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## THE CHURCH'S MISSION TO THE YOUNG.

The concluding sentence of Old Testament prophecy,—“he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,”—seems latterly to be receiving a new fulfillment. After long neglect, resulting apparently from misconception of the relation which children sustain to the christian church, parents and religious teachers are beginning to appreciate more fully the importance of their conversion to God in early youth. They have not, indeed, been forgotten, or overlooked, in the past, for no christian parent can be so utterly lost to all the claims of duty to God and his family, as to be wholly unconcerned for their moral and spiritual well-being. The mother of Philip Doddridge, teaching her little son at her knee, the story of Jesus, from the Dutch tiles that adorned the chimney-corner,—the only illustrated “Child’s Primer” of those days,—was perhaps not an uncommon example, at least among the Nonconformists of the last century. But beyond the parental training thus imparted, and occasional catechetical instruction by the pastor, both of them invaluable in themselves, there was but little done in the way of providing them with public means of grace suitable to their tender years and capacities. The Church of Christ had never apprehended, and indeed does so yet but very imperfectly the import of our Saviour’s words,—“of such is the kingdom of heaven.” A genuine religious experience in early childhood was generally regarded as so rare a phenomenon as to be almost incredible. And hence the preaching, though thoroughly evangelical and instructive, was in style and matter as much beyond the knowledge and ability of children, as it was ill-adapted to their physical capacities through extreme length. The devotional parts of the service were probably equally unsuitable. The gathering in of the children of the ignorant and vicious classes,—the “city Arabs,” as they have not inappropriately been named,—was a thing as yet unthought of.

Of late years much of this has been changed. The Sabbath School has been instituted, and notwithstanding many defects in its organization and working, has undoubtedly accomplished a very large amount of good. Christian ministers are learning to regard the emphatic injunction of the Master, to feed the