

THE RELATION
OF
BAPTIZED CHILDREN
TO
THE CHURCH.

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CHAPTER I.

Introductory.—The Medium between two Extremes.

THE *Relation of Baptized Children to the Church* is a subject that has often engaged the attention of the reflecting, and that is not without its difficulties. There is an analogy between the relation of children to the Church, and the relation of children to the State.

Sparta took the bold and distinct ground, that children belonged more

to the State than to their parents. As soon as a boy was born, he was inspected by the elders; if puny or deformed, he was exposed, if promising, he was immediately acknowledged and provided for. As soon as he was able to leave his mother's lap, he was placed in the public schools, and thenceforward trained to be a useful and obedient citizen. Children were looked on as the property of the commonwealth, and the individual private will was merged and lost in the superior and overshadowing claims of the State. The Roman Catholic Church rigorously asserts a like iron policy. Every child baptized by a priest, becomes from that moment hers, nor will she ever after relinquish her claim. It makes no difference, if the

parents give no consent, or are even ignorant of the fact, not even if a nurse takes out a child for a walk, and has the ceremony performed surreptitiously; or if a child can be inveigled into a place unsuspected by the parent. This was painfully illustrated in the case of the Jew-boy Mortara. In vain did the agonized father apply to have his son restored to him, in vain was foreign sympathy invoked to mediate; the boy is to this day withheld from his natural guardian, and tutored into all the superstitions of the Papacy.

Opposite to this tyrannical claim of property in baptized children, indelible, indestructible, is the other extreme of recognizing no relation between children and the church at all.

The mother of President Olin was a Baptist. Though devotedly attached to her children, "She abstained," says his biographer, "from the direct inculcation of heavenly truth, or the cultivation of religious habits. In this she was 'principled to do wrong;' she offered fervent prayers for her children, and taught them to read the Bible; but she was so afraid of encouraging a merely formal religion, that she never taught them to pray, not even to say 'Our Father!' lest they should 'draw near to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him.'"

Between the two extremes it is the part of wisdom to steer. We should recognize a certain relation as existing between the church and baptized children; and we should endeavour to

ascertain with precision, what the relation is, what is its nature, what are its privileges, what its limits, what its restrictions.

CHAPTER II.

Baptism a Covenant Birthright.

BAPTISM *is a Birthright derived from the Abrahamic Covenant.*

The church under the Old Testament economy, and the church under the New Testament economy, are one and the same Church. The Old Testament church was less mature, it was in the state of childhood, adolescence, or minority. It differed also in regard to time, duration, universality, pomp hierarchy, &c., but these were incidentals only. Substantially, the Jewish church was a witness for the true God and the true religion, as the Christian

church is now ; and the Old Testament dispensation, was, like the new, a nursery for heaven. If there ever was a church prior to the Christian church, it must be still perpetuated, because God is now fulfilling promises made to that ancient church, which could not be, if it were extinct. Nor, were we to say that God has instituted a new church, or adopted another in its place, would all his gifts to the new one be fulfilments of promises to the old. But such promises as we find in the prophets, of universality and the like, were made to the former church, not to a newly adopted one. If the Christian church is not the old church renovated, then is the veracity of God impeached, for the Jewish economy has long been "done away."

But the Hebrew church was governed by the same moral law, and it had also the same gospel. Christ was the Head of it, for "He came to his own," though "his own received him not." "The Scripture preached before the gospel unto Abraham." "Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." The spiritual Rock that "followed them, was Christ," i. e. typified Christ. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed in the wilderness." "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness." Acts vii. 38. Every sacrifice, every lamb, that smoked on the Jewish altar was a type of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; and the only difference between Abraham, or David's

faith, and Simeon's, or ours, was, that Abraham and David looked forward to the great atoning sacrifice, and we look back. One was anticipation, the other retrospection; nothing more; a looking at the very same object from different stand-points, and under different lights. "The patriarch David," says Peter, "being a prophet, knew that God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake in the xvi. psalm, of the resurrection of Christ."

Not only was the same common Saviour the common object of faith; the Jewish church had the same Holy Spirit as the source of light and holiness. David prayed, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" Faith, not works, was the ground of justification

and salvation then as now. To establish this point, the apostle quoted from Old Testament writers, "The just shall live by faith," and the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful.

The apostle compared the former dispensation to the minority of an heir; but the heir is the same individual when he comes of age. He adds, that we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. He calls the believing Gentiles the seed of Abraham, just as elsewhere he calls the believing Jews the followers of Christ. He compares the Jewish church to an olive tree, upon which the Gentiles are grafted, contrary to nature; i. e. instead of the good scion being grafted on the inferior stock, an

inferior graft is inserted into the old and good stock. You observe the old stock, the old church, is preserved; it stands the same, and does not forfeit its being because a graft is inserted.

These proofs should be satisfactory to every reasonable mind. If any desire to search farther into the subject, they may consult to advantage Dr. John M. Mason's "Essays on the Church of God." We consider it as sufficiently established for our argument, that the church has been and is one, under different dispensations; "My dove, my undefiled, is one;" it is the church of Christ, "of whom the whole family is named, in heaven and in earth." This means, if it means anything, that the whole family of believers in Christ in heaven and earth

is named of Christ, from Christ, Christians; Christians in heaven, formerly living, now saved; and Christians on earth, still in the flesh, and subjects of trial. Christians alive, and Christians departed, are of the same name and family; and Gentiles from the North, the South, the East, and the West, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, and sing the same song, "Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be honour and glory!" May you and I, have a place there among them, though it be the humblest!

We advance now a step farther. The church being shown to be one and the same under all dispensations, we remark, that infants were admitted to

membership under the old economy. But the grant of infant membership has never been repealed, and must therefore be in full and binding force.

No one denies that infants were admitted to the privilege once; they were once embraced within the express pale of the covenant; when were they excommunicated? When were they put out? When was the permission repealed? To repeal it would be to abridge the privileges of the covenant; it would be narrowing the covenant. Instead of narrowing his covenants, all God's arrangements and institutions tend to enlargement. This is their uniform, prospective bearing. The covenant has been enlarged, so as to admit more and others than the ancient people alone. It is not to be

supposed that when God enlarges and widens his house to take in aliens, he excludes the home-born children. When he invites Gentiles and foreigners to enter, he surely will reserve nurseries for the children of the commonwealth. I press this point. I want you to think of it. I want you to become imbued with it. It is an unanswerable point in the argument. Infants were once in the covenant; we are entitled to ask, when were they dropped out of it? We find no record of the fact. One would think so important a circumstance as the abridging the rights and privileges of whole generations of the rising race, would have been noted with more care, would have attracted more attention, would have aroused more opposition.

Of all absurdities that ever imposed on the minds of sensible and intelligent persons, this takes the lead; to imagine that so great a change could have been brought about without the Jews making an outcry. They had been accustomed to introduce their children to the seal; their silence is perfectly intelligible on the supposition that no change was made; but most unaccountable otherwise. Tenacious as they were of their prerogatives as children of Abraham, numerous and bitter as were their invectives against the Christian church, they never accused it of contracting the Abrahamic covenant, or casting out children from its pale. There were fierce disputes as to the saving effects of circumcision, but never a remonstrance, never a lisp

on this excision. We are compelled to the conclusion, that there was no occasion given for remonstrance. They found the prophecy of Isaiah literally fulfilled in regard to children of believers, "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and *their offspring with them.*" Isa. lxxv. 23.

The Jews of old may be presumed to have felt no less acutely on this subject than modern Jews. Hear the energetic disclaimer of Mr. Frey, the converted Jew, a name familiar in New York to the last generation. He was delivering a course of lectures in defence of infant baptism, and used this significant and emphatic language.

"Of one thing I am most certain, it is this. When my dear brethren of

the house of Judah and Israel shall be converted to the Messiah and brought into the church, *they never will be Baptists*. They never would submit—” mark the nervous language! —“they never would submit to have their infants disfranchised, their membership invaded, and them cast out of the visible church. Their infants, all along, from father Abraham’s days, have been members, and shared the seal of the covenant. What! they will exclaim, is the Messiah’s church and glorious dispensation *inferior to our old Mosaic church?* What! are we then to lose so much as to have our infants deprived of the seal? No, my brethren according to the flesh, when they shall be all brought home, *never will, never can be Baptists.*”

Mr. Frey afterwards, in consequence of a personal pique, chose to place himself in a position inconsistent with the views he once so cogently and graphically advocated; but we have nothing to do with his consistency, we are only concerned with his argument.

It will be borne in mind that in this discussion the burden of proof lies entirely on our opponents. It is enough for us to establish the original grant, it is for them to show the repeal. We point to the undeniable fact of the membership of infants under the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic economy; we have a right to demand, and we do demand, scriptural proof of this arrangement having been abrogated. God once conferred the right. He has never taken it away. There

is not the shadow of proof that he has. If any affirm it, let them bring forward the proof. Nothing is easier, if it exists. Till then, we maintain our position.

But we will be told that in the institution of believers' baptism the repeal was made. Adults capable of believing were alone therein comprehended. Preposterous! As if there was no faith till Pentecost! as if circumcision of infants eight days' old had been no seal of justification by faith, long before Jesus was born! as if Abraham, who saw Christ's day and was glad, had not been the father of the faithful! Of course, there were believing parents in the Jewish church, and the children of believing parents were admitted to membership with

themselves. Will any pretend to deny this? Were infants admitted to circumcision on their own faith, or on the faith of their parents? Beyond dispute, on the faith of their parents.

Believers' baptism! As if we, Pedobaptists, did not recognize and practise it! as if we left out faith as a condition of the ordinance! We require faith on the part of one or both of the parents. We require a solemn promise from them to pray with and for the child, and to set a godly example before it. Ours is believers' baptism, and more. It embraces the children of believers also. We dare not exclude them. They are inchoate members of Christ's visible body. We cannot arrogate the authority to turn them out. We baptize infants, not in

order to make them members; they are members already, by virtue of the faith of their parents. "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy," that is, set apart to God. "The promise is unto you and your children." "They are beloved for their fathers' sakes." In baptism we only recognize this membership. We publicly admit and receive under the watch and care of the church, one born in its pale and under its shadow, and who is so to be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that he shall, on arriving at maturity, become a citizen of Zion, entitled to all the immunities and privileges of full membership.

It is not an answer to our argument to adduce the abrogation of the Mosaic

ritual. The rite in question was established before the organization of the Mosaic ritual, in the time of Abraham, the father of the faithful; consequently, even when the Jewish church, or Mosaic dispensation, fell, it did not involve the rights of infant membership. Thus Paul reasons, "The covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Gal. iii. 17. It is the Abrahamic covenant, under which our claim is maintained, and that covenant is unaffected by the vanishing away of the Mosaic polity. It is "the covenant ordered in all things and sure," "the covenant unto a thousand generations."

This then is the conclusion, the unavoidable conclusion, to which we are drawn; that infant membership is a hereditary birthright of the Abrahamic covenant; that it has never been repealed or abrogated; that it is still in full force; and that the children of believers have an indefeasible right and claim to it, as old as the church itself.

CHAPTER III.

Baptism not a saving ordinance.

WE do not contend that baptism is a saving ordinance. An adult or an infant dying unbaptized is not therefore, simply on account of that omission, unsaved. We are carefully to disentangle the truth from all mixtures of superstition. We are not to encourage the notion, that if a child is at the point of death, the minister must be hurried thither to administer baptism as a sort of amulet or viaticum. This is to repeat the worst error of Popery. If the child is to derive any benefit from the ordinance, it

must be in virtue of the Abrahamic covenant; it must be in consequence of the faith of the parent. If the parent has no faith, all the waters of the ocean will do no good. We cannot countenance the idea that any outward rite is of saving efficacy, and that its absence is fatal.

Many have hesitated to commit themselves on the subject of infant salvation, as not being definitely revealed in the Scriptures; but the tendency of late years has been, among evangelical sects, to take a more unequivocal stand on this subject, and discard the language, even the faintest, of doubt. Calvinists have been accused of holding doctrines truly shocking, doctrines which would deify the devil, and place Moloch on the throne of the universe.

This is a misrepresentation and slander which we indignantly repel. Listen to the words of Calvin himself. "All those whom Christ blesses are exempted from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God ; and as it is known that infants were blessed by him, it follows that they are exempted from death." "They, [the Anabaptists,] sentence all infants to eternal death, by denying them baptism, which, according to their own confession, is necessary to salvation. Let them see, now, how well they agree with the language of Christ, which adjudges the kingdom of heaven to little children." (*Inst. Bk. iv. c. 16.*) "Infants are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven, who happen to die before they have had the privilege of baptism." (*Ib. c.*

15.) Thus speaks Calvin. Now listen to Zuingle. "Concerning the children of heathens, we decide nothing; though I confess that I incline to the sentiment which considers the death of Christ as available to the salvation of all who are free from actual sin."

A good work has been done in collecting the sentiments of distinguished Calvinists, showing that they are "universally" in favour of infant salvation, irrespective altogether of baptism; as Zwingle, Calvin, Mather, Toplady, Scott, Newton, Pictet, Whitefield, Watts, Hall, Howe, Junkin, Cumming, and others.* I can only offer a quotation or two further, from

* See these testimonies and many others in a work entitled "Children in Heaven," recently published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

that very popular Presbyterian divine, Dr. Cumming, of London. "The confession of faith in the church of Scotland has these words, 'Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth.' The expression, 'elect,' is, in my judgment, co-extensive with 'all dying in infancy.' I believe none but elect infants die in infancy, All children dying in infancy, or before the years of responsibility, are, without one exception or limitation as to the character or conduct of the parents, saved." (*Infant Salvation*, p. 25.)

CHAPTER IV.

Baptism a sign and seal, under the Gospel, of the Covenant.

ALTHOUGH baptism is not a saving ordinance, it is not a nullity. It is at once a sign and a seal. It does not of itself confer grace, nor regenerate the soul: we may apply to it the vigorous language of Augustine, cited and approved by Calvin, in reference to the Sacrament of the Supper. "I deny that men carry away from the sacrament any more than they collect in the vessel of faith." (*Calv. Inst. ii. 565.*) While we do not regard baptism as a saving or regenerating ordi-

nance, its value as a sign and seal is full of meaning and importance.

It is a *Sign* of the necessity of inward purification by "the water and the blood," the blood of Jesus and the washing of the Holy Ghost. It is in this light the importance of the mode becomes apparent. If we admit it to be a representation of the burial of Christ, we lose this instructive lesson; to say nothing of the anachronism of having the initiatory and antecedent sacrament symbolize the burial of Christ, and reserving the sacrament subsequent in nature and order to symbolize his death. This is to celebrate a burial before a death. The distinction between the two sacraments is obliterated; for the design of both is similar, the death and burial, i. e. two

parts of the atoning sacrifice of our Lord. It hardly seems necessary to separate them. But by interpreting this rite to be emblematic of *moral purity*, we discover an obvious distinction between the two sacraments, and secure the advantages of two great lessons of the spiritual life, forgiveness of sin through the atonement of Christ, and regeneration of the nature by the Holy Spirit.

As a sign of this twofold necessity of pardon and regeneration, a relative change of state, and an inward change of heart, the sprinkling or affusion of pure water, is a beautiful and meaning ceremony, as suitable for an infant as an adult. Indeed, in the case of an infant, it is even more so, for it strongly suggests the idea of original sin.

But it is more than a sign. It is a *Seal* also. Like circumcision, it is a seal of the righteousness of faith. And not only so, it is a *double* seal. In the words of Calvin, "It is an outward sign, by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of his goodwill towards us, to support the weakness of our faith; and we on our part testify our piety towards him, in his presence and that of angels, as well as before men." (*Inst. Book iv. c. 14.*) The same sentiment has been expressed in a little different form, but even more tersely, by the Rev. Thomas P. Hunt. These are his words. "His [Christ's] directions are, 'Baptize them.' Here is the seal,—affix it. 'Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.'

Here is the duty, the condition, that believers have to perform and seal. "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world," is the promise that the Saviour seals, and binds himself to fulfil. Baptism, then, as a seal, must be the seal of believers to be found faithful in teaching, as Christ commanded; and of Christ to be faithful in executing his promise "to be with them," that he might render their teaching effectual to salvation." (*Bible Baptist, No. II. p. 9.*) This view presents baptism as not intended only for the benefit of the children baptized, but also for the benefit of those who have to teach. The parent engages to train up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and affixes his seal to his part of the covenant.

The Lord engages to bless that faithful training, and by the hands of his authorized minister affixes his seal in turn.

This is an intelligible, rational, and scriptural view of the seal of the covenant, removing it entirely out of the spheres of superstition, ritualism, or formalism. It affords no countenance to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, while it satisfactorily answers the question, "What good does it do to the child?" Ridicule has been poured on the baptism of infants, because they are unconscious of what is done. It has been called "baby-sprinkling." It has been derided as useless and unimportant, and even absurd. But the baptism of infants is no more absurd than the circumcision of infants. Yet the latter was enjoined by divine

command on the eighth day. It will hardly be pretended that infants were more precocious in the days of the patriarchs than they are now. They knew no more, and could believe no better, than modern infants. And yet they were admitted then to the seal of justification by faith, to the believers' seal; and it was upon the faith of their parents. And what invests this subject with greater solemnity, is, that this was done by the appointment of the Almighty. He knew how much infants were capable of comprehending and of believing; and yet by his appointment he introduced children to the believers' seal, and punished those who omitted it. I would shrink from being among the number of those who set themselves up as wiser than Al-

mighty God, and who put aside his ordinances as if they imagined they could improve upon his institutions! If we obey a positive institution even when we do not see the reason, much more should we accept it as satisfactory to our judgment and conscience, when we are furnished with a beautiful, intelligible and consistent explanation.

As to the alteration of the seal from circumcision to baptism, it is only a change of mode. It does not affect the essence of the sacrament. It is just like the change from the passover to the Lord's Supper; or the change from the seventh to the first day of the week for the Sabbath-day; or the admission of women to the sacraments.*

* On this point see *Peter Edwards on Baptism*, p. 138. Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

These and similar changes are incidentals only. The covenant still remains intact. But the covenant must have a seal. Now no one is so mad as to insist that circumcision is that seal at the present day. Circumcision is admitted to be abolished. Baptism must be equally admitted to have come in its place, and is the seal under the Gospel. Otherwise the covenant is left without any seal at all, which is not to be supposed. But if infants were admitted to the former seal, they must have a right to the new one.

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CHAPTER V.

Baptism the Rite of Initiation into the Christian Commonwealth.

THE analogy between the state and the church is obvious. Paul presents it in nervous metaphors, when he speaks of Christians as no longer "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," "fellow-citizens of the saints." When he calls Mount Zion the city of the living God, and says "our conversation," or literally "citizenship, is in heaven." But children born in any commonwealth are members of the commonwealth, and entitled to protection. Let a miscreant lay violent

hands on the youngest infant in the land, or let a band of Sioux Indians carry one away captive, and the whole power of the state will be exerted to rescue the victim, and to punish the marauder. Courts will interpose, and take a child out of the hands of parents who misuse it. There are certain prospective rights which minors are entitled to, which are denied to aliens, such as voting, inheriting real estate, and holding the highest office. These rights are inchoate, inceptive, held, as it were, in abeyance, till the term of minority is terminated. Just so in the Christian commonwealth the right of children to all church privileges, as full communion, holding office, or having a voice in the management of ecclesiastical affairs, is held in abeyance

till such time as the preparatory training shall appear to be successful, and there is credible evidence of ability to discern the Lord's body, accompanied by fruits meet for repentance. Then the minor is received into full communion or membership. There is nothing repugnant to good sense, or objectionable, or superstitious, in this representation.

On the contrary, it is the most natural and rational thing in the world. The men of this world should not be allowed to be wiser than the church of God. They realize the importance of securing the proper education and training of the children in common schools and otherwise, in order to provide the state with the right kind of citizens hereafter. Not otherwise

should the church reason. She should see to the religious instruction and training of the young, in order to provide the right sort of material for making future citizens of Zion. If such preliminary training is neglected, adults may be converted and brought into the church, but they will be only half-formed, crude, poorly indoctrinated, impatient of discipline; and full of errors and *isms*. The church, the commonwealth of Zion, feels a deep interest in the education of the young.

Care for the children of the church has always been a distinctive feature of the denomination to which we belong, and we deliberately calculate on replenishing our ranks from this source of natural increment. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children."

Ps. xlv. 16. If we neglect it, we are shorn of our glory, and lose much of our strength. Experience has shown that signal marks of the divine favour have uniformly followed the act of pious dedication, and the blessing of the Lord has visibly rested on the house of Obed-Edom where his ark has been welcomed.

It may be noticed that those who adopt a different system depend chiefly for increase on periodical and spasmodic revivals. But periodical revivals imply alternate seasons of declension. Our system aims to render spasmodic revivals superfluous, by promoting a regular, healthy and natural growth. Dr. Bushnell has strongly developed this idea in his admirable work on Christian Nurture.

“Probably the proportion of those who in time,” says Dr. Atwater, “give hopeful evidence of piety, in such bodies, is as large as of those who are first gathered into the visible church from the world, upon the credible profession of conversion.” *Children of the Church*, p. 75.*

It is pertinent to inquire here, what have been the practical results of the system we have been advocating. It is by practical results it will be judged, by the common sense of mankind. The system can afford to invite scrutiny. An investigation was once made among the students of the Andover Theological Seminary, being one hundred and twenty-five in number; and it was ascertained that one hundred

* Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

and twelve had pious mothers, and only in one case was neither parent pious. Other investigations of a like character have had a similar result. These are illustrations of Prov. xxii. 6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

It has sometimes been flippantly said, that "ministers and deacons' children are worse than any others." In some exceptional cases, the very relationship has given a prominence to misdoing which has made it more noticed and talked about. But in point of fact, the statement is not true. "In Connecticut," said the Rev. H. W. Beecher, on a public occasion, "there were nine hundred and thirty-seven children over fifteen years of age, of

ministers and deacons, only twenty of whom turned out badly. In Massachusetts, out of four hundred and thirty-three families of ministers and deacons, there were fifteen hundred and ninety-eight children over fifteen years, and only twenty ever became dissipated. Here we have forty out of twenty-five hundred and thirty-five children, just two and one half per cent. in the whole number. I will ask any business man if he would not be glad oftentimes if his losses were not greater than two and one half per cent.? I undertake to say that no business has ever been so safe as that of raising deacons' and ministers' children in New England."

We derive another corroboration of our position from Dr. Sprague's inval-

uable collection of clerical biographies. A hundred clergymen may be taken out of one of his volumes at random, and it will be found that of this first hundred, one hundred and ten sons became also ministers. Of the remainder, the largest proportion rose to eminence in other professions or avocations. Can the same be said of any other body of one hundred men, taken at random from other walks of life? As to the daughters of clergymen, it has been remarked by a keen observer, that it is a passport to the highest places, and a guarantee of respectability and worth, both in Great Britain and America, to say of any lady, "she was the daughter of a clergyman."

I may be told that certain bodies of Christians, who reject infant baptism,

yet appear to have the blessing of the Lord upon them, and have accessions from natural increase. I answer, that by a happy inconsistency, happy for the children, their hearts are more safely to be trusted than their heads, their kindly feelings counteract their logic, and their creed breaks down in practice. Although they pertinaciously reject the seal of the covenant, they still practically act as if there were a real relation of the children to the church, and by Sunday-schools, or denominational schools, or domestic instruction, they secure a religious training to the children. But they do this in utter inconsistency with their principles.* They exercise a

* "Even Baptist churches are replenished from their children more than from any other source. The proportion

usurped authority, they interfere with the rights of conscience, they have no more right to teach their children than the children of the heathen. They sometimes feel the necessity of something more definite and positive. A venerable Baptist minister once confessed to the speaker, that their children were not brought up as strictly as they should be, and as ours are. Dr. Ryland, of England, could not feel satisfied till he had led his little son into a room apart, and solemnly dedicated him to God in prayer.*

is still greater, immensely greater, in churches which preserve unimpaired, practically as well as theoretically, the true idea of the *status* of baptized children, and also keep high the standard of evangelical truth, and piety, as in the Free Church of Scotland." *Dr. Atwater's "Children of the Church,"* p. 75.

* A correspondent in *The Examiner* (Baptist) says:

"I have conversed with Baptist ministers who avow their

“A writer in the *Freeman*, the Baptist paper of London, earnestly advocates the public *dedication* of children to the Lord. He thinks that many seriously inclined people run to infant baptism, in order to satisfy a sense of duty with reference to their children ;

conviction of the need of some ceremony, in our denomination, that should stand in the place of infant baptism in other denominations. It was argued that this rite, though unauthorized and injurious, as a strictly religious institution, tended, nevertheless, to impart a consistence and permanence to Pedobaptist churches, which could rarely be found in our own. Hence, it was said, Baptists would gain much by having some ceremony, of a simple and impressive character, through which Christian parents might publicly consecrate their infant children to God. Of the possibility of keeping such a ceremony from running into a positive institution, which would be to us all that ‘infant baptism’ is to other sects, I leave my readers to judge. I will merely ask, Why should Baptists be so ready to confess the insufficiency of their own principles? And why should they go to one of the most unwarranted and objectionable of Pedobaptist observances, to learn what that new thing is which should splice out our Baptist theories?”

a duty which might far more appropriately and scripturally be performed in the public service of dedication."

These denominations have prospered, not in consequence but in spite, of their principles: and they have owed the conversion of their offspring in riper years to the very covenant of which they have withheld the seal. But inasmuch as their refusal has arisen, not out of conscious and wicked contempt or disobedience, but from invincible prejudices, the good God has been pleased to overlook the omission. So Hezekiah prayed for those who had neglected to purify themselves "according to the purification of the sanctuary." This view may be illustrated by the Quaker mode of marriage. They call in neither minister nor mag-

istrate; they marry themselves; yet no one has ever questioned the validity of their marriages, or the legitimacy of their children.

On our plan of administering baptism to children, we think we secure an advantage, in publicly recognizing the relation, applying the seal, and enlisting the instincts of parental affection. Children have a right to the ordinance, they have a right to demand the seal, and they are defrauded if it is withheld.

CHAPTER VI.

Baptism places children under the watch and care of the Church.

Baptism places under the watch and care of the Church.

IN the case of adults this is done directly through the ordinances, personal influence, and discipline. In the case of children and youth the result is reached indirectly.

We have seen that the seal is not meant solely for the benefit of the child, but also for the encouragement of the parent. We now advance a step farther, and behold the circle of influence widened. We recognize a

relation between parent and child not only, and between both and the Great Head of the church, but a relation also between the child and the church, the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. It is a church ordinance, to be administered publicly. Hence private baptisms are discouraged by the Directory, (c. vii.) as well as private celebrations of the Lord's Supper, in order to discountenance superstitious tendencies, and to magnify the social character of the ordinances, as well. Private baptisms lose the following eminent advantages secured by public celebrations; the mutual avowal of the church relation, the open placing of the child in the arms of the church, the public acknowledgment of parental obligation,

the impressiveness of vows thus taken, and the implied engagement of the church itself to share in the child's care and guardianship.

The teachings of our standards are as follows.

“The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel, (not confined to one nation as before under the law) consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, together with their children.” (*Conf. of F. c. xxv. 2.*) “Children, born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church; and are to be taught to read and repeat the catechism, the apostles' creed, and the Lord's prayer. They are to be taught

to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's supper. The years of discretion, in young Christians, cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership." (*Directory*, c. ix. 1, 2.) "All baptized persons are members of the church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline: and when they have arrived at the years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church-members." (*Bk. of Discipline*, c. i. 6.)

To which the Revised Book of Discipline has subjoined, "It is the office of the church, therefore, to use the proper means, in dependence on Divine grace, for bringing them to repentance and faith, that they may rightly perform their duty."

The doctrine is here clearly and unequivocally laid down, that baptized children are members of the church, though not in full communion; that they are under the care of the church, and subject to its inspection, government and discipline; and that the church is bound to use the proper means to secure an efficient religious training.

The question then arises, what are the proper means? At this point there is a divergence of opinion.

Some, conscientiously believing that the church is bound to do something, and interpreting the term "Discipline" in its literal and technical sense, insist that children and youth should be disciplined as well as adults;* and if they remove their residence, should be furnished with regular letters of dismissal. Others, not less conscientious, are affrighted at the idea of a rigid cast-iron discipline, and recalcitrate at the setting up of a domiciliary inquisition. The truth lies between. The common error is in misapprehending the word "disci-

* "It deserves to be noted, among the traits of a Presbyterianism which is passing away, that Judge Ewing, as a baptized member of the church, always pleaded his rights, and once in a public meeting, declared himself amenable to the discipline of church courts. (Discipline, chap. 1, § 6.)" *Alexander's Letters*, i. 200.

pline," and taking it, not in a general, but a special and restricted or technical sense. "Discipline," says our book, "is the exercise of that authority, and the application of that system of laws, which the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed in his church." (*Disc. c. i. 1.*) Adults are reached by the direct exercise of authority; children and youths are to be reached indirectly by the application of the general system of laws, comprehending a variety of moral means and influences. The necessity of giving certificates of dismissal is obviated by the fact that children, wherever they go, usually continue under the care of parents or guardians. If they should do wrong, the idea of formal citation, trial, public admonition, suspension, or excommu-

nication, is simply preposterous. It is impossible to suspend from full communion or to cast out of it, one who never was in full communion. Besides, the instincts of our common humanity revolt from such a mode of treatment as too harsh for the lambs of the flock.

The sentiments of the judicious Dr. Dwight are entitled to great weight. "With respect to the discipline of persons baptized in infancy, my own views are these: It is chiefly committed to their parents and guardians; and is supremely administered in religious education, involving instruction, habituation, and government; duties respecting the person baptized, which are of no small importance, and are incumbent also on the church and

on its individual members." (*Theol.* iv. 323.) "Were the church to interpose, directly, in the government of persons thus situated; two independent jurisdictions would exist over the same subject, at the same time, and with respect to the same things. If both jurisdictions are rightful and scriptural, the child would not know which to obey. But the Scriptures have settled this point, by requiring him to obey his parents in all things, and informing him that this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Hence I infer, that the direct jurisdiction of the church over the child must be merely nominal; and can exist to no valuable purpose. . . . It is evident that such persons cannot be excommunicated." (*Theol.* iv. 390.)

In corroboration of these views, it may be added, that Edwards attempted to carry out discipline at Northampton, but was baffled. The parents interposed to shield their children.

The exercise of technical "*discipline*" or ecclesiastical authority being manifestly impracticable, we must depend upon the operation of those general and milder "laws," which we find in the Scriptures. Thus the church will come into possession of "the proper means" of securing the correct training and ultimate conversion of her baptized children. She has at her disposal the richest treasures of truth, the most influential moral agencies, the tenderest and most quickly responsive sympathies of the human heart.

CHAPTER VII.

Means and Agencies. The Public Prayers of the Church. The special exhortations of the Pulpit. Catechizing. Family discipline.

PROMINENT among means and agencies may be enumerated *The Public Prayers of the Church.*

Every minister is required by our Directory for Worship to remember "the rising generation," in the comprehensive prayer before sermon; and every pastor will, independently of directories, and from the promptings of his own heart, delight to present the lambs of the flock to the Good Shepherd for a blessing. In the services of the sanctuary, in the social prayer-

meeting, in the maternal association, and on other occasions, the united prayers of the church go up in behalf of her children, like

“A steam of rich distilled perfumes.”

To this practice allusion is repeatedly made in our hymns, as in the 583'd.

“For you the public prayer is made,
O join the public prayer;
For you the secret tear is shed,
O shed yourselves a tear!”

And again in the 587th hymn.

“Remember still that they are thine,
That thy dear sacred name they bear;
Think that the seal of love divine,
The sign of covenant grace they wear.”

Specific exhortations are often addressed from the pulpit to the baptized children of the church. Among

other motives presented to their consideration, is their early consecration to the Lord, their bearing a holy sign upon their brow, their being set apart from the rest of the world, and standing in a peculiarly near and solemn relation to the Most High. They are urged by the affection they bear their parents, by their veneration for the church of their fathers, by their gratitude for their elevation above the children of the heathen, by their obligations to the Gospel of Christ, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Such warm and tender exhortations are adapted to make a deep and lasting impression upon the youthful breast.

Catechizing is another potent engine for training a child in the way he

should go, that when he is old he may not depart therefrom. It has been objected to the Westminster Catechism, that it is above the comprehension of children, but the same objection might lie against the rules of grammar, and many other things. In childhood the memory is active and tenacious. Educators therefore fill the memory with facts, and dates, and scientific principles, that when the judgment becomes mature, it may have a copious supply of material to exercise itself upon. The shorter catechism is a compact and well-digested system of theology, and whoever masters it and is familiar with its answers, has a body of divinity always ready to his hand, and is armed against heresy and sophis-

try. Said a gentleman of another sect once to a teacher in the author's Sunday-school, "When I want my boy to answer to 'what is your name?' I will let him learn the Episcopal catechism; but when I want him to know 'what is the chief end of man?' I send him to your school to learn the shorter catechism." It is for this reason the Scotch, who are well drilled in the catechism from "what is the chief end of man?" to "what doth the conclusion of the Lord's prayer teach us?" love strong, solid, doctrinal preaching, and above all the rest of Christendom, are patterns of orthodoxy. The catechism has been the means of conversion also. Lady Glenorchy, in her Diary, related her having been aroused to convictions of sin

by the answer in the shorter catechism, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." She was filled with shame when she thought of her neglect to glorify God, and began at once to reform her life. (*Whitcross*, p. 5.)

"Said one of the best gospel ministers; I owe my preservation from error, under God, to the Assembly's Shorter Catechism and to the Scripture proofs of the same, both of which my pious mother taught me in my boyhood. Before I was converted, if I quarrelled with the doctrine of depravity, the answers and proof-texts of the Catechism came up as witnesses against me; if I heard men reason against eternal retribution, memory brought these words for my defence,

‘Every sin deserveth God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come,’ ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,’ ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;’ if ever I had any doubts about the trinity, these words dissipated them, ‘There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory;’ and my thoughts reverted to the baptism of Christ when each of the sacred three bore sensible testimony to this truth; and if I strove to be an infidel, I heard again my mother’s voice asking me, ‘What rule hath God

given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?' and at once a voice within me replied, 'The word of God (which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.' "

"A pious mother who was in the habit of catechising her children on Sabbath evening, had gathered them about her in her nursery for that purpose, when an infidel physician who was in attendance upon her sick husband, entered the room and seated himself by the bed-side. He heard her little children repeat answer after answer to the questions in the Catechism, and at length interrupted her with the inquiry, 'Madam, why do you teach your children that stuff?' Fixing her

tearful eye on him she said, 'Sir, that it may preserve them from skepticism, save them, and nourish their souls when I am dead.' He left the room, trembling before the power of her faith."

Family Worship and discipline must not be omitted from the church's list of agencies. This is "the church in the house." Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he set up the family "altar." David returned "to bless his household." The ark abode in the house of Obed-Edom three months, "and the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had." The family altar has been immortalized by the genius of Burns,* and

* "They chant their artless notes in simple guise:
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim :

championed by the eloquent pens of John Angell James* and James W. Alexander.† No agency has been more owned and blessed of God, silently, quietly, to be sure, but universally confessed to be most useful.

Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name :
 Or noble *Elgin* beats the heav'nward flame,
 The sweetest far of *Scotia's* holy lays :
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame ;
 The tickl'd ears no heart-felt rapture raise ;
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

“ Then kneeling down to heaven's Eternal King,
 The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays ;
 Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
 That *thus* they all shall meet in future days ;
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear.
 Together hymning their *Creator's* praise,
 In such society, yet still more dear ;
 While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.”
Cottar's Sat. Night.

* *Family Monitor.*

† *Thoughts on Family Worship.* Published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

Nothing can be more regularly, systematically, uniformly, methodically, impressive upon the youthful mind. And if singing is added, the effect is greatly heightened. In all after life, the recollection of the Bible opened on the table, the father reading a chapter, a hymn feelingly sung, and all kneeling down to pray together, forms a tableau that cannot fade out from the memory. Through such recollections, thousands have been preserved in virtue, reclaimed from vice, and hopefully converted. Parents do well when they pray *for* their children, but there is nothing like praying *with* them to make an impression on their hearts and consciences. John Randolph to his dying day felt the pressure of his mother's hand on his head, as she prayed

with him. There was an English tradesman who was accustomed to call in his apprentices to family worship. But as his business increased, and help was needed in the store, he gradually excused their attendance, and contented himself with having prayers with his wife only. In the course of time a letter reached him from a former apprentice, who spoke feelingly of the benefit he had derived from the family devotions. There he had first seen the evil of sin, there he had been led to embrace the Saviour. And he concluded with begging his former employer never to neglect that precious exercise, that his house might be the birth-place of souls. Every line of the letter flashed condemnation in the man's face, and he had no rest till

he resumed his custom, and called in all his family and apprentices, whatever interruption it might be to his business or his gains.*

“One day, a gentleman was riding on a western prairie and lost his way. Clouds arose in the sky, and not seeing the sun he quite lost his reckoning. Night came on, and as he knew not which way to guide his horse, he let him take his own way. It was a Western horse, and therefore likely to understand prairie life better than his rider, who was not a Western man. By and by a light glimmered, and it was not long before the faithful animal stopped before a log cabin.

“‘Who’s there?’ somebody shouted from within.

* Anec. for the Family, p. 263.

“‘A benighted traveller,’ answered the gentleman. ‘Can you give me a night’s lodging?’

“‘You’re welcome,’ said the man, appearing at the door.

“The gentleman found the family at supper—man, wife and children; and a place was soon made for the stranger.

“Some time in the evening the man asked: ‘Are you a minister of the gospel, sir?’

“‘No,’ answered the gentleman; and seeing the man looked disappointed, he asked why he wished to know.

“‘Oh! sir,’ answered the man, ‘I hoped a minister had come to *help me build a family altar*. I had one once, but I lost it coming over the Alleghenies. It is a *great* loss.’

“ ‘Perhaps I can help you to build one, though I’m not a minister,’ said the gentleman, who always had one himself; and after a little more talk, the man handed him an old family Bible. He read, and they sang a psalm, and all knelt. The gentleman prayed first, and then the man prayed, and the wife and children said, ‘Amen;’ for it seemed as if each wanted to have a little part in building up the family altar.

“ ‘Sir,’ said the man when they arose, ‘there’s many an emigrant that loses his family altar before he gets here—and after too; sir, it’s a *great loss.*’ ”

“ Robert Hall, hearing some worldly-minded persons object to family prayer as taking up too much time, said that

what might seem a loss will be more than compensated by that spirit of order and regularity which the stated observance of this duty tends to produce. It serves as an *edge and border*, to preserve the *web of life* from *unravelling*. 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesseth the habitation of the just.'**

In conducting both family worship and family discipline, parents should be careful not to introduce an unlovely rigour likely to create prejudices against religion. The best government is that which lets itself be the least seen. Family worship should be free from weariness. Sunday, instead of being the dullest day of the week, should be converted into the brightest, and be

* The British Workman.

welcomed by the youngest of the family. A chastened cheerfulness should pervade the day. Parents that are too unyielding, or too indolent, or too selfish, or too unskilful, to provide a variety of reading and occupation that will save the youthful mind from *ennui*, ought to amend their ways. All parents may consult with advantage Abbott's "Young Christian," chapter 9th.

Among other good things, Mr. Abbott says, "There are wise and there are unwise ways of keeping the Sabbath holy. . . . God did not institute the Sabbath in order merely that children might be kept from play, or that they might be forced to read, mechanically, good books; but that they might improve their characters, and make real preparation for another world.

Now, unless a mother adopts such methods as shall most effectually promote the improvement of her children, and unless she succeeds in interesting them in it, she does not attain the object in view. If your children are spending the day in a cold and heartless manner, complying with your rules from mere fear of your authority, they are not, properly speaking, keeping the Sabbath. The end in view, improvement of character, is not attained. . . . These three points, variety, system, and rest, ought to be attended to, in order to secure the greatest possible moral progress in that day.”*

* Young Christian, pp. 271, 273, 282.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Sunday-School,—Aid and Inspection of the Church.

THE wisdom and piety of modern times have devised no more powerful lever to elevate and Christianize society, than the Sunday-school.

The Sunday-school has been called "the children's church." We will not object to the name, provided it be not abused to supersede the divine institution of the Sanctuary, or to usurp its place.* There is a well-known

* An editorial in the "Presbyterian" for Oct. 7, 1865, has the following judicious thoughts.

"It is a virtual questioning of the Divine wisdom, that a more eligible method may be devised, and one better adapted

church, which holds such a secondary position, that instead of being a church with a Sunday-school attached to it,

to childish tastes. If the Sabbath-school is presumed to be this method, it becomes, instead of an auxiliary, an antagonist to the church. It is much to be feared that the opinion has become too prevalent among Sabbath-school teachers; that the Sabbath-school is better adapted to children than the regular ordinances of the church, and that they act on this principle.

“Some one, presuming, no doubt, that he was doing God service, has taught children to dislike the church and to prefer the school, by putting into their mouth a lament, of which the following is a specimen :

“‘To Sunday-school I love to go,
But not to church, up stairs :
The sermons are so very long,
So very long the prayers.

“‘And so I swing my little feet,
And move my hands about,
And wish, and wish, and wish again
The church would soon be out.’”

“This looks very like a systematic attempt to do mischief, and parents who are anxious for the spiritual welfare of their children may well take warning.’”

humourists call it a church attached to a Sunday-school.

Neither is it altogether truthful to say, on the other hand, as has been said, that a Sunday-school without ministerial supervision is "like a barrel without hoops." Ministerial supervision is of great value where it can be had; but I have known instances in the West, of Sunday-schools preceding churches, and preparing the way for them.

Neither is the idea to be tolerated for a moment, that parents can shift their responsibility upon the Sunday-school teacher. No mortal can take a parent's place, or a parent's responsibility. "Burnish your jewels," some one has said, "with your own hands!"

The church should look on the Sun-

day-school as her nursery, and take a deep interest in its prosperity. She should supply it with the means of purchasing books, maps, music, or whatever else is necessary for its comfort or efficiency. She should supply the ranks of the teachers from the choicest of her members, who are themselves taught of God. The superintendent should be, not merely a member, but if the needful qualifications can be combined, one of the officers of the church, thus bringing it into closer connection with the church, and creating an identity of interests. The pastor and elders should from time to time visit the school, and show that they take an interest in it. It would be encouraging if some of the members would occasionally look in.

If the pastor, as is sometimes the case, can meet the teachers to assist them in the weekly lesson, it will be so much the better. Each teacher is himself the pastor of a little flock, the lambs of the flock; and if one of them is sick, should make an affectionate visit, and talk and pray with the child.

There have been repeated instances of whole classes consisting of a dozen and upwards, being hopefully converted through the fidelity of a teacher. I knew one who had thirty pupils under her care, though not all at the same time, all of whom had been brought into the church but two. One of them died prematurely but in Christian hope, the other was prevented from joining the church by her father. Such brilliant results are truly cheer-

ing and inspiring. Such faithful and successful teachers will wear crowns radiant with stars. How important that Sunday-school teachers should be pious, zealous, every way competent for their responsible post! And how important that the church should take care that the immortal interests of her children should not be intrusted to incompetent hands!

To borrow Dr. John Todd's nervous language, "Our churches are already in the hands of Sabbath-school teachers. They give character, and create the fashions and feelings of our churches. Let them believe and go wrong, and we cherish an infant Hercules whose club will shortly be used in beating and killing his own mother. If our teachers are not held responsi-

ble for what they do and what they teach, to the Pastor and to the church, woe be to the hopes of stability in the walls of our Zion. . . The safety of our churches, their stability, permanency, order, purity, knowledge, all, under God, depend upon the character of our Sabbath-schools. . . I plead for this close connexion 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 labour 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 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.”*

* Todd's Sabb. Sch. Teacher, c. x. p. 300.

CHAPTER IX.

The Supervision of Parents by the Church. The Sense of Individual Restraint.

The *Authority* with which the church is invested by her great Head, over parents as members subject to discipline, enables her to see that parents do their duty.

This is one of the ways in which the church can indirectly control and influence children through her control and authority over the parents. If parents prove unfaithful to the vows which they took at the baptism; if they, like Eli, see their sons make themselves vile, and restrain them not; if they habitually neglect to pray

with and for their children; if they set anything but a godly example before them; if after promising to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they hand them over to the devil and his minions to be educated; the church may and ought to remonstrate, chide, advise, to call to account, and in case of persistence in evil, to bring down the weight of discipline upon them. Such action the church is not merely at liberty, but is under solemn obligations, to take; and thus she will effectually exercise a watch and care over the children, by compelling their natural guardians to perform their entire duty towards them.*

* "Of course, so far as kind discipline is concerned, in their younger years this must be mainly exercised through

Another indirect but very beneficial influence is a sense of *Moral Restraint*, arising from the consciousness of sustaining a recognized relation to the church.

It is not necessary that attention should be formally called to the existence of this relation. Its operation is quiet and gentle, and like the kingdom of God, it, "cometh not with observation," yet none the less effectively. Those who have been brought up under a different mode of training may question it, as a thing that has not fallen under their cognizance, but there is ample evidence of the existence of the feeling, first, in our own

the parents, by due vigilance and pains-taking on the part of the pastor and elders, to see that they measurably discharge their obligations and vows to train their children up for Christ." (*Children of the Ch.* p. 85.)

consciousness, and next, in the circum-
spection and correctness of character
it induces. The youth feels that he is
not left isolated and alone ; he is backed
by a numerous and respectable body,
of whom he is part ; he is aware that
he has their sympathy and is entitled
to their aid ; he knows that their eyes
are on him, and he strives to show
himself worthy of their confidence ; he
looks up with reverence to the clergy-
man whom he sees his parents respect,
and is gratified when he attracts his
notice and approbation.* This is one

* " The minister, other things being equal, is the best ed-
ucator ; for his office develops reverence in his pupil, and so
aids in the culture of those moral and religious faculties
that should always be as leaven to the otherwise worthless
lump of knowledge. Scholarship without piety is skepticism.
Faust is the natural fruit of learning. A clergyman strikes
this hidden fount in the soul, and compels its streams to
flow." *Independent*, Sept. 21, 1865.

of the strokes of nature that amiable poet Goldsmith has introduced into his sketch of the good pastor.

“ E'en children followed, with endearing wile,
 And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile,
 His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
 Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distrest.”*

The sentiment of veneration is implanted in our breasts by nature, and has vast potency over ductile and imitative youth. Franklin led his two grandsons up to Voltaire, in the zenith of his fame, to have the patriarch of French literature lay his hand on their heads; and they never forgot it. The father of the late Dr. John Rice introduced his son to a celebrated patriot of purer fame, the venerable Patrick Henry, that he might imbibe some lesson of wisdom from the sage's lips.

* Deserted Village.

That lesson was given in these words, "My son, remember that every man is the maker of his own character;" a maxim perhaps not unfamiliar to the lad, but coming from such a source, it made a deep impression upon him, and contributed to the formation of Dr. Rice's subsequent commanding character.

This habitual moral restraint, though the youth may not always be directly conscious of it, makes him feel that by indulging in irreverence or misconduct, he is acting out of character, he is not doing what was reasonably expected of him, he is, to use the nervous words of Prof. Atwater, "As false to his own position, as if he should make war upon his own family, or join the enemies of his country."

CHAPTER X.

The Church keeps steadily in view, as her only object, the salvation of the soul.

WHAT gives to the church a great accession of power, is, that in all her arrangements *she keeps one object steadily in view*, the salvation of the soul.

Success in any enterprise is dependent on unity of purpose. He who would succeed must adopt St. Paul's motto, "This one thing I do." He must persevere, undisturbed by rebuffs, undismayed by disappointments. Such is the earnest unity of purpose of the church, in the entire work of training youth. If the offer were made

to the church to have all the education of the country in her hands, the religious element excepted; that, like the learned Jesuits in China, she might teach everything but religion; she would spurn the proposal without a moment's hesitation. In ordinary schools there is a little grammar taught, a little geometry, a little geography, a little Latin; but without any definite aim. The pupils may become farmers, or astronomers, or lawyers, or statesmen, or soldiers. But the church has one sole, pure, noble object in her eye, that is, that all her children shall become Christians. If this result be not reached, she confesses herself disappointed. Her labour has been lost. It is for this she watches, for this she plans, for this she prays.

All preaching, all teaching, that does not bear on this great end, is in her opinion of little worth.

She desires to instil religious truth with the first dawn of intelligence, while the mind is tender and impressionable. She takes the plastic clay, and resolves to mould and fashion it into the image of Christ. She knows it is a life-long task; but she will feel well repaid, if at last a soul of priceless worth is trained for usefulness on earth, and a blessed immortality in heaven. Patiently therefore she works; untired she brings all influences to bear on the formation of habits; assiduously she labours to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. Thus is the child entrusted to her tutelage, surrounded ever by a holy atmosphere.

Not otherwise reasoned the subtle Carthaginian, when he led his little son Hannibal to the altar of his God, and there made him swear ineradicable enmity to his country's foes. Not otherwise does the red Indian reason, when he gives his son tomahawks for toys, and teaches him to amuse himself with taking imaginary scalps. Not otherwise do the Papists reason, when they begin early to fill the infant mind with prejudices that it can never get rid of. In the church of S. Agostino, in Rome, I once saw a little boy lifted up by his mother to kiss the foot of the Virgin, and then she touched his forehead with holy oil from the lamp that burned before the image. Will that boy ever forget it? Let us learn even from our enemies. Let

us take advantage of the impressible nature of children, and pre-occupy their minds with wholesome truths, that will become part and parcel of their thoughts, and enter into the formation of a solid and useful character.*

Carrying out with undeviating perseverance such a single-hearted unity of purpose, and relying for aid on the accompanying blessing promised by her ascended Head, the church shall not fail to be crowned with success. "As for me, this is my covenant, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee,

* It is with a single eye to carrying out this purpose, viz, the formation of a solid, steady, serious character, that the church persists, in spite of the odium which is lavishly heaped upon her, in discountenancing all amusements and diversions of a frivolous or anti-religious tendency. Such amusements she considers to be, theatres, operas, circuses, horse-racing, card-playing, gaming of all sorts, balls, dancing, novel-reading.

and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Isa. lix. 21.

Such are the means and agencies at the church's command to benefit the children placed under her watch and care. With the blessing of the great Head of the church, they may be confidently expected to prove efficacious. Of course, we are dependent on the divine blessing, and we are powerless without it. "Without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. Sacraments and services, prayer and preaching, instruction and training, become useful only as they are attended by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

“The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in them that by faith receive them.”*

Prayer for the divine blessing should therefore accompany all our efforts for our own good or the good of others.

* Shorter Catechism, q. 91.

CHAPTER XI.

Recapitulation. A Word to Ministers, Parents, and Baptized Children.

LET us recapitulate. The positions we have endeavoured to establish are these. Baptism is a birth-right privilege, derived from the Abrahamic covenant; it is, under the gospel, a seal of the covenant; it is the rite of initiation into the Christian commonwealth; it places under the watch and care of the church. In discharging this trust, the church depends not on direct technical discipline, as with adults, but on the operation of the general laws of Christ's kingdom. The means and agencies are the pub-

lic prayers of the church, the special exhortations of the pulpit, catechizing, family worship, the Sunday-school, the authority of the church to enforce the performance of parental duty, the salutary restraint arising from the consciousness of a relation to the church, and the steadiness with which the church, in all her arrangements, keeps in view the one object, the salvation of the soul.

Ministers are concerned in the relation of the church to the children. When the great Shepherd appointed pastors of his flock, he gave them a special charge: "Feed my lambs!" Let them beware of negligence in the discharge of this high trust, but labour to acquit their consciences of the blood of souls. That is a solemn question

which will be asked of them in the judgment-day, "Where is the flock that was given thèe, thy beautiful flock?" And in especial, where are the lambs of the flock?

Parents are interested in the relation of their children to the church. Let them ponder the spiritual meaning and intent of the baptismal rite. Do not omit it. Secure all its rich benefits for your children. Train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Set them a godly and lovely example. Pray for and with them. Imbue their tender minds with the Scriptures of truth. Implore the aid and influence of the Holy Spirit to renew their hearts, to convey to their souls the grace signified, and to make them early the subjects of a saving

change, in deed and in truth the lambs of Christ's flock.

Baptized children are deeply and personally interested in the relation which they sustain to the church of Christ. You do not occupy the indifferent position of children of the Heathen, or children of unbelievers. A sacred sign is on your brow. You have been set apart to God, and been surrounded by circumstances most favourable to the development of a Christian character. Shall all this be in vain? Shall it be in vain that your Redeemer, your parents, and the church have done so much for you? "Will you not from this time say, My Father! thou art the guide of my youth?"

THE END.