

4. Thomas Secker, Archbishop from 1758 to 1768, buried in the churchyard of Lambeth. To him is due the completion of the Church Catechism. The medallions of Bancroft, Tenison, and Secker, have been modelled from photographs taken from the original portraits in Lambeth Palace; that of Tenison was painted by Simon Dubois, and that of Secker by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

ORIGIN.

The original idea was to provide religious instruction for poor children who were not taught at home and were not reached by the Church. This implied that the children of the better Christianized classes were taught at home and in the Church, parents and priests co-operating; and such was the fact. Nothing could be more beautiful than England's system, which contemplated a conscientious discharge of parental duty, supplemented by the systematic training of the Church. The rubrics after the Catechism were by no means a dead letter.

“¶ The Curate of every parish shall diligently, upon Sundays and Holy Days, after the Second Lesson at Evening Prayer, openly in the Church, instruct and examine so many children of his Parish sent unto him as he shall think convenient,

“¶ And all Fathers, Mothers Masters and Dames shall cause their Children, Servant, and Apprentices (who have not learned their Catechism) to come to the Church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear and be ordered by the Curate until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn.”

But there were many children not reached by this beneficent system. And alas! there were many parents and masters who cruelly neglected the commands of Mother Church. A happy thought entered the heart and brain of a good man. The Sunday School was born!

It has become a pretty large institution since.

Not only so, but it has become a very different affair. It has assumed the attitude of sole responsibility for the religious instruction of the children. It is called “the Children's Church.” Two facts stand out distinctly. Whether they are to be regarded as causes or effects is a question for special consideration, but not now; *First*, That the Sunday School as an evolution has been contemporaneous with the decline of parental instruction and family worship. *Second*, That the function of teaching, as inherent in every theory of an ordained ministry, has largely been lost sight of.

THEORY.

When we study the present system, now so widely existing, as a means of religious influence upon children, we find that to a large extent it is controlled by principles quite distinct and divergent from those which have in all ages governed the Church of England, and, indeed, all branches of the Catholic Church, in regard to the light in which baptized children are to be viewed. We hold, with increasing ardor, the view which has been happily received in the present century, that in Baptism the child is made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. The other theory is that, whether baptized or not, the child cannot be deemed a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven until he has

experienced an emotional and conscious change called “conversion,” or “regeneration,” or “getting a new heart.” Evidently as either view is held, it will give character to the school. Under the former view, the idea of cultivating an implanted seed will dominate; under the latter, the idea of implanting the seed. The immediate aim is either to educate a mind in which Grace has begun its work, or to secure the inauguration of the work of Grace in the mind. Under the operation of one theory, the teacher will say to the pupil: “You are a child of God, and I am here to instruct you in the things pertaining to your Father's house, in His truth, His Word, His Church, His Sacraments, His spiritual gifts, and all these as leading unto perfection.” But under the other theory the teacher must say: “You are not a child of God, and I am here to implore you to give yourself up to Him, to believe in Him, to turn to Him, that you may become a member of His family.” It must not be presumed, however, that under the former theory there is any subservience of the imperious law of conversion. We hold to the necessity of conversion, but we do not identify conversion with regeneration. Regeneration is God's act in Baptism, and conversion is the continuous response of the regenerated heart. Conversion is the equivalent of repentance. As often as a child of God sins, he should repent. Repentance is turning to God, which is conversion; and hence conversion should be a daily act in his life. Instead of looking for conversion as the beginning of a Christian life, our teachers should look for it as the fruit of a Christian life already begun. Baptismal Grace, unless forfeited by wilful sin, inevitably leads on to continuous conversion.

These divergent theories determine the character of the means used. In one case these will be emotional; in the other educational. The “revival” atmosphere will be found enveloping the school in which children are regarded as now in a lost condition. In the other school a quieter tone will prevail, and the busy scene of spiritual activity will be better described as a “preparation for Confirmation.” Indeed, it is the latter which can justly claim to be the Sunday School, for, while stirring appeals, exciting music, and unctuous prayers may be wanting, there is a steady aim at instilling the spiritual truths of the Holy Scriptures by study of the text and by careful memorizing of the catechetical and symbolical summaries of the truths therein contained.

CRITICISM.

1. Our own Sunday Schools have been too much influenced by the false view of the Christian life to which we have referred. The truth held as a mere theory does not protect from error. But we believe the day is passing away in which the Church has held so timidly in practice the principles she has avowed in her formularies. *Laus Deo!*

2. The great trouble with the Sunday School is the small amount of time given to it. One hour of instruction per week is the maximum. Imagine one hour a week to arithmetic or geography! The English rubric shows a better state of things, for on Sundays not only, but on all Holy days were the children of the Parish to be sent to the Priest.

3. There is too little instruction. It is our's to inform the mind—to pour in the truth—to explain the Faith—to provide, in one word, for every child under our care, that he shall have good knowledge of the things which a Christian ought to know, believe, and practice to his soul's health. The writer once overheard a teacher in one of our largest Sunday Schools; he was addressing a class of more than twelve young men. A chapter of St. Paul, weighted with the deep things of God, was under consideration. The talk was sheer idiocy—that's the least that can be said. He wound up by saying; “Now, young men, if you want to be

happy, you must become Christians!” Not one ray of light did he cast on the simplest truth. Those splendid boys looked bored—so did this deponent.

4. By anticipation we have already indicated a further criticism. Too little time, too little instruction, instruction too *gruel-y*. A child partly trained, poorly trained, taught by one who needed to be taught, taught nothing in such a manner as to enable him to give an intelligent reason for anything, is summoned by a Superintendent, who is at his wit's-end to provide for a surplus of scholars, and she (that is usually the sex) is graduated out of her place as a very ignorant scholar (good girl as she is) into the place of a very, very ignorant teacher. It is a shame to inflict such an injury on the poor thing, and sometimes, with a display of sense which the Superintendent lacks, she sees how it is, and retires blushing and abashed.

5. Far too slight is the bond which binds the clergymen to the school. He is the Divinely-ordered and sent Teacher. He is specially set apart to represent the Great Teacher. He is, and will be, held to be responsible for the spiritual instruction of the children. It is a part of his vow, in which he promised to give faithful diligence to minister: 1st, the Doctrine; 2nd, the Sacraments, and, 3rd, the Discipline of Christ. The teaching stands first, because without it the Sacraments become of none effect. The Priest's lips keep knowledge, and for the young as well as the old. Is it not a gross corruption, and one that needs reforming—that which makes pulpit-preaching to exhaust the teaching function of the clergyman? Pulpit-preaching, which is seldom distinctly instructive in its character, which may be slangy, sentimental, essayish, sophomoric, sensational, but must not be doctrinal. To this complexion it has come at last! And now, in order to meet the demand, the pulpiter must spend himself on two sermons weekly, and have no time for “instruction.” The little misses must teach the children, and ignoramuses must expound Romans to the young men. It is all wrong—it is all wrong.

NEEDS.

1. More conscience on the part of the clergy. More courage, too. To feel that the Sunday School work is the best part of his duty, will make a Priest strong to resist the absurd demand for pulpit-preaching in excess.

2. More co-operation on the part of parents. A revival of home religion.

3. A system of normal training, whereby lay-helpers can be instructed (1) what to teach, and (2) how to teach it.

4. Text books of study which shall have point, force, and brightness. One plague Egypt did not suffer—the sentimental platitudes of modern Sunday School literature. O what stuff to give to minds that are as bright and strong and capable as are the minds of most children! There is a grand field here for some commanding genius—he has not yet appeared—who, with the clear brain of a theologian and the warm affection of the parent, shall give us a systematized expression of all the great truths so simply that the wayfaring man, though a fool need not err therein.

THE FUTURE.

It will all come right in time. Some monstrous evils have been cured and others will be. The Church of 1987 A. D., will not be as she is now. Old things that are not *de fide* nor essential will keep on passing away, fought for, one by one, by the excellent but not clearvisioned people who think the first virtue in religion is to keep things just as they had them when they were young (which, poor souls! they never do keep), fought for with less wisdom than zeal, and fought for in vain. The Church is never at a stand-still except when she stagnates. Life means progress, and the phenomena of revived power in our own commun-