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## INGDOM OF

Rev. John Pearson,  
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Heaven," frequently, indeed, on nearly every occasion, have reference to His visible Church on earth, and, because, when our Divine Lord and Saviour declares that His visible Church contains within it the young, we not only consider and rightly consider, His words to be a sufficient authority for admitting little children by baptism into the Church, but we also have the duty put before us with equal distinctness, that they are to be instructed in the principles of Christian faith and duty.

1. It always has appeared to me that there is only one way of looking upon Christian children, and that is the way which is so clearly indicated in the office for holy baptism and in the catechism. The child is brought to be baptized, and we make our prayers to God that he may the receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration; that is, that the sin of our first parents, "the original sin," which we so mysteriously inherit, and which is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam, may be forgiven to that child, that he may enjoy the everlasting benediction of heavenly washing, and may come to the everlasting kingdom promised by Christ our Lord, and "acknowledging," as we say we do in the Nicene Creed, "One baptism for the remission of sins," we cannot but regard the children who, like ourselves, were removed "from that state in which they were, viz., born in sin and the children of wrath," and made in their baptism "the children of grace, as a great trust, to be cared for by us and trained up for God." It is evident from the charge in the baptismal office, that this is the line of duty marked out for those who have the training of the young, both parents and sponsors. It is declared to be their duty, since "the child has promised by them, their sureties," to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve Him; it is declared to be their part and duty to see that "that infant be taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession he has made by them." I believe that the root of the great difficulty under which the Christian religion labours at the present time is, that parents and sponsors do not, and, in many cases, never even try to, discharge this duty which they have undertaken, and which, in the case of parents, rests upon them naturally. The very origin of Sunday Schools, one hundred years ago, was an acknowledgment of this fact; and, I fear, that the state of things which then existed continues to this day, for there are comparatively few parents, and fewer sponsors, who even attempt to teach their children the principles of Christian faith and Christian duty. I am old enough to remember when it was the custom, in families where there was an earnest desire to bring the children up "in the knowledge and fear of the Lord," for the father or the mother to assemble the children of the house on Sunday afternoon or evening and to instruct them in the catechism, and to read again one of the lessons which had been read in Church. But it is to be feared that this custom is hardly known, not common, in these days. Parents seem to fancy themselves relieved from all responsibility in this matter, if only they tell their children to put in an appearance at Sunday School; while, at the same time, the careful preparation of the lessons for the Sunday

School which the child ought to learn is, to parents, a matter of perfect indifference. You who are teachers are well aware of this fact from the utter want of any preparation, which is made plain to you in too many cases every Sunday afternoon.

However, we find these unhappy facts before us, and while deploring their existence, our present duty is to do the best we can under the circumstances. We have not created these circumstances which have grown up through years of neglect, and we are not personally responsible for them; but the whole body of the Church is responsible in her corporate capacity; and we also are personally responsible for doing our best, according to our opportunities and talents, in the matter of remedying the evil which exists through the neglect of parents and sponsors, but especially the neglect of parents.

2. Our business, then, it would appear, is to take up the duty at that point where it has been dropped by those who are the natural instructors of the children; and that point is, unhappily, near the very beginning of the Christian life; for I am not saying too much when I say that in too many cases the extent of a child's home religious teaching is, to repeat the Lord's Prayer, frequently without any intelligent appreciation of its meaning. To this may be added a general idea of right and wrong, and of doing to others as you would wish them to do to you. This is, of course, something to be thankful for, but it falls far short of what a Christian "ought to know and believe to his soul's health." It is to supply this deficiency that the Sunday School exists. And, therefore, it seems to me that we have to go back to "first principles." We have to teach fully, not only in the letter but in the spirit, "the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments." Other things may be interesting, for example, the depth of the river Jordan may be interesting; or the names of the Judges, or of the Kings of Israel may be interesting; or a story from a book or a newspaper may be interesting; but what we ought first and always to try to fix in the minds of children is the relation in which they stand to God, as being His creatures, redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, and with duties and responsibilities arising out of that relation, and with hopes beyond this life—in short, as being created immortal beings on their trial for eternity. They must be taught to believe in "God, the Father, who made them and all the world in God the Son, who redeemed them and all mankind, and in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies them and all the elect people of God." Nothing ought to be allowed to supersede this, because upon the grasp of this a child's future welfare, in this world and in the next, will largely depend.

Since God has given to us a revelation of what we ought to know and believe, as well as what we ought to do, we are as responsible to Him for our belief as well as our practice. There is a great fallacy underlying the pseudo-charitable saying, "that it is no matter what a man believes if only he tries to do what is right." The fallacy is, that God is indifferent whether men accept His revealed truth or not; in other words, that there is no such a thing as "truth." But surely this is wrong. Pilate indeed said, "What is truth?" But Pontius Pilate is no authority in Christian theology. There is such a thing as "truth" in Christian doctrine; and "the truth" is that which God has revealed to us, and that which, in all ages, and everywhere, has been carefully guarded and taught by His Church, which we are told is "the pillar and ground of the truth." Thus, we are taught that God "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in right-

eousness by that man whom He hath ordained"—even our Lord Jesus Christ. This doctrine of a future judgment, because with all that follows it, is to be believed and woven into the woof of a child's daily life. It is not to be set aside by any new views of "Eschatology." It is a "truth" upon which depend the most momentous issues both in time and eternity. It is not an open question; it is not a matter of opinion; it is a truth which is to be fixed in the mind, as a matter of the greatest practical importance revealed by God to man. And so are all the articles of the Creed. There is not one which can be spared, or which ought to be tampered with. Every doctrine contained in the Creed is necessary to be known and believed to our soul's health.

2. And with respect to the Lord's Prayer, there is involved in it the whole principle of worship, which in these days is too much lost sight of. On the first of the two occasions when our Lord gave this wonderful prayer to His disciples He said, "When ye pray say our Father;" on the other occasion He said, "When ye pray, pray after this manner." So that we are not only to use the Lord's Prayer, but in all other prayers the same principle of construction must exist; and it does so in all those most devout liturgical offices of the Catholic Church which have come down to us, whether in the Greek, or Latin, or Syriac, or English language. And that principle is, that the honour of God, and the glory of God, and the worship of God, come first; and the benefit of man, and the edification of man, whether temporal or spiritual, comes second.

3. And just as we must teach the doctrine of Christ contained in the Creed; and the true idea of Christian worship and devotion contained in the Lord's Prayer; so also we must carefully teach the great standard of Christian duty contained in the Ten Commandments, and make those whom we teach clearly understand that "right" is not that which commends itself to a man's conscience only, but that which is declared to be so by God. In other words, that there is a power external to a man which has a right to say to him what he shall and what he shall not do; and that power is God. Just as Pilate said, "What is truth?" meaning that "right" and "righteousness" are just those things in morals which commend themselves to a man's sense of fitness. It is against this false rule of morality that we must carefully guard those whom we teach.

These brethren together with the rest of the catechism, seem to me to be the basis of all this instruction to be given in our Sunday Schools. There should be a clear understanding of man's state by nature; of his redemption by the atonement made on the cross; of his adoption into the family of God at his baptism; of the covenant then entered into when God made him a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, and when he, by his parents and sponsors, undertook to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh—to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and to keep God's holy will and commandments; of his duty to God and his neighbour contained in the Ten Commandments; of the Fatherhood of God and the glory of God, and the need of God's grace contained in the Lord's Prayer; and of the doctrine of his sacramental union with God, beginning at his baptism, and continually sustained by communion with Him in that other great Sacrament in which "we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood; when we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; when we are one with Christ and Christ with us." If this were done, and done patiently