

Children and Church Attendance.

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"If my children were able to attend but one service on Sunday, and the choice lay between the Church and the Sunday School, I would have no hesitation which to choose; I would take them to the Church and I would forego the Sunday School."

So said an able and efficient superintendent to me the other day as we walked a country road together. I replied heartily,

"I am glad to hear you say so, and all the more because you are a Sunday School superintendent and deeply interested in Sunday School work. I have known superintendents who considered the Church only as a sort of adjunct to the Sunday School, and would not hesitate for a moment to sacrifice the claims of the one to those of the other.

As we stood by his gate we talked over this matter, and found ourselves largely at one. The Sunday School has been a power of immeasurable importance, and he would be a very unobservant and unappreciative man who would for a moment underrate it. Sunday School teachers and superintendents who have given much thought and care and labour to it, and have seen its fruitage and rejoiced in it as the years have gone on, are in no danger of not understanding its value. But its influence on Church attendance is a matter which calls for careful consideration.

One may stand at the door of any church on a Sunday morning and watch the children troop forth from the school, and he will see only here and there one go into the Church. The most pass on their way to their homes, and clearly the Church service has not entered into their minds as a thing which in the least concerned them. It may be questioned whether some of them have much of an idea how the inside of the edifice really appears.

Now Church attendance is a matter largely of habit. But how or when can the habit be formed when systematically the child is trained to turn away from the Church doors? If one looks over almost any ordinary congregation on the Sabbath he will frequently be surprised to notice how few children are present. Some of us preachers are in the habit of saying something in our sermons to the little folks, but not infrequently we find that there are no little ones there to whom we can speak.

It might be a matter of surprise that, considering how almost universal attendance on Sunday School is, so comparatively few young people, when they have left it, are found in the Church. In the ordinary walks of life one will now-a-days rarely meet with a young man or a young woman who has not at some time been a member of a Sunday School, while at the same time he will find everywhere young people who rarely ever visit a Church. We think this would not be so had a different system been pursued and a different theory been held.

The Sunday School, in a very mistaken way, has been called "The Children's Church." This

is a vicious designation, and has a deal of harmful meaning in it. The Sunday School is no Church, and cannot take the place of the Church, and the fact that so comparatively few pass from one to the other, unless they become members of the Church while in the Sunday School, declares it. By much of, at least, silent training the children are taught that they have little to do with the Church, and it is not at all strange that they feel no interest in its services when they have grown too old to remain in the Sunday School.

The children should be taught that what is said to them, what the preacher preaches, is not indeed all of the Church service which claims their regard. Merely to be present, to engage in the worship of God, to sing, to pray, to hear the Scripture read, to mingle in these acts of devotion, are sufficient of themselves were there nothing else. The sermon is an accessory, the worship is the main thing. To have this firmly fixed in a child's mind is to have done an unspeakably important thing for his moral and religious training. What could be so valuable as to have inwrought with a child's nature the value, the duty, the privilege of divine worship. To be with a company who, on the Sabbath day, worship and praise the great God, to bow with them in prayer, to join with them in song, though no word of preacher should be comprehended, this should be made to stand out before a child's mind as beyond measure a thing to be sought after. But it is, we fear, under the present state of things, rarely made to appear, even by a glimpse, in our Sunday Schools.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly*.

ADVERSITY is the trial of principle. Without it a man hardly knows whether he is honest or not.

SOMETIMES a fog will settle over a vessel's deck and yet leave the topmast clear. Then a sailor goes up aloft and gets a look-out which the helmsman on the deck cannot get. So prayer sends the soul aloft—lifts it above the cloud in which our selfishness and egotism begot us, and gives us a chance to see which way to steer.—*Spurgeon*.

A DISCOVERY of intense interest to the Christian world has lately, it is claimed, been made. A Mr. Shapira found among the Arabs fifteen pieces of black sheepskin leather containing portions of the Book of Deuteronomy which date back nine hundred years before Christ. Mr. Shapira succeeded in procuring them, and now offers them to the British Museum for \$5,000,000. These MSS., if real, are of immense value, because they carry us back some hundreds of years farther than any known MSS. The Decalogue is, also, written upon them, and tallies very closely with the record in our present version. Of course it will take some time to prove the genuineness of these slips, but modern scholarship will soon satisfactorily settle the question of their reliability. We wait to hear the verdict of competent authorities.—*Canada Christian Advocate*.