

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE SABBATH SCHOOL AS AN EVANGELIZER.

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There is no one but will admit that the Sabbath school has of late years assumed great importance as a means of training the young. A little more than a century has passed away since the Sabbath school movement under Robert Raikes began, and ever since that time it has been steadily growing and becoming a more potent spiritual factor in modern Church life. That the Sabbath school is an educator, all will be prepared to admit; that it exercises a refining, elevating influence over the minds and hearts of the young will be equally clear; but that the Sabbath school is an evangelizer may not be so clear to some minds, because not so frequently dwelt upon in this particular capacity. We purpose in this paper discussing the value of the Sabbath school in this aspect, and we hope to make it evident that it can act as evangelizer with as much if not greater efficiency than the Church itself. For, if we understand it aright, the position of the teacher in the Sabbath school is similar in some respects to that of the minister in the pulpit. The function of the minister is not simply to impart instruction; it is to draw in as well as to build up, to evangelize as well as to edify; and if he is properly qualified for his position, he will act in both these capacities, as he will certainly have occasion so to do. Now, so it is to a certain degree with the teacher in the Sabbath school; the chief difference being that the teacher has to deal with the young while the minister has to deal with the old as well as young—with all ages and classes. There are one or two reasons why we regard the Sabbath school as calculated to become a very efficient evangelizing agency—why it has advantages for becoming so, while even the Church as distinct from the Sabbath school, has not.

I. Consider the condition of those with whom the teacher has to deal. He has to deal with the young—with those whose condition is most favourable for receiving good impressions. In youth the mind is plastic, evil habits have not yet been formed, the mind readily takes the direction which we desire to give it, and the seed of truth dropped in its virgin soil has the best chance of taking root there, and, warmed by the sunshine of the Divine Spirit, growing up and bringing forth fruit. Never again shall the heart be in a more favourable position for receiving the good seed; never afterwards shall the child be in a better condition to form habits of virtue, truth and goodness. We might specify three patent influences which are brought to bear upon the young. There is the home influence, and this is, of all merely human influences, the most powerful. In the home the tenderest years of life are passed—years during which he is most easily influenced for good or evil. There he enjoys a father's instruction, a mother's love and prayers, or the bad example set by them is leaving a stain upon his nature which long years will not efface; there his young mind receives its first bias in a right or wrong direction. Next to the home influence in value and far-reaching effects come the Sabbath school influence. Its influence is second only to that of the home. While attending the school the heart of the child is yet impressionable and pliant, so that it easily responds to any outward influence brought to bear upon it. For a certain time every week, extending over a number of years, and those the most impressionable years of his life, the child enjoys the face-to-face instruction of his teacher, hears sweet hymns sung, earnest prayers offered in his behalf, and is blest with the companionship of friends in the school heartily interested in his welfare, the effect of all which in forming his habits and moulding his young life must surely be powerful and far-reaching. After this Sabbath school influence, the next in importance comes the Church influence. We regard the Sabbath school as wielding a more potent influence over the child than the Church, simply because of the more favourable condition of the child to receive good impressions when brought under its instruction. As things now are, the Sabbath school is the child's church, the teacher his minister, the lesson-book his Bible. There is no reason why the church should occupy this inferior, secondary position as regards the child, but there is no

remedy for it so long as her services are so elaborate and formal as to prevent children from profiting by them. If the church would retain her moral hold of the young, she must adapt her services to their age and capacity. If the minister would occasionally put something into his sermon for the children, suited to their years and understanding, or if he would, at stated times, preach a sermon from the pulpit especially for them, the church would wield a more powerful influence for good over the young than she now does. We are glad to learn that this practice is being adopted by some even eminent ministers. We learn that Dr. John Hall, of New York, makes it a point, as often as he possibly can, to have something in the sermon for the children. But a short time ago we read of a minister omitting the first reading every Sabbath morning, and in its place substituting a short address to the young of his congregation. Were such a practice followed, two good results would certainly flow from it: (1) It would have the effect of causing our children to attend more regularly and take a more intelligent interest in the service of the sanctuary. In many places our children do not attend, or attend but in small numbers, the church services. They have the impression that if they attend the Sabbath school it is quite sufficient; that the Sabbath school is designed for the young, and the church for grown-up people. Now, the remedy we have just prescribed would cause the children to feel that the church was for them as well as the Sabbath school. The children would soon take their places in our congregations; they would enjoy the advantages of both services; and the minister would thus co-operate with the teacher in their moral instruction and training. (2) Such a practice would cause us to realize more fully that the Sabbath school and the Church are, in reality, one. The tendency of the time is to separate the one from the other—to regard the one as independent of the other. In some quarters the Sabbath school bids fair to become no longer the ally but the rival of the church—to usurp her functions and take her place. But the practice we have referred to would place the one in its true relation to the other, and show that the Sabbath school is part of the church—that the one includes the other. We are glad to notice that in the report on Sabbath observance adopted at the late meeting of the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, this truth was strongly emphasized.

II. Consider again the close relationship in which the teacher stands to the pulpit in his class, and this will form another reason for regarding the Sabbath school as calculated to be a successful evangelizer. We all will admit that the teacher sustains a very close relation to his pupil—even closer, in some respects, than the relation between preacher and hearer. He can use a freedom in his mode of addressing them which would be out of place in the pulpit, and in this way can come into closer personal contact with them. The free-and-easy conversation style is universally admitted to be one of the most effective modes of address. Were such a style adopted in the pulpit as often as the subject would admit, the attention would be more easily riveted, and the truth brought home to the heart with greater effect. Says an eminent preacher and writer on this point: "Now, being sure that your theme is one of interest, and worked out with thought, if you take language of that kind, and use it in colloquial or familiar phrases, you must adapt to it a quiet and natural inflection of voice—for almost all the sympathetic part of the voice is in the lower tones and in a conversational strain—and you will evoke a power that is triumphant in reaching the human heart." Now, the teacher in the class naturally falls into this familiar, conversational style, and the result is that the attention is arrested, interest created, and the truth impressed. For these reasons, then, the Sabbath school, through its teacher, is calculated to be a very effective evangelizing agency in bringing the child to Christ—in causing him, that is, to realize that by baptism he has already been given to Him; that he is, therefore, already His; and that all that is required of him is to accept for himself, by a personal act of faith, Jesus Christ as his Saviour. In this way the Sabbath school would co-operate with the Church, the teacher with the minister; a grand unity would be seen to pervade their work. The one would act and be reacted upon by the other, and both, animated by the same spirit, and working towards the same end, would perform more successfully their great work, the salvation and edification of men of every class and age.

### AFTER THE BATTLE.

MR. EDITOR,—The promoters of the Presbyterian Church bills which have just passed through parliament owe their best thanks to all the friends that helped them. The most efficient aid was rendered by the congregations that sent petitions on behalf of the measures. It was the voice of the people that carried the day in the face of a pertinacious opposition. The opposition could scarcely be called formidable; it lacked the essential element of strength—it was not backed by numbers. But what it lacked in this respect, it made up by audacity and perseverance; and it might have been even more troublesome than it was had not the United Church presented an unbroken front in asking for the legislation. Those whose interests were specially involved cannot therefore be too thankful for the enthusiastic support given them by their brethren who had no direct interest in the matter. Indeed, in spite of the trouble and expense entailed by the lawsuits and legislation, they have served to demonstrate the entireness of the union, and have contributed to cement it more firmly. The sufferings of some of the members have been shared in by all, as the apostle's figure indicates should be the case in the Christian Church. As one of the sufferers, I beg to tender hearty acknowledgments to the brethren throughout the Dominion, who brought their influence to bear upon members of Parliament, in both the Commons and the Senate, in favour of the measures for our relief.

Presbyterians, in their Church capacity, are not given to meddling in party politics. The membership of the Church would not brook any other attitude. It was therefore to be expected that when a demand for legislation, such as was lately made, came before Parliament, it should receive respectful attention from the members, irrespective of party lines, as was the case. The Premier and the leader of the opposition were equally friendly in the Lower House; while the admirable help rendered in the Senate by Messrs. Dickie and Vidal, of the one party, was ably and cordially seconded by Messrs. Scott and Power, of the other. And as party politics did not enter into the question, so neither did nationality nor creed. Messrs. Brooks and Kirkpatrick, who introduced two of the bills into the Commons, are both members of the Church of England; while Mr. Shaw, who had charge of the Temporalities Bill, is a member of our own Church. But Messrs. Bergeron, Bourassa, and Girouard are Frenchmen and Roman Catholics, and yet there were no warmer supporters of the measures than they. To no two gentlemen in Parliament are the promoters more indebted than to Messrs. McDougall and Mills, for the able and zealous support they gave. It is all the more to the credit of the former gentleman and Mr. Shaw that they took such a prominent part in promoting the measures, seeing that they both number non-unionists in their constituencies, their courage and independence contrasting favourably with the bearing of the representatives of Victoria, South Lanark, Glengarry and Montreal West, in similar circumstances. Messrs. Bannerman, Casey, Scriver, Robertson (Shelbourne), Sutherland and White (Hastings), all rendered yeoman service to the cause, at the most critical point in its history, although at a later stage the last-mentioned gentleman ratted.

It ought, however, in all fairness to the thirty members who voted against the third reading of the bill in the Commons, to be stated that very few of them, indeed, upheld the pretensions of the minority in their integrity. Messrs. Amyot and McMillan did; but as for the rest, they went for dividing the fund, although they proposed to do so in a fashion that gave to the non-unionists far more than they could be shown to be entitled to on any equitable principle of division. The greatest danger to the measure arose from the proposal to divide the fund. Had the minority addressed themselves to securing a legitimate proportion of it, they would probably have succeeded, such was the temper of both Houses, although it would have been a misfortune had this taken place. It would have been specially unfortunate for the non-unionists, as the beneficiaries among them would have had less adequate security for their annuities when there was only a capital of \$25,000 to look to, than when there was \$330,000 to fall back upon. It would also have just lessened the security of the majority by about one-twelfth, besides that it would have tended to perpetuate the non-unionist party in the country. The minority representatives, by claiming an absurdly