

who could carry arms must go over Jordan to aid their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. They knew it would not do for them to leave the children unprotected, and what to do with them in the circumstances was a serious question. They finally came to this conclusion: "Our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land."

What will we do with the children? is a question that is always turning up. Fathers and mothers have often wept over it and carried it on benedict knees to a throne of grace. Sabbath school conventions and institutes, ministers and church courts, boards of education and State Legislatures have had it before them again and again as a subject for grave consideration, and the answers that have been given to it are as varied as the circumstances which call the question up. But where will we find a more suggestive answer than this one given by the men of Reuben and Gad: "Let the little ones dwell in the fenced cities." The cities in which the children are kept ought to be "fenced" or rather "walled" cities.

The home should be a fenced city. Around it should be the strong wall of parental authority—a wall so real, so good, so strong that when it is tried by those within or by those without it will stand the test. It is not necessary to have it unsightly and forbidding. No, let every stone in the wall from the top to the bottom be covered over with the flowers and fruits of an honest, undoubted affection. Let prayer and faith bind stone to stone with the power and presence and blessing of God. Within such a walled city the children should dwell. Getting out from behind the home walls, breaking away from the wholesome restraints of parental authority too soon, has resulted in the ruin of thousands. These walls should not only keep the little ones in, but they should keep the "inhabitants of the land" out. These foes come sometimes as "friends of the family," sometimes as playmates, sometimes in the shape of books, papers and magazines, and sometimes in the garb of fashion. Oh, parents, keep the door closed against folly and sin. By the love ye bear to these young immortals, by the awful dangers to which they are exposed, do your very best by God's help to have your home and theirs walled on every side, and covered over by the sheltering shield of an almighty Saviour.

So too, the school should be fenced—the public school and the Sabbath school. The first should be fenced or walled by the State, and the second by the Church. Around the great public school system should be a good strong wall of common law, so good and so strong that opposers could not get their fingers in to meddle with it. We thought we had the wall strong enough, but it seems we have been mistaken. It is natural for Rome to be trying to take care of her own interests, but we must give her to understand that we have rights that must and shall be preserved.

The walls round about the Sabbath school are not strong enough. It is the only fenced city that many of the little ones know anything about. The inhabitants of the land in many cases break through and snatch away the precious souls which Christian men and women are trying to save. By God's help the walls of truth, love, faith and prayer must be made higher and firmer.

The Church should be a fenced city for the little ones to dwell in. It is heartrending to see the world reaching into the sacred enclosure and taking the young captive at will. Let the house of God be made an attractive place for them. Let them be brought to it early in life, and let them have a place of their own in the family pew. Let those who are older show their appreciation of it by dwelling within it themselves, and above all let the prayer of all be "Build Thou the walls of our Jerusalem."

Let us watch carefully the walls—the walls about the home, the school and the Church. Instead of weakening or lowering them, let us aim at making them higher and stronger, so that our precious little ones may be safe. Let us teach them early in life their need of the Saviour, and labour to have them "in Christ." With Him for a habitation for ourselves and for them, all will be well. None shall be able to pluck the lambs out of His bosom. Then when we are called to go over Jordan with our brethren, we can leave the little ones behind us with the confident hope of seeing them again.—*Central Presbyterian.*

THE Christian is not one who looks up from earth to heaven, but one who looks down from heaven to earth.—*Lady Powerscourt.*

### INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANS.

Never have there been such wide spread opportunities for Christian usefulness as at present. Christians need scarcely ask, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" for the work lies all around, and presses upon them and claims their active zeal. Sad it is that so many are found negligent or forgetful of their individual responsibility to be co-labourers in hastening on the triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom. The whole world is now the gospel field, and already "white to the harvest." India and Japan, the islands of the South Seas and of the far off Western Pacific, are having the gospel preached to them, and Ethiopia and the partially explored African continent stretch forth their hands for the Christian labourer. Yet many, even in our own Zion, are ignorant of the fact that thousands all over these heathen lands have heard the Word of Life and rejoice in a risen Saviour, and, as gleams of light shining in dark places, show so sadly the millions who are passing from time to eternity in worse than Egyptian bondage, because the coffers of the Lord's house are not overflowing with the free-will offerings of every individual Christian.

Our home work suffers, too, from the lack of this individual responsibility. How many waste places might "bloom and blossom as the rose," if in sparsely settled parts of our country, individual Christians would gather themselves weekly in the Sabbath school and prayer meeting! God would soon bless such efforts by sending them an under shepherd.

Even in our towns and cities with their beautiful churches and softly cushioned seats, where the Pauls and Apolloses in the pulpit tempt the passers by how many professing Christians are satisfied to be in their places only on pleasant Sabbath mornings. How many vacant seats, at the evening service and prayer meetings, to pain the heart of the faithful minister, instead of each and every professor being Aarons and Hurs to hold up the hands of the pastor in his labourious work!

Is not this a true picture of too many in all the churches of this Christian land? What is the secret of this sad apathy? Is it not found in the individual inner life? Christian reader, do you appreciate the high privileges of your calling? Your Christian life is called a race, and you are enjoined to "so run that you may obtain;" "to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." You are called to be a soldier of Christ, and to "gird yourself with all the panoply of the gospel armour" and then "fight the good fight of faith." The Saviour says to you, "Go, work in my vineyard." Will you go, or leave others to do the work? Christ is King in Zion. He has "girded on his sword, and in His glory and His majesty he rides prosperously." Would you, Christian reader, share the triumphs of Christ's kingdom? Then work; and whether ten talents, or five talents, or only one talent have been committed to you, let not your Lord, when he comes, find yours laid away in a napkin. Would you wear an incorruptible crown, and shine as the stars for ever and ever? Then labour in faith to "turn many to righteousness." It is the grandest work that human hands can do; and the reward is on high.—*Christian Observer.*

### "TWENTY MINUTES FOR SERMONS."

The recent announcement by a Chicago preacher, that henceforth he shall take but twenty minutes for sermons, has a sound like the notice given by express train conductors at certain stopping places along the route "twenty minutes for refreshments," and the motive which has to do with fixing the limit in both cases seems very much of a piece; namely, to give as short a time as possible to a necessary but rather irksome duty, which at best is an interference with one's plans, and must be done up with despatch. In connection with the twenty-minute sermons in this case, we are informed, the other services are not to be abridged. The organist will take his usual indulgence at his key-board; the choir will sing to their uttermost, and the long prayer will continue long. Expenses (in time) must be cut down, and a beginning is to be made with the sermon. Such a considerate attention to the preferences of the average church-goer is expected, no doubt, to stimulate church-going; and this ecclesiastical conductor who is henceforth going to compel his people to stop only "twenty minutes for

sermons" evidently counts upon a large increase of passengers.

A good sermon may be preached in twenty minutes, but that does not justify the use of any such device as this to attract men to church. We do not know how the exact announcement may have sounded under what may have been peculiar circumstances, but, judged abstractly, the fisher of men who baits his hook with "twenty minute sermons" will next be advertising two minute prayer. Such expedients are undignified, unmanly, unbecoming. They tend to lower the name of religion, to cheapen the instrumentalities of the church, to put the Gospel before the world in the attitude of a beggar instead of the messenger of it. Let a minister preach twenty minute sermons if he wants to and can, but not attempt to make capital out of the practice by advertising it.

It is very doubtful whether this preacher, whose name we do not even know, will succeed in making his sermons short by confining them within twenty minutes. Some sermons would be long even at twenty minutes, while others are short even at an hour. Some subjects demand longer treatment than others; some occasions allow it, and for a preacher to measure out his "meat" in due season "in portions of uniform size, is sometimes to over feed his flock and sometimes to starve them." Old Dr. Emmons used to say "No conversions after the half hour," and he rigidly regulated the length of his famous theological essays called sermons according to this maxim, but we venture the opinion that a good many conversions have attended the last part of sermons which have stretched a good deal beyond the half hour. We know of a minister who, when he sits down to the composition of a sermon, takes so many sheets of paper no matter what the subject and no matter what the occasion, and writes till he has filled them out. Then his sermon is done. Nothing could be more fatal to the best preaching than any such mechanical ways of sermon measuring. Not the yardstick, nor the hour glass, should be the preacher's guide, but common sense. When his sermon's length begins to exceed its breadth and its depth, then it is getting too long, and it is time for him to put a stop to it.

A good motto for preachers is, Stop when you have finished. It is one also which applies to editorial writers.

Enough said. *Christian Union.*

### MANY WAYS OF DENYING CHRIST.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that there can be no apostasy from Christ where we are not absolutely called on to deny His name, or to burn incense to an idol. We deny our Lord whenever, like that Demas, we, through love of this present world, forsake the course of duty which Christ has plainly pointed out to us. We deny our Lord whenever we lend the sanction of our countenance, our praise, or even our silence, to measures or opinions which may be popular and fashionable, but which we ourselves believe to be sinful in themselves or tending to sin. We deny our Lord whenever we forsake a good man in affliction and refuse to give countenance, encouragement and support to those who, for God's sake and for the faithful discharge of their duty, are exposed to persecution and slander.—*Bishop Heber.*

THE humble man, though surrounded with the scorn and reproach of the world, is still in peace, for the stability of his peace resteth not upon the world, but upon God.—*Thomas A' Kempis.*

A THANKFUL spirit has always fresh matter for thankfulness. To praise God for the past is the sure way to secure mercies for the future. Prayer and praise live or die together.—*Romaine.*

SOFT words do more than hard speeches; as the sunbeam without any noise will make the traveller throw off his coat, which all the blustering wind could not do, but make him only bind it closer to him.

MANY a one is worn out in body, embarrassed financially, and discouraged in spirit, because he thought he could find another path than that which he felt persuaded the Lord wished him to take.

THERE may be furlough from our customary work; there can never be any lawful vacation from doing good. There may be a change of place and scene and fellowship; there must be none in the spirit of self-sacrificing beneficence.—*A. L. Stone, D.D.*