

parishes it may be found well to be chary about admission to this higher grade. A nucleus of capable and persevering workers, recognized as such by an authority outside the parish, must tend to raise the level of the rest, and to give outsiders a higher conception of the office. It may do something to draw into the work those able and vigorous young men who do not at present get fired with the wish to teach because the whole arrangement appears too slack. Raise your standard and you will increase the number and the quality of your workers. Surely, too, it is something for a commencing teacher to have an upward move before him, and an approval to win. Again, the solemn admission before teachers and scholars must be a constant reminder to both of the high nature of the office.

I have not attempted in this paper to touch upon the training of teachers, and I shall listen with great interest to any suggestions that may be made as to methods of improving upon our preparation meetings, training lessons, and general private intercourse.

II.

DR. G. P. GOLDSMITH thought that if we could do as we wished, we should place the commencement of the preparation very far back in a young person's life; should preferably select our candidate from a truly Christian home; and should wish that the earliest religious impressions should have been learnt at the mother's knee, and that the first attempts at articulate utterance should have been to lisp the ever-blessed Name. For among the initial qualifications necessary, earnest personal piety was absolutely essential.

A great *desideratum* would be classes of those desirous to become teachers, conducted by a clergyman or some experienced teacher selected by him. These classes might meet for a period, say, of three months, and the young people might receive instruction in such subjects as Biblical archaeology, ancient history and geography, the manners and customs of Oriental lands illustrative of the Holy Scriptures, ecclesiastical history, and the constitution of the Church, together with more personal dealing as regarded their own spiritual life and mutual encouragement in seeking by earnest prayer and devout use of the other means of grace, increase in holiness, and the aid of the Holy Spirit for the work they were about to undertake.

A skilful conductor of such classes as these would give object lessons in the teaching and management of a Sunday-school class; he would give specimens of both the didactic and interrogatory methods; he would point out the advantages of the catechetical mode of eliciting from the children what they already knew, and of making this a basis of further instruction. He would take care to remind intending teachers of the serious mistakes arising from ignorance or forgetfulness of child-nature, and from failing to adapt their teaching to the varying ages and standards of knowledge attained. In towns such training classes might be composed of candidates from several neighbouring churches, and even in many instances in rural districts occasional meetings might be arranged for young teachers from contiguous parishes.

Where the formation of these classes might be found impossible the best substitute was the careful study of the works of such masters of the teacher's art as Mr. Palmer, of the Church Sunday School Institute, and Mr. Groser, of the Sunday School Union, combined with such practical experience as might be gained by accompanying at his work the ablest teacher accessible, and observation of his method while engaged with his class. The recognition of Sunday-school teachers might be regarded from two points of view—first, the general estimation in which this good work should be held by the Christian world at large, and, secondly, the official regard that might be paid the workers

by ecclesiastical authorities. The more the work of the teachers was understood the more it would be appreciated, and the higher would be the value attached to their services. Would it not be possible to constitute a new order of Sunday-school teachers, publicly and officially recognized as accredited ministers of the Church, and taking their place among our other officers in our spiritual machinery? Would not such a recognition not only greatly encourage these workers; but, in raising their tone and *status*, signally improve the quality of their work? After a certain period of probation satisfactorily passed through, there might be a public admission to such an order, with the presentation of a certificate or badge, at an impressive service. Perhaps the Bishop himself might find it practicable, after Confirmation services, to admit candidates well approved and presented by their clergy, and by a few kind fatherly words, to deepen the sense of responsibility, as well as that of glad thankfulness for the high honour of being called to fill even the lowest place among those who humbly attempted to carry out the Master's injunction, "Feed My lambs."

Paper read at the Exeter Church Congress.

LENT AND RELIGION.

(From the North Dakota Churchman.)

The demand of this solemn season is first, last and always for reality in our religion; and the call to us is any and every call which can help us towards that noble goal. The only enduring reality in religion is likeness to God's ideals of what we should be; and the only real religiousness is the faithful endeavor which draws us towards that, even if over the coals of grief and trouble.

"A religion which does not take hold of the life that now is," says Beecher, "is like a cloud that does not rain. A cloud may roll in grandeur, but if it does not rain it is of little account, so far as utility is concerned. And religion is to the soul what health is to the body—it is the right ordering of all the faculties. By religion I mean perfected manhood, the quickening of the soul by the influence of the divine Spirit."

What is your life? You cannot answer that question in any definite forms of words. You can run around the question, and say life is action, feeling, motion, sensation, sleeping. But that is like saying that the fruit of a tree is the life of a tree. A tree is made up of many members, and differing substances apparently. The sap is not the life. Yet it must duly course through the woody fibre that there may continue to be life. So religion does not consist of ordinance, and the spiritual life does not consist in actions. The ordinances are the methods through which we disclose our religiousness; and our actions are the results, the fruits of our religion, and prove what sort of religiousness we have, but they are not religion.

When you undertake to define religion in set phrases it is surrounded with difficulty, because religion escapes the shackles that man, fond of distinct definitions, is always trying to put upon it; man would put religion into the straight jacket of his own understanding. That is the reason why there are so many schools of thought in the Church, all based mainly on non-essentials. That is the reason why Christendom has been so sadly divided. Men want to analyze religion too closely. They would in the past lay down the exact law and handcuff every element or abolish every view that did not coincide with their notions of theology. This mania is now passing away; let us be duly thankful. We have it to thank for all the St. Bartholomew and Autos da Fe in man's cruel story.

A great many definitions of religion can be given, all, or most of which, serve to illustrate

some single view thereof. Now the reason of this mysteriousness of religion is just the same as the reason for the mysteriousness of life. For life is to the body precisely what religion is to the soul. And when you can thoroughly analyze and describe the one, I for one am quite willing that you shall lay down absolute ultimatums upon the other. But religion being the life of the soul should and does perpetually call us to the consideration of the soul's needs and the soul's God. Faith is simply stated, the patriotism of eternity, which perpetually bids us look forward to and adorn ourselves for that citizenship in Heaven of which St. Paul speaks.

Religion is like the firmament; the more it is examined the greater the number of stars which disclose themselves; like the sea, the more you sail upon it the more immense it seems, and the further you stay apart from it the less account or interest it has for you. Like pure gold, the more it is tried in the furnace the more it is purified and perfected. Religion is not merely to taste sweet things, but as Carlyle says in his rough way, "To do noble and true things and to vindicate oneself under God's Heavens as a God-made man."

Religion is simply the right living of faithful believing. Religion should not be used as caulking, something to stuff into the cracks and crevices of a man's life, but it should be regarded and used as the very warp and woof of life. Religion is living in the hand of God, and its hands are full of righteousness.

Surely if one comes at all to appreciate these thoughts he must with ease come up also to the appreciation of the meaning and helpfulness to him in particular of a season like this of Lent, which stands to the year in the same relation that Sunday does to the week. It is here because it is consecrated of man as the result of centuries of experience as a necessity in the life of the soul, and ordained of God when He made man a Spiritual being.

It is then either evidence of levity in the soul, or obstinate mistake of the mind, when one stands aside and says—"I do not believe in Lent. It is of no use for me." Everything and every day that can make your religiousness more real, and you more real in your religion, is a thing, or a day, that you cannot possibly do without save to your own loss and discomfort somewhere and sometime in your life. Every Lord's Day is an open invitation to us to come apart from earthiness and rest awhile. Some day that invitation will come to you and me in a very imperative way, in an absolute way not to be denied.

"Did you expect me?" "No!" was the reply. "Suppose I had been death?" said the physician to a patient. Now one of the chief objects of Lent is to make this whole deep and wonderful mystery of life and death real to us. Everything which calls us to religiousness, and so calls us to God, is a plea for us and with us to come to the level of our noblest capacity, and rise to the marvellous dignity of man as shown in eternal hope. And when we consider how we cling to the passing trumperies and vanities of a brief and butterfly life is it any wonder that Christ's Church should be unwilling to leave a matter of such great importance solely to the caprice of her children? Would she not be the rather grievously to be blamed if she did not strenuously insist to call us by just such seasons of rest and meditation to make at least brief excursions along the road of our certain destination. To the Christian death is the funeral of all his sorrows.

And again we are in this season diligently reminded not only of the mysteries of death and life, we are also reminded of that strange mystery, *death in life*. This fact of men who are spiritually dead, yet walking about just as if they were really alive is one of the most for-