

tion; and the congregation, when addressed, give their pledge to the same effect. When they declare that they shall give him—the minister, “all due support in the Lord,” they are ignorant indeed, if they conceive that this includes nothing more than the mere fulfilment of pecuniary engagements, however punctually this may be done; they ought to understand, if the designs of the gospel ministry are to be secured in relation to themselves, that they are solemnly bound to afford him every possible encouragement in the performance of all his pastoral services. But, if instead of meeting him on occasions of public catechising in accordance with their distinctly understood obligations, they seldom or never make their appearance, in what light, I would ask them, are they in justice to regard their own conduct? As they are responsible to God, it will prove their safety, that they be furnished with such reasons as he will sustain. The same remarks will apply to the public worship of God, on the first day of the week. Whether is the man who is a punctual attendant in the sanctuary, every Lord’s day, more likely to derive spiritual benefit, or the person whose attendance is only occasional? Whether is he who gives attention to the whole of the public services on the Sabbath, more apt to feel a genuine and dutiful interest in these services, or the man who is only a half-day attendant?

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace out all the reasons by which persons are influenced in absenting themselves from catechetical meetings, still the following circumstances may be mentioned.

Some possibly may conceive themselves *above* exercises of this kind; they are already so well instructed, that, to occupy the position of being examined on topics of religion, were a species of self-humiliation to which they feel no disposition to submit; and, that it ought to be left to children to receive information in this form. Certainly, we reply, this mode of imparting instruction is admirably suited to the capacities of the young. The very common practice of having catechisms compiled for the special benefit of this class, indicates what are the prevalent sentiments on the point—the principle being the

same with respect to what is written, and what is oral, as in the exercise in question. But while this exercise is most useful for children, it would form no degradation to persons even of ample acquirements to give countenance to a practice which has been found so beneficial; their presence would operate as a salutary example; and although they might not obtain any additional knowledge, still their graces might be improved. But possibly after all, they might discover reason to abate somewhat of the very favorable opinion which formerly they were disposed to cherish, relative to their own attainments.

Timidity may operate with others. Perhaps they are also sensible, so far, of their own deficiencies, and would avoid exposure. But, meanwhile, are they availing themselves of other means to supply their deficiencies? If they are, why not avail themselves also of catechetical means? By so doing, they must arrive sooner at the end they propose—a competent share of religious information. But do they make no effort to remove their ignorance, though they may possess the most favourable opportunities? Then, their ignorance, a most serious evil, is to them more tolerable, than that others should discover their defects. Through indolence, and, something akin to vanity, they are thus retained in no very enviable condition.

Some may plead that public catechising is not practised in other churches. In this case, the consideration to be attended to, is, not what other churches follow, but, is what we now advocate, scriptural and useful?

While agreeably to the observations already made, we hold it to be the duty of every minister, strictly to observe the practice in question, still if any should be found unhappily remiss, those who least frequent meetings for examination, would likely be found to be the most vociferous against the dereliction. Such is the inconsistency of many.

The business of Sabbath Schools, may be viewed as an excellent training, for the exercise we have been recommending; and must continue to command the interest of all those who are friends of the youth, and would consult the welfare of Zion.