practice ; nor were his labors wholly unsuccessful. There were during a great part of the year from four to eight large adult Bible classes connected with his congregation, and a very large and flourishing Sabbath school, besides numerous associations for mutual exhortation, union in prayer, &c.

If it should be said that such multitudinous labors on the part of laymen cannot long be continued, I grant it, and for two reasons ; 1, because they are gratuitous, and 2, because mankind have not yet learned to understand or at least to value rightly the blessedness of doing good. Were it not for these two difficulties, I see not why every church might not and should not be a body of lay-ministers—lay-missionaries rather—and why they might not experience, as the result, that growth in grace and in the knowledge of God, which should correspond to such an amount of labor and charity.

There was a time in the history of the church of

Christ when every church member—every male member at least—regarded himself as a missionary, and acted accordingly ; going daily from house to house, conversing, exhorting, encouraging, and strengthening, as the nature of the circumstances seemed to require. How they and their families were supported, at all times, does not so plainly appear ; but I suppose this was not a first concern with them. As it was afterward with Paul, so I suppose it must have been with the rest of the first disciples—that being brought up Jews, they had each a trade by means of which they could find time to step aside from their lay-ministry and earn a livelihood. Perhaps, however, there was property enough among them all for the support of all ; and we know they had, for a time, all things in common.

How much I wish the same general spirit could be made to prevail among the modern disciples of Christ ! I wish all who have taken upon them the Christian name would consider themselves set apart to the work of reforming their fellow men, and that they would feel themselves to be lay-ministers, having it for their first business to seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, fully assured that in doing so, all things necessary for the support of themselves and their families would, in the divine Providence, be added. But the custom of making it the great business of life, to convert souls, only attend-

ing to what is usually called business just far enough to secure a competent support when there was no other means of being supported within their power, has for nearly 1800 years—in most parts of the world at least—been out of fashion.

I might here insist that it would be for the spiritual not to say pecuniary interest of the churches of Christ, among us, to pay their faithful Sabbath school teachers a stated compensation or salary for their services. At present, however, I will only say, as I would say of ministers, that though the laborer, in both cases, is worthy of his hire, yet I would never in either case be governed too much by a respect to the recompense of reward. As did Paul, so would I have every Sabbath school teacher go and do the work which divine Providence seems to assign him, and believe that, having done right, the reward will not fail to come sooner or later;—indeed cannot be prevented. It *is* more blessed to give than to receive; not, it *will* be merely. I do not believe a Christian community would ever let a faithful Sabbath school teacher suffer among them for the common necessaries of life. In David's day it was by no means common to see the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread; neither do I believe it would be so now. Let me but have the zeal and the purity of Paul—I do not say his talents—even though they were manifested in a sphere of action as narrow as that which falls to the lot of the Sab-

bath school teacher, and I do not believe we could lose our reward, even in a pecuniary point of view. Were this possible however, we could not lose the still richer reward, in the love which is promoted by our charities.

I have repeatedly said that it is more blessed to give than to receive; and Dr. Dwight, in making his comment on this remarkable passage, says thus: "Doing good produces love; and we love those to whom we *do* good more than we love those who do good to us." Here is one of the secrets of even parental love; for what parent, worthy of the name, is not continually doing good to his children, from the very hour of their birth? It cannot be denied that the love of children to their parents, is in part on account of the good which the latter have done them; but must it not also be admitted that their love is far less potent than that of the parents? On the same principle is it that while the faithful and excellent teacher—and the Sabbath school teacher no less than any other—is attaching his pupils to himself, his own heart, in consequence of the good he is doing, is becoming very closely bound up in theirs. Thus is he blessed; and should he succeed in drawing out their affections and directing them to Him who has said, My son give me thy heart, his reward will not only be great here below, but it will be still greater in the kingdom of the Highest.

CHAPTER II.

DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS, IN RELATION TO
SABBATH SCHOOLS.

§ I. THE SABBATH SCHOOL A PART OF THE CHURCH.

Views of Mr. Todd.—Testimony of the writer.—Anecdote.—
The badly selected library.—A wolf in sheep's clothing —
General remarks.

It is the opinion of many that the Sabbath school ought to be, as it were, a part of the church, and under its supervision. "If they organize by themselves," says Mr. Todd, "and stand alone, distinct from the church, there is danger lest they feel that they have a distinct interest; and lay plans and pursue their ends not only without consulting the wishes of the church, but without consulting her interests. I should lament most deeply to see the day when the teachers in our Sabbath schools shall be found acting independently of the churches and in array against them. There is not—cannot be—in nature, any separate interests in the two bodies. But should the day come when the fashion shall prevail that Sabbath schools shall be organized and carried on as independent organizations, then will heart-burnings commence. Then will many of the church withhold their children, the

church and the minister stand aloof or become subordinate to the school, the power of the church will pass into the school, and the church in fact take that particular shape. Then will the school control the election of the pastors of the church, and do all which is now done by our churches, as such. No man can think more highly of the Sabbath school than I do. But wo to the day when they shall strive to 'lord it over God's heritage,' and concentrate every thing pertaining to the church of Christ in the Sabbath school. Christ did not organize his church in the shape of the Sabbath school, nor can she ever assume that shape without destroying her proportions and her existence. The attempt so to shape her can never succeed; and I trust it will never be made."

Now in these views of Mr. Todd and others I most heartily concur. This duty of parents, or rather this duty of the church is the first duty which pertains to this class of citizens in relation to the Sabbath school. They are in one word to establish the school. The teachers ought to be appointed *directly by them*, and not in the loose careless way in which they are now often appointed. As for the superintendent, it may be well that *he* should be elected by the teachers; but not so with the teachers themselves. Their appointment should be the result of almost as much deliberation and prayer by the

church, as should the selection or the installation of a minister. This, it seems to me, would make them feel that they are elected by somebody, have a trust committed to them, and are accountable for their conduct, and in some measure for their success. Moreover, it would increase the confidence of the children in them, and thus greatly add to the weight of their influence.

What is said of the danger of getting bad men into the sacred office of teacher in the Sabbath school is worth attention. I have seen all that is feared in this respect, once or twice realized. I have seen a Sabbath school established in connection with an orthodox congregation, and placed under the entire control, library and all, of a man who was of very different sentiments from those which the parents of the children entertained; such as in the view of every one would have excluded him from communion with the church, if not from their society at their houses. And all this because the church did not take hold of the matter, but suffered the school to be got up as an independent organization. I remember distinctly about the library. The superintendent contrived to send to a city book-store, of very doubtful standing as to its religious character, for the books; and to impress strongly the belief that they were suitable books for the Sabbath; when some of them were no more fit

for Sunday reading, or but little more so, than Robinson Crusoe, or Blue Beard, or Sindbad the Sailor.

There is at this moment, in the very heart of one of our oldest New England states, a case which will illustrate, in a manner more striking still, the point on which I am now remarking, and show that the fears entertained by Mr. Todd and others are far from being ill founded.

A gentleman who had become highly distinguished as an author and teacher, and who, being of a sanguine temperament, and not a little flattered by his success both in the literary and political world, removed from the capital of one of our New England states to a more retired but still somewhat populous region, and commenced operations on a new, but extended scale. Though still a politician of the most ambitious sort, he sought popularity or at least influence in quite another manner. Notwithstanding the fact that he was skeptical in matters of religion, he found means to impress on those around him the belief that he was both "honest" and zealous in "the sacred cause," and to get access to the Sabbath school. As he was somewhat ingenuous in his manner, not to say "apt to win" by his graces, he was not many years in securing an almost unlimited influence over the youthful part of the congregation to which the Sab-

bath school properly belonged, but with which it really had no connection. The character of the lessons and of the library were soon decided by him ; and while his influence was increasing, that of the minister, a godly man as it was generally believed, was decreasing. It is indeed true that the minister was not always wise in his management ; for by taking for granted, perhaps prematurely, that the reformer of Sabbath school instruction was his enemy, he actually made him still more so, and hastened the day of his own dismissal. For such was the progress of things that the minister was gradually supplanted, in the hearts of the people, and the new-comer obtained so firm a foothold in their affections as to be a principal agent in introducing another minister of a far different character from the former ; and not only of introducing him, but of rendering him generally acceptable. The result is, as I have been recently informed, that the former evangelical character of the church no less than of the congregation is fast disappearing ; and a new and more latitudinarian character taking its place. And all this mighty change in a population highly fixed in its character has been accomplished in the course of a few years, by one crafty, insinuating, persevering individual.

Here, then, I say, is a specimen of what may be done by an ambitious, designing man. Whether

this is the only instance of the kind which ever occurred in New England or not, it should serve as a warning to all against the premature introduction of strangers to places of so much influence and trust as the Sabbath school; and should, above all, remind the church of the importance and the necessity of taking this matter entirely into her own hands. How dare Christian churches commit the tender lambs of the flock to—she knows not whom—perhaps to the wolf in sheep's clothing? Peter was commissioned to feed the lambs of the flock—never Judas—never strangers. He who knew all things knew better than to commit them to any other—as Christian instructors out of the family—than to one of those who had been so long with him, and who were most thoroughly imbued with his own spirit.

The anecdote I gave about a badly selected library leads me to remark in this place, that one duty of the church is to establish and control the library; but of this I shall treat in a separate chapter. All I shall insist upon at present is that the church should in every thing keep the management of the school and all its concerns in their own hands.

Perhaps, however, in treating of the duties of the church, in relation to the Sabbath school, I ought to begin at the beginning. It belongs to the church in regular meeting, to say whether or not they will have a Sabbath school. If a Sabbath school is de-

cided on, it then belongs to the church to decide on the number and qualifications of the teachers, the kind and course of studies to be pursued, the books, maps, apparatus, etc., to be used. It is for the church to say whether question books shall or shall not be used; whether collateral instruction in the natural sciences shall be given, and if given, to what extent. It is for them to direct about the time, place and length of the school, with all things pertaining to its organization and general management; and I think it would even be well for them to exercise some control in regard to its classification. It is indeed true that a parent can withhold his children from the Sabbath school if he pleases, either because he dislikes the teacher or the associates of his children. And yet, would it not be better for him to have a voice in deciding who should be the teacher and who the companions of our children, than to leave it to others, and then be subjected to the painful necessity either of suffering them to remain where we do not wish them to remain, or of withdrawing them?

§ II. PARTICULAR DUTY OF PARENTS IN RELATION TO SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Seasonable attendance of children.—Studying the lessons with their children.—Frequent parental neglect.—Example of faithful parental duty.—Reflections.—Whole churches are sometimes resolved into Sabbath schools.

When however the Sabbath school becomes duly organized, and a parent has concluded to send his

children, let him at once make up his mind to send them seasonably and regularly. Let them not only be seasonable, but properly prepared. If parents care enough about Sabbath schools to send their children to them at all, they ought to care enough about them to see that they are in every respect well prepared. Half the parents, in some portions of our community, hardly know, from one week's end to another, what lessons are assigned their children, either at the day school or the Sabbath school, or whether any. Such neglect is unpardonable, especially in the case of the Sabbath school.

There is hardly a parent to be found among us who would not be as much benefitted by a thorough knowledge of the lessons assigned to his children as the children themselves. Why not then take hold of each lesson, during the week, along with his children, and make it his principal family Bible lesson? Most Christian parents acknowledge it to be their duty to read the Bible, and even to study it, daily; why not then read and study the part of it which is assigned to their children, as well as any other?

But what shall we say to those parents who not only neglect their children's lessons, and in spite of all their professed regard for the Sabbath school, practically show that they do not value it at all, but even seem to regard it as a piece of drudgery, both

to themselves and their children? Yet some such parents may be found among us, and I wish I could say they are not numerous. If a child comes to them with a book or with a question, they are repulsed with an "I can't be troubled with you;" or with something still more cold and discouraging.

Now I maintain it to be the duty of every parent, even if he does not study the lesson along with his children, to take an interest in it; for in fact, unless this is done, it is to little purpose that the children are connected with the school. They may indeed repeat the words of the lesson, and repeat them correctly too, but their hearts will be as cold if not quite as hard, all the time, as the rocks of the soil they tread on; and the teacher will wonder, and the superintendent will wonder, and perhaps the minister will join in their amazement, that the feelings of the children are so little affected while so much is done for them. But their wonder might cease, could they look into the family circle, and see the parental indifference to the Sabbath school which pervades it.

I like much better the spirit exhibited in the following narrative, said to be true, though I do not know on what authority. It is found in Todd's "Sabbath School Teacher," but does not appear to have been original there.

"It was Saturday evening when I arrived at the house of my friend, in a retired village of Massachu-

setts. The family had just risen from the table, and the little ones were retiring to rest, when one of the elder children requested the mother's permission to attend the teachers' meeting that evening.

“ ‘The rain will prevent a meeting to-night,’ replied her mother ; ‘but we will not be denied the *privilege* of studying the lesson.’—Accordingly the table was soon covered with books, and surrounded by the happy family.

“ ‘This is our usual custom,’ said the mother, ‘when the weather deprives us of the assistance of our minister, whose kind instructions have for many years greatly assisted the teachers in their benevolent work.’

“ I declined an invitation to join the interesting circle, but was a highly gratified spectator. Here were the father and mother, with their lovely children, together with a modest young woman residing in the family, with their Bibles open. Each was questioned, in turn ; references were found and impressively read ; maps consulted ; and the Bible Dictionary often referred to. The intelligent and unrestrained questions of the children, clearly manifested that it was no new employment. The Bible seemed to them not only a familiar but a beloved book. While looking at this animated scene, my mind unconsciously glanced back over a period of sixteen years which I have been permitted to spend as a

Sabbath school teacher, and I could not but reflect : Oh had I been thus aided by Christian parents, cheerful and effectual had been my labors, where now I fear they were lost.

“ After the lesson was concluded, family prayer offered, and the children had retired, the following conversation took place.

“ ‘ I am delighted to find that your children engage with so much pleasure in studying the Bible. How have you managed to make it so agreeable ?’

“ ‘ We have never found any difficulty in making the word of God a pleasant study. In the first place my little children are taught many of its stories before they can read. And as soon as they become Sabbath scholars, we make it a point to study the lesson *with* them. I believe they were never sent away to get it by themselves ; this would seem too much like a task. Either one or both of us always take the lesson, and show them that we cannot be denied the privilege. We ask, and in our turn, answer the questions, talk over the scene, imagine ourselves in the very spot, and endeavor, as much as possible, to interest and impress our young scholars. This is done on Saturday evening or Sabbath morning. But there is another method adopted by their mother which I think still better. Every morning, during the week, after family prayer and breakfast, the children have always been accustomed to read,

with her, a chapter which is talked over in the same way. Questions are continually arising, while it is read, and thus the habit is formed of *daily reading the word of God with pleasure and attention.*'

“ ‘ Your method is certainly a very simple one, and how easily might every Christian parent adopt it ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, for although the Holy Spirit alone can take of the things of God and show them to our dear children, yet I am confident parents can do much to render this blessed volume a precious book to their children. If with a countenance beaming with pleasure they would say, Come let us read it together, my children, instead of assigning it as a daily task to be run over alone, the time might not be distant when it would be to both better than gold, even fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb ; and I think it would essentially aid *you* who are Sabbath school teachers, for I know you must have your trials as well as your pleasures, and many of the trials must arise from the negligence of parents. God forbid that such negligence be laid to Christian parents ; and yet is it not a sad truth that the children of many of them have not learned to esteem this holy book as their necessary food ? ’ ”

Let me appeal to every one who reads this narrative, and inquire why it is that so many of them leave the explanation of the Sabbath school lesson,

wholly to the teacher, or to him and the minister, when they ought to become scholars themselves and study it with their children. Let me prevail with them to make a trial, for three months, of a course not unlike that which is indicated by the foregoing dialogue, and see if they do not find it exceedingly profitable to themselves as well as to their children.

But parents have a great deal to do besides aiding their children in getting their lessons or studying with them, and seeing that they are regular and punctual in their attendance. Every church member, says Mr. Todd, should, if possible, “have something to do with the Sabbath school, either as a teacher or scholar;” and I accord with this view entirely.

He says, also, that “if the church were to do her duty, almost all the congregation would be connected with the Sabbath school in some relation or other. In some of our congregations this is already the case. I could mention several village congregations in New England, in which the Sabbath school numbers between five and six hundred, or nearly all of the congregation. These are the most interesting schools I have ever seen. I have seen a class of old ladies—probably all over fifty years of age—who sat down to the recitation with as much interest as any class of children could. I do not say that all, without exception, can do so. Mothers with young children cannot, and fathers sometimes cannot be

connected with the Sabbath school. But these are but exceptions to the rule.”

I have also been acquainted with one or two of these Sabbath schools. The most interesting of these, was that of the North Church in Hartford, nine or ten years ago. Here the whole church resolved itself, for a time, into a Sabbath school. The arrangement, however, did not become permanent. The middle aged and the old were not enough imbued with the love of improvement to persevere in such a good work; nor are there many whole congregations to be found who are. Nor was this all. There were two regular church exercises besides the session of the Sabbath school; and I feel confident that every arrangement which involves so much of the time of adults on the Sabbath, will forever be abortive. Children may be kept at their taskwork, because compelled. And yet the very parents and masters who thus compel them to grind as it were in their prison, would not, themselves, yield obedience to a rule which is so obviously unjust.

If the church and congregation are to be resolved into a Sabbath school, let the plan be adopted to which I shall allude more particularly elsewhere—that of having but one regular church exercise a day, say in the afternoon, and having the forenoon devoted to the Sabbath school — and let the rest of the day be sacred to divine worship in the family. This

plan I think will be the final resort of our churches, but not perhaps till after several centuries have been passed over.

Still, as things now are, I believe it to be the duty of most parents, either to connect themselves very closely with the Sabbath school, or wholly to give it up. They should assist their children in studying the lessons, or rather they should study with them; they should assist them, if any assistance is needed, in getting to the school in good season, and in good condition; they should, in greater or less numbers, be the teachers of their children while there; and lastly, they should be present during the exercises, both to observe the school and to select books for their children from the library. I shall say more of the library, however, in another chapter.

§ III. FAMILY CONVERSATION.

General rule on this subject.—Things as they are among us.
—Conversation at the breakfast table.—At dinner and elsewhere.—Anecdote of the Icelanders.

Parents should also remember the Sabbath school in their daily conversation. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” is a declaration of very high authority; or, in common language, what we take an interest in, or value, *that* we think about and talk about. And the contrary of this rule is true. What we neither think about nor talk about,

is seldom valued, or where our treasure is not, there our hearts will not be.

But what are we to think, judging by this rule, of those parents and masters among us, who never say a word to their children about the Sabbath school or its lessons, from one week's end to another—and but seldom from one year's end to another? That they set any value upon it? What do the children of such families think? They may not always put their thoughts into words, nor indeed be conscious that such thoughts are really in their mind; yet I honestly believe they make the just, no less than natural inference, that all our pretensions to regard for the Sabbath school are hollow.

We talk about dogs and horses, and houses and lands, and stocks and interest, and purchases and sales, and balls and exhibitions, and elections and salaries, and births and marriages, and eating and drinking; and our tones of voice, as well as our looks, prove that we are interested in these things. They prove that we consider them as things of real value, and that it is out of the abundance of our hearts that our mouths speak. And children do not misunderstand us. They know where our hearts are; and though we may say we value the Sabbath school, they have no such evidence that it is so, as they have that we love money, office, pleasure, etc.; and especially eating and drinking.

Even if we talk about the Sabbath school, it is, as it were, by constraint. The conversation is introduced by accident, or by somebody who wishes to press it, for the moment, upon our notice; usually by one of our honest and plain-hearted young folks. We who are parents rarely introduce the conversation.

Watch a modern breakfast or dinner-table. The tea-table I leave out of question, as I fear the subject of Sabbath schools would be absolutely rejected there, as being too grave a matter. Let us watch the conversation, I say, at the breakfast-table. Nay, I care not, if it is the first breakfast of the week. What shall we hear? Any thing about the Sabbath school? How seldom! How much more frequently is this precious season for familiar, improving conversation, trifled away by small talk—the weather, the choice of dishes, the dress to be worn, the carriages or horses to be used, who is to be the preacher for the day; and a thousand other things of about equal importance, and equal adaptation to the occasion.

And is the conversation any more improving even at dinner, when the Sabbath school is to follow immediately? Who says any thing about the Sabbath school, even then? Who does not choose rather to talk about the appearance of such or such an individual, or such a couple; or the beauty of the sermon; or the excellency of the singing; or the

defective utterance of the speaker ; or the want of accordance of his sentiments with those in which we ourselves have been brought up ?

Until parents manifest the same interest—to say the least of it—in the Sabbath school, which they do in other things, it is in vain for them to talk about their friendship for it ; and almost equally useless for them to send their children there. They will continue to be late, at times, and to be indifferent when they arrive. They will continue to think more of something else, even while reciting, than of the meaning of their lessons. They will continue to be uninterested in prayer time ; and even to laugh and play, in too many instances, if they can get a chance ; or at least to twist into all sorts of shapes. How can they care for that which they are not taught to care for ; which nobody around them appears to care for, except one hour in the week ; and in which they see no form or beauty, that they *should* care for it.

It is said by Dr. Henderson, a highly respectable writer on Iceland, and who has himself been a traveller there, that by the laws of that island, the parents, at least in some cases, are held responsible for the conduct of their children, and are actually punished for their faults and crimes. If all parents among us were to be sentenced and punished for all the faults and follies and delinquencies of Sabbath school pupils, is there not reason to fear that punish-

ments would be rather more frequent among us than they now are ?

And why should not parents be thus punished ? If it is the ordinance of Jehovah that the soul that sinneth it shall die ; that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither the father the iniquity of the son, then nothing can be more certain than that the stupidity, the indifference, the roguery even, of the Sabbath school pupil, is attributable, in no small degree, to the neglect of the parent, and that the son should not, in such case, bear the iniquity of the father, but that the soul that sinneth ought to suffer the punishment.

It may be doubted, however, the example of Iceland to the contrary notwithstanding, whether human courts are yet wise enough to act according to this wise ordinance of Jehovah. At the last tribunal, strict justice will be dealt out ; but in the existing imperfection of human governments and human tribunals, it is greatly to be feared that the iniquities of parents will be visited, very often, upon the children, and that the father will suffer many a punishment which ought to be elsewhere inflicted.

§ IV. PRAYER FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Neglect of prayer for Sabbath schools.—A contradiction among Christians.

We have another striking evidence that people, almost everywhere, are hollow-hearted, in regard to

Sabbath schools. When and where do Christian parents, in their family worship, intercede for the Sabbath school? Is such a thing often known? In the great congregation of the church, the minister, it is true, sometimes remembers the Sabbath school, and the Sabbath school pupil may chance to observe it; but he seldom if ever hears prayer for the Sabbath school anywhere else. And he makes the natural and just inference.

When, Oh when, will the practice of mankind, not merely in relation to the Sabbath school, but almost every thing else, cease to contradict their pretensions and professions? For though there is undoubtedly far more of stern unyielding truth, and far more of open honesty and fair dealing in the Christian world than elsewhere, yet when we consider the purity of God's law, there is by no means as much as there should be. We too frequently profess to be one thing, and yet in our practice are quite another. We profess before our children, as well as the rest of the world, to lightly esteem this world and to set a high value on the next; and yet we pursue a course which would lead the unsophisticated mind to suppose exactly the contrary. This ought not so to be, most certainly. Let us be what we may, we should seem to be exactly what we are. There should be no double dealing; no hypocrisy; no giving the lie to our profession.

§ V. FAMILIAR INTERCOURSE WITH TEACHERS.

Giving them a hearty welcome.—Receiving their visits.—Duty of parents to become teachers.—Particular duty of those who have once been teachers of week-day schools.

While it is most undoubtedly the duty of Sabbath school teachers to visit their pupils at their homes respectively, it is equally the duty of parents to take care to give them a hearty welcome. There is as wide a difference between receiving a teacher into the family in the true gospel spirit, and the contrary and more prevalent mode, as can well be imagined.

I have visited families who received me with all the cordiality of an intimate and highly valued friend, and gave me every opportunity for seeing and conversing with their children. But I have also visited other families where I was kept at a distance; and although I was not required to go below or into the kitchen to converse with them, yet it was easy to perceive that I was not recognized as an equal—hardly as a friend. In short, it was easy to perceive that the friendly fellow-feeling which ought to exist between the parent and the teacher of his children was wholly wanting, and which among Christians is certainly to be regretted. Paul says expressly that none of these outward distinctions ought to exist, in the Christian world generally, for the simple reason that “we are all one in Christ Jesus.” But let others do as they may, the Sabbath school

teacher should recognize no difference in rank among his pupils. He will look upon them as immortal beings, travelling on together to a world where the only distinction is that which is founded on moral excellence.

Here may be the proper place for urging it on parents to exercise the self-denial of becoming Sabbath school teachers. Not all parents, of course, for all would not be wanted, at least in the mere work of teaching. The selection, however, should be made from parents, of such as it is thought will be most able and efficient. The rest should be, as far as it is practicable, observing for themselves the progress of things, and when the proper time comes, selecting the books for their children from the library.

I think, at all events, that every parent who has the true spirit of the gospel, will be ready to aid in the Sabbath school, if he is needed; except in those particular circumstances of sickness, &c., which ought always to be a sufficient excuse. But if parents were thus ready and anxious to teach or otherwise assist in our Sabbath schools; if instead of a dearth of teachers, and a difficulty, almost everywhere, of finding a sufficient number willing to make a little self-denial for the general good, the inquiry were continually being made, on our right hand and on our left, Can I be of any service in the Sabbath

school? how greatly would it alter the whole existing state of things! But this readiness and anxiety on the part of parents to sustain the Sabbath school, ought to exist, and must be seen to exist, before the rising generation can be fully trained in the way they should go.

Especially should those parents—and of such there are always some among us—who have been teachers in early life in week-day schools, come forward with cheerfulness and courage to the duty of Sabbath school teachers. I can hardly refrain from pitying the stupidity of parents of this description who will not put their hands to the work. Do they have right views of their own responsibility? Do they know one of the first great principles of the gospel, that to whom much is given, of the same will much be required?

CHAPTER III.

ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

§ 1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

WE have seen, in a former chapter, that God has been the author and establisher of two institutions in the world, the family and the church—and

that most or all other institutions are of human and not divine appointment.

But we have seen that the Sabbath school, though a human institution and not of divine appointment, may yet be made the dispenser of many blessings to mankind. It may aid the family, or those rather who stand at the head of the family, in their labors. It may aid the minister in the discharge of his solemn and sacred duties. It is useful in order to furnish the pupil with a vast amount of collateral information, and especially by giving him a knowledge of natural law. It is valuable for its tendency, rightly managed, to elicit thought and inquiry. And finally, and above all, it is valuable as a means, under God, of the early conversion and sanctification of children, and the sanctification, if not the conversion of teachers. To this last special end should all our efforts be directed, whether in one form or another.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the best methods of organizing and conducting Sabbath schools, in order to render them prosperous and useful.

§ II. OPENING THE SCHOOL.

The Sabbath school should undoubtedly be opened with prayer, and that chiefly by the superintendent or by some one of the teachers, who knows the precise character of the school. Strangers may indeed sometimes be invited to the discharge of this

duty, but I would not have the invitation often extended to them. After the prayer, a hymn may be sung. Let the lesson come next; and after this and a few remarks if needful by the superintendent, let a single verse be sung, the books of the library in the mean time having been distributed, and the school closed. The time spent in the Sabbath school at a single session should hardly exceed one hour. I would have no long speeches or addresses, nor any exhibition or display.

§ III. LENGTH OF EXERCISES.

The exercises should all be short—the prayer and the singing especially. This is one reason why I would not have strangers permitted to have any control over the school as to time. A prayer of fifteen minutes, when the superintendent is accustomed to pray but five, deranges the order of the school, and causes more evil, as it seems to me, than good. If there were ten minutes to spare for prayer, I would prefer half of it at the close of the school rather than the whole at the beginning—and the same remark I would apply to the singing. I would not, however, take up in any instance more than fifteen minutes of the hour devoted to the school, in prayer, singing and remarks; for I consider three-fourths of an hour the smallest amount of time which it is necessary to expend on the lesson, and in such conversation gen-

eral and particular as might naturally grow out of it.

This season, however, of three-fourths of an hour, I might sometimes divide in order to give the school a short recess ; during which, I would not have the pupils leave their seats. In this matter of having a recess, where the whole exercises continue but an hour, I would indeed be governed by circumstances, and by observations of the results. In general it may not be necessary ; but that it sometimes is so, especially in the case of particular classes, is unquestionable.

§ IV. VARIETY IN THE EXERCISES.

This I deem exceedingly indispensable. The custom with many teachers and superintendents, of pursuing a course or series of lessons which admits of little variety, and overlooks wholly the fondness in the human mind for novelty, is as it seems to me exceedingly to be regretted. The love of variety and fondness for novelty, in the young mind, is implanted as I have no doubt by the Creator for wise purposes, and if duly regarded like all of his institutions and laws would lead to happy results. Why then, should it be banished from the Sabbath school ? Shall we give up to Satan every thing valuable, because all valuable things are at times abused or perverted ?

This may serve to show one reason why I object to question books, especially in the way they are most commonly used. They are valuable, I admit, for teachers, in learning how to study the Bible and how to explain it to the youthful mind; at least they may afford some aid. And yet I doubt their utility, except on particular occasions, in the Sabbath school. There is certainly a more excellent way. Children are quite apt enough to study their lessons mechanically, when we do the best we can to prevent it; but this having written or printed questions, whether in the day school or Sabbath school, but above all in the latter, and whether the answers are directly appended to the questions or not, I have always disliked, and I long to see our Sabbath school teachers able and willing to pursue a better and more rational course.* God may add his blessing—and does add it—to the labors of faithful parents and teachers, though some of their methods may be wrong; but he blesses them still more, when they are right.†

But whether we use books or not in our classes, it is in vain, wholly so, to prescribe for ourselves a course of lessons, however excellent, without reference either to the capacities or the inclinations of our

* Some, I think, are prepared for this more excellent way, but their number is, as yet, very few.

† The subject of question books in the Sabbath school will be discussed more fully in the fourth chapter.

pupils. Children, it should never be forgotten, are at best unskilful, as an apostle expresses it, in righteousness ; and cannot endure strong food, even that which to us may seem exceedingly nourishing and wholesome. What, think you, would become of the tender babe of three months old, were we to insist on its eating solid bread or beefsteak ? Would he eat it ? Or could he eat it ? Would he have teeth to masticate, or a stomach which could digest it ? And suppose he had teeth, and digestive powers strong enough, would he relish it ? Would it not be disgusting to him ? But you may as well expect the babe of three months to relish and digest bread and meat, as the children of our Sabbath schools to receive with pleasure, or to mark, learn, or digest, many of our Sabbath school lessons—such even as we in our superior wisdom have decided to be adapted to their wants and capacities.

§ V. THE LESSONS SHOULD BE INTELLIGIBLE.

For, in the first place, it is not only necessary that the lesson should be good—that is, such as in the judgment of adults is good for adults—but it must be intelligible. I might speak here, more fully than I have before done, of the importance of having for superintendents and teachers, those who are, or have been, parents ; or who have at least had the care of children, a good deal, in *some* way. Those

who have been successful both as teachers and parents, are preferable, whenever such can be obtained ; that is, provided their other qualifications are equal. For none know so well what will be intelligible to children as those who have made children and the character and tastes of children an object of study.

But be the superintendent or teacher whom he may, he must labor to make himself and his lessons understood. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, says, that when laboring in and for the churches he had rather speak five words with his understanding, that by his voice he might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue ; but many of our Sabbath school teachers do not seem to be of Paul's opinion. Not only are the lessons themselves unintelligible, but the teachers throw little or no light on them.

What the lesson is, whether parable, commandment, doctrine, history, biography, travels, chronology, genealogy, geography, customs, manners, anatomy, physiology, astronomy or geology, is, in my view, of far less consequence, that is, in the hands of a person of right qualifications and a right spirit, than its intelligibility. Any thing, or almost any thing, may be made plain to the youngest minds we meet with in our Sabbath schools ; and almost any thing may be obscured by those who, as was said of

Job by his Maker, darken counsel by words without knowledge.

§ VI. SOLEMN YET CHEERFUL.

While the exercises of the Sabbath school should be conducted with all that solemnity which is due to the Lord's day, they ought at the same time to be cheerful. I know of no good to be derived from dressing religion, or any of the ordinances or institutions of religion, in habiliments of gloom; but on the contrary, much evil. Say what we will, and think what we may about it, children are always repelled by giving a sombre cast to religious things; and on this account, were it on no other, I would strive to maintain an air of cheerfulness, in the Sabbath school.

There is much reason for doubt whether the prevailing belief that the Savior never laughed, but was habitually grave, if not even sorrowful, has not done a great deal of mischief in the world. How do we know that the Savior never laughed? And suppose it were so, is that a part of his character which, in imitating him, we should consider it indispensable to put on? We may be assured, however, that there is no good evidence that such was the fact. That he was grave, habitually, may be true; but is there any incompatibility between habitual gravity, and cheerfulness? Are not some of our

most grave people among the most cheerful? Though they look grave, yet examine them closely and you perceive they wear the marks of internal cheerfulness after all. The Sabbath school is, of course, no place for laughter or merriment, and no one will understand me as saying that it is so. And awful may be the consequences, even in this world—leaving the world eternal out of question—of trifling away the sacred golden hours of the Sabbath school.

§ VII. NEATNESS IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL ROOM.

Two reasons why neatness in the Sabbath school room is indispensable.—The Sabbath school room itself.—Neatness of person, clothes and books.—Tobacco in the school room.—Eatables.—Importance of having a plan.

Let a Sabbath school be held where it may, in the church or the conference-house, or even in the school-house, an air of neatness should always pervade the place where it is held. This should be the case, for two reasons. 1. Because it is well to train children to neatness and cleanliness, both on the Sabbath and week-days—cleanliness being, in the opinion of Jeremy Taylor, next to godliness. 2. Because it is unpleasant to those who occupy the seat of a Sabbath school room, after the school is closed, to sit down in the midst of dirt which should not have been left there; or which, if left, should have been removed by those who were the occasion of it.

In some of our churches, the central or main part of the building, for the sake of its warmth as well as for several other reasons, is given up to the use of the Sabbath school. I am always glad to have it thus given up, because it is, on many accounts, and in many instances, the best place in which a Sabbath school can possibly be held. And yet it is no small sacrifice to the owners of slips or pews to relinquish them in favor of the school. The books and other things which they leave, are liable, for aught they know, to be misplaced or injured; their cushions to be soiled, their seats, &c., to be cut, marked, or defaced, and a thousand little nameless evils to ensue. If the Sabbath school is held in these places, therefore, great pains should be taken to prevent any harm from arising to the owners of the seats which are occupied.

But there are other points on which great care should be exercised by the superintendent and teachers, in order to form habits of neatness. The persons and clothes of pupils, but more especially their books, should be kept clean. Every child in the Sabbath school needs, as it seems to me, a Bible, if no other book. And yet unless great pains are taken this Bible will be injured, not merely by the smallest scholars, but by older ones.

I could indeed hope that no member of the Sabbath school, whether pupil or teacher, would be so

reckless of health and decency as to carry tobacco into the school room, either in the mouth or pocket. And yet such things have been done. I have been so annoyed by the smell of tobacco, while in the Sabbath school, without being quite able to ascertain the source whence it came, that I was hardly in a condition to go on with my labors. Shame on those boys who need the hints here thrown out; but still more disgraceful is the conduct of those teachers who set them the example.

Nor is it much more commendable for the pupils to carry nuts, fruit, food, &c., in their pockets, in order to eat in Sabbath school, and above all to drop the skins, &c., on the floor. I do not wonder at all, if many persons, who are the owners of pews or slips in churches, should be unwilling to give them up to the use of the Sabbath school. And yet they might do it with safety, were every teacher and pupil—and every parent too—what he should be. Such things ought never to be admitted by parents to the pockets of school children.

I have treated of these *little* things, as many will call them, in a formal lecture, because it really happens in the result that they are something more than little things. They have much to do not only with the comfort and neatness of the Sabbath school, but also with order and decency.

I must not omit to speak, in this place, of the

importance, on the part of both the superintendent and teachers, of having a plan before them at the Sabbath school, not only generally, but for each day in particular. These plans should be devised and matured, in part at home, and in part at the weekly meetings to which I shall hereafter refer. Nothing can be done in the church, the family, or the school, i. e., hardly any thing, without a plan, however often we may be obliged to vary it to meet new exigencies and new exercises.

§ VIII. THE EXERCISES SHOULD BE MADE INTERESTING.

Three rules for rendering the exercises interesting.—Story telling.—Bell ringing.—Contribution boxes, and other interruptions.—Necessity of regulating time and temperature.—Power of sympathy.

Yet whatever the plan may be, no plan can be executed happily without the most unremitting kindness on the part of the superintendent and teachers; nor without the most unremitting efforts to make the school pleasant and the exercises interesting. Not that much should be said to the pupils themselves about variety, or pleasure, or interest, or happiness;—our conduct should be a continual evidence of the state of our feelings with respect to our pupils.

There are a thousand ways of making the Sabbath school interesting, of which an anxious and faithful superintendent or teacher may avail himself. First, his countenance may be such as to impart

cheerfulness and pleasure, or the contrary. Secondly, his actions may manifest the same disposition. Thirdly, his words, and general conduct. Children do not misunderstand us. They read our true feelings much more readily than we usually suppose.

I believe it will be distinctly understood by this time, that I attach little value to formal addresses to our pupils, whether by the superintendent, by strangers, or by teachers. If addresses are ever made, however, they should be exceedingly short, and should consist chiefly of some striking illustration or story, the moral of which can hardly be mistaken. The tendency of much formal lecturing to harden the young heart, and promote practical infidelity, has been more than once adverted to. I may be mistaken as to the general principle, though probably I am not; but whether mistaken or not in general, I am certain there is no mistake in regard to the effect of much formal lecturing in the Sabbath school. It can do no possible good; it may do a great deal of harm.

I have said that a very short recess in the course of the Sabbath school exercises may sometimes be desirable; but on the whole I should prefer, at such seasons, a short story from the superintendent, either read from a book or given verbally, or sometimes a mere anecdote. I have also thought it might be well for the superintendent to present to his pupils,

on these occasions, a summary of the principal Sabbath school intelligence, foreign and domestic ; though in this sort of instruction, I should be as brief and as sparing as possible.

Many attach a good deal of importance to the circumstance of having a small bell in the school-room to be rung by the superintendent as the signal for giving their attention when the school is about to be opened, prayer attended, or any other change made, which concerns all. But I have usually found that a slight rap with a penknife or pencil was sufficient for every purpose. Besides, I wish always to remove every thing from the Sabbath school which gives it a mere formal character. The contribution box, let the object be ever so praiseworthy ; the library ; together with all sorts of rewards of merit, seem to me but poorly adapted to the solemnity—the sacredness rather—of God's holy day and house.

If there be an absolute necessity for any thing which gives to the school room a secular or mechanical appearance, it is a clock, with perhaps a thermometer. These instruments, the one to measure time and the other temperature, seem to be quite indispensable. Many a Sabbath school is noisy because the temperature is not what it should be ; it is too hot or too cold. For though the pupils may not make any complaint, in so many words, they often suffer a good deal, and manifest that suffering

by restlessness or inattention. And many a superintendent and teacher, for want of a thermometer and a little reasoning on the subject, has not only been miserable himself for a long time, but made the school miserable. For the power of sympathy is very great. As is the teacher, so is the school, says the French philosopher Cousin; the Sabbath school teacher who smiles will have a smiling school, while he who is inwardly or outwardly unhappy, whether his unhappiness is evinced by changing color often, by erratic or hurried movements across the room, by trembling hands or a tremulous voice, by down-cast eyes, or by frowns, will soon find his school *sympathize* with him.

§ IX. CLASSIFICATION OF THE SCHOOL.

Number of classes.—Importance of good teachers.—Classifying according to age or capacity.—According to behavior.—A common error.—Anecdote of Plato.—Power of example as a means of reformation.—One source of injury to Sabbath schools.

How many classes there shall be in a Sabbath school depends, as I suppose, on the decision of the question, How many good teachers can be secured? For though it is commonly thought—and with much of truth—that six pupils are enough for one teacher, yet it seems to me better to place ten or twelve pupils under the care of one *good* teacher, than for the sake of having the classes smaller to take part of the twelve and place them under the care of a teacher

who is not well qualified for his task. The utmost exertion should be made, no doubt, to procure an efficient teacher to every five or six scholars; but if I had but ten really good teachers to one hundred pupils, I would certainly think it better to distribute the whole among them than to give to each of them his quota of six pupils and place the remainder under the care of persons in whose abilities or disposition I had less confidence.

As to classifying according to age or capacity, this seems to me a matter of less consequence in a Sabbath school than is sometimes supposed. If I had the charge of a class of pupils who had made considerable progress in the sciences, I would still desire to teach them the Bible in all the simplicity of a little child. The Bible is, in fact, a simple book. I am more and more astonished at its simplicity; and the more truly learned a pupil is in the common branches of human knowledge, the better is he prepared to study it as a simple book. In short, to repeat what I have repeatedly said, I would teach all classes and all ages, *trained as all ages and classes now are, ignorant of the Bible and of Bible science*—very nearly in the same way.

Nor would I wish to classify in regard to behavior so as to put a youth of a particular cast under the care of a teacher who is especially adapted to the management of boys of that description. I

would make no provision of this sort in a Sabbath school. Let us make the instruction simple, and we shall hardly fail to make it agreeable; especially if we really love children, and are truly fond of the employment of teaching.

Some, I know, regard it as an evil to mix the light-minded and the grave, the obedient and the docile, with the careless or heedless. But this has appeared to me the best way of reforming bad pupils. We must, after all, everywhere in life and in *every thing*, depend much more than we have hitherto done on the influence of example as a means of reformation. We must be content to mingle the evil with the good, especially where we have good enough to form a correct current of opinion and action.

We have all read, perhaps, the story of Plato and his dissipated nephew, which whether true or untrue is very much to my present purpose. This wretched young man, having been spurned from his father's house, and refused the society of his more intimate friends, was received by Plato; and when every body wondered that so good a man as Plato was should harbor such a bad youth, he only said that he wished to show him, by a suitable example, how much better it was to be industrious, temperate, and pure, than to be indolent, vicious, and abandon-

ed—or in other words, how much better it was to live well than to live ill.

It will be time enough to separate mankind—the good from the bad, and the obedient from the disobedient—when the judgment shall have set, and the books shall have been opened. Till that time the general rule is not to separate them—to which rule three should be the smallest possible number of exceptions. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, it is said, Let both grow together till the time of the harvest; and human wisdom has, as yet, devised nothing better. There is something wrong about our houses of correction, our houses of industry, our houses for juvenile delinquents, our alms-houses, &c., &c. These persons ought to be in good families, rather than in confinement, although it is admitted that solitary confinement is better than the association of vice and crime. What I say is, that there is a more excellent way still; and it is here that I wish to bring my remarks to bear on the Sabbath school. If we have in a school of one hundred pupils divided into ten classes twenty who are disorderly and twenty more who are careless, it is better to put two of each of these into a class with six good pupils, than to separate them, and have four bad classes and six good ones.

I know this opinion is contrary to the current

opinion of mankind. It is usually thought better to separate the bad from the good, forgetting that we thus usurp the throne, or at least the province of the Creator. In a world of perfect beings—in a state of reward merely—it may be safe for the good that the bad should be away from them, and it may be just for the bad—those who have gone so far as to be irreclaimable; but in an imperfect state of *humanity* like our own, it is neither best for the one nor safe for the other.

I may seem to be away from my subject—the classification of the Sabbath school; but it is not so. I have been endeavoring to show that superintendents and teachers may save themselves a great deal of care and anxiety about the adaptation, as Mr. Todd in his Lectures calls it, of teacher to pupils and pupils to teacher. A good man, and one especially who is a good teacher, is always adapted to his children or pupils. If they are good, the adaptation will of course be seen and admitted; if they are bad, he is certainly better adapted to them than any other person would be. The great point, therefore, in a Sabbath school, is to get a few individuals to teach who really love their pupils, who understand them, and who delight to teach them. If only four such can be found to one hundred scholars, we should employ that four and no more; but if twenty, thirty, or forty, it is so much the better.

Having obtained a few teachers of the right stamp, go forward and do the best you can with them.

In conclusion, under this particular head, let me just say, that our Sabbath schools are often ruined by getting every body into them. We seem to think that every one whose own heart is right with God is fit to teach religion to others ; than which no mistake can be greater. A teacher should be pious, to be sure ; but it is not one pious person in ten who is fit to teach in the Sabbath school. We shall see hereafter that such persons as I now refer to, should be learners rather than teachers ; and that it is in their power to become such, if they will but take the necessary pains.

§ X. TIME OF HOLDING THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

The morning the best time.—Four reasons why.—Change needed in the public habits.—Only one Sabbath school session in a day.—Objections to this.—These objections met.—View of experience.—Picture of a modern New England Sabbath day.—Morning Sabbath schools conducive to the health of the body, the health of the mind, and the health of the moral powers.

The best time for holding the Sabbath school is, unquestionably, in the morning, say an hour and a half before the church services commence. If these last are begun at half past ten, the Sabbath school should be opened at nine.

The reasons for this are numerous, and some of them weighty. 1. The minds and bodies of the young are more vigorous in the morning, and on

this account whatever is done, is more likely to be well done, than if deferred to a later hour in the day. 2. The mind is not only more vigorous in the morning, but it is not preoccupied. 3. The minds of the teachers are also likely to be in the best condition. 4. By having the Sabbath school exercises at nine o'clock in the morning with an interval of half an hour between its close and the commencement of public worship, and having the whole intermission season to themselves, children are less likely to become fatigued with the duties and labors of the Sabbath, and more likely to carry some of its instructions into the week with them.

Many city schools, I am aware, meet at the hour of which I am speaking in the summer, and a few do in the winter. As a general rule, however, except in some of our cities, Sabbath schools are held during the intermission, and occupy or consume the greater part of it. Sometimes they are attended to immediately after the close of the forenoon services; at others, not till some time has elapsed, say a quarter or half an hour. Seldom more than half an hour. On this little inch of space as it were, whether it precede or follow the exercise, they have barely time to swallow their morsel of food; and if they must go home for this purpose—a distance of from a quarter of a mile to half a mile, and sometimes

more—they have not time even to swallow their meal in any proper or wholesome condition.

When both the morning and the intermission are taken up with the Sabbath school, as is sometimes the case in our cities, the evils are still greater. In such cases neither the church exercises, nor those of the Sabbath school, so far as the children are concerned, can be very valuable. Observation and study have satisfied me, that human nature is not strong enough to sustain, advantageously, this sort of task-work. To be kept from eight or nine o'clock in the morning till five or six in the afternoon almost constantly under the influence of religious exercises, is more than one adult in ten among us would be willing to endure. Especially is this the case when the religious feelings of the children are not enough developed to enable them to relish the Sabbath school. Happily, however, this sort of tyranny over the human mind and body is seldom known of late, frequent as it was in Boston and elsewhere not more than ten years ago. Common sense has nearly rejected it.

My own belief is that the best way—and indeed the very thing to which the Protestant Christian world is now tending—is to have but two religious exercises in the day in the same church and congregation, one for the children and another for the

adults ; that for the children to be held in the forenoon, and to take the place of the Sabbath school, and that for the adults in the afternoon. In attending on the former, the children should be accompanied by their parents and friends ; in attending the latter the parents should be accompanied by the children.

As, however, the period is very distant when this arrangement will come into vogue, and some hundreds of thousands of citizens, if not indeed several whole generations will in the mean time have passed away from this life's busy scenes to the scenes of other worlds, we shall for a long time to come be in need of something not unlike our present Sabbath schools. For this purpose, and with this view, we must come as near to what we desire as our circumstances and the public opinion will permit.

Only one Sabbath school session in a day we must insist on everywhere, and this I think will generally be granted. We must next insist on having this one session in the morning, both winter and summer. Here there will be objections ; and some of them, at first view, seem to many to be formidable.

The most formidable, however, of the whole is, that during the short days of winter, those parents and masters who reside at a distance cannot get their children to the school in season.

We will suppose some of them live at the distance of five miles from the church, though in our New England communities it seldom happens that many reside so far off. What then? What are five miles? For little children, it will be said, five miles is quite a long distance to walk; and so it is. But why shall not the parents accompany them? But if they do, those who have vehicles of any sort would very naturally carry their children.

But I shall still be told that nine o'clock in the morning is a very improper time to open a Sabbath school in winter; and that nobody would attend. But is it so? Would nobody attend? But if so, why not? Those who live near the place of meeting could attend even at such an early hour: so that the seats of the classes would not be wholly vacant.

It is *impossible*, I have heard it said, for those who have the care of a family to get them ready for the Sabbath school so early, even if the distance is not very great. But is the morning of the Sabbath shorter than the morning of other days? Yet who does not know that it is quite common for parents to get ready their large families on week-days for the day school which begins at nine o'clock? I have known more than one district school where large families of from five to seven children have been regularly at the school by the accustomed hour of nine o'clock, through the winter, although they

were obliged to walk from one to two miles. And I have attended one school where the ages of the pupils varied from five to twenty—about the age of our Sabbath school pupils—where one quarter or one third of them came a distance of from two to four miles; and I always observed that none were more punctual to the hour of opening the school than those who were obliged to walk three miles or more. Does nine o'clock come earlier, I again ask, on Sunday morning than on any other?

But parents are obliged to get ready for church themselves, it will be said, which is a task to which they are not compelled on week-days. True; but then they have something else to do, on week-day mornings; that is to say, they *will* do something else. This excuse will not answer. Let us come at once to the real apology. This (in plain English) would probably read thus:

“We have always been in the habit of lying in bed a little later on Sunday morning than on other mornings; and it is quite inconvenient to break the habit. It would cost us no little self-denial to get up, on Sunday morning, in time to prepare our children for a Sabbath school which begins at nine o'clock.” This, I think, would come very near being the true apology; to which, however, might be added as a sort of appendix, that there is a great deal of shaving, brushing boots and clothes and extra

labor about the house, especially in preparing and arranging dresses on Sunday morning.

I wish those who are opposed to the custom of having the Sabbath school at nine o'clock in the morning, would give the true reasons why they object to it, and then we should know better how to meet them. We should tell them that if Sabbath school instruction, which is gratuitous, is as valuable to them as that week-day instruction for which they pay, there is as good a reason for rising early on Sunday morning and availing themselves of it, as there is for rising early enough on the week-day to get their children away to the district school in due season.

Let people either acknowledge that the Sabbath school is of little consequence, and so let it be given up, or else let it be so managed as to be likely to answer the end for which it was designed. This end I am sure can never be answered by having the exercises during the intermission of the services. Let us have the Sabbath school in the morning, or not at all.

If there were any apology worthy of the name of an apology, for having the Sabbath school held during the intermission, except the indolent wicked habit of lying in bed later on Sunday morning than on any other, and then spending too large a proportion of the golden hours after getting up, in unne-

cessary not to say wicked labor, I would not utter a word more on the subject. Having thus publicly protested against it, I would suit the action to the word, and dissolve my connection with Sabbath school teaching at once.

Satisfied, however, that I have hit on the true reason why it is not held in the morning, and believing that I can make it appear to others that this is the true reason ; but, that instead of being a good and substantial reason—one which God will consider good and substantial in the great day of account—it is no reason at all, I have determined to go forward.

Let it be that there were some object of gain or honor or pleasure to be secured by bringing the children of a parish or town together at nine o'clock on Sunday morning—and let it be that the object was deemed a lawful one. Let it be a panoramic view of the principal cities and objects of curiosity in the known world. These, as fast as they could be viewed to advantage, were to be seen, gratuitously we will suppose, by the people of the town and their children, provided they would come together for the purpose on Sunday morning at nine o'clock. We will suppose, I repeat it, that there was nothing unlawful in the sight of God in thus coming together, any more than in bringing together the Sabbath school. It would be difficult to make me be-

lieve that the panorama would be as thinly attended as the Sabbath school. Every parent who had any curiosity at all, and knew the wonders of the panoramic art, if I may so call it, would be sure to be present with his children, and that too in due and proper season.

I might mention a hundred things, for aught I know, which would prove a sufficient inducement to most persons to get out their children early Sunday morning; I will add, however, but one. Let it be distinctly understood that the parents and masters of every child in the parish who would bring their children together in the town hall, or any other central place, every Sunday morning at nine o'clock, and remain with them an hour, should receive one dollar for every such child, ward, or servant, and let there be no wrong in doing so, and we should hear no apologies about the shortness of the mornings, the coldness of the season, or the difficulty of getting ready. Grant even that each parent felt it necessary to spend as much time on dress, for himself and children, as is now thought necessary on the Sabbath morning, still the difficulty could be got over. Much of the preparation could be made Saturday evening. Very small indeed would be the number of parents who would miss the opportunity of getting one, two, three, four, five, six, or more dollars a Sabbath throughout the year, when it was to be obtained at

so little sacrifice. Families of five, six, or eight children, above all—the very families whose heads complain that they cannot get their children early to Sabbath school—would be sure to turn out for the sake of the bounty of from two hundred to four hundred dollars a year.

Now if these things are so, what is the rightful inference? Can it be any thing else than either that we have no confidence in our Sabbath schools, as being useful to our children, or that we value money more highly than souls, even the souls of those who are near and dear to us?

Perhaps there is one more inference. Perhaps we are really in such poverty that we feel ourselves compelled to over-work during the week, and especially to work late on Saturday evening, and get so much worn out that we cannot become sufficiently restored by the usual hour on Sunday morning; so that we are obliged to lie late and then let go the Sabbath school till noon, whereas the offer of a gratuity on Sunday morning would relieve us from the necessity of laboring to excess and enable us to finish our work in six days, according to God's appointment. Even in the latter case, however, I would still be inclined to ask, Are there no causes of this universal indigence, which cannot be removed? It is strange indeed that the Creator has bid us do

all our work in six days, when the six days are not long enough for this purpose.

The subject is a painful one at best. I beseech those who hear me to ask themselves whether the remarks I have made are applicable, in any respect, to themselves. No person of good sense and a just knowledge of human nature will doubt, as it appears to me, for one moment, that the morning is the best season, in itself considered, for the Sabbath school, as well as for all other schools. Let him think, then, why he believes a thing is right, and yet will not do it.

I believe the testimony of experience is ever in favor of holding the Sabbath school in the morning. Since I began to prepare this course of lectures I have received from a superintendent of one of the Baptist Sabbath schools in Utica, an interesting letter on this subject, from which I venture to make a single extract. The writer, by the way, was wholly ignorant of my own views on the subject at the time he wrote.

“I was deeply affected,” he says, “yesterday when the Sabbath school of which I am superintendent, decided to change the hour of meeting from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M. It does appear to me that Christians ought so to arrange their affairs for the Sabbath that they can be ready to sow their seed in the morning.”

Some may say that they do not see, after all, why the custom of holding the Sabbath school between the two church services is much more objectionable than that of holding it in the morning would be, provided no more time were taken up with it in the one case than in the other; and provided also, that the intermission season is long enough to give time for rest and refreshment besides.

But herein consists the principal difficulty. No Sabbath school takes up less time than about one hour; and generally it consumes directly and indirectly something more, say an hour and a quarter. Now if the intermission is an hour and a half, every one sees that even an exercise of one hour leaves but scanty room for rest and meals. If it is two hours, which, however, is not very common in the winter, except in our cities and large towns, still there is but barely time left from the Sabbath school, if only an hour is devoted to it, to attend to other necessary things. And when by reason of an extension of the forenoon church services, some fifteen minutes beyond the hour of twelve o'clock, and a tardy performance of the duties of the superintendent and teachers, even this scanty pittance is abridged still more, the evil is very great.

I should be glad to see the congregation of adult persons, if such a one can be found, who would readily and cheerfully submit to the drudgery which

on the Sabbath school is often imposed upon the children. Let us take a view of a fashionable Sabbath day. Not as it is spent in vicious or careless families, either; but as it is SOMETIMES spent in families of the better sort.

The children rise in time for breakfast, but the breakfast is late, say about eight o'clock. Religious exercises fill up the time from half past eight, the time for rising for breakfast, till nine o'clock. And now for washing, and brushing shoes and clothes, and getting ready for church. An hour is soon spent, and at ten o'clock it is time to be on the road to church: though many who live at a distance set out by half past nine. It is possible that some of the children get a few moments, either before or after breakfast, for studying their lessons; but it is believed that this is not generally the case; and if it sometimes happens, they are not moments of quiet but of haste.

At half past ten they are in church. Here they are confined till twelve or later, when the Sabbath school immediately follows; after which those who do not go home for refreshment have from fifteen to twenty minutes of relaxation. I say of relaxation; but it is a species of relaxation which is not worthy of the name, and which is usually of little benefit, physically or morally. Sometimes, I know, the short season of relaxation precedes the Sabbath school; and

sometimes, but not generally, the season of intermission is two hours instead of an hour and a half in length.

At half past one, or at two, church services again commence, and continue till three o'clock or half past three, and sometimes till nearly four. Then all go home, of course, and arrive at various hours from half past three to half past four, according to the time of closing the services and the distance. Then follows perhaps, at the end of all this fatigue of body and mind, a season of family reading, or catechising, though in a very large proportion of our families this is probably omitted, for it is exceedingly difficult with the present fashions to bring all the members of the family together at this time. After supper, which under the circumstances is usually rather full and prolonged, comes the regular family worship; after which the burden of the Sabbath—all but the load or burden imposed on the stomach—is over.

Now I ask the candid and reflecting, if this is not about a fair sample of a New England Sabbath—I mean in the country? I have indeed said nothing of the morning, noon, or evening prayer meeting; nor of the third or fourth religious exercise; because though some or all of these occasionally have a place, yet they are by no means general;

and when they are so, children are not uniformly required to attend, especially when they reside at a distance.

Is not the picture which I have presented according to truth? Are not some of our children tasked in a manner which is highly improper and unreasonable, not to say unhealthy? The adult has his liberty to some extent, during the intermission, though it should be a short one. And to this liberty according to my view the *child* is entitled. We have no right—no moral right I mean of course—to deprive him of it. By giving him a season of rest at noon, though only an hour and a half or two hours, you divide a tedious day—tedious to him, I mean—into two parts, with a space between them, in which to recruit his mental and physical energies. I know the Sabbath will still be a long day to him, even on this plan, but it will not appear so long, nor will it indeed be so intolerable, as when the season of rest at noon is denied him.

I have said elsewhere—and I repeat the sentiment here that it may not be forgotten—I believe that two public exercises on the Sabbath are as many as are profitable, either for children or adults—above all for children. The rest of the time I suppose might be most profitably spent in the bosom of the family. I mean by this, that if children attend a

Sabbath school, they ought to attend but one of the church services; and that, as I do not like the idea of separating parents and children, I look forward, with great pleasure to the time when the whole congregation, old and young, will form a Sabbath school from ten to twelve o'clock in the forenoon, and then the whole congregation together attend a regular church service between two and four in the afternoon, or what would be better, perhaps, between one and half past two.

However, as it is probably several centuries too early to inculcate this last view, and perhaps a little too early to express it as a hope, I will return to the work of trying to provide the best possible substitute. And this, as I have repeatedly said, I consider to be a short Sabbath school in the morning.

This change, if we can effect nothing further at present, is indispensable to the health of the body, to the right exercise of the intellectual faculties, and to the wellbeing of the soul.

And first let me speak of the health of the body. I believe I shall be sustained by every candid and intelligent medical man when I say, that to continue the present round of Sabbath duties imposed on childhood is to injure, almost inevitably - and that too in a very short time—the bodily health of the majority of those concerned. I have not a doubt on my own part, that nearly all suffer sooner or

later, and perhaps every individual. If you ask me to name the particular complaints to which they are subjected, I cannot do it without reference to the constitutions and predispositions of each individual. One will be affected in one way and another in another. One will be led into a train of nervous affections; another will find his digestion impaired; another his circulatory system, and so on. But remember that I give it as my honest and deliberate conviction, that the course of Sunday management to which our best people are now subjecting their children—and in the belief too that they are doing God service—is slowly but certainly, as a general fact, undermining their constitutions. If it does not actually bring on disease, it will certainly aggravate diseases which are induced by other causes. I wish I could dwell longer on this point, for light is certainly needed here, if anywhere; and I have no reason to think that any of my readers would willingly close their eyes against it. The great difficulty to be met and surmounted in order to a reform in our Sabbath schools is the deplorable ignorance which everywhere prevails in regard to the constitution of mind and body. But I must defer the consideration of the physical evils which grow out of an abuse of the Sabbath school system for some other occasion.

The intellectual evils cannot be so lightly passed

over. Most of our Sabbath school children attend the week-day school. Here the intellect is usually tasked quite enough for the health of the mind, especially when the child is under the age of seven or eight years. I believe, in fact, that it is the concurrent testimony—at least nearly so—of all who have a right to speak on this subject, that the mind ought not to be tasked much by what is properly or at least usually called *study* till a child is full seven years of age. But if so, it ought not, after having been tasked six days in seven, to be held to labor on the seventh. Even for those who are beyond the seventh year, the Sabbath should be to them a day of rest; and must be, or the health of their minds will be impaired, and the most unhappy consequences sooner or later follow.

My own opinion is that the intellectual faculties of children who attend week-day schools, and of their teacher too, ought not to be tasked at all on the Sabbath. If, however, there must be task work, let us endeavor to have the surrounding and connecting circumstances as favorable as possible.

But you bring so many objections to the Sabbath school, it will be said, and to the manner of conducting it, that you will discourage people, and lead them to abandon it; so far, at least, as they place any confidence in your views and statements. A thing so bad, they will say, as you represent the

Sabbath school system, is not worth the trouble of a day or an hour, to attempt its reformation. Why not then abandon it at once ?

But not quite so fast. A thing which has no influence, at all, in society, for good or for evil, could not in the short space of 60 years have accumulated so many abuses. But an institution which is powerful for good or for evil, and equally so, has but to be brought under control and made to operate in the right channel, in order to produce good, entire and unmingled. Besides, it is indispensable, I again say, that every thing should have its infancy ; and if so, it must be exposed to the dangers of infancy.

Sabbath school instruction for the old and the young, may be so conducted as neither to injure the body nor impair the mind ; but on the contrary promote the happiness of both ; and I am endeavoring to show how. And this remark leads me to the third point under this head, viz., why a change or reform in Sabbath schools is necessary to the well-being of the soul.

Let me say then, in the first place, that I have very many doubts whether it is ever possible for the moral powers of man to be in what might be called a healthy, vigorous state, while the body and the intellect are sickly or even in a perverted or wrong state. "A sound mind," alluding to man's whole nature

aside from his bodily powers, says an old maxim, "in a sound body," as if the two naturally belonged together and were inseparable.

But be this as it may, our moral powers will never thrive under abuses of which I have been so loudly complaining. We talk to children about loving and serving God, and going to heaven to praise God continually, and about the holiness of the Sabbath, and the blessedness of heaven because it is an eternal Sabbath. But have we never read the story of the little girl (from Mrs. Barbauld) who after having been made to hate the Sabbath by the perpetual confinement which her good grandmother ignorantly imposed on her every time it arrived, and having also been told that heaven was an eternal Sabbath, honestly said, that if it was so she did not want to go there ?

Now children may say what they please to the contrary, because trained to think they *must* say so, about their respect for the Sabbath and its ordinances and their love of the Sabbath school ; and parents may think what they please about it ; but be it remembered, they can no more come to love the exercises of the Sabbath and the Sabbath school, so long as both are made a drudgery to them, than they can come to love that which is bitter or acid by continually eating it.

Children, I know, are highly imitative in their

character ; and what their parents and teachers love they are apt to love also. But what parent or teacher does really love the Sabbath school, as it is now usually managed ? He may *endure* it, because he thinks it a good institution, one out of which, some how or other, and at some time or other God may be pleased to *educ*e good. And children, in like manner, may learn to *endure* the Sabbath school, and a few may mistake this power to *endure*, as some teachers do, for *love*.

CHAPTER IV.

METHOD OF SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHING.

§ 1. ERRORS OF PRESENT METHODS OF INSTRUCTION.

An example of erroneous teaching.—Endeavor to show that such instruction is not religious instruction.—May lead to religious instruction.—Other methods which are preferable.

IT has been said, in a former chapter, that there is very little of education among us, by week-day or by Sabbath, except mere *word* education ; and such I verily believe to be the fact. The Sabbath school pupil and the pupil of the district school continue to love and hate as before, in despite of all our efforts—nor is their health at all improved by them. Many, I am aware, will be slow to admit

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the truth of this charge; and those who admit it, in its application to other schools, will be slow to admit it in its application to the Sabbath school. But that it is not made without due consideration, I propose to show by an example.

The superintendent of one of our Sabbath schools not long since gave out a lesson to the school under his care on the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the last chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. It was, in fact, the last of a series of lessons prepared expressly for Sabbath schools; and the whole series had been studied in the school. The verses referred to are as follows:

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

The questions on the first verse of this singular lesson—singular I mean for an ordinary Sabbath school—were as follows. Let it be observed, however, that the pupils were taught to find answers to the questions, if they could, in the verses composing the lesson; but when there was no answer to be found there, they were referred to other parts of the Bible for answers, as will be seen by references which I shall read in connection with many of the questions.

“ 1. Who are spoken of here? What *rule* is meant? ver. 15. (Here the pupil is referred to the preceding verse.) How do those walk or live, who act according to that truth? Eph. v. 8-11. Upon what alone do they depend for salvation? Gal. ii. 16. What does the apostle wish to such? What is the peace which he desires for them? Phil. iv. 7. How is it obtained? Rom. v. 1. What is the mercy which is here spoken of? To what are the salvation and blessings of Christians owing? 1 Peter i. 3. What is the grace of God called, to show that it is undeserved by men? Rom. v. 15. What is the exhortation of the apostle Jude? Jude 20, 21. Is it common, in the letters of the apostles, to wish peace and mercy for those to whom they wrote? 1 Tim. i. 2, Titus i. 4, 2 John 3. By what name are Christians called? Who were at first called Israel? Why were they called the Israel of God? Deut. vii. 6. Why are Christians now called by that name? 1 Peter ii. 9, 10. How was this privilege obtained for all who believe in Christ? Eph. ii. 13, 16. How did this truth show the error of the doctrine which the false teachers preached? Rom. iii. 21, 22.

Now what is this sort of instruction to the young, but mere *word* instruction? And so far as it is intelligible, what does it but address the intellect? Now people may fancy that this kind of instruction

is religious instruction as much as they will; but I can assure them, it has no such tendency as they suppose. It is not lawfully entitled even to the name of *moral* instruction. But let us analyze it a little.

“And as many as walk according to this rule,” &c. Now the first question in the list is, Who are spoken of here? Consequently the pupil's first effort is to find, in the verse to which it refers, an answer to it. Perhaps he finds it—“they who walk,” &c. Perhaps, however, he feels some degree of uncertainty, and so when he comes to the Sabbath school, if the question comes to him, he reads the verse, and this with many teachers answers the purpose, and they pass on. Or if it comes not to him, he goes on in uncertainty.

But the next question is, What *rule* is here meant? The pupil is referred, by the book itself, to verse 15—the verse preceding. Here again he is a little at a loss, and consequently he reserves to himself the privilege of reading the whole verse should it be necessary—a privilege seldom if ever denied him.

For a solution of the next question the pupil is referred to Eph. v. 8–11. Here are four verses to be read or recited, in order to come at the answer; and cruel indeed would the teacher be thought who should require his pupils to recite such long references.

And as for selecting the particular portion that solves the question, he seldom takes the pains to do it; nor could he do it, in many instances, were he to make the trial. Now what ideas do Sabbath school pupils get from all this? And suppose they attached ideas to it, and were enlightened, is the heart at all affected? Are they any nearer obeying the holy law of God than they were before they recited it? Any more disposed to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, or their neighbor as themselves? Is any thing cultivated but the memory? I am surprised at the ignorance of the human mind which those teachers betray who suppose that such instruction as this is religious instruction.

I know indeed that it may by possibility *lead* to religious instruction; but it has no religious power of itself. It is a dead letter, or worse than a dead letter; it falls lifeless upon the mere intellect. It may lead, I say, to religious instruction, in the hands of a teacher who thinks. Such a teacher will find God, and lessons on God and holiness, in every thing. He may tell them what is meant by *walk* and *rule*, and what it is to walk wrong, and what to walk or go by *right rules*. He may present simple but forcible illustrations of the word walk as it is often used in the Bible, especially here. He may relate anecdotes or recent occurrences, and

draw a moral from them that will touch the heart. Nay he may even instruct them in the mechanism of walking, and show them the wonderful operation of the laws of God in the human frame. But I have spoken of results as they usually are, in our schools; and not as it is desirable they should be, or as, in the hands of a good teacher, we can easily imagine they might be.

I shall now proceed to give several examples of a very different sort of instruction from all this; which, whether better or worse, I leave to the reader. It is not indeed intended wholly as a substitute for such teaching as I have described above; for in the hands of highly advanced Bible classes such lessons, by the conversation to which they give rise, may have their use. But a knowledge of geography—that I mean of the countries mentioned in the Bible—of history, biography, antiquities, manners and customs, &c., is of primary importance in the outset of a course of religious instruction; and whatever else is taught or whatever books used, cannot be dispensed with. Moreover it is at once intelligible, interesting and profitable, and though it may be regarded by some as purely scientific, it need not be so. Dr. Franklin found no difficulty in *moralizing* on the lives, occurrences, &c. of the Bible; and cannot those who prize the Bible as their

dearest treasure do as much with it even in its more scientific parts as the mere philosopher ?

§ II. TEACHING BIBLE GEOGRAPHY.

Value of this sort of knowledge.—Illustrated by a lesson from Matt. ii. 1, 2—Objections to this method considered.—Remarks and reflections.—A second lesson of geography.

ONE of the preliminary or preparatory studies of the Sabbath school, as I have already said, should be geography. Nothing gives so much of reality to the sacred narrative as a knowledge of the geography of the countries of which it speaks. I admit, indeed, that thousands read the word of God to great advantage, without this knowledge, for the wayfaring man, though a fool—that is, uninstructed—need not err essentially, in any thing which pertains to the salvation of his soul. And yet there is an almost inconceivable difference between the feelings and thoughts of one who reads a passage of the Bible with a mind nearly or wholly vacant, and one who reads the same passage with a mind which sees at one view every thing which pertains to the subject or subjects it embraces.

To illustrate the difference to which I refer, let us take up and consider, for a moment, the first two verses of the second chapter of the gospel according to Matthew, including, as they do, a small por-

tion of the early history of our Savior. They are as follows :

“ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

To three-fourths of the community who should read this passage, no other ideas would be suggested than the birth of Jesus, a great way off, perhaps eastward; places called Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Judea, of which it might probably be conjectured that the first was a city; a king by the name of Herod; certain wise men, who came to him from a place eastward of the king's residence; a star in the east; and an indefinite notion of certain devotional acts by the wise men. In regard to all the rest, no ideas would exist; and those which I have suggested would be very obscure and indefinite. Whereas to the members of a Sabbath school class, properly instructed and enlightened, the case would be far otherwise. Let us see what this proper instruction is.

A Sabbath school class of almost any age, but especially if old enough to know something of geography and the use of maps, might be profitably employed during the whole time allotted to them

for a single Sabbath, in a course something like what is about to be suggested.

The teacher might commence the exercise by reading the first verse, and then saying to the class generally : This verse tells us about somebody's being born ; do you know who it is that is here spoken of as being born ?

Perhaps all, or nearly all, answer together, " It is Jesus." Some may say afterward, " It is Jesus Christ." The question would be, I am aware, a very simple one ; but the simpler the better, that the class might not be discouraged in the outset.

Do any of you know how long ago Jesus Christ was born, or in what year ? If a person should be born this year, he would be said to be born in 1841 ; and if one of you had been born just ten years ago, this would have been in 1831. Now I ask you if you know how long ago *Christ* was born, or in what year ?

This second question is of such a nature as to require, for the sake of very young pupils, a little explanation. The teacher would endeavor, however, to make the subject as intelligible as possible.

He proceeds to ask : Do you know *where* Jesus Christ was born ? If you do not recollect, just read over the verse and see if you can find out. (Let the reader keep in mind that I am suiting my instruc-

tions here, to the very youngest Sabbath school pupils.) “In Bethlehem of Judea;” will be the reply, by this time. Very well, in what part of the world *was* Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born? Was it eastward, westward, northward or southward of us? Was it in Europe, America, Africa, or Asia?

Should his pupils hesitate, he might here treat the subject negatively. Do you think Bethlehem of Judea was in America? Why not? Was it in Africa? Why do you think so? If it was not in America or Africa, it must have been in Europe or Asia—which do you think the most likely?

Here a map of the world—at least, an outline map—would be desirable. I think it better that it should be on Mercator’s projection; but almost any map will do. Let the four quarters of the globe be distinctly pointed out, and Palestine shown; and let it be distinctly seen that Palestine is within the limits of Asia. Let the bearing of Palestine from the United States be also noticed and remembered, as well as its bearing from Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Chaldea, Syria, &c.

It is undoubtedly true, that for some members of very young classes, and for a large proportion of the older classes of a Sabbath school, such minute geographical instruction would not be necessary. And yet there would be so many to whom it would be

useful, that I would certainly pursue it, except perhaps in the very highest classes; and even these should have a little of this sort of drilling. I have known many a common school teacher who would put his oldest and most advanced pupils, on the first day of school, before forming an acquaintance with them, into the spelling and reading of words of only one syllable; and even into the simplest elements of words themselves. If this recurrence to first principles is useful to the district school pupil, why should it not be equally useful in Sabbath schools?

After giving the class a general idea of the situation of Palestine, with respect to other countries, a judicious teacher would do well to introduce a map of Palestine only,* with the three principal divisions of it, Judea, Samaria and Galilee. He would point out to them Judea with its capital, Jerusalem in the south, Samaria in the middle, and Galilee in the north. Here, he would say, is Bethlehem of Judea, where the Savior was born, and proceed to show them its situation with respect to Jerusalem, and briefly to describe it and relate any facts he might be acquainted with respecting it, either in connec-

* For this purpose, also, that is for the purpose of giving a general idea of the structure of the country to beginners, a mere outline map is best, having on it nothing but the grand divisions of the country, with the ruins, and mountains, and a few of the principal cities.

tion with its ancient history, or its modern appearance. Some teachers would be familiar with its present condition, as set forth by travellers, who may be relied on; others with its ancient history; and while the former would be able to speak of the convent of St. Helena, over the supposed spot of our Savior's birth, the latter would mention the names of some of the distinguished individuals who were born at Bethlehem, or who lived or died there. Were there time, and were I the teacher, with my outline map before me, I should think it both a duty and a pleasure to be able to do something in both ways; so that if the antiquities of the place did not suffice to arrest attention, its modern state might do it.

If it is said that this sort of instruction might do very well for beginners, but would not do so well for more advanced pupils, I reply, Try it, and see. The teacher who shall fit himself properly for this work will soon find that not only older children but even adults will be interested in it. How soon will the latter crowd around the teacher and his class, and lend a listening ear! They may be attracted, it is true, by the novelty of maps and other apparatus, but this is not all; they are attracted by the ever active, never to be wholly repressed *desire to know*—the lever upon which, in conjunction with religion, not only the world of the Sabbath school,

but the world in general—even the most vicious and miserable portions of it—is yet to be elevated.

It may be said that by this mode of teaching I would encourage a species of profanation of holy things—that instruction in geography is a secular concern belonging to the week-day, rather than the Sabbath. It is not so however; though the objection will continually recur to many minds, even if it were as frequently answered and answered satisfactorily.

But to proceed. The incidental instruction of which I have been speaking may be of greater or less extent, according to time, the circumstances, the feelings of the teacher, the condition of the pupils, &c. Or it may be varied to meet the circumstances. Thus, as I have already suggested, if the pupils do not appear to be interested in the description of Bethlehem, as it now is, the teacher may speak of it as it *once was*; if they are uninterested with the biography of one person who has resided in Bethlehem, as *Boaz*, try that of another, as David, or Jesse his father.

Nothing of this kind, I admit, *belongs necessarily* to the subject matter of the two verses I have selected from Matthew; it is incidental or collateral instruction. Still it is, as I maintain, Bible instruction; and may be made, one portion of it or another, to attract attention and afford profit. I would, it is

true, teach nothing of geography or history but what every child that reads the Bible ought to know, and nothing of biography, or manners and customs, that would not be likely to give rise to useful moral reflections. But I would not hesitate to teach, even on the Sabbath day, that which does have such a tendency; and I should consider myself sustained too in doing so.

Here, in connection with the geography of Bethlehem, and of the province of Judea in which it is situated, I would speak of Jerusalem as the capital of Judea; of the situation of Bethlehem with respect to it; of the Dead Sea to the southeast; of Hebron to the south, &c.

But here, also, should it be necessary, in order to arrest attention, might come in some account of "Herod the king." For Jesus, we are told, was born in the days of Herod the king. I should indeed prefer, as a general rule, to have in view a single great point in each lesson, to which I would if possible direct attention; and only branch out upon other subjects when it was indispensably necessary to do so in order to procure attention. Thus, in the lesson before us, I would prefer to make geography—that of Palestine and the adjacent countries, especially the *east* here spoken of—the main subject, though in another lesson, say the parable of the sower, I would make manners and customs the chief

thing ; and in another, as the prodigal, I would dwell on moral character, and the dangers to which the young are subjected of being ruined on leaving the paternal roof, by falling into bad company, &c.

If, however, a teacher is at a loss for geographical thoughts in the lesson before us, he may still find something to do. He may, as I have said, talk about Herod the king. The king of what ? might be asked. And what do you know about him ? Was he a good, or a bad king ? Why do you think so ?

Again, the second verse tells us that wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. Now the question may be put—perhaps without recurring to the map, if the latter has been well explained before—What countries lay east of Palestine—who these wise men were, or may have been, &c.

Here would be room, no doubt, for a great deal of instruction from the teacher, in regard to the condition of arts, sciences, and religion, in the countries around Palestine—and they should be shown that there were *wise men* even if there were no *magi*, in Egypt, no less than in Arabia, Chaldea, or Persia.

Conversation might be had on the star in the east, or rather the star which was seen by the wise men *from* the east ; for it is by no means likely that they went several hundred miles in an opposite direction to that in which they saw the star ; besides,

it was evidently seen westward at the time of their arrival in Judea.

Further explanations of the origin of the word *Jews* might occur in connection with the question. Where is he who is born king of the Jews? as well as much conversation about the king of the Jews himself. If Herod was already the king, how could a person, not belonging to his family—not of the royal line—be *born* king. The word *worship* might also suggest a fund of interesting conversation.

I am well assured that as a general thing this form of Sabbath school instruction—or as it might be called, the topic system—is the best which can possibly be devised. Other excellent systems there may be, I know; but this is certainly the more excellent, at least in the beginning.

There is but one serious difficulty about the matter; which is the supposed incompetency of teachers; I mean an incompetency supposed by themselves. Many who can sit and hear a class of pupils recite a number of verses from the Bible, or a hymn-book, or perhaps several chapters, or ask the questions in a question book and hear the pupils' replies, will shrink from the idea of teaching in the way of which I have been speaking. They do not themselves understand the geography of Palestine they say; and how can they teach it to their children?

Besides, they have not time to devote to the work of making the necessary preparation.

But a Bible dictionary certainly costs but little; and a great deal may be learned by any person of good sense, in but a single hour, with the dictionary in one hand and a Bible in the other. Take the very lesson, for example, to which I have been directing your attention. Every one can find an account of Bethlehem in it—its distance from Jerusalem—the direction in which it lay from that place. Then the fact that it lay six miles south of Jerusalem might give occasion to learn something of Jerusalem. And how long would it take to acquire many facts in regard to this city? Or if a teacher should say that he could retain, till he should meet his class, but a very little of what he might learn in one short hour, then let him study what he can, retain what he can, relate what he can, and read over the rest. And finally, if the pupils are not old enough to understand what is read, he can paraphrase, or explain it to them. It may justly be questioned whether a teacher who cannot give one hour of individual attention to a lesson, is fit to conduct a Sabbath school class; but he who has but one hour, and has common sense, ought to be able to collect facts enough in connection with the two verses of Matthew which I have mentioned, to keep up the

interest of his class as long as their interest ought to be kept up, at one time.*

I wish to have a child so instructed that when he reads about Jesus, as being born in Bethlehem of Judea, he may be able to make it a reality. This he will hardly do, however, in the way in which religious instruction is now usually conducted. All will be a blank to him or nearly so; or he will at best have about the same feelings in relation to Bethlehem, or Jerusalem, or Judea, which he has in regard to the places mentioned in the story of Sindbad the Sailor or the travels of Gulliver. It will at best be a sort of fairy land to him, rather than real *terra firma*. But only give a child the kind of instruction at which I have hinted, and he will have *ideas* in his mind.

Let him then read about Bethlehem of Judea, and what will be his thoughts? At the word Bethlehem he thinks of a village or city among the hills of Southern Palestine—a hilly country throughout—having Jerusalem, a very large city, but a little way to the north, the Dead Sea to the east, &c. Bethlehem, its churches and other buildings, its hills and valleys, its ancient but distinguished inhabit-

* I might allude here to the practice of some teachers of taking written notes with them to the Sabbath school room. Not prolonged ones, but only a single word to remind them of the topics, collateral or otherwise, to which they wish to refer. I mean memoranda, however, rather than notes.

ants, Jacob, Ruth, Boaz, Jesse and David—Jerusalem with its walls and spires and churches and mosques, the Mount of Olivet, the Dead Sea skirting the horizon all along the east and southeast, and a great many other things—will all be before his mind's eye and will call up feelings—I may say pleasures, too—which to other readers are most evidently unknown.

Thus much for the *pleasure* of having ideas in one's mind, when we read and hear. But it should be remembered that there is profit in it too, if life itself is profitable. For it is not so much the number of hours that we are actually awake, or even that we breathe, which determines the length of our lives, as the number of ideas we have. If a person has three times, or five times, or ten times as many thoughts or ideas in his mind, during a life of seventy years, than another person of the same years, and if those ideas are equally just and vigorous, then I cannot see why the former individual does not, to all intents and purposes, live three or five or ten times as long as the latter. Is it not so? Now there is all the difference which I have here represented, among mankind in respect of thought and ideas; and perhaps I should say, a great deal more.

I grant indeed that it is not always they who think most rapidly, who think *best*. Vigor of thought is sometimes diminished in proportion to its

rapid flight. I have seen individuals, the speed of whose thoughts was as the lightning ; and yet their ideas were seldom good for any thing—they were none of them, at any rate, strong and manly. But then, on the other hand, it is not true that strength of thought is in proportion to slowness. There are individuals who think rapidly and yet think justly. Some of the best and most vigorous thinkers I have ever known thought at least ten times as much in a day as their slower thinking neighbors ; and thus, as I maintain, lived ten times as long in the same number of years or days. If they were Christians, moreover, they were as the natural result ten times better Christians, at least so far as personal enjoyment of their religion was concerned.

If it is highly desirable that when we take up a newspaper or a book to read, or a pen to write, or sit down to converse with our friends, we should have *ideas* in our heads ; it is particularly important that when we sit down to read or think on sacred things, we should not be, as too many are, almost *destitute of ideas* through the whole exercise. There may be silent worship, as with the Quakers, and it may have its uses ; but it is the silence of the tongue merely, and not vacuity of mind which is useful to any ; for God will never accept of mental unfruitfulness, where he has given us the means of cultivation, and a proper soil to cultivate.

But especially is it desirable to think with activity and energy when we read the Bible; and this is one reason why I would have every one, as soon as he is old enough, to understand geography, biography, history, chronology, manners and customs, &c. I would have every word, especially every important word, suggest ideas. And not mere simple ideas, either; but whole clusters of ideas; and this with a most surprising rapidity. Why there is as much difference between the state of mind of two individuals, who might read that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, one of whom should be familiar with sacred geography, and the other a stranger to it, as there is between the state of mind of two persons in Boston, one of whom stands on Beacon-street and surveys the common, and the other, having ascended to the top of the State-house, surveys the whole city, and its fourteen or fifteen surrounding towns and villages.

§ III. STUDY OF BIOGRAPHY.

Lesson on the Transfiguration of Christ.—Biography of Moses.—That of Elias or Elijah.—That of Elisha.

BUT I must pursue this subject a little farther by remarking on another passage of Scripture, involving more of biography. For this purpose I have selected the first three verses of the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, embracing an account of what

is usually called the transfiguration of Christ. The teacher of a Sabbath school class, where these three verses were the lesson of the day, might first read them to his class, as follows :

“ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.”

Now although these verses involve a little geography—as they naturally excite the curiosity of an inquiring mind in regard to the “ high mountain” spoken of—yet it is obvious that the study of geography could not, or at least should not be made the prominent topic of this particular lesson. Biography is more obviously a leading topic here than geography or any thing else ; and though the teacher would not entirely exclude every thing else, especially if the attention of the pupil could not be kept up, yet he would certainly do well, to confine himself principally to that single subject.

He might say to his class : Here is the account of the Saviour’s going up into a mountain and several other persons with him. Do you know how many ? What were their names ? Do you know whether they were strangers to the Saviour, or acquaintances ? Of one of them it is said, “ John his brother.”

Whose brother is meant? Whose sons were James and John? What do you know about them besides what is here related? What do you know of Peter? Whose son was he? What other name had he besides Peter? What do you know of his general character? Was it this same Peter who denied the Saviour? What other wrong thing is related of him besides his denial of the Saviour? Had Peter any family? Do you know where his family resided? Had James and John families, do you think?

We are also told here about Moses and Elias. Was not Moses dead long before this time? How happened it, then, that he was here? In what part of the Bible do we learn about Moses? In what particular books? In what country was he born? Where did he die? Whose son was he? Whom did he marry? What were the names of his children? How was he related to Aaron? How to Miriam? About how long before the time of Christ did Moses live?

This again, it will be said by many, would have nothing to do with the lesson, and so at first view it might seem. But then it is biography and truth—Bible biography and truth. It is what all children ought to know, and what many do know, at least in part. And this is a good reason for connecting it with the lesson. Some of the questions could be

readily answered by almost any pupil ; while others would have to be answered by the teacher himself, who could enlarge or contract his range of remarks as he might see fit on the occasion, and as the unexpected and often unforeseen and curious questions of his pupils might incline him.

But we have not yet done with the lesson. Who was Elias ? he would ask,—a question which few, if any, of a youthful class would be able readily to answer. They should be told that in the New Testament, Elijah the prophet is called Elias, and examples should be given. Now then, the teacher might say, what do you know of Elias or Elijah ? And in order to find out this, a course might be pursued in relation to this distinguished individual not unlike that which was pursued in a preceding paragraph in relation to Moses. The story of Elijah, like that of Moses, might be more or less extended ; and as that of Moses may be made to draw in sketches of other characters, so that of Elijah might involve or at least lead to that of Elisha.

§. IV. BIOGRAPHY IN OLDER CLASSES.

Account of Philip the Evangelist.—Conversation respecting him.

FOR a larger or at least a more advanced class, Bible biography might be taken up in a manner rather more difficult or at least more philosophical.

We might give out, for example, a week beforehand,* the story of Philip the Evangelist, requiring the pupils to find it out from beginning to end, or at least to go as far as they could. And when beginning this method of instruction, one might help them a little by telling them in which chapters of the Acts of the Apostles they must seek for their information.

In teaching a class with this lesson as our text or starting point, I would first inquire if any of them knew whether the Philip here mentioned was the same with Philip one of the twelve apostles of the Savior. This might be beyond their capacities, but should not be beyond the knowledge of the teacher. Having done his duty in this respect, he might proceed in a manner somewhat like the following :

You may open your Bibles to the sixth chapter of Acts, at the 5th verse, and one of you (specifying which) may read it. Here is the *first* account of Philip. Though we do not know where he was born, you see he was chosen to be an officer ; do you know what office it was ? Should they not see the connection readily, I would inform them, and

* I ought to say here that I would prefer to give out all lessons a week beforehand, even when they were as simple as the two preceding ones. Nor would I wholly, in all cases, reject the old plan of committing to memory. On the contrary, I think that when the lesson was short, say only a few verses, and these connected, I would have it committed to memory by all the pupils.

mention at the same time the duties, in those days, of a deacon. *

Turn now, I would say, to the eighth chapter of Acts at the 5th verse. Here you find mention of Philip again. What is it here said that Philip did? It is said he went down to the city of Samaria—where did he go from? This is ascertained, with considerable certainty, by consulting the first verse of this chapter. How far from Jerusalem was Samaria? In what direction? Why then was it called down, since we almost always call it up towards the north? Let this be explained.—This course, I know, involves geographical as well as biographical instruction; but in a large class I would not hesitate to bring it in, even where it was not a leading topic.

What did Philip do at Samaria? With what success were his labors attended? What did he do besides preach? (See verse 7 of chap. viii.) Did he do any thing else besides preaching and casting out unclean spirits? Who else, in those days, could do such mighty works besides Philip? With what sorcerer did Philip have an adventure at Samaria? Did the sorcerer appear to become a good man? Was his conversion to Christianity real or pretended? Was this the fault of Philip?

Look now at verse 25 of the same chapter. Who spake to Philip, as related in this verse?

What did the angel tell him to do? What countries or places lay towards the south? To which of them did Philip go on this occasion? Whom did he fall in with in his journey? Did he *overtake* him, or did he *meet* him rather? Where was Ethiopia? Is the country called by this name now? Where had the eunuch been? Where was he going? In what kind of vehicle was he travelling? Did Philip ride with him? What happened on their journey? What became of the eunuch?

Much familiar conversation might here be held between the teacher and his pupils, if necessary or desirable, about the book the eunuch was reading—what the form of books was at that time—baptism—its subjects—modes, &c. There are a thousand *streets* and *lanes*—to say nothing of the more unfrequented *by-paths*—into which the pupils may be led a little way, and in which they may often travel for a time, with much pleasure and profit. And let me say again, once for all, that this by-the-way instruction is often, very often, the most permanent.

But to proceed. I have asked you what became of the eunuch after he was baptized; now what became of Philip? Where was Azotus? What do you know of Azotus? What other distinguished cities of the Philistines were there in those days? Where did Philip go next, after he was at Azotus?

Which way was Cesarea from Azotus? About how far? What do you know about it? Near what sea did it lie? In what direction from Jerusalem? About how far? Was it *down* or *up* from Jerusalem?

Is this the last account we have of Philip the Evangelist? As it is not probable the pupils of a class will know any thing more about him, they may be required to turn to the 8th verse of chap. xxi. of the same book—The Acts. What place is here mentioned? Who came here in the course of his travels? Whose house is it said he came to? Is there any doubt that this was the same Philip who was left there in a former part of our lesson? Had he a family here? What is said of some members of his family? What reason have we to think he resided here permanently? What became of him afterward?

§ V. MORAL INSTRUCTION.

Parable of the prodigal son.—How to draw moral reflections.
—Advantages and disadvantages of printed question books —Use of dictionaries commentaries and other helps.

ONE specimen more, of this sort of instruction in the Sabbath school. For this purpose I select the parable of the prodigal son, found in the fifteenth chapter of the gospel according to Luke. I select this lesson because it gives a fine opportunity, in the sequel, for touching the hearts of the young.

The instruction I have alluded to, thus far, though very important, is preparatory, rather than deserving of any other name. It plays round the head, but does not, in all instances, without special effort by the teacher, reach the heart.

I would begin somewhat as before, by reading or requiring a pupil to read, the first two or three verses of the parable beginning with the eleventh.

“And he said, A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”

The first words of these verses, I would say, are, “And he said.” Now *who* said?—This inquiry I would make to arrest attention, and bring the young mind to the subject, that every pupil might know what he was about. “A certain man had two sons.” Is there reason for believing that he had more than two? What reason have you for believing that he had no more? Two reasons are given in the second verse read; but so unaccustomed are many Sabbath school pupils to think, that it may be often necessary to point them out to them.

“And the younger of them said unto his father,” &c. The younger of whom? And why should

he be so much more forward to make claims of this sort than the elder ?

“ Father, give me the portion of goods,” &c. Do you know what were called *goods* in those days ?

“ Falleth to me.” How could they fall to him ? What is meant by the word *falleth* ?

“ And he divided unto them his living.” Who divided, &c. ? To whom did he divide ? What *was* his living ?

“ And not many days after.” Here I would show that though “ many days ” sometimes, in the Bible, means a considerable time—once it was three years, as in the case of Shimei, the enemy of David—yet that the phrase “ *not* many days,” used here, means a very few days only ; perhaps one or two weeks, but probably not so much.

“ The younger son gathered all together.” Gathered all what together ? Here, if not before, there should be a full and faithful exposition of the meaning of the word *goods*, at the time of this parable. Real estate should be shown to have formed a less important item than it does now with us ; and clothing and cattle much more important ones. Such an explanation would involve much in regard to customs, manners, &c.

“ And took his journey into a far country.” Now if this parable was founded on facts, as I suppose most of the Savior’s parables were, it is probable

that this father and his family resided in Palestine, either in the province of Judea or that of Galilee. The far country may have been Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rome, Greece, Persia, or India; but more probably, as it seems to me, one of the two latter. A few hundred miles, however, in those days, was far off; so that it is quite possible he went no farther than Egypt, Syria, or Arabia.

“And there wasted his substance with riotous living.” What was his substance? Was it not his own goods and property? What was riotous living?—Here mention to the pupils, some of the forms of living that would be called riotous; and ask them if such living was right. Would it be right for boys who remain at home subject to their parents, to indulge in riotous living, even if their parents would permit it? Why not? The physical as well as moral consequences, if known, might be pointed out and a warning voice lifted against them.

Now do you suppose this young man went away privately, without the knowledge of his father or any other friends, that is, did he *run* away? Why do you suppose he was desirous of going away? Was it right for him to leave the paternal roof? Perhaps he wished to see distant countries; was there any thing wrong in this? Perhaps he was anxious to pursue some other employment, and his father was unwilling; would it be right to wish to be

away on that account? And even if it were right for a youth to *desire*, at times, to go away from home, is it ever right, in any circumstances, to go away privately;—to *run* away?

But would it not be right in some cases, perhaps you will ask, for a boy to run away? If the father was intemperate, and the boy was afraid he would take his life, would it not be right for him to run away? Or if his father was to attempt to compel him to steal, or lie, or swear, all which conduct he knew was offensive to God, might he not go away? Or if a parent or master were working him so hard that he knew it would destroy his health—what then? Or if a penurious or lazy parent were actually starving a child to death, might he not, then, lawfully leave him?

These questions, and a multitude of others which might naturally be raised from the text, would give great scope for conversation with pupils; and in most cases, would not fail to draw them into it. Anecdotes might occur, either to the teacher or the pupils, which would illustrate the subject, and serve to remove their difficulties. Those who have never tried this method of teaching, have little conception of the wide range which a discussion will sometimes take; or of the interest which pupils who are very young will sometimes manifest in it.

On the morality of going away from home privately, or running away, the case of Dr. Franklin might be adverted to ; who, it is well known, became great and distinguished, though a runaway. Can it be that so great and good a man as Franklin, it will be asked—one who seems to have been so singularly favored by Divine Providence—did wrong in running away from his parents ?

Here again a teacher would have a fine opportunity for instilling lessons of morality into the minds of his pupils. He would endeavor to show them that the success of an individual does not always prove that he is right in his course. Dr. Franklin was great, notwithstanding, or in spite of his faults—for faults he certainly had—but it is a question with many whether, though great, he was a very good man. Suppose he *was* a good man, however ; suppose this could be shown, I mean, it would not prove that every thing which he did in early life, long before he became a good man, was right.

I suppose, however, that whether right or wrong, the case of Franklin, though he was a successful young man and finally rose to eminence, is but an exception to the general rule. This rule is, that those who run away turn out ill ; and if a proper examination into the subject could be made, it would probably appear, that for one boy who runs away

from parents and masters, and yet does well afterward, a hundred, at least, if not a thousand can be found, who are thereby ruined.

One thing more might be profitably done here, by an ingenious teacher, who was well acquainted with facts. He might show his pupils how such stories as Gulliver's Travels, Sindbad the Sailor, Baron Trenck, and Robinson Crusoe, tend to make boys uneasy with their home; and sometimes even cause them to run away. Not many years ago, some boys in Dorchester, in this state, having their heads full of the story of Robinson Crusoe, actually fitted themselves out for a residence on the island of Nantucket; and ran away from their parents, in order to go there. They were, however, overtaken in the woods before they arrived at their place of destination, and carried home again. I believe that fictitious writings generally have a tendency to unsettle the youthful mind in the case of both sexes; and a teacher who believed thus might take this opportunity of expressing the belief, especially to older pupils. For my own part, I never knew a boy or girl who loved home or church or school the better for reading novels and romances; but a great many who evidently loved home and school and parents and other friends the less for it.

But to our lesson again, from which I may seem to some of my readers to have strayed almost as far

as our young Robinsons did from Dorchester. The next three verses are as follows :

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat ; and no man gave unto him.”

“And when he had spent all,” &c. When *who* had spent all ? What is meant by *all* ?

Well, when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. What is a famine ? Do you know what countries in the world are most subject to famine ? Was this famine, from which the young prodigal suffered, miraculous ; or was it apparently an ordinary occurrence ? Here the pupils of most Sabbath school classes will need a good deal of instruction — I mean in connection with the last two questions—and happy is the teacher who is prepared to give it.

“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.” What is meant by “he went and *joined* himself ?” Did they keep their swine in droves then, in eastern countries ? And were they under the care of a keeper as sheep and cattle were ? Was the employment of keeping swine a respectable one ? Here instruction should be given in regard to

the methods of keeping cattle, sheep, swine, &c., in eastern countries, and something should be said of the respectability or want of respectability of the employment. Mention may be made in particular, of the shepherds of Bible times, from the days of Moses down to the time of Christ ; together with the kind of dangers to which sheep were exposed which rendered shepherds necessary. This text would, or at least *might* lead to much conversation on natural history.

“And he would fain have filled,” &c. What is the meaning of *would fain* ? Of whom is it said *he would fain* ? Would fain what ? Husks of what ? They could not have been the husks of Indian corn, as it was not at that time known ; at least in that country. They should be told, here, what the word *corn* means in the Bible ; and also what was probably meant by husks, in this place, viz., the skins, shells, rinds, &c. of fruits.

It is said here, that he would fain, or gladly, have satisfied the cravings of his stomach with coarse things, such as were considered fit only for swine, “but no man gave unto him.” Where were his friends who helped him to *spend* his money in the course of his riotous living ? Were they all dead but he ? For riotous people seldom live as long as other people. Or was it with them as it usually is with associates in sin and crime, that when one of

the company has no longer any money, they are quite willing to turn him off and take no farther notice of him? What, not so much as to give him a few rinds, or skins, or husks? Oh no; he might take care of himself for what they cared, now that he had no money. And worse than all this, perhaps they were among the very first to taunt him on account of his distress and poverty, though they were conscious that they were among the causes of producing it.

What a fine opportunity would this lesson afford, just at this point, for presenting—and that too in a most forcible manner—the evils of vice! A Sabbath school teacher must be exceedingly uninformed in his Bible or unacquainted with human nature, or cold-hearted, who would let slip, without the most urgent necessity, such a golden opportunity for endeavoring to make serious impressions.

However, were I the teacher, I would not, as yet, make too many inferences which were strictly religious. I would reserve this part of the application—at least a good share of it—till I came to another portion of the parable. My object would be, *first*, to interest them; *secondly*, to prepare their minds, and make the appeal to the conscience, at once, just before closing the lesson.

But now follows a verse more curious than any of the rest, if not more instructive. “And when he

came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

"And when he came to himself." What can this mean? Had he not been *himself* all the while? Had he been deranged? Had he been confined or imprisoned? *Came to himself?* A most singular expression indeed, children; can any of you think what it means?

It is hardly possible for a class whose attention had been secured thus far, not to take notice of this singular expression, and be led to think about it. And here, as it seems to me, is the place to lay hold of their consciences. They may be told—what is strictly true—that they who live in this world for the mere purpose of gratifying themselves, to eat and drink and swim in pleasure, regardless of the future, may justly be said—as is intimated of the young man in the parable—not to be themselves; or as we should say, to be crazy. They are not what God made them to be. Nothing appears to them as it truly is. Vice does not appear truly hateful; nor does virtue appear truly lovely. There may be something respectable and even desirable to them in piety or Christian character; or rather they may respect it because they have a sort of half belief that after all it is the right sort of character. And yet they have no relish for it; nor

can they see any beauty in it, that they should earnestly seek it.

And herein, I would say to a class, consists that depravity of the human heart, of which the Bible so often speaks, and of which preachers sometimes tell us;—this loving an object so much which God would not have us love; and hating those things which he would have us prefer and pursue. “I will tell you just how it happens,” I would say, “that we love what we should hate, and hate what we should love; and are not ourselves any more than the young prodigal was. It comes just as *his* dispositions and tastes came. We have run away from our father’s house, as he did; and instead of living as we might have done, and *ought* to have done, under his mild and wholesome and just government, have chosen to pursue our own way; and have even supposed or seemed to suppose our father did not see us, or know or care what we were doing. I am now speaking, you know, of our Father in heaven and not of our earthly fathers; for I suppose that few indeed if any of you would have the hardihood or the folly to treat your earthly as you often do your Heavenly Father.”

And here—precisely at this point—while the children are interested and affected, I would have a teacher press, for a little time longer, the analogy between the sin of this young prodigal and the sin

of mankind in general. No parable in the Bible is better fitted for this purpose—not one. If, however, a teacher have failed to prepare the minds of his pupils to receive it, better defer the moral a little longer, and proceed with the exposition of the chapter still farther. Better defer to a more “convenient season,” than cast your pearls before swine, when it is known beforehand they will only turn again and rend you.

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father.”

Now, children, why did this young man go to his father? Was it because he had no food and no clothes where he was, and could not procure any? Was there nothing else that moved him but his own suffering? Did he not feel that he had wronged somebody? But whom had he wronged? His father, do you say? His father and mother—if a mother he had? His brothers and sisters? How had he wronged them?

Here again opens a fine field for the discussion of the duties which children owe to parents and to one another, and which cannot be so well fulfilled in a foreign land, as under the paternal roof—duties which it is easy to see were left, in the case of the

young prodigal, wholly unperformed. Here, again, we may advert to the case of Franklin. Though he succeeded in building up his own reputation and fortune by going away from home, could he at the same time perform the duties he owed to his parents and brothers and sisters? And if some of the latter did not prove to be as good men and women as they might have been, had Franklin nothing to do in the way of reflecting that if he had remained at home he might perhaps have made them better?

But you will perhaps say, Children are obliged to go away from home at times. *How* obliged? Do the parents require it, or think it best? In that case, of course, they are released from obligations which would otherwise devolve upon them; for it is a primary rule that they must obey their parents. But this is not the kind of going away that I am now talking about; it is a very different thing.

The young man said, "I will arise and go to my father." Had his sole object been to get rid of suffering—had there been no sorrow of heart that he had ever left his father's house and undertaken to act for himself—ungoverned and undirected—why did he go to his father? Why not turn aside into some other country which was not affected by the famine, and try his fortune there?

But he said he would do more still. He would

not only go to his father—but he would confess to him that he had done wrong. He would tell him that he had sinned. Ah yes, you will say; he could say so to gain his father's favor—to get back to the old place in his affections, and secure his former advantages. But remember, he does not ask this. He does not ask to be taken in as a son again. No such thing. "Make me as one of thy hired servants," says he. This is all he dares to hope for, and all he deems himself worthy of, and more too. "I am no more *worthy* to be called thy *son*," he says.

There was yet another proof that he had come to himself and saw things rightly, in that he acknowledged he had sinned, not only against his father, but against Heaven. Here, too, some may say, he might have been seeking to conciliate his father without having any true penitence for his faults. It might indeed be so; but there is one thing that makes it appear otherwise. He puts his sin against God—against Heaven—*before* the sin against his earthly father. I have sinned against Heaven *and* before thee, is his language. Now a hypocrite, who, knowing his father to be a good man, was disposed to compliment him and his religion would be likely to put the father first. He would be very likely to say; I have sinned against

thee and against Heaven. Nor would a hypocrite be quite so willing to become a servant to the family as he seems to have been. Pride would have revolted against it.

In fact the whole affair looks like a case of sincere penitence. You must remember that he was as poor in regard to property, as he could be, and no doubt very ragged, if not dirty. He was also nearly starved, at least by the time he reached his father, and perhaps he was afflicted with disease, into the bargain. What hypocrite would have been humble enough to appear before his father in these circumstances? No, he was a true penitent now, I am quite confident.

But he "arose and came to his father." When did he do this? Was it in a day or two or a week after he formed the resolution? None of these, as it appears to me. I do not believe he delayed a moment. Indeed the Bible narrative would seem to imply as much; though it does not positively say so.

And mark the result. "When he was yet *a great way off*, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The father, somehow or other, knew his heart; and without waiting for the son to come to him and make the confession which he knew he

was ready to make, he met him a great way off, and received him with every possible mark of affection ; and even spoke kindly to him, and took him into the midst of his family.

Here, all along, the parallel between sin against an earthly father and a heavenly one is as striking as it can possibly be made, and so are the results. How *much* can be done in a single lesson, must be left for the teacher to decide ; he being governed, as every teacher should be, by the age, capacities, dispositions, &c. of his pupils, and by numerous attending circumstances.

I would not have dwelt, at such length, on the mode of Bible teaching which I prefer, and which I am confident is the true mode, had I not believed that many who read this chapter, not only teachers but parents, would be glad of a pretty full and free development of the plan which I prefer and propose, and that it would afford to some of them important hints. It is nature's plan, not an artificial one ; it is that of Pestalozzi and Socrates—yes, more, it is the plan of Jesus Christ. And though all I have said, especially in connection with the story of the prodigal, may not be quite adapted to a class of pupils five or six years old, yet it is so to some of the elder classes of every school. The *plan*, at least, is adapted to all. In filling it out, every teacher will, of course, be

obliged to exercise much judgment. It is, however, not a little surprising to see how much better our children, even our little children, will understand religious truth presented in this way, than when presented in a more direct manner.

The teacher who has entered deeply into the spirit of the plan here recommended will need no modern question book for himself or his pupils. Neither will he need artificial landmarks, of any sort. Not that he will have any hostility to question books for his own guidance, or to afford him hints; but he will not wish to depend on them or have the pupils; and he will sometimes for the moment regard them as an incumbrance. You will say, perhaps, that he must have before him his Bible Dictionary and his maps, which are quite as unwieldy and render the course quite as artificial as question books do. But this is not exactly so. The *pupils* of the class, *during the exercise*, do not want any dictionaries or books of reference—their Bibles, perhaps, excepted. Indeed it is better that they should be without them. And the *teacher* who is duly prepared for the exercise will not need them. He will indeed have studied them before he comes to the Sabbath school; but he will have no time to explore them after he gets there.

But maps are needed, it will be said. Yes; and

they are needed, if we have question books. A single map, however, in the hands of the teacher, is sufficient. Nor are these needed *always*. In such lessons as the parable of the prodigal, though the conversation *might* turn in such a way as to give occasion to use them, they are hardly desirable. Nor are they needed in many of the other lessons, as on manners and customs, and pure biography.

It is said, perhaps, that the plan I propose would require more study than the former plan — that which involves the use of written or printed questions. I know it will; and that this, after all, is the most substantial objection to it. People in general—and some of our Sabbath school teachers among the rest—dislike to think much; and the question book system does not require a vast deal of thought; hardly any thing but a little parrot work,* Whereas

* Perhaps I have not done full justice, here, to the defenders of the use of question books. Some of the more intelligent of them, besides urging the fact—and I admit it to *be* a fact—that most of our Sabbath school teachers, as they now are, need question books, insist also that the result of all our teaching, whether we use question books or not, is about the same thing. A few minds they say, become books to other minds; and even the verbal questions of the superintendent or the teacher become in effect the question book of those who are instructed, as much as if it were printed or written.

But if all this were true—and it certainly has truth in it—there is one argument more, not against question books as they might be prepared, but against all which I have seen. They present things in too learned a manner. It is not that they do not analyze the Scripture as they ought for some of them use both the sympathetic and the analytic methods; and a few even carry the latter very far. But the grand objection

to know how to read the Bible, or teach it, as it seems to me it ought to be read and taught, requires a great deal of attention and study.

Every thing which is taught in these days in our day schools, or almost every thing, is illustrated by anecdote, or maps, or charts, or diagrams; so that they who will, may not only study it, may not only

is, that they take up every thing too systematically—more so than the Divine Author of the Bible ever intended.

A set of questions on the gospels, for example, designed even for young children, is very apt to begin with the evidences of Christianity, the early promises and predictions concerning the Savior, his genealogies, &c. I have before me at this moment one of the best sets of questions on the gospels I have ever seen, intended for mere beginners in the study of the Bible, and yet many of its lessons contain but very few thoughts with which the younger of our Sabbath school pupils ought to have any thing to do. Only *one* of the first thirteen lessons (the whole number is fifty-two) is at all fit for young children at Sabbath school. The first fifteen of them are on the following topics, and in the following order, viz.: The Bible; Internal Evidence; Evidence from the Fulfilment of Prophecy; Promises and Predictions of Christ; Types of the Old Testament; Preface (that is to the Gospels); The Divinity of Christ; Christ the true Light; Christ's Incarnation, Glory, Fulness—John's Testimony; The Birth of John Baptist foretold; The Annunciation; Mary's Visit to Elizabeth; John's Birth and Circumcision—Zacharias' Song; The Birth of Christ; and the Genealogies of Christ.

What a strange mistake has the writer of such a series of questions on the gospels made in presenting to the young, at the very outset, these abstract subjects! They should be at once told, as I think, of the Savior—his travels, conversation, conduct, parables, and miracles. If the Holy Spirit intended the books of the Bible should be *read* in course, I am sure they were never intended to be *studied* in course—certainly not by children. I hope the friends of Sabbath schools will ere long discover the mistakes they are making in regard to modes of instruction, and return to the more simple and natural way, even if the *apparent* progress of their pupils should be less than before.

study it, and in a parrot-like way recite it, but also if they will, understand it, and have a vivid picture of it before the mind. Shall every thing else be taught understandingly but the Bible? Shall every thing be rendered interesting to the young, but that which should be most so?

The teacher who has drank deeply of this system, will not be at a loss how to spend an hour on almost any lesson, of a few verses only, which may be assigned him in the whole Bible. We have seen, already, how much time may be spent on some two or three verses, even when the object is to get over the ground as rapidly as possible. But suppose a teacher is assigned a lesson of but one verse in the Bible, and is required to spend an hour on it; and that too without any previous notice, not so much as a moment. I grant that he will do the subject and himself and his pupils better justice the more he studies it, but he may do much without any previous study of that particular passage.

I do not mean, however, that the object which I have stated, can be accomplished by confining one's self to the particular exposition of the verses which may have been assigned him, but by the study of those, and by study and conversation on collateral subjects or parallel passages.

Let a teacher be required, without any previous notice, to interest a school, for one hour, in connec-

tion with the verse, "Jesus wept;" one of the shortest in the Bible. The conversation will naturally turn on the cause of the Savior's weeping; who it was that was dead; the manner and circumstances of his death; the family to which he belonged, and their history – that of Lazarus, Martha and Mary; where Jesus was when Lazarus died; whether he wept long at this time, or whether he soon resumed his native cheerfulness; whether he *often* wept; what sort of a man he was; his probable appearance externally; his relatives, friends, &c. It is easy to see that no thorough Bible student could be at a loss for collateral topics; for they are almost endless. And when I say no thorough Bible student, I do not mean to refer to the mere theological student, that is, to a member of one of our fashionable seminaries. I mean by *a student*, one who studies, whether in a theological seminary or out of it. Every one can be a student, and a thorough student too, if he will; especially of the Bible.

Or suppose the lesson were: "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow." How much might be said in a Sabbath school class, on this single, short, and apparently uninteresting verse! Who it was that spake; to whom he spake; what parables are; what *beho'd* means; what a sower is; and, by the way, what was sowed in Palestine, with a num-

ber of other things, might each afford a great deal of scope for free conversation ; and that too which would be profitable.

I look forward with a great deal of pleasure to the hour, when we shall see our teachers needing nothing in the Sabbath school but their Bibles, (and perhaps their pencil and paper,) in order to draw forth treasures for the young mind of things both new and old. I look forward to the gladsome time when the Bible, and the scenes and men and things of the Bible, shall be solid realities, and not mere fiction to the young mind—when children shall not study their Bibles either on the week-day or on the Sabbath because they *must*, but because it is pleasant to them, because they love to do it ; and would esteem it a privation were it forbidden them.

When that glad day shall arrive, then will the faithful superintendent and teachers in our Sabbath schools be seen to be—as they truly are—public benefactors ; and they will deserve, and either here or in the world of spirits will receive, a rich reward. Then will Sabbath school pupils be as young cedars, tall and green and flourishing, in the house of our God, and pillars or supporters everywhere—as they come to suitable age—of the social fabric. Then will the Sabbath school aid parents, and ministers, in a thousand ways ; and then, too, will the latter cooperate with the efforts of the Sabbath school.

Then will the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose. Not only will the family and the church be happier, but every part and parcel of the whole social system.

CHAPTER V.

OTHER METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY.

§ 1. BIOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE.

General structure and character of the Bible.—Advantages of studying divine truth in this form.—1. Negative advantages.—2. Positive advantages.—3. Elevates and improves the conscience.—4. Assists us by the example.

It may have struck some readers of the Bible as a little singular, that so much of this divine book should be taken up with the lives and actions of distinguished men. What, it may be said, are the books of Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, two of Kings, two of Chronicles, Esther, Daniel, Jonah, the four Gospels and the Acts—to say nothing of the five books of Moses, and the books of Ezra, Joshua, Nehemiah, Job, &c.—but a collection of biography and history, especially the former? A distinguished Christian poet has said that “half the Bible is praise;” but I might also say, at least with the poet’s license, that half the Bible is biog-

raphy. Not in the style of modern books of biography to be sure, where every individual is made a faultless or perfect hero ; but oftener in fragments, and in a manner too which exhibits faults as well as excellencies ; for it exhibits man as he truly is, and not as his favorites delight to render him. The Bible biographers, in their statements, intend to glorify God ; and their records do most evidently tend to show forth his glory ; but our mere human biographers often aim to glorify man—either themselves or somebody else. Nothing can be more instructive to man than the *study* of man, as the inspired writers have described him ; while at the same time, the course they have taken evinces in the most striking manner their impartiality and honesty.

Do you ask what is the advantage of studying biography, how well soever it may be written ? The advantages are numerous. Some of them are the following :

1. *Negative advantages.* These do not belong to biography, exclusively ; but are attached to the study of all useful science, that of biography among the rest. What I refer to, is the effect which they have to occupy the mind, for the time being, to the exclusion of evil thoughts. No one will pretend to believe, for a moment, that there is any thing immoral in the study of arithmetic, algebra, anatomy,

astronomy, or biography ; unless indeed in the latter case we study the biography of individuals in whom vice greatly predominates.

2. But the positive advantages of studying religious biography, are still more important and striking. This species of biography makes us acquainted, as it were, with the men of other times and countries ; and hence its importance to our Sabbath schools. We seem thus to be introduced to the more immediate presence and society of Joseph and Moses, and Noah, and Daniel, and Paul—and even of the Savior himself. And is not this a positive advantage ? Is there an individual that would not feel his bosom throb at the prospect of being introduced, five minutes hence, to Joseph or Paul ? Who would not prefer such an introduction, to the mere gratification of his selfish passions, or animal appetites, even for a whole day ?

Besides, not a few of us hope, by and by, to reach heaven—those blessed heights of excellence to which all the holy men and women of old have gone before us. There we shall see, not as now by the eye of faith, but face to face, the whole catalogue of worthy men and women of whom we have had a glance in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. And not only shall we *see* them, but if there is communion of spirit in heaven, we shall have opportunity to hold sweet converse with them

forever and ever. But will it afford us no pleasure to have become intimately acquainted, in this world, with their particular characters? Will any one who shall be ushered suddenly into the presence of David, or Isaiah, or Peter, or Paul, have occasion for regret that he has spent so much time while on earth, in studying the particular events of his history?

When friends meet, in this world, after a long absence, and many adventures, how much do they delight to sit together and recall past incidents! Especially is this the case when they have encountered, during their separation, singular dangers, or met with hair-breadth escapes, or been the recipients of remarkable favors. And will it not afford an individual pleasure, when he comes to sit down with Paul, in the courts above, to converse with him on many remarkable incidents of his remarkable life? Will it not afford us pleasure to hear, from his own mouth, the story of his journey to Damascus—his being mobbed at Lystra—imprisoned at Philippi—shipwrecked at Malta, and suffering martyrdom at Rome? But will not this pleasure be greatly heightened, if we are already familiar, as much so as the study of the sacred pages can render us, with his character and travels?

Above all, do we expect to enjoy in the heavenly world, the presence and society of our Savior, and to converse with him also face to face forever?

And will it not be a source of the purest pleasure to hear him talk of Nazareth, and Bethany, and Samaria, and Gethsemane, and Calvary? But how will it give a zest to the same enjoyment, to be so familiar with his life, as narrated by the faithful evangelists, that we can seem to travel with him from place to place, as he recounts his adventures, and relates his dangers and escapes—his labors and his trials!

To those indeed whose social powers have never been developed or cultivated, all which I have been saying may have been in an unknown tongue; alike unintelligible and uninteresting. But there are few such who come within the influence of the Sabbath school or the sanctuary. This is not a place which is likely to have attractions for the unsocial. The very presence of a person, old or young, in church or in Sabbath school, more than implies, as a general rule, that his social powers are in a greater or less degree awakened.

3. But again; religious biography, properly attended to, awakens, improves, and elevates the conscience. On this subject, President Wayland, in his *Elements of Moral Science*, has the following thoughts:

“Our conscience is improved by reflecting upon virtuous actions, and thinking upon virtuous character. The more we do this, the easier do we learn

to distinguish and avoid every thing that is wrong. It is for this reason that we should reflect much on the perfect character of our blessed Savior, if we wish to improve our consciences and make progress in virtue. So young persons should reflect upon the characters of Samuel, Joseph, and Daniel, in the Bible, and of Washington and other good men of later times."

Nothing can be more just than these sentiments; and hardly any thing can offer a higher inducement to the study of sacred biography. For it is one of the prominent faults of the religious education of our day, that conscientiousness is but feebly developed, and but feebly active, especially in the common or daily concerns of life. Yet the progress of pure and undefiled religion must be slow in the earth, till men learn to do justice, and love mercy, in and before the *world*, as well as to demean themselves and walk humbly before *God*. Never, however, will mankind learn to do justice, till conscience is so cultivated that this viceroy of the Most High shall assume its proper authority, and utter in a louder tone, and on all the smaller as well as larger occasions of life, its heavenly mandates.

"Never man spake like this man," was the testimony, even of the enemies of Christ; and it might with equal propriety have also been said, Never man *acted* like this man. Yet in nothing was he

more remarkable than for his conscientiousness. So that though our conscientiousness may be awakened and cultivated by the contemplation of the characters of holy men and women of old, the result is better secured, in proportion to the acknowledged excellence or freedom from defect of those men; and best of all by the study of the character of our Lord and Savior.

4. Once more. It has been said that we are seldom, if ever, in company with an individual, so much as a single half hour, especially if it is an individual whom we esteem, without having our characters more or less modified thereby; or in other words, becoming more like him, in a greater or less degree, than we were before. And I have no doubt that the truth of this saying will be admitted by all who have paid the least attention to the workings of their own mind and feelings. The contrary effect is also equally true—i. e. we are affected in a degree by the society of the bad, as well as the good.

But this is not all. Not only are we affected by the real presence and conversation of all those persons for whom we have not a positive aversion, but also by that contact with them into which we are brought when we study their character, as it appears in well written biography. Here, also, we *seem* to live and move, as it were, with the persons of whom we are reading.

Now the biography of the Bible, where we have been early made familiar with it, is of this soul-stirring kind. It is impossible to read it, and above all to study it closely in the Sabbath school, without having our whole characters affected thereby. This, then, furnishes a very strong motive to the study of that particular class of writings, especially those parts which relate to holy men and women whose lives, if they have not been faultless, have been at least comparatively so.

As to the study of the lives of those men and women who, though their main purpose was to serve God and their generation, were guilty of many sad failures in conduct, I would reserve this for a later period of the child's progress. For unless this is done, there may be a little danger that the child will not discriminate between the good and the bad; but will alike receive impressions from or copy both.

In prosecuting the study of biography with the end above mentioned in view, nothing in the whole compass of the sacred volume would be more fruitful of instruction to children, or more useful in forming their characters, than the life of our Savior. There cannot possibly be a better model on which to form character than this, as every one will acknowledge. And yet how little is this idea attended to!

§ II. TRAVELS AND CHARACTER OF OUR SAVIOR.

Reasons why the Savior should have a prominent place in all our Sabbath school instructions.—Story telling, as a means of religious teaching—Special lessons on the Savior.—Examples—practical ones—of this kind of teaching.

Let me repeat and enforce here the suggestion, that the Savior should be made the example of the child, no less than of the adult ; and let me also add that while this general idea should nowhere be forgotten, it should be especially borne in mind, in all our conduct and management in the Sabbath school.

It is insisted upon, therefore, that a large proportion of our Sabbath school instruction should have for its basis, the life, travels, and general character of the best men and women of the Bible ; and, above all, of our Savior. There is moreover a reason for this, to which I believe I have not yet alluded—the pleasure which the young appear to take in it. I have seldom seen a class of pupils—I do not expect very soon to see one—who did not relish, in the highest degree, the study of Bible manners, customs, and travels, but especially character. They are particularly delighted with every thing of the anecdote kind ; and almost every thing may be taught, if we desire it, in the shape of anecdote.

I have often been struck with this trait of hu-

man nature, as developed in childhood and youth. A story well told—and a Bible story in particular, though I scarcely know why—will enchain the attention of a Sabbath school class for a long time, when nothing else will be found sufficient to do it; and what is still more remarkable, it will not wear out. I never yet told a Bible story to a class of very young pupils so frequently or so long—provided it was not more frequent than each successive Sabbath—without their being greatly delighted with it; and in general, *the more so the longer it was told them*. If any one can explain the why and wherefore of this result, I am sure he has read deeper the mysteries of childhood than I have done.

The first and most important—and may I not say the most interesting—course of Sabbath school lessons, which could possibly be devised for children and youth, would be such a course as should bring most into view, in its progress, the character of our Savior. The first lessons should relate to his birth and early infancy; the next to his childhood; the next to his youth; the next perhaps to his entrance upon the ministry. Afterward the lessons could be so arranged that each should embrace some important act or event of his life, and that these acts and events should follow each other as much as possible, in the order in which they occurred. In this way, and by a constant recurrence to the principles which

governed our Savior in his actions, we could continually appeal to, and cultivate the conscientiousness of our pupils, as well as inform and indoctrinate them.

I regret, very much—who can help regretting it?—that while we admit the Savior to be our great example, we practically follow his example less than we do that of almost any other individual. We are taught to measure ourselves among ourselves, and even *by* ourselves, and at the highest possible effort only to measure ourselves by our neighbors; but how seldom to measure ourselves by Jesus Christ! This, surely, ought not to be so.

By taking up the infancy, the childhood, and the youth of our Savior as so many separate topics, and by conversing familiarly with our classes on the character of the Savior at these early periods of his life, a fine opportunity is afforded of leading them into the habit of making him their model, in all their conduct.

For example, in studying on the youth of Jesus, we should come of course to the statement that at twelve years of age he went up to Jerusalem with his parents to the feast. Now most young people of these days, and perhaps of any other days, who were about to make a journey of eighty miles, to the metropolis, would have more or less regard to external appearance. Here, therefore, as well as everywhere

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else, I would make the Savior the model, by leading them to reflect on his probable conduct in this particular, as well as in many others.

Did the Savior, when he went with his parents to Jerusalem, in all probability wear his usual dress? Or if not, what changes would he be likely to make? Were all such changes probably made with reference merely to his exposed situation as a traveller, and to cleanliness; or would his dress be gay, showy, or expensive? How many of you think he would be likely to wear very expensive or gay clothes? (Here I would encourage my pupils, if they were accustomed to express their opinion in this way, to raise their hands for the affirmative of the question.) How many think he would *not* wear very expensive clothing? Do you think he would be likely to be careful and prudent in his expenses; and why so? Would it be because his parents were poor, or for some other and better reason? Which ought to be the great reason why we avoid unnecessary expense in any matter, because it will bear hard upon ourselves or our friends, or because it is in itself wrong?

What reason have we for believing that the Savior always obeyed his parents? What instance is there in which he seems, at the first view, not to have shown them proper respect? Are we quite sure that in this instance he treated them impro-

perly? Is there any other instance of his seeming to do so, during the whole time of his continuance under the guidance of his earthly parents? How long did he remain at home with his parents? Do you know of any boy—did you ever read or hear of any one—who never showed marks of disregard to parental authority but once in thirty years?

I would endeavor, in this way, by the Savior's example no less than by his sacrifice, to make him a *whole* and perfect Savior rather than a partial one, to those over whom God should set me as a teacher. I would continually refer to him either by asking them what they suppose he actually did in particular cases, or what they suppose in a given case he would do; thus making *him* the measure of our conduct, as I have already called it, rather than our neighbors.

I would do more than even this. I would frequently put the question, what they suppose the Savior would do were he now among us, in the Sabbath school. Thus, suppose a boy were to sit rather unquietly in his class, I would break away from the subject of the regular lesson, for a moment, and say: Do you think the Savior ever attended a Sabbath school? Why do you think he did not?

But he was once a boy, like the members of this class, was he not? Suppose he were here in the world now, and about your age, and should come

into the Sabbath school, and seat himself on the bench by your side, how do you think he would conduct himself? How many of you think he would sit still, while in the class? How many think he would be very uneasy, and make a great deal of noise and disturbance? Addressing myself to the boy whose unquiet movements had led to the inquiry, I would say: But if the Savior would be likely to sit very still while in the Sabbath school class, what ought *you* to do? But suppose you should not sit still, what ought I to do? If the Savior were on earth, and were the teacher of the class in my stead, what would he probably say or do, in such a case?

Suppose a boy were to behave ill in time of prayer? Do you know, I would say, whether the Savior ever prayed? If he did, do you think he stood still, while praying; or did he probably move about from place to place? Why do you think he would be likely to keep still? But if it was proper for him to keep still in time of prayer, is it not proper for you to do the same thing? I observed during the prayer just now, that one of you (calling him by name) kept in continual motion, as well as played a little. Was it right or wrong? What think you the Savior would say about it if he were here? But are you willing to do that which he would say was wrong? Why should you be afraid to do that which the Savior would regard as wrong?

And if you would avoid doing a thing in his presence, why should you not avoid doing it in his absence? Does he not always, in fact, see you?

I would put to them, from time to time, a great number of cases like the following. Suppose the Savior met people on the road, in his travels, as from Nazareth to Jerusalem, how do you think he treated them? If they were young people, do you think he was rude or clownish; or if older people, unmannerly? Do you think he was ever accustomed to answer people roughly, as some boys sometimes do among us? Suppose he met with some very mean person, as a wretched miser, or a miserable tottering drunkard, do you think he would laugh at him, or holloa, or throw stones at him?

Perhaps he sometimes met with swearers—for swearers certainly abounded in Galilee, where he was brought up—do you think he ever joined them in their swearing? Do you think he was in the habit of using words which lead to swearing, such as we find in many a boy's mouth in our streets; and such as not a few men use, and some women too? Here I would, perhaps, name to the class a few of the long list of silly, not to say wicked words, so many of which are heard every day among us.

Sometimes the Savior, as we may reasonably suppose, would meet with boys who were indolent. Do you think he was fond of their society; or would

he try to avoid them ? And if he could not wholly avoid them, would he not have as little intercourse with them as possible ?

The boys of Galilee were, many of them, addicted to lying ; do you think the Savior always told the exact truth ; or do you think he sometimes departed from it, more or less, in order to suit his own convenience, or to make out a good story ?

Again, it was no uncommon thing among the bad boys of Nazareth and other parts of Galilee, to take things without liberty, if they thought neither the owner, nor their parents, nor teachers, would be likely to find it out ; now do you think the Savior ever did any such thing ? I do not allude to stealing money, either in large or small sums, so much as to stealing fruit and flowers, from fields or gardens ; taking to themselves small articles of various kinds which were not theirs ; robbing the nests of birds, fowls, &c.

If the Savior had brothers and sisters, we might ask whether it is to be supposed he would be in the habit of vexing or hurting them, especially any who were younger than he ; or whether it is not more likely he was kind to them, and instead of irritating them by vexing them, or doing them harm, that he labored incessantly to do them good.

In short, for I need not be more particular, I would bring the Savior's example to bear upon all

the conditions and relations of life—whether we are young or old, high or low, rich or poor, bond or free. For if I do not greatly mistake in the matter, such is the appropriate use of the Savior's example. It is not in the larger events of life alone—even of adult life—that he is to be imitated by his followers; for these larger events are but seldom, while the smaller events are of perpetual recurrence. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we are bound, according to Paul, to do all to the glory of God; and in what way would the glory of God be better promoted than by having every body do as the Savior would do in similar circumstances?

§ III. RESULT OF THIS INSTRUCTION.

Not always immediate—To *know* is not to *do*.—Tendency to promote conscientiousness.—Examples.—Nothing of this kind wholly lost.

The results of this sort of religious instruction would be as certain as they would be happy. But let us not form undue expectations on this subject. We must never expect to form Christians in this way. To *know* is not to *do*; and even to *do* is not always to *do from right motives*. What we ought to expect as the immediate result of this form of religious instruction is the awakening and forming of the conscience. Half the religious world, I say

again, have no conscientiousness in regard to the smaller concerns and conduct of life. Indeed, I have heard some men of considerable intelligence gravely and seriously say, that there were a grade of human actions that had no moral character; and that to think of inquiring how the Savior would perform them, would be foolish if not absolutely ridiculous. I have even heard this from some who aspired to be eminent teachers, and who were regarded as such.

But I have not so learned Christ, or even Paul. If I know any thing about the doctrines of these individuals, especially the former, there is not a single human action, word, or thought, which is not either pleasing or displeasing in the sight of God. His eye is always upon us, and never for a moment turned away, even though we may not believe it. And as surely as he sees us continually, so surely will he bring every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil; whether an idle word, or an idle thought or action.

I say again, therefore, that I would have people conscientious in regard to every thing they do. And I verily believe that to this conscientiousness in every thing, the kind of instruction in regard to the Savior, of which I have been speaking inevitably tends. Even if a child should not acquire the habit of asking himself in *all* the circumstances of life, how the

Savior would act in *similar* circumstances, he would at least sometimes do it. It could hardly be otherwise. The lessons of the Sabbath school are never wholly obliterated, especially when they are made at once intelligible, interesting and practical. Few are so stupid or so careless as not to be at all affected by them.

Let even a mischievous boy, who has been under influences of this sort from Sabbath to Sabbath, be tempted to pilfer from a neighbor's melon bed. He revolves it in his mind whether he has nothing to fear from dogs, guns, traps, &c. ; but he does not at first think of the All-seeing eye, that will behold him. Conscience, however, true to her office, soon reminds him that God his Savior sees him, and that this Savior, were he on earth, would not do what he is tempted to do. This thought perhaps decides a question which, but for the thought, had been decided far otherwise. Or if he goes against conscience and his fears, and does the deed, conscience is very apt to harass him some time afterward.

Let the teacher, therefore, whether in the Sabbath school, the district school, or the family, in all his teachings endeavor to make the Savior the great example, not only in mere theory, like most of the rest of the professing Christian world, but daily and practically ; and this not only in the larger concerns of life, but also in the smaller ones. Let him not

fear that any of his instructions of this sort will be lost, for I do not believe they will be wholly so, as long as the individual to whom they are given retains his consciousness.

§ IV. TEACHING THE NATURAL LAWS OF GOD.

Objections to these, as being secular.—The objection answered.—Examples of this kind of instruction.—The laws of germination and growth.—Decay and putrefaction — Perspiration.—Physiology of crucifixion —The renewal or renovation of the human body.—Practical moral inferences.—The law of fermentation.—Objections considered.

I have said, elsewhere, that I would teach the natural laws of God, in the Sabbath school; but have said nothing of the manner in which I would do it. Now if there are those who regard the sciences of anatomy, physiology, geology, natural history, &c., as secular matters, and who therefore feel conscientious scruples about suffering them to come into the Sabbath school, I would say to them, that these sciences need not and probably should not be introduced in a formal, scientific manner, but as it were incidentally; and in connection with the regular Bible lessons.*

* I do not mean to say that they should never be taught formally and scientifically to the young, for they undoubtedly should be so, from the very earliest years at which instruction of any kind is admissible; but only that the Sabbath school is not the place for these more direct efforts.

Am I asked how I would connect it with the Bible lesson? I will explain my meaning.

In teaching a class from the parable of the sower, for example, I would speak of the curious processes of germination and growth; and incidentally, perhaps, of decay. I would endeavor to explain to them, in as simple a manner as possible, those wonderful but not wholly inscrutable natural laws of Jehovah, by which a seed grows up into a tree; by which the tree maintains its existence in defiance of the extremes of heat and cold, and other surrounding influences; and by which it finally yields to chemical laws, and loses its vitality, or, as we say, dies.

In connection with the subject of decay and putrefaction, I would embrace the opportunity of showing a class, in as plain a manner as possible, that in the process which we call perishing, nothing is really and truly annihilated. That even a stick of wood or piece of charcoal, when it is consumed by fire, is not really destroyed, but that every particle of it is in existence somewhere.

This, should we choose to have it so, might lead to conversation about the dissolution of our own bodies, and to the laws of growth and decay in them. From these the transition to remarks on particular organs of the human body, and the laws of those organs, is easy and natural, should the time and cir-

circumstances admit of it. Or the transition might be to the change of body which takes place at the final resurrection; and the pupils might be referred to the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, for the beautiful account which Paul gives of this great change.

Again, in a lesson which should include an account of the Savior at Gethsemane, and the anguish he underwent there as evinced by his sweating as it were great drops of blood, after the more important and more striking moral reflections had been made and done their work, an ingenious teacher might proceed to explain briefly the nature of the process of perspiration; its uses in the human economy; and the diseases which result from its suppression. Here would be a fine opportunity for enforcing the Creator's laws of cleanliness among the rest, and for showing his class that Jeremy Taylor was not so much out of the way as many suppose when, in urging the importance of cleanliness, he said it was next to godliness.

And in a lesson which should embrace the awful account of the crucifixion, I would take occasion, both for the sake of making the idea of the Savior's sufferings more distinct, and for other purposes, to describe the manner in which He was fastened to the cross, especially by means of the nails; and in particular to speak of the violence which is done to the

human hands by piercing them through and through with nails. Not that there would be time, in a single hour, to go deeply into such a subject, but there would at least be time to announce it; and then the whole hour of the next meeting might be spent in an account of the curious mechanism of the hand, with the laws by which this instrument, together with the rest of the system, is governed. Or if an hour were too long, either because attention began to flag, or for any other reason, less time might be devoted to it—half or a quarter of an hour.

The nail, in passing into the hand in crucifixion first pierced the integuments; but these are supposed to have been explained already. Next, they pierced strong muscles and tendons, and delicate but strong bands and ligaments, and still more delicate nerves and blood-vessels. Here, to make the impression both vivid and permanent, it will be necessary to describe briefly a muscle, a tendon, a fascia or band, a ligament, a nerve, and two kinds of blood-vessels. To do this may require a good deal of time, and will involve an account of a large part of the organs of the human body, as well as a description of the functions they severally and unitedly perform. To say, however, in this place, precisely what should be taught, and how the instruction should be given, would be to go over with the

very course of instruction which it would be necessary to pursue while before the class, and would probably be as tedious as it would be misplaced.

On coming to the account of the piercing of the Savior's side, with the consequences which followed, there would be a fresh occasion for endeavoring to inculcate several of the laws of the human frame, both within and without us. What it was that the spear pierced, what the liquid probably was that escaped, why it escaped from the body, and several other important questions, both in the science of human life and in natural philosophy, might afford interest and impart reality to the awful scene. I am much mistaken if any way can be devised, which like this, will make the pupil feel that Jesus really suffered—and that too for him.

There is, with many of the young—I wish I need not say, with most—a very vague belief in the awful reality of the crucifixion, and of the resurrection. To them there is something so unearthly and unreal in these events, that they seldom, if ever—at least among us—feel the full force of the Scripture account of Olivet and Gethsemane, Jerusalem and Calvary. And is not that instruction a matter of some importance, which shall help them to regard the birth, the death, and the resurrection of the Savior, as realities?

Besides—and this, as I have already said, is one

principal object in this sort of instruction—is it not a matter of importance to extend the dominion of conscience, by continually reminding the young that the laws of the Creator are not only operative all around us, but within us;—not only above us, but below us ?

In connection with the resurrection of our Savior, or that of Lazarus, or with the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, or some appropriate passage of Scripture, I would be careful to teach the highly important doctrine of the renewal or renovation of the human body ; especially to the more advanced classes of our Sabbath schools. For when I was quite a boy and read in the Columbian Orator, a school book, in a sermon by President Davies, on the Day of Judgment, that at that day, the sky would be darkened, as it were, by parts of bodies, that became separated after death, flying this way and that to form a union—“ atom to join its fellow atom, bone its fellow bone,” &c., I used to have many difficulties. Suppose bodies are eaten up, I said to myself, as in the case of war, by vultures or beasts of prey, and go to form other bodies, how then ?—Whereas the same sort of difficulty exists, whether a body is eaten up or not. We have not the same body when we die that we have in childhood, or youth, or even in early manhood ; nay, more, not a single particle of it at seventy years

of age. At least there is no reason to think this is the fact. But in the resurrection, according to Paul, God giveth to each a body as it pleaseth him; and to every one his *own* body.

The human body is continually changing; particle by particle is constantly wearing off, especially internally, and being carried out of the body; while each particle which is removed has its place filled by a new particle, which perhaps but yesterday was part of a dead mass, in the form of food as it comes to our tables, and but a few months ago was part of the grain or herb of the field, or flew in the heights of the air, or swarmed in the deep ocean. We might tell them something of the processes by which this mighty change of dead to living matter is accomplished, so far as they are understood, or the process of digestion. We might tell them how long a period physiologists have *guessed* is necessary for changing entirely the whole body, so that not one of its former particles remains in it, all having become renovated or made new. We might tell them what are some of the blessings of this arrangement—how it happens that those bodies which come into the world the inheritors of disease in some of their parts, as the bones, the lungs, or the liver, may probably be improved and finally lose their diseased character, if the owners can but be persuaded to obey, for a long course of years, all the laws of

health and life. Many have wondered how it could harmonize with the benevolence of God that the sins of the parents should be visited upon the children in the form of scrofula, consumption, &c., when had they known that there is great reason for believing that by living right, the old bodies with which these very children come into the world, if not too far gone, might very probably after a few successive renovations, come to possess entirely new and healthy frames, they would not only have wondered but adored.

This wonderful doctrine, I say, might be suggested by several passages of Holy Writ; and the moral bearing might especially be brought into view. For if our bodies are continually changing, like our minds, and if we have the power to make them better or worse, and even to form them anew, as we have to form our minds and hearts anew, then it is a moral duty to do so; and every thing which is known to improve the human body, it becomes us at once to seize upon. For how can we glorify God, in our bodies and spirits which are his, as we are commanded to do, except by bringing our bodies into subjection to His laws, and making the most and best of them we possibly can? But does he make the most and best of his body, who, knowing he can greatly improve it, or perhaps from a sickly mass, new build it into perfect health, should he live

long enough, neglects to obey what he knows to be the laws of that body? Does he make the most and best of his body who not only does not do the best he can to improve it, but actually does a great many things, from day to day, which are continually making it worse?

And here too I am reminded of another natural law of the Creator, which should in fact be taught our pupils before we teach them any thing in regard to the renovation of the body, I mean the law of fermentation. The whole history of wine is curious, and I consider it no desecration of the Sabbath or the Sabbath school to have it properly set forth by the ingenious teacher. Indeed I should consider it an act upon which the Deity might look down with peculiar approbation, to show our young people in the Sabbath school, that we can have no vinous fermentation, as it is called, so far as we know, without having, as the result, a poisonous principle developed, called alcohol, and found diffused in the wine; and that this alcohol in any quantity, small or great, is unfriendly to the best interests of the human body, and will not permit of that improvement from day to day in the greatest possible degree, to which I have elsewhere alluded; and to show them also that until fermentation does take place, we can have no alcohol;—the latter never being contained, as some suppose it is, in the substances

from which it is made, such as apples, grain, &c. &c., but being always *made from* them, by a chemical or half creating process.

Should it be said that these are too high matters, many of them, for the pupils of our Sabbath schools; I reply, that this may be so, or it may not. They are not too high, if the pupils are trained to *think* and *inquire*; and if they are presented to their minds in the proper order and manner. Almost any thing which relates to the laws of the human frame may be made intelligible to the youngest child, if presented to him as it should be. But herein, it will perhaps still be said, is the difficulty—teachers are not ready to present it as it should be. I know many are not; were it not so, I should not attempt to give public instruction, in this manner. My aim is to encourage them to make themselves what they should be; and the first thing which I would attempt is to show how the laws of health can be taught in connection with Bible lessons, that teachers may be induced to study those laws, and promulgate them.

And as to the importance of these matters, who can doubt it? Not important to know one's self? Too early to know one's self? Impossible. Some of the first and most practical lessons which children acquire relate to themselves, especially their bodies. These are nearest to them, most tangible, and to

them most interesting. There is not a child of two or three years of age in the world, unless that child is either an idiot or strangely perverted by miseducation, who will not be both delighted and profited by the study of his own frame.

Still, it will be said that the Bible is not designed to teach us the sciences; but morals and religion. I know this is so, nor do I undertake to teach any thing in connection with the Bible which is not necessary to a right understanding of the Bible; nor even then, if it is likely to be acquired elsewhere—in the family, or in the day school. But though the Bible is not designed to teach us the sciences, especially the *facts* of science, yet it gives us the *principles* by which we are to be guided in the selection and application of the sciences. If we are required in the Bible to love our neighbor as ourselves, we certainly need to know how to make the application of this great principle in the daily walks and relations of life; in our families, our schools, our factories, our shops, and our churches. Is it loving our neighbor as ourselves—as Christ would have us love him, to assist him in destroying himself, or even to connive at his self-destruction? Is it loving our neighbor as ourselves to suffer him to remain—when it is in our power to prevent it—in that ignorance which will permit him to give his vote for wicked and unprincipled rulers? And so of a thousand other

things. And now if parents and the teachers of our common schools—the schools of the land—will not, that is, *do* not give the kind of information to which I refer, I hold it to be the duty of Sabbath school teachers to prepare themselves to give it; and to do so in connection with their regular lessons. Not, of course, to attempt to teach every thing at once; but only such things as they may seem called upon by the lesson to teach, and as may be adapted to their ages, capacities, and circumstances.

Thus, though I have said I would speak to my pupils of the renewal of the human body, I would not teach them every thing at once, but introduce them to the doctrine gradually. Occasions for adverting to it will probably occur several times in the course of a year or two. Nor would I explain to them, at once, the whole doctrine of *sympathy*, an important principle or law, alluded to by Paul, in his writings. Nor in speaking of wine, would I go through the whole history, with the uses and abuses of that article, at once. Its interference, however, with the health of the body, whenever introduced into it, I would ultimately make fully known, as they might be able to bear it.

§ V. TEACHING DOCTRINES IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

This entirely unnecessary.—Experiment of a teacher.—
Author's experience.—His method with Bible classes.—
Greatness of the work.

Some persons appear anxious to avoid the discussion of doctrinal matters in the Sabbath school. Now I do not think this at all necessary. I would certainly desire to have every teacher set forth and explain doctrine, as it comes in his way, in the Sabbath school, taking care to do it with candor.

The use of the Bible in the *common* school, has been objected to by many on this ground, and with more appearance of reason than the teaching of doctrines in Sabbath schools. And yet I have never found any great difficulty in either case. There is no difficulty in teaching the *children* of any school a great deal of the Bible—not excluding our own views of its doctrines, and yet not offend *parents* even of the most fastidious sort. But we are not driven to the necessity of doing even this. Much, very much may be done without trenching on doctrines. Besides, children are not very fond of them; as every experienced teacher must have observed for himself.

Here I wish to introduce an experiment of teaching from the Bible in one of our common schools, which will illustrate the point to which I am directing your attention, as well as many others

of minor importance. The account of the experiment is given in the teacher's own words:

“On commencing that experiment, my great fear was that I should at once encounter contested doctrinal points, and chiefly those. The rule adopted required a certain number of pupils first to raise a question on the portion of the Bible which was read. It was a rule adopted in relation to all other books also, and a leading object was to secure previous attention to the lesson read; or if not, then to secure that attention *during* the *reading*. I was relieved from my fear of doctrinal questions, in some degree, during the first exercise we attempted. The chapter described the case of Naaman the Syrian; and, contrary to all expectation, I was not called on to harmonize God's purposes with man's agency in the curing of that unhappy leper. The only question proposed was this;—‘What was there so valuable in the soil of Judea, as to make a mule's burden of it a present worth Naaman's asking for?’ And though, for my life I could not answer it, yet it awakened an interest in the class and the teacher not known before. The method adopted was finally to require each pupil to raise a question, and to refer the question raised by the older pupils to other pupils, to be answered at the close of the exercise, or the next day.

“Questions of interest *continued* to arise in this

class—still not involving doctrines—such as the following: Why did Jesus call Judas *friend*, (when he said to him, Friend whence camest thou hither?) knowing him as he did to be an enemy? What was meant by saying, ‘This poor widow has cast in more than they all?’

“Such was the interest excited by an exercise so novel, that the questions raised were marked; and the review proves most abundantly the position that doctrinal questions are almost the last to come up in a school of children under sixteen years of age.”

By far the greater part of the questions which are brought refer to the simple definition of words, especially among little children. It is affecting to remark how much they usually pass over without understanding it, when a single word of explanation would make all clear.

“A very bright boy of six years of age on reading the passage, They filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon an hyssop, for him to drink, asked who hyssop was, that had got to drink it. Another, when reading of Simon Zelotes, asked what Zelotes meant. Usually the teacher does not know, and often cannot conjecture, what difficulties the child may have—a fact showing the importance of encouraging the child to ask questions, rather than teach him.

“Such questions as the following have come up in our school, and would be likely to come up in every other; and what teacher could not be trusted to answer them? And what shall be said of the cruelty of the parent or teacher who could withhold the answer?”

“What is the meaning of ‘I trow not;’—‘Avenge me of mine adversary;’—‘If I have taken any thing by false accusation, I restore him four fold;’—‘He must needs go through Samaria;’ why must he?—‘An austere man;’—‘The chief priests and scribes feared the people;’ *why* did they?—‘As some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,’ &c.; what were the stones and gifts?—Meaning of ‘kinsfolk?’—‘This fellow perverteth the nation;’ what is that? What is a ‘centurion?’—‘If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?’ &c.

“By following a course like this, the teacher will sometimes be met with questions of a character differing somewhat from the foregoing, requiring a more labored explanation, and leading to useful and perhaps serious reflections, and yet they will still be questions which will involve no doctrines that could well be tortured into a sectarian character. I allude to questions which would arise from such passages as the following:

“‘Buy wine and milk without money and without price;’—‘If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out;’—‘Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder;’—‘Till I make mine enemies my footstool;’—‘Which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers;’—‘A prophet hath no honor in his own country;’—‘Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;’—‘Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did;’—‘Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst?’”

Now what this teacher has done in this experiment, I have done partially, many times; and whether to avoid the discussion of doctrines or not, I believe it to be richly worth the trial by most Sabbath school teachers.

One grand exercise, both in the Sabbath school and the common or district school, consists in requiring our pupils to select as many texts of Scripture as they can which encourage or enforce, for example, a particular virtue, or condemn a particular vice. Thus the members of a class might each be required to collect and mark, on a piece of paper, all the passages in the Bible which condemn

swearing. Not that they would be able to collect all, in half an hour or an hour ; but there are few, it is believed, who would not find some - more or less —and there would usually be one, two, or three members of a class who would be apt to procure quite a long list. With this list, and a Bible in hand, the passages referred to are examined by the teacher, and if he thinks proper, are recited or read by the pupils who select them.

Such an exercise has very many advantages, especially if the selected passages are committed to memory. If a teacher were really disposed to keep clear of doctrinal points, he might do it in *this* way, without difficulty. I could select thousands of Bible lessons, which would not, and could not by possibility, raise an objection on the ground of sectarianism, in the mind of any person of common sense and common understanding.

I might ask them to select all the passages in the Bible which hold out promises of various kinds ; as the promise of long life, health, riches, wisdom, present and future happiness, &c. I might require them to collect all the passages which contain threatenings against particular sins ; all the passages which encourage the various virtues, as humility, mercy, charity, peace-making, self-denial, &c. ; the names of all the good persons mentioned in the Bible ; the names of all the bad men and

women ; the names of all the prophets ; the names of all the pious women ; the names of all the persons who dwelt at particular places, as at Jerusalem, or Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum ; or who did particular things, as receiving the Savior into their houses, taking great pains to see him, ministering to him, &c.

Indeed I am sometimes inclined to think there is no better method of teaching the Bible in a direct manner than this ; and I earnestly recommend it to every teacher. He may connect the inculcation of doctrines with even these lessons ; but he will not be compelled to do so.

My own method of teaching the older classes of Sabbath schools, or what are usually called Bible classes, as well as the usual adult classes of our churches, is usually something like the following :

We take up as a topic, for example, the life of a particular individual ; such as Moses, Joseph, Ahab, or Peter ; or the travels of an individual who was distinguished in this way, as Elijah, Paul, Silas, or Luke ; or the account of a city, as Jerusalem, Babylon, Nineveh, Cesarea, &c. ; or particular events, as the flood, or the journeyings of the Israelites, the events of the day of Pentecost, or the shipwreck of Paul.

In pursuance of this plan, the members of the class are expected to study, rather than commit to

memory merely, the various parts of Scripture which contain the information required. The teacher, however, sometimes aids them in making the selection, or points out to them particular books, maps, or commentaries in which to find explanations, illustrations, or suggestions. When they come together, he presents his views of the subject, in a familiar manner, occasionally asking them questions, or encouraging them to present their difficulties.

It is true that I do not in this way bring the minds of lazy pupils into activity, so much as if I pursued a more popular course, such as that by way of question and answer. For in this latter way even the indolent will do a little. It is by no means difficult to connect an answer mechanically with a question in a question-book. Still, whatever the indolent pupil does learn or acquire in the way which I have described, and which I regard as preferable, instead of being acquired mechanically or arbitrarily, or in the usual way of task-work, is acquired with pleasure, and with some degree of understanding.

This latter course also involves most of the excellencies and many of the forms of the collateral explanatory methods which I have recommended for younger pupils. For I take pains to explain terms, remove difficulties, locate places on the map, and give much incidental instruction, whether the

lesson consists primarily of biography, travels, history, or any thing else.

After hearing what has been said in this and the previous lecture, the question I know will be apt to arise in the minds of many ; If these views of Sabbath school teaching be correct, "*who is sufficient for the work?*" A question I am always glad to hear ; for it implies at least a *desire* for future progress. Dr. Watts says, It is a sign of some good degree of improvement when we begin to discover how weak and unwise we are.

Nor can it be denied that the work of sustaining a Sabbath school is a great work. But the time has arrived, in the history of our world, when great things are expected, and therefore great things must be attempted. It is idle to expect the millennial glory of the world, as many of us do, without attempting to do more to hasten it. For depend upon it, this glad time will never come to us by miracle ; and it is to be the result, *under* God the Holy Spirit, of human effort and human instrumentality, or it will never come.

No one should engage in the Sabbath school till he is thoroughly imbued with the missionary spirit ; and ready, to the utmost of his means and opportunities, to spend himself and be spent in the cause of Christ. I am in no wise sure that it does not require as much self-denial, if not quite as much self-sacri-

fice to be a missionary at home—in the family, the common school, or the Sabbath school—as it does to be such in Ceylon, or Burmah, or in the interior of Africa.

Be this as it may, however, a great work is required, at the present day, of the Sabbath school teacher. He is to be to the young people of his charge, what the minister should be to those who are older, at least in some respects. He is to be to them a spiritual father. He is to be holy before them in all manner of conversation and conduct; that by his example he may win them to the same resemblance to the Father who is in heaven, which he aspires to himself. To this end he must labor in season and out of season, as the Scriptures say; and if need be, must reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all long-suffering. He must feel the responsibility which attaches to his sacred function. Mind, he must feel, needs to be fed; and he must be careful to select for it the appropriate food. Souls—immortal souls—are given him in charge to train for the skies, and to point thither.

Yet great and difficult as this work may be, let him not shrink from it. Why should he? Though ready to say, Who is sufficient for these things, yet let the consideration but serve to stimulate him to greater energy and self-denial. There are, it seems to me, many great and precious promises to cheer

and to encourage him. God, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, is with him; the Savior, while feeding his lambs, is with him; angels and seraphs behold him; and should he be the means of bringing back a single stray lamb of the flock to the true fold of Christ, they tune their harps anew, and cause their songs to be heard, as it were, in every part of the heaven of heavens—Jehovah's immediate but vast domain. Friends of Sabbath schools, never forget that they who turn many to righteousness, whether they are young or old, are to shine, in the moral firmament, as stars forever and ever.

CHAPTER VI.

DUTIES OF SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHERS.

§ 1. COMMON DUTIES OF RELIGIOUS TEACHERS.

Religious teachers, whether of the Sabbath school or elsewhere, should have high aims — Motives to exertion suggested by Mr. Todd — Study of the Bible — Study of Commentaries and other books — Particular necessity of an acquaintance with sacred geography. — Weekly meetings for studying the lesson in concert. — Prayer meetings for prayer. — Punctuality. — Teaching by example. — The influence of Piety. — Aptness to teach. — Reviewing the lessons.

I AM to speak, in this section, of the common duties and common responsibilities of superintendents and

teachers. And first I am to say something of the high moral standing they ought to maintain.

No Christian at the present day ought to be at all satisfied with present attainments. But while this remark is applicable to all Christians, it is especially so to those who hold stations of responsibility in the church or elsewhere. It is so to superintendents and teachers of Sabbath schools.

Is it not a very great error to suppose, as many are apt to, that Noah, Joseph, David, Daniel, John and Paul, stand at such a distance from us as to be inimitable? For my part, I am inclined to think that we do very wrong to view them in this light. I can never believe that, though they were great and good men for the times in which they lived, they would stand out in such relief from the rest of society, were that society as it should be.

Nor have I a doubt that every Christian of these days, with the light and knowledge and privileges of our times, ought to be as holy, absolutely so, as the best of those holy men of old were. They would not of course, even then, stand out as such prodigies of excellence in our times, as those men were in theirs; but they would, most undoubtedly, be found to be, in many respects at least, quite in advance of the average of modern Christians.

I feel quite confident that if every Christian really thought it to be his duty to be as good as

Joseph or Paul or John, he would make much greater progress than he now does, in the Divine life. It is not enough to *admit the truth* of what I am now saying ; there are very many among us who go thus far. Yet so little practical hold has such a belief on them, that they never seem to make much effort to rise to the height to which they so readily admit they might attain.

Let there be a change among us in this particular. Let every Christian feel himself bound to be as good at least as Paul was—I would say in fact far better. The morality of Christ—the piety rather—should be his model, instead of that of Paul. True it is right, as Paul himself intimates, that we should be followers of him, as far as he was a follower of Christ. Let every Christian feel bound, I say, to be as good as Paul ; let him feel ashamed before God and man if he is not so.

Now one means of becoming what Paul and the Savior were, so far at least as the latter is imitable, is to lead the life which they led. And no class of men have better opportunities for doing so than parents and teachers—including ministers under the term teachers. They that turn many to righteousness are to shine as the stars forever and ever. The Sabbath school teacher is in this respect highly favored. He has an excellent opportunity for making advances in piety. If he does not reach the summit of

holiness which Paul reached, while in this world—nay, if he does not rise in due time vastly higher—then he is certainly very much in fault. Give Saul of Tarsus the opportunities for missionary labor, and consequently for self-denial and self sacrifice, which the modern Sabbath school teacher enjoys—with the general social, civil and religious privileges of the latter – and what think you would be the result? Most certainly a person who would stand as much in advance of the average Christians of modern days, as Paul of Tarsus in the first century stood in advance of his converted countrymen.

One consideration should weigh with Sabbath school teachers which I do not remember to have seen urged except by the Rev. John Todd, in his “Sabbath School Teacher;” nor has he—while he has stated the thing—made himself very intelligible. He alludes to the fact as he calls it, that the partial application of the Gospel to the present condition of mankind imparts a fearful physical energy, which proves a curse instead of a blessing; except in so far as moral influence can be thrown into the balance against it. He is undoubtedly right; but he should have been, as it seems to me, more fearless in his illustrations.

He says it is done, 1st, by calling more minds into action, or enlarging, as it were, very rapidly the sum total of human intellect; 2, by stimulating

that increased mass of intellect; 3, by elevating the mass of population, so that instead of spending their energies upon low pleasures, puerile sports, or brutal contests, they turn them into higher channels; and thus a mighty physical and intellectual strength is created. It is as if the bodily and mental powers of an individual were increased in a surprising degree, without any increase of his *moral* powers—and even with a diminution of the latter, because in the full and free play of the accumulated bodily and mental energies of the individual, the moral faculties would be left to dwindle away for want of exercise.

It has long been a maxim that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; but perhaps Mr. Todd is the first who has boldly asserted that a little Christianity is in any way dangerous. Yet I see not how it can be otherwise, in the circumstances to which he refers; and only regret that he has repressed, as he twice says he has, his philosophical explanations. He should have spoken out. I have not time to go so deeply into the subject, in a work like this, even if I understand him fully, as to render the doctrine very intelligible; and must therefore merely advert to it, and say, that if well established, its use to Sabbath school teachers is to urge them to bring up the subject of moral education—so long neglected—till the moral energies of society prove a healthy balance to its physical and intellectual

energies, and then will the whole unite in operating as favorably as it hitherto has—even on Mr. Todd's own principles—unfavorably.

But Sabbath school teachers should not only secure a high moral standing—they should also *study their duties*. Till quite lately there were few books on this subject to be obtained. But since the publication of the works of Hall, Abbot, Pachard, Todd, and Newcomb, no teacher either in the Sabbath or district school has just cause to complain of a want of books on this subject. The “Sabbath School Teacher” should at all events be in the hands of every one who desires not merely to pass in the crowd, but to do his whole duty— who not only seeks the approbation of man, but fears God.

But above all, should superintendents and teachers study their Bible. One of the principal advantages of the Sabbath school, as I have already attempted to show, consists in its tendency to enlighten the minds and warm the hearts of teachers. It compels them to do good; and doing good cannot fail to bring down a blessing. It compels them also to study the Bible, more or less. Now it has always struck me that there was no way in which an individual would make so much progress in Bible science, in a given time, as in studying it in reference to the duties of a Sabbath school teacher.

Some I know get along with the business of a

teacher, and seem to be but little wiser or better for it. But it should not be so. Bible dictionaries, Commentaries, Antiquities, with pictures, maps, &c. &c., are so common in these days, and withal so cheap, that I hardly know how to forgive the teacher who wholly neglects to avail himself of the assistance which they proffer.

And yet I would study every Sabbath school lesson in the first place without them, with nothing but the Bible and my own natural unperverted common sense. Most teachers make too much of commentators when they once acquire the habit of using them. Instead of using them as an aid in thinking about the lesson, they suffer them to think *for* them.

In the use of some books in connection with the study of the Bible, not much thinking, I know, is required, as in the use of books on manners and customs, antiquities, geography, topography, history, &c. Here we do just as is always done in matters of mere science; we are compelled to take most things upon trust. We cannot go back eighteen hundred years to know the manners and customs which then prevailed; and if we could, not all of us could visit the Eastern world to ascertain facts for ourselves. We must trust where we cannot know, in these as well as in other matters.

Nevertheless, I still say, in regard to all our

notes and commentaries on the Bible, that I would be exceedingly cautious in their use. I would indeed use them ; but not till I had first brought my own understanding to the task of deciphering the meaning of the text. Studied in this secondary cautious way, they are as valuable as, when studied in the more common way, they prove injurious.

The late Joseph Emerson, a distinguished minister and teacher, gives the following advice to the teachers of our day schools, and it is scarcely less appropriate to the teachers of Sabbath schools. He was speaking of the various means to be devised for interesting our pupils.

“One method, for this,” he says, “is faithfully to study every lesson previous to attending to recitation. Though you may have a good general acquaintance with the branch, though you may have heard the same recitation twenty times before, you should still devote particular attention to the exercise before meeting your pupils, not only to refresh your mind with thoughts before familiar, but to gain new and more extended views on the subject. This will excite an interest which merely reviewing former ideas and reflections, can by no means inspire.”

So important, however, do I regard a correct knowledge of sacred geography, in order to a vivid conception of every thing which the lesson is designed to impart, that whenever the lesson contained

the slightest reference to place, I would have a map before me, and always refer to it. Nor is this all. I would not only *have* a map, but *make* one. I never would study a Bible lesson involving an account of a place, without making a map of that place; or at least without examining, and if necessary, correcting one already made. Every teacher above all, and if possible every pupil, ought to have in his mind's eye the places mentioned in the Bible, their position, size, relations, &c. Nothing, like this, will render our instructions in the Bible class or Sabbath school so interesting—so full of life, and few things will give our pupils more confidence in our instructions.

I am acquainted with some teachers who have so vivid a conception of Jerusalem, for example, and the adjacent country, including the valley of Jehoshaphat, the brook Kidron, Gethsemane, Bethphage, the Mount of Olives, and the valley of the son of Hinnom, that when they come to allude to these places, in conversation with their classes, their manner is so engaging and so interesting, and their descriptions are so vivid, that the pupils often begin to suspect they have actually been on the spot; and sometimes raise the question whether they have been or not. In any event their instructions are so lively, that they never fail to interest their classes; while the classes around them engaged on the same

lesson will often sit vacant or be disposed to play. I do not therefore believe it possible to overestimate the value of this kind of instruction.

I remember what is said by his biographer, of the late Pres. Dwight. So much had he studied the various employments of mankind, and so much had he observed what was going on in the world around him, that when he fell into the company of men of particular employments and occupations, they all took him to belong to their own. And so much, above all, had he read history and geography, that when he described a place, no one doubted he had been on the spot and made his own observations. So, in a good measure, was it with the late Dr. Payson. Thus should it be with Sabbath school teachers, and the study of sacred geography.

What I have said here of the duty of teachers in general, applies of course specially to superintendents, &c., with the more force from the fact that so many teachers engage now in the Sabbath school, and will be likely to continue to engage in it, who will not be willing, in this respect, to come up to the dignity of their calling and office.

In order to understand all the difficulties of a Sabbath school lesson, the teachers ought to meet at least once a week to study it together. I believe there are few who would grudge the time spent in this way, were they but once fairly habituated to it.

I have known teachers of Sabbath schools to walk two or three miles, both in pleasant and in stormy weather, during the severest winters, in order to be present at these weekly meetings.

Sabbath school teachers should be men and women of prayer. Not of public prayer merely, but of private and family prayer. *They* will accomplish little for the rising generation, in any of the popular forms of doing good, who do not often enter into their closets, and there commune with their own spirits and the Father of spirits; and as they hold this sort of communion, find a flame of sacred love kindling within them, till it causes their very hearts, like those of the disciples who were going to Emmaus soon after the crucifixion of our Lord, to *burn* within them. Here, on the most sacred altar which is to be found under the Christian dispensation, they offer up the most acceptable sacrifice—that of a subdued heart, a broken and a contrite spirit. Going hence to the Sabbath school, they will stand a chance of doing some good to their children in the name, as it is sometimes said, of the holy child Jesus.

It is customary, in many places, for the teachers of Sabbath schools to hold a monthly concert of prayer for the cause in which they are engaged; in addition to which many have weekly prayer-meet-

ings. All these may be advisable—the monthly meeting I am sure is.

I believe there is nothing on which the Christian world lay so much stress, that is so little prayed for as the Sabbath school; and this not only in public, but in private. Not only Christians in general, but, in too many instances, ministers—nay, even Sabbath school teachers themselves—most unaccountably and unpardonably neglect prayer on this subject, even if they do not actually throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the prayers of others. These things, my friends and brethren, *ought* not so to be. They *must* not long be so. If the Sabbath school is a blessing, or is in the providence of God designed to become such, it must be cared for and prayed for. And if no minister, church member, parent, teacher, &c., has love enough for it to pray for it, let it be given up at once. It is little better than solemn mockery to continue to *sustain* an institution merely that it may have a name to live, while it has no living, active, vital principle—as was the case with the church in Sardis, in the time of John the writer of the book of the Revelation.

Sabbath school teachers ought moreover to be punctual. Lord Nelson, it is said, made it a rule when he had an appointment to meet a person, to be present just fifteen minutes before the time; and

Washington and many other great men have made it a rule, from which they seldom if ever departed, to be at the place appointed, a *little* before the time of meeting.

But how is it with the Sabbath school teacher? I speak now not so much in regard to his attendance at the teacher's monthly or weekly meetings for prayer, but chiefly in regard to his attendance at the special Sabbath school exercises. Is it of less importance that he should be punctual, than it was that Nelson or Washington should be? Is the enterprize in which he is engaged less holy, or less desirable? This I am sure no one will pretend. Nor will it be said to be more difficult for the Sabbath school teacher to be punctual, than it was for the highest officer of the British navy, or the commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States of America to be so.

We talk much, as Christians, of moral or spiritual warfare—of fighting the good fight of faith, and repulsing the world, the flesh, and the devil—and with a view to gain an advantage over the enemy, by carrying the war into his own country, we enter the Sabbath school. But do we act the part of good soldiers, and above all of good officers, under the great Captain of our salvation, when, instead of being on the ground punctually, we come in one, two, three,

five, and even twelve or fifteen minutes too late ? And yet nothing is more common.

Had Nelson, or Washington, or Napoleon, been as negligent in regard to punctuality as many of our Sabbath school teachers are, it would, for aught we know, have often occasioned the defeat of their entire fleet or army. And are we sure the loss is not greater, in some instances, by neglect of punctuality in regard to the Sabbath school than any loss which could possibly be sustained by a naval or military commander ? We certainly can never know that it is not. What is the loss or gain of a world, politically speaking, to that of a single soul ?

If it is asked how souls can be lost by want of punctuality in regard to the duties of the Sabbath school, I reply, by inducing the belief in the hearts of our pupils that we are *hypocritical*, and do not feel the power of that religion which we are anxious to recommend to them. Children are much more acute in their observations of character than some of us are aware, and know much more readily if we are in earnest to do them good. And the conclusion to which the young child may come, that the Sabbath school teacher is heartless or insincere, may be the means—I have no doubt often is the means—of the destruction of his immortal spirit.

Indeed I have very little doubt that the time

will come, in the history of our world, when the superiority of moral victories over mere physical ones will be so apparent and undeniable, that many a gospel warrior will rank inconceivably higher among his fellow-men than Alexander, or Cæsar, or Napoleon; or even than Washington. Indeed I cannot, even now, look at the character of the better sort of military men, living or dead, with half the interest with which I look upon the faithful and skilful Sabbath school teacher, or regard them as half as great men. What is a Washington or a La Fayette, to a Robert Raikes or a Harlan Page? A mere star of second or third magnitude, and destined ere long to hold a place still less conspicuous, that is, relatively. For while the best political men and warriors will come to be, in the comparison, like mere stars, the moral warrior will be a sun, and will shine, with increasing brightness, forever and ever.

The remarks of the last paragraphs remind me of another highly important duty of the Sabbath school teacher, which is to set his pupils a proper example. Example is better than precept, is an old maxim; and as true as it is old. And yet, while its truth has been admitted, time immemorial, its importance seems hardly to have been understood by the Christian world, even to the present hour. Above

all, has it never been understood and practically regarded in Sabbath schools.

Here, teaching by precept seems to be all that is attempted. I speak, however, of Sabbath schools of the present time, and in our own country; for when these schools were first instituted by Robert Raikes, and even since that time, in a few places, it has been an object to bring into action, in its whole power, a holy and heavenly example. But this, I still say, has been the exception, so far as I am acquainted; and not, by any means, the general rule.

I would that every teacher, in order to have his example what it should be, were decidedly pious. This I have repeatedly stated already; nor can it be too often repeated. I know much is said of admitting amiable and excellent young men and women into the Sabbath school, in order that the duties of the school may prove the occasion of their conversion; and I know too, that such has often been the result. And yet I am not convinced, on this account, that they ought to have been admitted. On the contrary, I believe that they ought not to have been; and that if a few are incidentally converted by being admitted to the rank of teachers in the Sabbath school, there are evils enough growing from it, directly or indirectly, to overbalance the good which is done.

The teacher should not only be a man of piety, but one of *extraordinary* piety. Teachers, as I have again and again said, should be selected from the church members, and should be the very best men among them. It is true that they must be apt to teach, as a fundamental qualification ; but they must also be apt to teach right, especially in teaching by example. For we are not merely required to permit our light to *shine* before men, but to let it *so* shine—in other words, in such a manner—that others seeing our good works may be induced to glorify the Father who is in heaven.

Now who lets his light shine properly, lets it shine all the while. Some people who even think themselves Christians appear to suppose that they are not required to let their light shine the whole time. If it shine, and shine rightly on the Sabbath, and on a few extraordinary occasions of the week day, they seem to think it sufficient. But the Sabbath school teacher should recollect that he is not only continually under the Divine eye, but almost continually under the eye of his pupils. His example is observed all the day long. The teacher does so or so, I have heard made the plea for wrong doing by many a pupil ; but it is oftener made the excuse in reality, than by open acknowledgment.

Especially should Sabbath school teachers remember they are undergoing the scrutiny of hun-

dreds of eyes on the Sabbath, particularly in the Sabbath school room. While there, they should set a double watch over all their ways, words, and actions. Nothing, in word or deed, should escape them that can be construed into wrong, in the slightest degree. Here, if any where this side the eternal world, should the conscientious teacher who is aware of his responsibility, remember that he is treading on holy ground.

But the light which is poured upon him by the Sun of righteousness, should not only be reflected *in a proper manner*, and that *continually*; it should be a bright and cheerful light. With many, everything connected with religion seems to wear a sombre hue; and the light which is reflected from them has the same dark shadow. This is exceedingly unfortunate. Religion should impart cheerfulness to its possessor; and the cheerfulness which he feels should be reflected upon others. Grave, but yet cheerful—eminently so—should be his motto, especially in the Sabbath school. His presence should continually cheer and encourage his pupils; never render them gloomy or depressed. The example of gloomy Christians can never allure, but must forever repel the young, whether in the Sabbath school or elsewhere. I wish those who have the care of children, everywhere, would remember that without a relish for divine things, children will

forever remain without it, despite of the force of precept or example so long as there is nothing inviting in that example. The fear of wo remediless may drive a few to good things ; but it will be only a few ; and the remainder will be hardened.

I have alluded to the importance of punctuality, to the teacher himself ; but it should be remembered, that it is as a matter of example that punctuality is especially demanded. If you are punctual, your pupils may be expected to be so ; at least after the lapse of a little time. If you are not punctual, depend upon it, they will not be. Here, if nowhere else, example is exceedingly powerful—it is almost omnipotent.

I have said that if the teacher is punctual, his pupils may be expected to be so. This is certainly the general rule ; and to it will probably be found as few exceptions as to any other general rule which could be named. Of this the following anecdote, though it relates to a day school rather than a Sabbath school, will be an appropriate example.

A teacher was once employed to take the charge for one year of a large and somewhat unmanageable district school, in a central part of one of our New England townships. He soon found that one of the worst habits he should be compelled to encounter was the utter want of punctuality which prevailed. Some of the pupils were present at the

hour of opening the school, but others were from half an hour to an hour later. He resolved on setting them the example of commencing his school always by the time; and not only of doing so by the time, but in reality long before the time. He was at the school room usually from half an hour to an hour before the time, talking with the children, telling them stories, or giving them instruction. They soon began to find out that the teacher was always there in good season, and that the pupils who were there with him seasonably were very happy in his society. This being generally known produced quite a revolution in the state of things; and it was but a little while before nearly every pupil in the school was punctual to the time of being in his seat.

The evils of want of punctuality on the part of teachers, both as regards example and its influence on the teachers themselves, is thus portrayed by Mr. Todd, in his *Sabbath School Teacher*;—and the representation is made with very great fidelity to truth:

“*No one can be a good teacher, who is not a punctual one. Every thing valuable in a class depends, under God, upon this. In my own range of observation and experience I have never seen a blessing follow the labors of a teacher who failed in this particular. As a certain consequence of his*

delinquency, the children become dilatory in their attendance. I do not value the labors of any teacher who is unwilling to step out of his path of ease or convenience, in order to fulfill the responsibilities which he has voluntarily assumed in his Master's vineyard.

“Teachers err here frequently through want of consideration. Suppose a school consists of 150 scholars, and the teachers 25. Suppose several teachers came so late that the superintendent must delay opening the school for five minutes. This seems a short time to wait. But take the 175 persons which compose the school, and multiply it by five, and you have 875 minutes lost. Suppose this to take place once on every Sabbath, and the loss for one year is 758 hours ; and suppose the same set of teachers continue this for five years, and it would be 3790 hours. If now we suppose the habit to be by them perpetuated in the school, and transmitted down, and above all, woven into the habits of hundreds of pupils, and become a part of their character, no arithmetic can compute the evils of such a habit.

“You come late this morning to your class. The results are that your scholars are disappointed ; they take their seats, see the school opened, and feel lonely, having no teacher. The superintendent feels at a loss what to do. He sees the lambs without a

guide. He waits as long as he dares to wait. He goes round the house to find somebody whom he may lay hands on and press into the service. Finding none, he has to come back, and take the class, and unite it most reluctantly on all sides with some other class. The whole school is disturbed by the process. He kindly says he presumes the teacher is sick. This is done, and you soon come hurrying in, with that quick noisy step which always indicates a consciousness of being too late. The class must again be disunited and taken to their own seats, while the school is again disturbed, and the mortified superintendent sees you are any thing but sick. Let me assure you that you have attracted notice—shown that you were of some importance; but you have lowered yourself in the estimation of every one in the house.

“A want of punctuality amounts to robbery. A short time since, at a village in the neighborhood of London, a committee of eight ladies, who managed the concerns of an institution which had been founded for the relief of the neighboring poor, agreed to meet on a certain day, at 12 o'clock precisely. Seven of them attended punctually at the appointed hour; the eighth did not arrive till a full quarter of an hour after. She came in according to the usual mode, with, ‘I am very sorry to be behind in the appointed time; but really the time

slipped away without my being sensible of it; I hope your goodness will excuse it.' A Quaker lady replied, 'Had thyself only lost a quarter of an hour, it would have been merely thy own concern; but in this case, the quarter of an hour must be multiplied by eight, as we have lost a quarter; so there have been two hours of useful time sacrificed by thy want of punctuality.' "

I have made this long quotation in order to impress the more strongly on all who hear me the great importance of punctuality as a matter of example. To what is here quoted I might have added that a teacher can never obtain implicit and unhesitating *obedience* in his class, unless he is a punctual man in every respect. And one of the points to be most strenuously urged, as well as most strenuously enforced both by precept and example, in the family, in the day school, in the Sabbath school, and in fact almost everywhere else, is the habit of punctuality. Let us never forget, however, what is so often repeated by Cousin, "As is the teacher so is the school;" and if a teacher find his pupils wanting in punctuality, let him look into himself for the cause, and in himself he will almost always find it.

Much is said of an aptness to teach, or as some call it a peculiar *tact* at the employment. I acknowledge the difference among men in this respect; still I do not think it is so much the gift of nature

but that most persons may come to possess it, if they heartily desire it. If a person really loves teaching and loves the minds and the souls of his pupils, he can hardly fail to become skilled in his employment. Only give me the young man or young woman—or the old man or woman, for I care little which—who loves the business of teaching, and I will insure you the successful teacher.

But teachers of Sabbath schools should have an eye, above all, to the *moral character* of their pupils. This, as I have elsewhere observed,—the formation of moral and religious character,—is or should be the great object and end of their instructions. For this it is that they should endeavor to make their lessons interesting and attractive; and for this should they make every possible effort, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

There is one thing, in connection with the duties of the Sabbath school, which is very often omitted, but which should always be attended to; I mean a review of the lessons. It is of comparatively little service for a pupil to commit a chapter or part of a chapter or a psalm or hymn to memory, or be able to answer fluently and correctly a set of printed questions, if this is the sum total—the end of the matter. And yet how generally is it so! How few Sabbath school pupils ever think of their lesson again, after they have once recited it! And the

reason is that they are not *required* to remember it. There should be therefore something, from week to week, in the form of review. Especially should every leading point of the lesson be reviewed.

The best time for this, I think, is at the commencement of each succeeding Sabbath school exercise, and before entering upon the new lesson. It need not take up much time—not more than five minutes. True, more than five minutes may be spent in this way; but I would not recommend to the teachers to spend more than this. Besides if the pupils distinctly understood that they were liable to be questioned on each preceding lesson, they would take more pains than they now do to remember it; so that the review would become less and less necessary.

Superintendents and teachers should be careful to visit their pupils at their respective homes. I know this duty is generally admitted; but then I also know that it is as generally neglected. The benefits of this visiting to all parties would be very great; and I am surprised that so little of this sort of work is done, even by teachers who are truly benevolent. Perhaps they are thinking of visits which are too formal. Whereas the more free the visit is from formality, the better for every practical or Christian purpose.

Such visits would give a fine opportunity to

cultivate the spirit of Christian love and union between the parents and children and the Sabbath school and its officers. Many a breach in the church already made, might no doubt in this way be healed; and many another breach be prevented; and thus, in a corresponding degree, might the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ be made to prosper.

§ II. PARTICULAR DUTIES OF SUPERINTENDENTS.

Habits of order must be secured.—Mount Vernon school in Boston.—Moral Suasion.—Example of inflicting punishment.—Anecdote of Mr. Taylor.—“Soul” of the system.—Keeping a Record.—Making Reports.

HAVING now dwelt at considerable length on duties common to superintendents and teachers, I shall venture a few remarks on the particular duties which belong to superintendents.

Habits of order should be observed and even cultivated in every Sabbath school. “Let all things be done decently and in order,” says Paul; and his injunction will apply as well to the Sabbath school as to the church. Order, it is said moreover, is the first law of heaven.

But in establishing order and conducting the school in a proper manner with reference to the formation of good habits is obviously and in no small degree the duty of the superintendent.

I may be found to differ from many when I allude to the importance of cultivating good habits in

Sabbath schools. But I am not wholly alone in this matter. Many who have written on the subject have insisted on order as indispensable. Scholars have sometimes been excluded from the Sabbath school for being disorderly, and it is quite possible that it ought always to be so. Disorder is bad enough in any school and at any time, but especially in a Sabbath school and on the Sabbath day.

By good order, however, I do not mean perfect silence. This in a large school would be impossible. I mean rather that every thing should be done at the proper time, and all things should be kept in their proper place. Every scholar should be in his seat at the moment of opening the school; and should not leave it, except in extraordinary cases, nor then without the permission of his teacher, till the school closes. Nor should he leave then in very great haste.

I never before felt the importance of order so much as I did on visiting the Mount Vernon school in Boston, some six years ago, when under the care of the Rev. Jacob Abbott. Every thing and every exercise had its time and place; and every thing was attended to and kept in its place. The pupils did not seem to yield to the will of the teacher so much as to the *order* of the school; or rather to the hour of the day. There was a clock in sight of all; and the hours for each exercise were pasted up

so plainly, that they could not be mistaken. When the hour assigned to an exercise arrived, that exercise was attended to, at once. Neither the pupils nor the teacher seemed to think it possible there could be any delay. If they were engaged in something else which it was ever so desirable to finish, even if they were in the midst of a recitation, it made no difference. All seemed to obey the clock, or the hour indicated by the clock, rather than the teacher.

Now it should be so, in a good degree, in every school, whether week day school or Sunday school; but especially the latter. Neither the superintendent nor the teachers of a Sabbath school can think for a moment of inflicting punishment of any kind, especially corporal punishment, on a pupil. And yet the school must be governed, and the superintendent and teachers must secure this point. I think the point most effectually gained by producing such a state of public sentiment in the school, if possible, as that established by Mr. Abbott.

Nevertheless order, I say again, should be secured; and if the force of moral suasion should be insufficient, something else must be resorted to. What that something else should be, remains to be determined; and perhaps must always be left to the judgment of those most intimately concerned in the case—the superintendent and teachers. Circum-

stances are ever so varying and variable, that what would be best in one school, might be doubtful—perhaps injurious—in another.

Much may be done, I think, towards establishing order by making each pupil feel, if he can do it, that he has power greatly to add to the good condition of the school, if he will, by his example; and that in this respect, we are all teachers, the younger as well as the older. I would not undertake, however, to fasten a conviction of this sort on the minds of the pupils so much by means of long lectures, i. e. long conversations, as by a hint now and then; and especially by pointing directly at cases, should any such come under their observation, as there usually will, in a large school.

I have been much pleased with an anecdote related by Rev. John Todd, in regard to the methods which were adopted in Washington to get rid of a bad boy in the Sabbath school, and restore order. As some who hear me may hereafter be tried in the same way as was the teacher of the unruly boy in question, I have copied the anecdote.

“In a flourishing school connected with one of the churches in the city of Washington, there was a very rude and unmanageable boy. As all mild measures failed to make him better, it was determined that he should be sent away from the school. To make a deeper and more lasting

impression on himself and all present, it was also determined that this act of discipline should be administered in a formal and solemn manner. Accordingly, whilst the exercises of the school were going on, the superintendent knocked upon the table and called for attention. He directed the teacher of the class to which the little culprit belonged to take him by the hand and lead him out into the view of the whole school. This done, the superintendent, in a solemn manner, told him he had been so bad a boy that the teachers were under the painful necessity of sending him away from the school, and go he must. After a few words of admonition and advice, he gave out an appropriate hymn, and the whole school sung it standing. The teacher, by the direction of the superintendent, then took the boy by the hand, led him out of the school through the vestibule, through the inclosure, and through the gate, and then closing the gate upon him, let him go. The boy wept ; the teachers and scholars wept ; and the whole scene was most affecting. A salutary influence was exerted upon the whole school by this transaction, and it is hoped a lasting and most beneficial effect was produced upon the little exile himself. For who should come, the very next Sabbath morning, but the same little boy, entreating with tears that he might be taken back, and promising that he would henceforward be a good boy !

The teachers were not unmoved by his tears of penitence. They received him again into the school; and since his restoration, he has been altogether another boy."

This perhaps is the extent to which the discipline of the Sabbath school should be carried, when the crime is that of mere disorder, and even this in rougher hands than those just mentioned might fail entirely of its good effect. A great deal depends on gentleness, in all matters which pertain to discipline. I was much instructed at the Seamen's chapel one Sunday in Boston. In the midst of the services a drunken and probably boisterous sailor entered, and staggering along the broad aisle and beginning to talk strangely, the proper officers proceeded forthwith to take him out of the house. "Softly, brethren; softly, brethren," said the minister, Mr. Taylor, himself once a seaman; "lead him out gently." His soft words most evidently had their full effect. The sailor became more quiet, and submitted without resistance to their requirements, and did not return to make any more disturbance.

But a superintendent must not only secure and preserve suitable order and discipline, he must be as it were the soul of the whole. As mankind are constituted there must be a head to every body. But this remark, true everywhere, is especially true of the Sabbath school. I have said that there must

be a head, but I do not mean that there may not be more than one superintendent to a school. Indeed I think there ought to be at least two, the second to act in case of the absence or sickness of the first; and in addition to these I think a female superintendent is also highly desirable.

However, be this matter regulated as it may, there should be a soul to the system, and this soul should be the active, energetic, almost everywhere present influence of those who superintend. They should have an eye to every thing which is going on, in doors and out. Bringing the teachers together once a week, providing for their instruction, planning lessons for the pupils, selecting books for both libraries—that for the teachers and that for the pupils, classing the pupils, taking care that every class has a teacher and every casual vacancy is supplied, attending to order and discipline, opening and closing the school, &c., &c., are duties which, in ordinary circumstances, devolve upon superintendents; and, if they are faithful, consume a good deal of their time, not only on the Sabbath, but also on the week day.

Superintendents should also keep a faithful record of the proceedings of the school from Sabbath to Sabbath; not in a merely formal manner, as is now too often done, but in a manner which, to those who examine it, conveys ideas. Thus, to note that

such a Sabbath the school was opened with prayer by the superintendent, and that there were present so many male and so many female teachers and pupils ; and to relate the same story from Sabbath to Sabbath, is of very little service. Let the superintendent note all this to be sure (for I would have him, by all means, put down the outlines) ; but let him, at his leisure, fill up a considerable space with remarks on errors, mistakes, &c., with facts and anecdotes relating to the character and *progress* of the school ; such as serve to show its real condition and spirit. A record thus kept would be instruction to every teacher ; nor am I sure it would not be so to the pupils, provided it was read over weekly, immediately after the beginning of each particular exercise.

I deem it the duty, also, of every superintendent to converse with the whole school a few minutes of each Sabbath, and perhaps ask them questions. Sometimes these questions may be put to the whole school ; sometimes to particular classes ; and sometimes to particular individuals. The replies should be in a clear audible voice, not in whispers or shrieks. Sometimes they may be requested to raise their hands to express their opinion, or perhaps to rise ; or having risen, to be seated.

If visitors are present in the school, it is the business of the superintendent to pay some attention to

them, or to appoint an individual for that purpose, which is preferable. This should be the case, I mean, when any attention at all is paid to visitors. I would not have it so, however. I would have the school always open to the reception of visitors; but they should observe for themselves, and take care of themselves. So I think it should be in regard to every school, at least every public school.

One duty of the superintendent remains to be mentioned; it is that of making out the yearly report of his school. Nothing can be more loose than these returns often are; and yet there are few things about which we should be more careful. To report so many scholars when a part of those same scholars are reported by other superintendents; to report so many teachers when a part of those teachers are never present, or were present last year but are absent this year, while their names have never yet been stricken from the list; to report that the school is flourishing when all that is done consists in a few dry recitations of what is but little understood, while the health is being constantly impaired and the heart growing constantly harder all the time; to report such a number of conversions in the Sabbath school—so many teachers and so many pupils—when those conversions are all which have taken place during the whole year in connection with the church and congregation, and have been owing as

much to other circumstances and other efforts, as to the influences of the Sabbath school;—all this, I say, and many more things connected with too many of our Sabbath school reports, is very much to be regretted, and calls loudly for reformation.

Especially to be regretted is it that erroneous views should be embodied in a report of this kind, in relation to the number of conversions which have taken place. I know these representations are inadvertencies, for the most part; seldom, if ever, intentional. Still they are misrepresentations. How can it be otherwise? From what class of the community do conversions usually take place in congregations where there is no Sabbath school? Is it not from the very class of which the latter are made up wherever they exist? Nay, does it not often happen that when a report says that so many teachers and so many pupils have been hopefully converted during the year, these constitute the only conversions that have taken place in the whole congregation? But have not these selfsame persons, old and young, been in the habit of attending the regular church services, the stated public prayer meetings, and the prayers of the families to which they belong? Who knows how many of those conversions are fairly to be set down as resulting from the efforts, under God, of the Sabbath school, and

how many to the labors of the parents at home, the minister in the pulpit, &c. ?

I repeat it, that I may not be misunderstood, I do not set down the superintendents of Sabbath schools as guilty of intentional wrong in this matter ; far from it. It is an oversight on their part, but it is an oversight which it is desirable should not exist. They should at least state the fact that, though there have been such a number of conversions, it is impossible in the nature of things, as it truly is, to say how far these results are fairly attributable to the Sabbath school, and how far to other influences.

And so of that part of the report which relates to the attendance. It should be continually kept in view, both in the reports of superintendents and in the general report made by the secretaries of Sabbath school societies, unions, &c., that there is room for considerable inaccuracy in these documents on account of what I have here named. So that if the error cannot be prevented, we should take care to send along with it, to the eye of the public, its own corrective. This is strictly the public due, in fact ; but this is not all. The enemies of our religion set down all these things as a species of white lying, and are sure to make the most of them in showing that our religion is not what it professes to

be; though nothing can be farther from the truth than to identify religion with the errors and follies of its professors.

CHAPTER VII.

DUTIES OF MINISTERS IN RELATION TO SABBATH SCHOOLS.

§ I. WHAT MINISTERS CANNOT DO.

Ministers who do not believe in the utility of Sabbath schools.
—Other ministers —Ministers cannot do every thing.—
Our unreasonable demands upon them.

WHAT a minister ought to do, in relation to Sabbath schools, depends as I suppose upon a great variety of circumstances. It may be his duty to do much, or little, or nothing at all. For as the Sabbath school is here supposed to be a part of the church and congregation, and instituted and organized by the church and congregation, and as there are a few ministers who do not believe in the usefulness of Sabbath schools, one of this stamp might happen to be connected with a church, where there was already a flourishing Sabbath school, and might be expected to render it his assistance. But would it be his duty to comply with such a request? Would

we ask him to do that which we knew he believed to be wrong?

But there are those who even believe in the general usefulness of these schools, who cannot and ought not to do any thing of consequence to sustain them. Is it asked why they ought not? Simply because they have enough and more than enough to do already. Nothing is more unreasonable than the demand made by people now-a-days upon some of their teachers, especially their religious or pulpit teachers, they appear to regard them as mere men of leisure, having little to do, but to sit in their chairs or on their sofas, and read and write, and then receive large salaries for their services. The idea that our teachers—our ministers among the rest—are really and truly our hard-working men, if we have any such in the community, never occurs to them.

Now I freely acknowledge that we have among us both lazy schoolmasters and lazy ministers. Nevertheless where either of them are what they are expected to be, they have no time to be lazy; and it has been my lot to know of a very great number who had not the disposition to be so.

Need I mention in this place, preliminary to an account of the duty which ministers are supposed to owe to the Sabbath school, the numerous—I should say the unreasonable—demands which are made of them?

It is certainly enough for any one—a Belgian or even an American giant himself not excepted—to write two sermons in a single week habitually, provided they are *studied* as well as *written*. This kind of labor—mental labor, I mean—is exceedingly exhausting, although they who have never labored in this way seem to have no idea of it ; and not a few who labor hard in this way and suffer as the consequence, do not seem to know what ails them. Multitudes of ministers and teachers and other literary men destroy themselves every year, by this overtaxing the brain and nervous system ; when a little less study and a little more exercise would have been the means, not only of saving their health, but of prolonging their lives.

If however to write two sermons a week were all a minister had to do, the case would be very much altered. I suppose, indeed, that there are few if any among us, who would not injure their health—and that in a very few years, too—by preparing two well digested sermons each week, provided they did nothing else. Man is not made to do nothing but study, any more than he is to do nothing but work ; and I hardly know which is most destructive, to mind and body both, than an exclusive devotion to either. I think, however, that all study produces rather more of actual disease than all work does ;

although the latter makes me more brutal and stupid.

But to return to ministers. If they were merely required, I say, to write two sermons a week, and this was all they had to do, our demands on them would not be quite so exorbitant. Or if we would be satisfied with their extemporaneous efforts a part or the whole of the time, or with one sermon newly written and one which had been preached before, revised and modified for the occasion, they might find time to do more still, than merely to sermonize.

But what are the demands which, in point of fact, we make of them? Let us think the matter over a little.

First, as I have said already, we require two sermons of them. Secondly, we require them to give us extra sermons, more or less, lectures, &c. Not a few ministers, besides the two regular sermons of the Sabbath, are expected to preach Sunday evening, and two evenings in the week besides, or at least one regular week day evening lecture. Very few indeed get along with less than two extra discourses weekly, which, though unwritten, are of course by every conscientious minister more or less premeditated or studied. Thirdly, we require them to be ready for funeral services, marriages, &c.;

and to visit the sick. Fourthly, they are expected to visit, occasionally, all the families of the parish, whether sick or well; and some are required to visit each family once at least in six months. This last demand is especially made by the poor, who if not often called on will soon cry out, "aristocracy." And yet their children and acquaintance know that the last thing they desire to see fairly in their houses is their minister. Fifthly, ministers are expected not only to visit, largely, the sick and the well—and the schools into the bargain—but they must be at home *always*, to receive the calls of all who wish to see them as well as those who only wish to hinder them; and these last in particular. For none of those who call to see a minister will so soon complain that he is absent unnecessarily, consulting his own ease or pleasure, as those who, though they have least to say, call oftenest and stay longest. Sixthly, they must be ready for every extra work of charity which comes along, and above all to take an active part in all the crusades which are to be made against the various forms of vice which exist among us, and usually to take the lead in them.—Here, at any rate, is a war for them in which and from which there is no discharge. They have no alternative but to enlist, and to enlist too as officers and not as mere private soldiers, or be denounced as unchristian.

Finally, they must not only do this—the work of

nearly half a dozen strong minded, able bodied men, but they must rule well their own household; for if a minister's son or daughter turns out ill, once in a hundred instances, it is trumpeted long and loud, and a stigma fixed if possible on the whole profession. Moreover they are expected now-a-days, by many, not only to be men of half a dozen lives or more, but to spend a pretty fair proportion of one life in laboring in the garden or the field, in order to preserve their health.

I would not be too severe on people of course, but I do think that while we expect too much, a great deal too much, of many other professions, the common schoolmaster for example—requiring even of him to make bricks without giving him straw—it is only of the minister that we require absolute impossibilities. Of him however we are certainly apt to make demands which not only border upon impossibility, but which were actually *impossible* even for an angel. No wonder so many ministers *live upon sheds*. No wonder so many break down who attempt to go on. No wonder a few fly to the woods or fields at once, rather than make the sacrifice of reputation, health and life.

Now we ought not to forget that in making the minister, we should not as good Protestants desire to unmake the man or the citizen. The minister,

though a minister, is still or may be a husband ; a father ; the head of a family ; a neighbor ; a citizen. All these relations and positions imply duties. The duties of the first three, the domestic duties, are exceedingly weighty in the estimation of one who knows as well as a minister of the gospel ought to know how great a work it is to bring up our households in the fear of God—and in such a way that others too may learn, from their example, to fear him. Nor are his duties as a neighbor or citizen few or light ; to say nothing of other possible connections, as brother, parent, &c. Yet all these things are by many who are far from being Catholics wholly overlooked. Many of us as truly and as practically deny our preachers the rights of matrimony, and especially the duties and privileges which pertain to or grow out of that institution, as does the church of Rome. Of what use is it to permit this institution, by the usual forms, to the minister, when by our customs we forbid him to perform the duties which naturally grow out of it, and which ought ever to be inseparable from it ? What is it but downright, I was going to say impious mockery ? A minister may—nay *must*—have a family, and yet he must have nothing to do, it seems, in the education of his family. This must be left to a companion, to domestics and to chance ; and to leave it to either or all of these, as society is now constituted,

is little better than to leave them to chance, merely. For even the companion of a minister, though a worthy companion, is for the most part, unless she bursts asunder the chains which fashion has imposed, almost as much shut away from her family as her husband.

The truth is that the pulpit duties of modern ministers are altogether too great and arduous, at least as things are. There was a time, in the history of the Protestant church—nay even in the history of our own New England—when there was, to some churches at least, both a preacher and a pastor. If so much is to be made of sermonizing as many suppose; if a minister is to be required to write, every week, two new sermons,—not merely scrawl them, but write them from the recesses of his own brain,—then there ought to be, connected with him, in the parish, a pastor to perform the rest of the duties. No man, I say once more, who has a family to provide for both as respects body and soul, and a body and soul of his own to be duly managed also, can do more for a parish than to study and write two sermons in a week—if they are studied and written as they ought to be. I care not if he is as strong as Hercules or Goliath—he must eventually suffer in the performance of the task; and most men will sink under the burden in a very few years.

But if these things are so, and if it is a general fact that ministers are not only required to do all this, who does not see, at once, that it is as idle as it is cruel to expect they can do much for Sabbath schools were they ever so favorably disposed towards them ?

I would not indeed have things as they are. I would not have a minister, who is at the same time a pastor, required to preach over one sermon a week, either on his own account, or for the well-being of his hearers. No man can preach or hear more than one elaborate discourse on a Sabbath to any advantage. If there must be more than one service in a day, I would have the other exercise an exposition of a passage or of several passages of the Bible, rather than a regular sermon.

Indeed it is my most deliberate conviction that if the custom is to continue—of which, by the way, I have many doubts—of having such large congregations and churches, and if the same man is to be both preacher and pastor, no written sermons ought to be expected or required of him. During his parochial visits, he should take notes of the more interesting facts, and preserve memoranda of the more interesting thoughts which might occur to him, and these notes and memoranda of his pastoral visits should furnish him with the very material wherewith to fill up and render interesting the extem-

poraneous performance of the following Sabbath.

Let me not be understood as regarding it as a matter of indifference whether a minister has the *power* to write a sermon or not, should the case require it. It appears to me, however, that he who, like the good pastors of Waldbach and High Alps, knows how to make the pastoral duties of the week the best preparation for the services of the following Sabbath is the very man who, above all others, should be able to write a sermon. If a man can preach with great acceptance and success extemporaneously, it appears to me he ought to be able to write down from his pen in the study, what he can let fall from his tongue in the sanctuary.

It is such a minister, if any one, who can lend his aid to sustain the Sabbath school. It is he alone who can meet the teachers at their weekly meeting, give them occasional lectures on their duties, take charge of a class, or act as the general superintendent. No other person ought, as a teacher and pastor of the flock, to attempt to add to his duties, already enough to press him into the dust, the care and responsibilities of the Sabbath school. No matter how forcibly the direction of the Savior to Peter, "Feed my lambs," may seem to sound in his ears,—he has other and pre-existing engagements. Your lambs must be fed as they can be. Let the family

do what it can, let the Sabbath school do what it can, and let the district school do what public opinion will permit; but let not the minister attempt what, in the very nature of things must injure his health, and perhaps make him in five years a mere invalid—obliged to leave family and church, to run to the “Springs” or to the “West Indies,” or across the “Atlantic,” in search of what he will seldom find, at least till he finds it beyond the grave!

§ II. WHAT MINISTERS CAN DO FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Preaching on Sabbath schools.—Occasional lectures.—Explaining the lessons publicly.—Example of the method of doing this.—Difficulties on account of stupid hearers.—Attending the weekly meetings of the teachers.—Views of Mr. Todd.—Remarks.—Visiting the Sabbath school.

WHEN a minister can be found who, believing in the utility of Sabbath schools, has time to aid their operations, there are many ways in which he can do so. Perhaps the first and more important means of forwarding these objects, is by occasional preaching on the subject. For this, in fact, every minister has time. Nor are there many congregations that would not be both interested and instructed by a discourse once in six or three months, on these institutions.

Having time for the purpose, he might also give lectures to the teachers, either occasionally throughout the year, or stately at particular seasons.

These lectures might be on the duties, both general and particular, of the teachers, or they might be wholly scientific. Of the last description, are lectures on sacred history, geography, biography, antiquities, manners and customs, and the like. With the aid of maps, charts, &c., or even without them, great good might be done. Some might also—I know of a few such—be able to give lectures on physiology and the laws of health.

Another method which I have known ministers to adopt in aid of the Sabbath school, is to explain the lesson which is next to follow. Thus, suppose the Sabbath school lesson for the morning of a certain day were the first twenty-one verses of the third chapter of John's gospel, the minister would, on the Sabbath next preceding, make a plain, practical exposition of it. I say a *plain, practical* exposition, because some ministers are too scholastic in their manner of explaining things. Instead of spending the greater part of the time allotted them in those explanations which I have shown in previous lectures the unsophisticated mind most loudly calls for, and only giving a due proportion of the time to a simple statement of the doctrines which are inculcated, they are apt to enter, in an exposition of this chapter, upon an elaborate discussion of the nature of the new book, the atonement, future punishment, &c.

Although it would ill become me to dictate to the minister the course he ought to pursue, yet I cannot help giving a brief specimen of the manner in which I would proceed, were I to attempt such an exposition. It will, perhaps, be recollected, that the first verse of the chapter in question, reads as follows: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

First, I would explain the term *Pharisees*. There are hundreds of adults—sometimes, perhaps, hundreds in a single congregation—who have no clear and definite ideas of the meaning of the term Pharisee. They do not know that the Jewish, like the Christian church, was divided into sects; and if they know even this, they know not how many of these sects there were, or which were considered the most respectable, or in what, in fact, their peculiarities consisted. All this I would endeavor to make plain—as plain as the English language could make it—and not only plain, but inviting.

Next, I would tell them something about a *ruler* among the Jews—such as was Nicodemus. The word ruler occurs so many times in the New Testament, that it seems to me highly desirable for every person to understand its meaning. And yet how few—how very few—can tell you any thing more about it than that it indicated *authority* or *rule* of some sort. A full explanation of this single term, would

take up four minutes or more. And a short account of Nicodemus himself nearly as long. Here, then, on a single verse, out of more than twenty, and that too one of the shortest of the whole, from ten to fifteen minutes might be profitably spent; and if rightly managed, I have no doubt agreeably spent, as well as profitably.

I would not say so much of this method of instruction, if I were not fully satisfied both of its *necessity* and its *superiority*,—if I were not satisfied, above all, of the aid it would afford teachers and pupils in prosecuting their studies during the week which would follow the exposition. So that while effectually accomplishing other objects, the minister is doing the very best thing in his power for the Sabbath school.

Still I speak with diffidence, on account of one difficulty—one, in fact, which seems to me almost insurmountable. For I might almost as well expect a man to carry the Andes on his shoulders, as a minister to satisfy a certain class of his hearers with this form of instruction. So that the difficulty, as will be seen—the impossibility rather—arises from the views and feelings of the people, and not from those of the minister; and it is this blindness of the mass of the community to their own real wants, that almost palsies one's hand while he attempts to write on the subject.

There are very few persons among us who would be satisfied for any considerable time with any thing short of the very form of pulpit instruction, which is so common among us already. It has sometimes appeared to me, that we prefer to hear what we very little understand, as if to save the labor of thinking. Many will gladly sit the year round—that is every Sabbath of the year—to hear from their minister about the same set of ideas which they have always heard, only that they are turned and transposed in such a way as to assume half a hundred or a hundred different aspects—just as we may transpose the letters of the alphabet in a hundred or a thousand different ways. Nor will they be satisfied with any other sort of preaching. There must be just about so many firsts and secondlies and thirdlies to a discourse, or it will not answer their fastidious purposes; and it must contain, moreover, the very views which they have heard and believed all their lives long; for if it contain more or less, it is deemed heretical. Let it but be what they have heard, or perhaps slept under, half a century or more, and they are greatly delighted. Never before, perhaps, was there a more excellent preacher, or more *beautiful* sermons. While he who has dug deep into the Divine law, and brought forth, for their edification, out of the Divine treasury, things new and old, will not at all please them or satisfy their morbid expect-

ations, in comparison with the man who preaches in fine style, uses fashionable gestures, dresses fashionably, though he says what they have heard a hundred times before.

I speak here with some confidence, for I have had an opportunity to know how people feel in regard to this subject. Some years since I was one of a number of petitioners to the pastor of one of the more respectable churches in Boston, requesting him to substitute, for his elaborate forenoon sermon, a sermon of the kind I have been describing—an exposition of a chapter, or part of a chapter, either in the Old or New Testament. The reply to the petition was, that for himself he should like the plan proposed, but that it would never be satisfactory to the majority of his hearers; and to a few it would be offensive. I hardly need to say that the prayer of the petitioners was not granted.

Another way still in which ministers might aid Sabbath schools, had they the time to spare for it, is by meeting with the superintendent and teachers at their weekly meetings. "The teachers," says Mr. Todd, "would gladly hear the minister, the fountain whence they draw their knowledge, and by him they are willing to have their opinions shaped. They feel too their need of mental discipline, their poverty of thought or illustration, and especially they feel their inability to obtain and grasp those great prin-

ciples and views of the whole plan of redemption which are so desirable ; and which once obtained, give a religious teacher such power. Ministers do not get this great system fully before the mind till after years of study. Is it any wonder, then, that teachers cannot ? The doctrines of the Bible, the great foundation stones of the moral temple, are what they want to measure and examine, to lay their hands upon, to rest their hopes upon, and by which they wish to teach better. The pastor only can thus instruct them.

“ By meeting the teachers weekly, too, the minister would preach better ! And how ? Because he would be continually studying to simplify truth and thought and language, so that the children may understand what is taught them. In this way he will preach with more simplicity, more nature, more ease, more directness and more illustration. So great a part of his instructions will not go over the heads of his hearers.”

From the statement by Mr. Todd, that Sabbath school teachers would gladly have their opinions shaped by that of the minister, however well intended, I venture to dissent. It appears to me that teachers should not be encouraged in the habit of suffering others, even well informed ministers, to *shape their opinions*. Our opinions on all subjects, especially on religious subjects, should be formed

according to truth, and not according to any human standard. I am frequently almost impatient when I find teachers forming their opinions almost wholly from Scott's or Clarke's or Henry's Commentary, and not from the Bible itself. I wish Sabbath school teachers and everybody else, to read the Bible for themselves and form their opinions according to their own good sense. With the determination to do so, however, great aid may be derived from a minister; and I fully accord with the excellent writer from whom I have just quoted, in most of his views on this important subject.

One or two things more can be done by the minister, for the Sabbath school. He can superintend it. Ministers have done this service and done it well. I repeat it, I do not undertake to say how many can find time for it; but any who have the time, may thus render an essential service to the community.

But what is more common, they can teach Bible classes. Usually the minister, if he can attend to it, is the best man to manage and instruct the more advanced pupils of a Sabbath school. A great many ministers do this work; and some of them do it well, exceedingly well. Others, however, do not succeed so well. As I have said elsewhere, it is far from being every good man who can teach good things. There is a tact of communicating what we

know, without which our efforts are but half successful.

A writer who insists on a connection of some sort between the minister and the Sabbath school—and were ministers not overburdened with labor already, I would insist upon it as strongly as he—thus expresses himself on the subject :

“ I plead for the close connection between pastor and school, once more, because it will create a strong, a sweet and a delightful tie between the pastor and his flock. The children will feel that their privileges are great, because the minister of God is so frequently present, and takes so deep an interest in the school. The teachers feel that they labor not in vain ; and that, however discouraging their prospects may be, there is one heart that will never grow cold—never lose its sympathy for them. The parents will feel that the piety and the intelligence of the church are enlisted in behalf of their children, and will be encouraged to co-operate. The church will feel that she must go with her leader, and will gather her sympathies around the vineyard of the Lord ; and the minister himself will feel that when no success attends his labors he has a cohort in the church, who by experience have learned what it is to labor in vain, and who will not be backward to sympathize with him. And when the

holy man of God dies there will be tears from the eyes of those in the Sabbath school room who have looked upon him as their best friend."

There is at least one thing which a minister can do, to which no writer, so far as I know, has adverted. He can treat the Sabbath school teacher as an equal—a fellow laborer—a coadjutor—and not, as has sometimes happened, as an inferior. There is no benefit to be derived from keeping the Sabbath school teacher, the common school teacher, or any other teacher at a distance, as if his employment were less sacred, or as if the minister were of better materials than he. Let us be grateful that the number of ministers of this sort is far less numerous than it once was, and that the proportion is still diminishing. So long, however, as there are any of this stamp among us, there is occasion for adverting briefly to the subject.

But the minister may do more than simply to acknowledge the equality of the Sabbath school teacher with himself, in so many words; he may and should manifest his republican feeling not only with his lips, but with his life. He should labor to break down the reserve that has sometimes existed, like a mountain barrier, between even the good pastor and the equally good though perhaps less learned teacher. I do not say that the teacher

should try to break it down, but the minister himself rather ; for I have greater confidence in *levelling up* society than in levelling downward.

If there is any thing in the Christian world which should form the basis of caste, it is moral excellence. And yet there seems to be a contradiction even in this. Who can think of the Savior, as assuming a higher rank than the meanest of his brethren ? Where was it that he made the assumption—at Nazareth ? at Capernaum ? on the sea of Galilee ? at Bethany ? at Jerusalem ? at the cross ? Never, no, never. We instinctively revolt at the idea of the Savior as setting himself above his brethren of the human race, on account of his excellence. The more superlatively excellent or holy a person is, the more, in fact, he resembles the Savior, the more remarkable will be his freedom from every thing which would seem to imply an assumption of superiority.

Now ministers should be, above all other men, if possible, close imitators of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and in this particular among the rest. If we cannot conceive of the Savior as setting himself above those who were around him, then we ought not to find Christian ministers assuming such an attitude. And if, on the contrary, we find the Savior more free from every thing of the kind to which I refer than any other individual in the world, then in proportion as his ministers and followers are like him, will

they put themselves upon a par with their fellow men.

One object of the Christian church and its ordinances was to favor equality in society, or at least to break down caste—to teach the followers of Christ to be servants to their fellow men as he himself was, rather than to take the attitude of superiors. And every thing which pertains to the Sabbath school ought to be so managed as to have the same tendency; and the faithful minister of Jesus Christ, if he can do no more in relation to the Sabbath school, can at least do all in his power to give it this direction and tendency. Indeed this is what thousands are doing; and though I insist and have all along insisted that the Sabbath school, as yet, accomplishes less, so far as immediate results are concerned, than many suppose, still, if it can but be instrumental in breaking down caste among us, of which there is some hope, it will not have had its day wholly in vain.

Lastly, a minister may learn, by stepping into a Sabbath school now and then, the art of making his instructions intelligible in the great congregation. I say he *may* do so. For there are some ministers who very much need to acquire this sort of knowledge, and, if they cannot obtain it elsewhere, ought to be willing and glad to obtain it in the Sabbath school room. Thousands of the youthful part of a

congregation may yet rise up and call their minister blessed, on account of the tact he acquired in his profession, by an occasional connection with the Sabbath school.

CHAPTER VIII.

SABBATH SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

§ I. UTILITY OF SABBATH SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

Rewards in Sabbath schools objected to.—Books in a library not to be used as a reward.—Sabbath school libraries defended—as on the whole desirable.

THERE was a time in the history of our Sabbath schools when the spirit of emulation was appealed to by the distribution of various forms of rewards, usually of little value. But the use of Sabbath school rewards, tokens of merit, &c. has I hope nearly gone into disuse. What little remains of the system of bestowing rewards is now connected with the Sabbath school library.

But even here I would take great pains to avoid the appearance of reward. Indeed I would make such rules and regulations in regard to all Sabbath school libraries as should entirely preclude every such idea. I would have every thing general. The scholar who made the least progress and who

behaved the worst should share equally with those who made the most progress and behaved the most correctly. All I would have on equality; but I mean as to rights. If any one injured a book or manifested an entire want of interest in regard to it, I would at once deprive him of its privileges.

Some are averse to Sabbath school libraries; supposing them, on the whole, productive of more evil than good. Children, they tell us, need to think more and read less. They have more books already than they can use to advantage. Besides, the character of not a few of our Sabbath school books is very doubtful.

Now all this reasoning against Sabbath school books is very plausible, nor is it wholly without truth. Children certainly read too much, and think too little; as well as read, indiscriminately, all sorts of books. For various reasons it comes to pass, that without some general direction on this subject constituting a Board of Supervisors, much of the reading in our families—often in our good families—is any thing but what it ought to be. But this, instead of being a reason for opposing the introduction of Sabbath school libraries, is in my view one of the strongest arguments in their favor. In the use of our modern Sabbath school books, parents are aided by a Board of Education as it were, that is, by the Committee of Publication of the society; and may

be tolerably sure that at least no foolish or obscene book will find its way through their hands into the hands of their children. That any such board should have or exercise infinite wisdom in their selection, is not to be expected, and accordingly we sometimes seem to see the word *finite* instamped on their doings. Nevertheless the selection they make is probably a better selection, in every respect, than would be made by nine in ten, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, of the generality of parents themselves; first because too many of them know not how to select, and secondly because they are too busy to do it, had they the necessary knowledge.

So that on the whole I am in favor of Sabbath school libraries of some sort. But if such libraries must be had, there must be certain regulations respecting them. It is in vain and worse than in vain to have a library, and yet have no rules respecting it. Let us consider the subject however separately.

§ II. LIBRARIES FOR TEACHERS.

Necessity of such libraries.—What they should include.—Church libraries.—Who should select the books for a teachers' library.

IN the first place, however, let me say that I should greatly desire two libraries to every Sabbath school—one for the teachers and one for the pupils. The best Sabbath schools I have ever known were

thus furnished. Few teachers are able both to work for nothing and find themselves with all the implements of their profession. The fact is, that if the church leaves her Sabbath school teachers to labor gratuitously and will not come to their aid in any other way, she ought at least to furnish them with a library. By the aid of this, each teacher might get along with a very few books of his own, except perhaps Calmet's Dictionary, a Harmony of the Gospels and a few maps.

A library for the teachers of a Sabbath school should include all our best commentaries on the Bible, from the Comprehensive Commentary to Barnes' Notes and Newcomb's Harmony. Scott and Clarke at least, besides those I have named above, should be found in it.

Another class of books suitable for this library, are those which treat of antiquities, as Jahn's Archaeology, Bible Manners and Customs, &c. The Natural History of the Bible by Harris, Abbott, or others should be another item. The best travels in the East, as those of Niebuhr, Burckhardt, Carne, Maundrell, Clarke, Smith and Dwight, Stevens, Jones, Robinson, and Buckingham should also if possible be procured. Along with these should be Bible Dictionaries, and Gazetteers of various kinds, and a supply of geographies and maps. Every thing, in fact, which will fit the teacher for the

special discharge of his duties should be included. I would even include all the back volumes of the *Missionary Herald*, or at least all the current numbers; for besides its other merits, this excellent periodical is one of the best works on geography—sacred geography among the rest—to which the inquiring mind could possibly be directed.

I have sometimes thought that when we consider how soulless our common town libraries are, especially where in view of sectarian jealousies likely to arise all religious books are excluded, it becomes a serious question whether our public libraries should not be formed church-wise, as I should call it; each denomination having its own library. It is true I deprecate as much as any man, the idea of widening the gap between our various religious sects—already too wide; but yet I dread, much more, this stripping a library of almost every thing which, to one numerous class of readers, gives life or interest to it.

If this arrangement were entered into—if every church and congregation had its own library; if the church held the Sabbath school, its formation and its destinies in its own hands, and furnished it with teachers from its own numbers; then I see not why the teachers' library might not be part and parcel of the general church or parish library. Future experience may perhaps decide that this is the best thing

which can be done. As things are now, however, I regard the teachers' library as far more necessary than that for the pupils; although I should be unwilling to dispense with either.

Who should select the books for the teachers' library, is with me a matter of considerable doubt. It is a matter to which they are hardly competent who have never known the privileges of one. A committee from the church ought probably to have a voice in the matter, at any rate. Let the selection be made, moreover, as much as any other act is performed which concerns the church arrangements, organization or discipline, in the fear of God; for no Sabbath school library, for teachers or others, can be expected to perform its appropriate work without the Divine blessing.

§ III. LIBRARIES FOR THE PUPILS OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

A selection for them is already made.—This, however, is to be selected from.—On what principles —Not on the ground of cheapness, solely —Great influence of Sabbath school books.—Biographies.—Memoirs.—Happy living rather than happy dying.—Modes of distributing books.—Why parents are the best persons to draw books for children.—Parents and children should read the books together.—Too much reading.

If the formation of a library for the pupils of the Sabbath school is a little more simple than the formation of that for teachers, it is nevertheless, a work on which we should bestow care. For though we

have a selection, as it were, of books for them already made—which is not the case in relation to teachers—still even this selection is to be selected from. No one Sabbath school presumes to take every thing which may be had at Sabbath school depositories, even were their means ample and the books all equally excellent. A choice is to be exercised. By what principles, then, in making this choice, shall the committee of selection be governed ?

To me it seems obvious that there can be but one leading principle to which they should be directed, worthy of the *name* of principle. To select books on the principle of mere cheapness, would certainly be unwise. To select those which had the most or the prettiest pictures would be little better. Not that cheapness or prettiness forms a positive objection to a book of any sort ; on the contrary both seem to me recommendations, in themselves considered. All I mean to say, is, that it would be worse than weakness to make either of these the *grounds* of selection. The great principle by which we should be governed should be a regard to intrinsic excellence and a reference to moral tendency, religious improvement, or growth in grace. The best books—those best calculated to make us at the same time wiser and better—and only such should, in my view, be selected.

One recommendation in books for children,

though it may not belong in strictness of language to moral excellence, I would certainly seek, I mean intelligibility. There are some books which find their way into our Sabbath school depositories, which are by no means very intelligible to children;—hardly to adults themselves. Not that such books pass the ordeal—come under the supervision of which I have spoken—for they do not, at least not always. There are few depositories in our country, perhaps there are none, where books are not kept which have been subjected to no eye of scrutiny; and though catalogues of those which have been published by our various societies, unions, &c. &c., are usually kept at depositories, many a committee of selection neglect the use of their senses, and purchase the class of books which I have just named, with a confused idea that they come to them under the sanction of the same board as the others do; and it sometimes happens that the clerks or keepers of depositories, either through negligence or design, do not undeceive them. Acting on the principles of the *world*, I well know that they are under no sort of obligation to give such information; but acting on the principles of the religion of Christ, they are so.

Then, again, there is a choice to be exercised in regard to books which have been examined and approved by the revising or publishing committees. They indeed select the best which are offered them,

but it cannot of course be expected that among a hundred books approved by a revising or publishing committee, all should be of equal excellence. Why then should we not avail ourselves of the privilege of choice among them? Is it not our duty to do so? Are not our responsibilities to God for the manner in which we educate our children such, that we expose ourselves to his disapprobation if we do it not?

For these Sabbath school books coming into our families from week to week, have no little influence in these families. Is it not a common maxim—at least in books—that no friend visits our families without leaving an impression, even though he stay but half an hour? But if a friendly visit of half an hour affects the character of our children, for good or for evil, how much more the friendly visit of a book, protracted as it is to a week or two? How much more still, when we have during the whole week some three, four or six of these quiet, modest, but at the same time speaking monitors! How exceedingly careful ought we then to be about the character of these visitors! Can we be too much so?

For reasons which have already appeared in the preceding chapters, I should be anxious to select, as one class of suitable books for a Sabbath school library, the biographies of eminent men and women mentioned in the Bible—as Noah, Moses, Joseph,

Samuel, David, Saul, Timothy, &c.—provided, however, they were properly written. For it is not every one who can write these books as they should be written, and has been done by a few, such as Gal-
laudet and Mrs. Hooker. Some put their own construction upon motives and conduct so much, that a child cannot separate, easily, the inspired from the uninspired, or the true from the false. Now I should exceedingly dislike to have a child of mine read one of these books, in which the writer's own imaginations or conjectures were so mixed up with plain Bible truth that he would be liable to be perplexed. How many a child has been led into wrong notions, by the motto which has often been appended to pictures of our Savior representing him at the age of twelve years, as disputing with the Jewish doctors and lawyers ; when not a word is said in the Bible which would justify such an inference ? And yet not a few of our very good Sabbath school books contain more or less of the writers' own constructions of things and events, and have the same tendency to mislead the reader.

I say therefore that in selecting for the Sabbath school, I should be anxious to avoid all books of this sort if possible, even if by their exclusion I should very much diminish my range of selection. Better have but few books at a time, if they are well chosen, than a larger number if it must include those which

are improper. We need not, however, be limited to a very small number of books. By going to the various depositories, as well as to that of the American Union, we may be able to collect quite a large number which may be regarded as unexceptionable.

Every thing in the Sabbath school depository which is well calculated to inspire the young with the love of sacred geography, history, manners and customs, I would by all means seize upon, provided however, as before, the writer has not interwoven too many of his own constructions into it. Such are accounts of travels, as those of our Savior, Luke and others; of particular places, as Jerusalem, Jericho, Mt. Carmel, Bethlehem and Nazareth; and of particular things, as the palm tree, the cedar, the cross, &c.

There is one class of Sabbath school books, from which I should be apt to select a very small number of volumes. I allude to the memoirs of deceased good children of our own day and generation. I have various objections to this class of books, among which are the following.

First, I doubt very much whether that piety can be *healthy* piety which is so often in these cases—faithfully narrated no doubt—grafted upon a precocious or sickly constitution. Now the piety of the New Testament—the piety of John and James and Luke and Paul, and above all of our Savior him-

self—was a healthy piety. So was that, as I have no doubt, of young Timothy. We have no evidence that one of these individuals was while young a prodigy for learning, like Pascal, John Mooney Mead, and Nathan W. Dickerman. I am therefore sorry to see such precocity held forth as a suitable object of imitation. I do not believe that any child whose intellect has been cultivated as early as was that of John Mooney Mead, who was taught hymns before he could speak plainly, can be a healthy child; and though his biography may be exceedingly valuable to a medical man, I do not wish to see it in the Sabbath school.

But secondly, I dislike one of the features in which this premature piety—were it indeed piety—is presented. In saying this I know very well that I utter no new truth. It is only what has been said, and well said, by a multitude of others. Still a course of remark respecting Sabbath school libraries, would be very incomplete without adverting to the subject; and besides by doing so, I add one more to the numerous testimonials which have been given in concerning it.

I say therefore, that I greatly dislike the custom of presenting youthful religion to the youthful mind in such a dress as that in which most of these works present it. Religion, would she allure the young into her paths, must be presented in a cheerful, not

to say joyful garb. And why should she not be thus presented? Is not religion—I speak of course of the Christian religion—better entitled to bask in the sunshine and wear the aspect of perpetual smiles than any thing else below the sun? Why then, I ask, should it ever appear in the habiliments of gloom? Why not appear as its Author most evidently intended it should appear?

And yet many and many a Sabbath school book is little else than the details of sayings and doings during a long and tedious sickness, with a full account of all the dying or last words of the deceased. I might here mention a great number of our Sabbath school memoirs in addition to those to which I have already alluded; but I know of none more unfortunate in its general features than the memoir of Ann Eliza Starr, more than half of which—I believe in point of fact, about two thirds—is filled with details of her sickness, last sayings and doings, and early and lamented dissolution.

What children want, in order to render religion attractive to them, is examples of happy living, rather than happy dying. It is of course no disparagement to children or adults to give pleasing testimony even in sickness and death, that they have loved God and man, and were prepared for the society of man justified and God glorified, at the hour of their departure;—but neither is it highly desira-

ble, unless the language of their lives has been in correspondence with that of their deaths.

It seems to me deeply unfortunate that any individual young or old, but especially the young, should get his head filled with the notion of being *prepared to die*. The Bible, so far as I recollect, uses no such language; neither do I think its use ever judicious. We should be prepared *to live*, rather than *to die*—for the life that now is, and for the life which is to come. If stronger Bible language than this is to be sought, or is desirable, we have it from the prophet Amos. “Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!” The suggestion about special preparation for *death* always conveys to my mind skeptical feelings. “Prepare to die,” I say to myself. Man does not die! His countenance is indeed changed, and he is sent away. But every thing essential to the man—every thing worthy of the name—still survives, despite appearances.

Perhaps something is owing to the peculiar structure of an individual’s mind, and yet I am quite sure that the notion of special preparation for death, which the memoirs of pious children are apt to inculcate, is as unfortunate for the cause of truth and piety as any thing can be; and one of the greatest of the smaller mysteries with which in this state of existence I am often perplexed, is, how great and good and wise men can sanction the use of the class

of books of which I am now so freely speaking, and vainly think they thereby aid the cause of virtue and piety.

For to be a little more particular : death-bed religion and death-bed repentances cannot be relied on at all as tests of piety. This is so common an observation that I need but to repeat it, and to say that in the whole Bible, so far as I can now recollect, we meet with but one instance of genuine repentance in a dying hour, while the Sacred Record speaks, in a thousand instances, of those who lived holy lives, leaving it to us to form our own opinions about the manner of their death. From all which, I think we may make one inference, that genuine death-bed repentance, though barely possible, is not very probable.

2. The religion of the sick room and the death-bed are, and ever must be, repulsive rather than attractive to the juvenile mind. Tell me not, in reply, that this comes of the natural heart—a heart at enmity with God—and is therefore to be expected. I know it is to be *expected*, and this is the very reason why I would point out a more excellent way. I would not bring the young into contact with the sick room and the death-bed, except in the course of Providence these are found at or near our own homes ; nor would I bring them into contact with books which treat much of the sick room and the

death-bed. If it were possible to give them the *lives* of good children, even of those who die early; if we could have a particular account of all their sayings and doings in the common concerns of life, how in order to secure the approbation of their consciences, and above all of God, they fought against their bad habits, evil propensities, stormy passions, undue appetites, and wrong desires and feelings, and how they denied themselves and took up their cross day by day, as well as how they loved the Sabbath, and prayer and praise, and the Bible, and the Savior; if we could have all this, I say, to form the basis, and indeed the principal part of the memoir, with *a very brief account only* of the last sickness, though it were a long sickness, and of the last hours and last sayings, I should not feel as strong an objection as I now do to books of this description. I should indeed like, still better, to have for this purpose the lives of children who, instead of dying early, last to old age. Nothing can be more unfortunate for the cause of good, than the impression which is sometimes made on the young mind, and which has occasionally found its way into words, that all the good children seem to die early! How ill does this accord with the language of that Bible which we would fain recommend to the young, when it tells us, that the wicked shall not live out half his days? For here—in the matter of these books—the language

of fact *seems* to be that it is the *righteous* that does not live out half his days.

3. But once more ; the religion of the death-bed is not what is desirable. If it were to become common for either the young or the old to live on as they list while they are in health, and only become religious when the dark days of adversity and sickness arrive, I would no longer give much for religion as the means of polishing and purifying and rendering happy the world in which we dwell. That, however, which does not make us holy and happy in this world, can never make us happy in another world, and it were well if it were so understood, and so presented to the minds of all, especially the young.

I repeat it, therefore, that in selecting books for a Sabbath school library, I would studiously avoid all which give to good and holy things a dark or sombre shade—of which there are certainly a very great number to be found at our best depositories. I have already expressed a very strong partiality to Bible biography, if well written ; but it must be prepared *exceedingly* ill, that is, *exceedingly* wide from the truth, to bring it into the shape of modern memoirs, and to give to Joseph or Daniel or Paul a long and tedious season of sickness prior to their dissolution, or any last dying words. Let us labor to remove, if possible, every thing that stands in the

way of representing religion as it truly is,—that which makes us wiser and better in all the relations of life, and which, going with us across the dark valley of the shadow of death, makes us wiser, better and more and more glorious in the world of spirits. Let us do nothing at all to favor the idea that piety is a something which is valuable to die by, but which is rather an incumbrance than otherwise while we live, as is the expressed belief of some pseudo-converts to Christianity, and the *practical* view of thousands who would hesitate before they would be quite willing to put such a sentiment into words.

But suppose a library to be well selected and ready for use. What shall be the arrangements respecting it? Shall children be allowed to take such books as their inclination or fancy may direct? Or shall there be some oversight of the matter by parents or teachers? Shall books be drawn every Sabbath, or less frequently? Shall there be laws to enforce their regular return, and penalties to prevent their abuse? And shall they be drawn during the Sabbath school exercises, or at some other season?

I think the custom of carrying round the books and allowing the pupils to select in their seats, during the Sabbath school exercises, is objectionable, for two reasons. 1. It is no slight interruption to

the regular exercises, or lessons. 2. The pupils are not allowed time to select to any purpose. They might almost as well take them by chance as in the usual hurried manner which the custom to which I allude involves—governed often as they are, solely by a regard to the appearance of the cover, the quaintness of the title, or the beauty of the engravings.

As to the policy of having laws to secure a punctual return of the books, at the time when they ought to be returned, as well as to prevent their abuse, I have doubts. If the method of selection and general management which I am about to propose and to insist on could be adopted, I think it better that laws and penalties should not exist; but as things now often are, not to have laws and penalties is equivalent to having the library of very little service.

My proposal is that the parents take the oversight of this matter, and select the books for their children. It is possible, indeed, that the superintendent and teachers might do the work better, had they time for it; but usually they have not. On the whole, I prefer that it should be left to parents, or if, as must sometimes happen, the parents themselves cannot attend, let them send or depute some person—a neighbor or the teacher of the class.

Let parents come to the Sabbath school with

their children—I here go upon the supposition that the school is held at 9 o'clock in the morning—and let such of them as are not wanted as Sabbath school teachers, seize the opportunity while the classes are reciting, &c., to go to the library and make the selection for their children. Those who are personally employed as teachers in the school, may perhaps engage a neighbor or friend, who is not thus employed, to draw such or such a book for them; or, what would possibly be still better, they might themselves be on the ground fifteen minutes before the school is opened, and make the selection at that time.

Let it be observed, in passing, that there should be printed or written catalogues of the books, of which every parent should have a copy; for this would save a great deal of time in looking over the catalogue, or examining the books, after their arrival on the spot; and besides would enable the parent to send for the books which he most desired for his children. There would, of course, be some little difficulty about sending, because the book wanted might not be obtainable; but this could be obviated by giving the person by whom we send, direction to get No. 6, for example, if he cannot find No. 11; or No. 8, if he cannot find either No. 6 or 11. There must, of course, be some system in regard to the selection or drawing of books; but this is easily

arranged. Perhaps the simplest and best arrangement is to have the names of the parents alphabetically arranged, and after he whose name stands first on the catalogue has drawn first, he shall next draw last ; and he whose name is second shall next have the opportunity of making the first selection ; and so on.

There are numerous reasons why I prefer to make as much as possible of the parents in this matter and in every matter, and as little as possible of the children. One principal reason is to present a check to that growing spirit of insubordination among us, already the source of much trouble, and which promises to be productive of trouble still more serious. Time was, in the history of New England—and that not yet quite a century ago either—when there was among us the spirit of subordination. What Mr. Combe calls the organ of veneration was as yet active, and combativeness, destructiveness, love of approbation, &c. &c. had not swelled to a gigantic size. But these days are gone by now. Our lads of twelve to twenty are now young men—we must not call them boys. They must think for themselves on all subjects—they must not be fettered by doctrines or creeds, imposed by their parents or their masters. Nay, more, they must have their own societies, as temperance societies, anti-slavery societies, Harrison clubs, and for aught I know, Jackson

clubs. In short, a great deal is said of and to our young men, and they are urged forward when they ought to be held back. There is a period in the lives of young men,—as every young man finds out has been the case, when he becomes an *old* man,—when, though they think themselves exceedingly wise and exceedingly capable of self-direction, they are in more need of guidance than at any other period of life, except perhaps its veriest infancy. I allude, of course, to the period which may usually be included between the fourteenth and eighteenth year. It is the stormy period of life; the period when the passions, just rising, are headstrong and unmanageable—like the sails of a ship just set by the inexperienced in the midst of a gale. Oh how much is subordination—kind, gentle, but firm subordination—needed at every step of this part of the voyage of human life, to save from fatal shipwreck. And yet here it is, precisely at this point, that the genius, if I may so say, of many of our customs—I am afraid too the genius of our institutions and constitutions—would encourage insubordination. Let Christians then do all they can to counteract this growing evil, not so much by violent opposition, as by prevention—by keeping the power in their own hands as long as they can, as long, at least, as God meant they should keep it. Let this principle, moreover, be kept in view, in the organization and management

of the Sabbath school, and even in the formation and regulation of the library. Let parents at least—if the superintendents and teachers cannot—select the books which are to be the companions and form the character of their children.

So far as I am acquainted, it is customary to draw books from the Sabbath school libraries every Sabbath. I think this is too often, altogether too often. Once a month—say the first Sabbath of every month—is often enough to draw a new book, as it seems to me. Twelve good Sabbath school books in a year, are quite enough for a single pupil to draw; especially if he is a member of a numerous family who also attend the Sabbath school and draw books in the same manner. I suppose it is usual for each pupil to read the books drawn by his brothers and sisters. Suppose, now, there are five in a family who attend the Sabbath school, and each draws a book every Sabbath, and each of the family reads all the books drawn. It follows, that each of these children reads five books a week. Or if the family should chance to include seven Sabbath school scholars, each reads seven a week, or one a day. The number for each pupil a year would be 365 volumes; that is, if the library should contain so many. Now I care not how small the books are, there is not a child in the world who ought to read 365 Sabbath school books a year.

I do not deny that I have put here an extreme case, for there are few such large families as I have supposed. It is no uncommon thing however, as every one knows, for three or four brothers and sisters to attend the Sabbath school. Yet even in that case, on the old plan, the number of new books which might be read in a year, by a pupil, would be enormous. It would be above two hundred.

One of the advantages to be derived from drawing only once a month is that a collection of new books would last longer in this way. Suppose the church contribute, at the end of each year, and purchase fifty new books. Now if a family of four children is to be permitted to draw a book every Sabbath, will not all be drawn out in about twelve Sabbaths? And what is to be done for the remaining forty? But let them draw but once in a month, and even families of four children may all have, from a collection of only fifty, a new book every month throughout the year.*

A great deal is said, I know, about their reading the old books, at least a part of the time. But he knows little of human nature who does not know that few children will do this, at least with any

* Of course, I am here speaking of a very small Sabbath school. As many books are necessary, in every library, as there are pupils in the school. Eighteen dollars, however, will buy more than fifty books;—say about seventy-five. And thirty-six dollars will buy at least 150 volumes of very good books, which will usually be equal to the number of pupils in our largest country Sabbath schools.

relish. It ought not to be expected. The best way is for the church to contribute yearly a small sum—say enough to buy fifty volumes—and make the best possible use of them for that year, and when the year is at an end, buy more. Fifty small volumes cost but little—perhaps if we reckon the number of individuals, parents, and children, connected with a Sabbath school at three hundred, not more than five or six cents to an individual. Will any grudge this small sum? Will the father and mother of a family of two children grudge the payment of twenty-four cents a year, for the perusal of twenty-four new books? Let it be remembered, moreover, that each of the family, parents and children, can peruse all the twenty-four books; so that there may be no less than ninety-six perusals in all, at a quarter of a cent apiece. That church must have strange notions of duty which, believing in the usefulness of Sabbath school libraries at all, grudges this small—I had almost said trifling expense—that of a pound of butter, or a quarter of a pound of tea to a family. Will any doubt which is of most value to a Christian household, four ounces of tea or the reading of twenty-four new and valuable books?

And yet, as has been already intimated, more than this need not be asked, for a Sabbath school of ordinary size. True the books selected would be many of them small books, but not all. Eighteen dollars

will buy a very good assortment of our best books for the juvenile mind to the number of fifty volumes. A little more than this would be required for a good teachers' library, such as I have elsewhere referred to.

I have insisted that the books ought not to be drawn oftener than once a month ; though if this were thought too large an innovation upon present usages, the change might be made, at first, to once a fortnight. Some of the reasons for drawing books only once a month are as follows :

1. Every parent—every mother at least—ought to read, with her child, every book which is drawn from the library. Most mothers and fathers too would delight to do this ; but seem to think they have not the time. I hold that they ought to find time, or else not select or draw the books. I do not mean that the child ought never to read a book which is drawn for him except when he reads it with the parent ; but only that it should have one reading, which should be a *joint* reading— all the family being present if possible ; all at any rate but the father. And not only should the book be read, but it should be made the subject of conversation. Whenever either child manifests a wish, by raising the hand or by any other signal agreed upon by the family, to ask a question, let it accordingly be asked ; and whatever digressions it might involve, if

they were not wholly foreign to the subject or wholly improper for the child, I would permit ; that the conversation might be free and unembarrassed.

But the book should not only be read together and reviewed when read ; it should form the frequent topic of conversation at the table and elsewhere. Besides other books should, in many instances, be read with reference to it. Thus if the book before the family were the life of Joseph, I would have the parent often refer the child to the part of the Bible whence the story was taken, both that he might be led to inquire whether it was correct, and also to accustom him to search, for himself, the Holy Scriptures in general. So if it were the description of "Jerusalem as it was, and as it now is," I would accustom him to read, while perusing it, the "Modern Traveller," and other authentic works ; that he might verify, all along, the statements of his author.

Now who does not see that there is no time, in a family — where there are three or four children who draw books—to read over, in this way, all their books in the compass of a single week. Three or four books, if small, might possibly be thus read in a month ; but if one or two of them were larger, a month would not be long enough. Besides, it is impossible to adopt any rule which will meet all cases, and the extreme which I have mentioned

would be a far less evil than the extreme of being deluged with books on the old plan, that is of having, in large families, some twenty or thirty books in a month to be *gossiped over* merely, for they can never be read in any proper or useful manner.

2. A second reason for having but few books in a family is that children may not become satiated—cloyed, as it were—with them. Such a result, whenever it happens, is deeply unfortunate. So is that of making them too cheap. Children should set a high estimate upon books, and learn to use them with great care. Any thing which tends to make them too cheap in their estimation is to be avoided with much solicitude.

The evil to which I now allude is found most conspicuous in our district schools. No sooner can the child “say A B, and sit on a bench,” than a book is put in his hand, and he is compelled to hold and study it. To *study* it, did I say? I recall the expression. It is mockery to call it studying. He holds it, indeed, and looks on it—sometimes he even holds it with care. But study it he does not, at least not generally; nor does he generally hold it carefully or safely. It is *thumbed*, and *soiled* and torn; and it becomes an old book long before its years should indicate age. Hundreds and thousands of books are thus worn out—I might say wasted—to no purpose; nay even to a purpose much worse than

none. The pupils acquire the habit of using books carelessly in school ; and it is ten to one but the habit thus acquired is extended to the use of books everywhere, as well as carried along into later life. Nor is *this* all. In acquiring the habit of being careless in the use of books, we acquire the habit of carelessness in other matters. It would be one of the strangest things in the world to find a boy who neglected to preserve his books with proper care, who was not neglectful in a greater or less degree about other matters. Besides, the habit of holding books in the hand—having eyes and yet seeing not—if it does not tend to hypocrisy, must at least be greatly injurious in other respects.

It does not seem to me desirable that children, in the district school or in the family, should have much to do with books in very early life. I have seen habits formed in families, by an early and free indulgence in the use of books, which the parents a year or two later would have been greatly glad to have had broken. I would have books rare and valuable to the young, that they may be prized by them when they are old. I have even sometimes thought, that were I teacher, I would not let my pupils have *any* books in school, especially for a few of their first years ; that I would teach them orally and from slates till they could read well, and then gradually let them have books as a favor. If this

custom or method were common, I doubt whether we should find children as we now do, here and there, who hate books. I believe there is naturally no such thing as a book-hater in the world; that a hater of books is a monster—the result of mismanagement on the part of teachers and parents. I am afraid, moreover, that the *cheapness*, as I have called it, of Sabbath school books, has had something to do in the case. Let us, at all events, take great care that we have none in the Sabbath school library but good books; and that what are drawn from it, are drawn because they are desired, and if drawn are read, and well and properly used and taken care of. Let us at least do no harm with our Sabbath school books, if we cannot make them as really useful as we may desire.

3. But it is not only unfortunate to satiate a child with books; too many books are in point of fact positively injurious to the mental faculties. Too much mental food is almost as bad for the mental faculties, as too much bodily food for the functions of the body. And indeed it not only injures the mind, but the body also. Hardly a medical man has written on the subject, who has not set down the habit of reading a great deal, or at least a great deal of intellectual activity, as having an unfavorable influence on the health.

One of the faults of the age is, that we read too

much, and think too little; or more properly perhaps, read too much in proportion to our thinking. Adults could hardly read too much, if the reading were of the right character, and if it were *carefully* read, marked, learnt and inwardly digested. Children, however, up to seven or eight years of age at least, and in fact for some time afterwards, should read but very little. One of the blessings of a well selected and well arranged library—whether Sabbath school library or any other—is, that instead of encouraging endless and indiscriminate reading, its tendency, rightly conducted, is to shut us up to fewer books and those of a better character. Let parents then, together with the teachers of Sabbath schools, and indeed all the friends of the young, take pains to have Sabbath school children read as few miscellaneous books as possible, and to have what they do read, be read and understood thoroughly. Thus may their reading contribute to their happiness of body and soul; and thus may it be made a means of inducing them to glorify Him who is the author of body and spirit both.





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