

ADDRESS OF THE BEST MANS OF
SECURING THE GREAT END OF
SABBATH SCHOOL INSTRUCTION.

At the recent Conference, with special reference to Sabbath School work, called by the Presbytery of Toronto, the Nov. B. Wallace introduced the subject by the following address:—

The great ultimate end of Sabbath School instruction, as of all instruction in connection with the Church of God, is the salvation of souls. I think it will be generally admitted that the Sabbath School is a part of the machinery of the Christian Church for the religious training of the young. Whether we hold with most Presbyterians, and as our Synod several times declared, that the Sabbath School should be under the care of the Church, or that it should be managed as a separate organization, at least of Christian origin, it is not the great end of Sabbath School instruction is to unfold the way of salvation before the minds of the scholars, and to do all that human instrumentality can do, to lead them to receive by faith the Gospel message of pardon and reconciliation to God through the atonement of His beloved Son.

This is the great end God had in view in setting up His Church in our world, and in giving us His Holy Word to make known His saving truth to all nations. This is the end for which the Son of God was manifested in human nature, and for which He hid down His life, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

The great end, then, that we should have in view in all religious instruction, is the promotion of the divine glory in the conversion of sinners, and in the upbuilding of believers in all the graces of the Holy Spirit, and thus their ultimate salvation.

Now we are to consider what are the best means to attain this end? To answer this question in all its aspects would lead us into a very wide field, for by it we are reminded that man has physical, as well as an intellectual, moral, and religious nature. But we must limit our remarks to certain aspects of this subject.

We should not be satisfied with merely well-meant, but often very inefficient, efforts to do good in any department of Church labor, far less in one that has already yielded far less than its due, and which is capable, if properly managed, of yielding yet more abundant fruit to the divine glory, and the great joy, progress and prosperity of the Church of God.

If we could lift the veil that conceals the unseen world, and behold the vast number that have already been gathered into the Kingdom of the Sabbath School enterprise of the last year, we should be greatly cheered in prosecuting this work with fresh ardor, in our Master's name and strength; yet our hearts would no longer hang down, nor our efforts relax in this noble enterprise, by which thousands of souls have been saved, and hundreds of ministers of the Gospel and other Christ workers have received their first lessons as labourers in the Lord's vineyard. Even now, Sabbath School teachers are, at times, cheered by proofs of the success of their efforts to advance the kingdom of their Redeemer. About thirty years ago a Sabbath School teacher happened to be present at the celebration of a young minister, in a village, now a town of Canada. He heard the young candidate describe his Christian experience; how he had attended a Sabbath School, and had often grieved his teacher by his waywardness. But his devoted teacher and parents, till he led him to the Saviour's feet; and he was made partaker of the benefits of Sabbath School instruction. This teacher marked his features well, and beheld before him one of his former pupils, and was delighted by seeing him entering upon such a path of usefulness in the Lord's service.

It is computed that there are now 8,000,000 Sabbath School scholars, with 860,000 teachers in Great Britain; and 4,000,000 scholars and 600,000 teachers in the United States, besides probably 4,000,000 scholars, and 800,000 teachers in the Dominion of Canada. Now this vast machinery is fitted to accomplish a great work for the divine glory and the enlargement of Zion's boundaries, and the best and most efficient means has been adopted.

But we must not be lulled by the complaints on all hands, made by the experienced Sabbath-school workers, that the results are not at all what might be expected from such an extensive machinery, and a loud call is made for greater efficiency in the management of the Sabbath School institution, and more faith, skill, diligence, constancy and devotion, on the part of those who administer it.

The first thing requisite is to choose a good Superintendent. He should be not only a man of living piety, a man who knows and loves the Saviour, who daily walks with God in a life becoming the Gospel, but he should also have a good report among them that are without. He should be a man whom the world admits to be a Christian in business, more eager for profits than

honouring or serving God, or saving souls. He should be prudent and judicious, but above all kindly and loving in his disposition, and one that takes delight in the society of young people. They are naturally drawn by his initiative and captivation of qualities that they like, and unless the superintendent has the magnetic power of attracting the young, he will not succeed well in his work. To should not, as a general rule, be too young. Yet it is far better to have a superintendent of young people, and one who is willing to learn, and zealous for the honour of God, and whose soul longs to lead the young to Christ, than a cold, formal person—however respectable his standing or knowledge. What is requisite in a superintendent, and in a minister, is to be a man full of faith and love. Holy Ghost, and is not a man who ministers care, for any number of years, amputated their own souls, where they can do so in a very desirable way.

2. Having chosen the best man you can as superintendent, the next thing is to select the best teachers you can obtain. English writers such as Dr. Dinkirk of Edinburgh, and James Wells, of Glasgow, have noticed the readiness of the leading men of the United States to engage in the Sabbath School work. Statesmen, bankers, leading merchants, and lawyers, esteem it essential to the welfare of the country, to lead the youth, both native and foreign origin, to be imbued with the principles of Christianity.

This is indeed one of the chief elements of their success as a nation. Lively would it be for our New Dominion if leading men of ability, tact and earnestness, would make Sabbath school teaching a specialty as in the United States. Our leading business men, as well as the Elders and other officers, should be interested in the school, and esteem it an honour and a duty to engage in so glorious a work. As a general rule teachers should be members of the Church;—that is persons who have at least made a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,—who can speak from personal experience of the grace of God, and the preciousness of His interest in Jesus, and His love to those who are converted to Him. Well would it be for the Christian Church, if all her numbers were truly converted persons—who would themselves upon God's altar, as by His demand for workers. "How are we, said us."

Yet we are not always able to get such teachers. I would not decline the services of serious persons, willing to be useful, although they have not yet been constrained by love to Christ to join themselves to His Church.

I believe that the effort to impart instruction has led many seriously to consider their own position and to ask why they had not yet given themselves to Christ and His Church. If they are truly serious persons—and no others should be employed in the Sabbath school without securing the need of something more than a merely decent moral character. The exercises of the School and the questions put by the superintendent should soon lead them to accept of Christ as their ownaviour—in order that they may be honored to place the Lamb of God upon their hearts as their Saviour's care. Robert Harkes was converted as the result of his effort to do good. He commenced his Sabbath school scheme not as a converted man, but simply as a lover of children and a friend of social order. But he heard one of his scholars, read the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah, and the words of the prophet's grand old prayer, and he felt that a strange thrill ran through his soul and he loved before the "Man of Sorrows." Still, in selecting Sabbath School teachers, this should be the rule to choose persons of intelligence, piety, and of noble and loving hearts. These persons are likely to attract children, and to give answers, not to repel them by their penial, cold selfish spirit, that seeks honour from man, and not the greatest honour possible for man, to be co-workers with God.

3. The teacher's commission. God in His infinite wisdom has instituted the family in order to secure the highest welfare of children for time and eternity. The primary duty of training children is thus laid upon the parents, and it is evident from the Word of God, Gen. vii. 7. xiii. 17-19. Dent. v. 6-8. Prov. xvi. 1. Eph. vi. 4 that the parent is held responsible for the right up-bringing of his own children for God and for heaven. There is good cause for this divine arrangement. Parents are not only held responsible for their children, but more interested in their welfare; and being more constantly with them in their earlier years, they have better opportunities than others to bring them up aright. They should also have more influence over them as they have done more for them than any others. God has thus bound parents to their children by the clearest and most indissoluble ties, in order that parents may write upon the tablets of their young and tender hearts, lessons of heavenly wisdom. And it may be that if all parents fully and faithfully discharged their duties, there would be no need for an intervening link, between the family and the

Church, which is in some respects the Christian family on a larger scale. Apart altogether from the neglect of parents, we believe the Sabbath school to be unnecessary, or at least inoperative, in the present age, unless it can mingle early and extensively with other, and especially because of the advantages, in some aspects, of an organized class or school over family instruction. But as many parents do not train their children, the Sunday school was instituted to do the work of such parents, and in general an auxiliary to the family in the instruction and training of the young. The principle of Sabbath schools, I believe, authorized in the great commission, "Go teach all nations," in the special command of Christ to His Church, "Feed my Lambs," and in the example of the Saviour Himself who showed such a deep interest in children, and said "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." To some extent the special instruction of the young, by the Christian Church, existed from the beginning, and earnest ministers of Christ in Scotland and in England, occasionally gathered the children together for instruction in divine truths.

But to Robert Harkes is due the honor of organizing in 1781, Sunday schools into a system, which has spread throughout almost all Christian lands. The S. School is properly the Church of Christ, fulfilling her commission and doing her appropriate work in that department of it, the instruction and training of the young, in the way that experience has shown to be most effectual to undertake the work devolving on her. The Sunday school teacher is thus an assistant to both parents and pastors, in the training of the young of the flock, for their future place in the Christian Church; and the Sabbath school teacher should be viewed as the nursery agent of the Church.

Many receive their first impressions in a Sabbath school, and it has been declared that the greatest number of British missionaries have been converted by its agency. It is held by those who have given much attention to this subject that the majority of those converted are converted in only life. Arnot, of Edinburgh, says:—"There are many converted old men, but not many old converted men." We wish to give a direction to a stream, you must begin at its source, but after it has run and increased a channel for itself, and increased its volume by many tributary streams, it is beyond the power of man to prescribe the channel in which it shall run. It is true the Almighty can turn the course of a river, and has so done in the case of the Red Sea, but the ordinary course of the river that is in his power. His wonted way is to give them their final direction ere they have run far, or cut their channel deep. God has also given special promises to them that seek Him early. We have examples in Scripture of those that were justified from the womb. Our Lord says, "I thank Thee, O Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Out of the mouths of babes, or young children converted, He ordains praise to the honour of His own grace and love. Many a man, however actually converted, as that of Phileas, described by the great President Edwards. He was converted at four years of age, and lived 60 years after, giving evidence that he had then experienced a change of heart. Many similar cases have been related by McChesney and other servants of God. We should desire that all parents, and especially the converts of the young, if they have true faith, and used appropriate means, should be more frequently cheered by such cases.

The Church should have a firm footing in the child's susceptibility of converting grace, and should aid and encourage Sabbath School teachers and parents in their efforts to attain this end. We should ever seek prayerfully and lovingly to sow the seed of divine truth in the hearts of the young, expecting it to bear fruit in their conversion and salvation in a long time, it will sprout and blossom when the Holy Spirit descends in copious showers of blessing. Naturalists have observed that the seeds that have long shined the ground now are the trees and plants which have lately before been seen there, now spring up in the soil. So when the thorn-jungl of worldly cares and evil desires have been cut down by the axe of divine judgment, then the "incomparable seed" of the precious truth of the Gospel, sown by Christ to those who have been well instructed, than those who have been neglected in their youth. Parents and teachers, even as pastors, may have to wait, as well as teach, in faith; but they should look up for the fulfillment of the promise, "My word shall not return to me void." Sabbath school teachers who have laboured in this spirit have often been cheered by long and honoured and loving instruments of blessing to Christ several, and in some cases all, or nearly all of the children of their care.

The Sabbath School teacher's motto should be "Myself and my class for Jesus."

When we consider the tendency of parents in our day to neglect the instruction of their children, we may well admire the wisdom of God in raising up the Sabbath School to counteract this tendency and to meet the wants of the age. This institution seems especially designed for our exalted times. What would be the opinion of the world in our day, if the Sabbath School? It has largely accomplished the purpose for which it was called into existence, for it has supplied, in part at least, the place of parents who have neglected their children.

4. The Teacher's model. In order to be successful the teacher must live a life devoted to the service of Christ. The young are also observers of character and conduct, and they cannot be influenced for good by those who live for self, the world, or sin, by drinking, smoking, worldly or gay persons, or by those who are principally more for earthly riches and honours, than for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In order to be owned in this world they must, like Robert Harkes, have a passion for doing good. They should also set before them as their model those who have been most devoted to Sabbath School work, and most successful in it. Wendell Phillips is the model of all fathers, of those who have been successful in the department of human life. Aristotle the Grecian hero formed the character of Alexander the Great, Luther, Calvin, and Knox breathed their spirit into the churches of the Reformation. Sabbath School teachers have also worthy examples to guide them in their noble enterprise. Men like Ralph Waldo, Pardee, and Bolton of New York, and many others, who have conferred great blessing on their race. Above all, teachers should set Christ before them as their great example. They should study after His character, and in a mode of dealing with the various classes, and classes that came before Him, and thus learn how to adapt their efforts to the good to the character and circumstances of those whom they seek to benefit.

5. The teacher's knowledge. Teachers ought to be well acquainted with the Scriptures. Their history, biography, and prophecies, precepts, doctrines and promises ought to be familiar to them in their household words. They cannot be good teachers who are not. They should be well equipped with a knowledge of the truth. In order to give divine teaching, without which other knowledge will be of little value, we must live up to our present knowledge and convictions of what is duty, for our work is to sow the seed of truth. He that doth the will of God shall never be deficient in what he is to do of God. Teachers should use "Crosby's Concordance," to compare Scripture with Scripture. This is the readiest way to learn mind the truth of the Spirit in the Word, and the analogy of the Scriptures. The teacher should understand the meaning of the various parts of the system of divine truth. He should also admit that the Shorter Catechism is the best short compendium of systematic theology ever drawn up. The naturalist does not find his specimens systematically drawn up in the field of nature, but gathers and classifies them, and thus secures a more and more profitable to study them.

The teacher should be familiar with Eastern manners and customs, natural history and geography. He should consult some plain commentary, such as James' Notes, Kitt's Pictorial or Illustrated Bible; also books of reference, such as Angus' Bible Hand-Book, Brown's Biblical Antiquities, and some good Bible history, as that of the American Tract Society, Kitt's or Hill's Letter, Fairbairn's Imperial Bible Library. There should be a teacher's library in every Sunday School, lists of books suitable for such can be found in Pardee's "Index," or Stead's "Teacher in the Sunday School." And works such as these, and the Sabbath School Treasury, should be read by every teacher, to learn the views of those who have had the widest experience, and to ascertain the best methods for applying their knowledge in the most efficient manner.

6. The Teacher's Training-Class. Besides the earnest private study of works designed to unfold and apply the great truths of divine truth—it is of very great importance, that the teacher should have a weekly meeting for prayer, and study of the best methods of teaching, and a reference on the general interests of the Sabbath school. During my own I organized this privilege. In 1839, 1840, and 41, I attended the teachers' weekly meetings in connection with St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, and Hamilton, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Alexander Gale. The system there followed was Gall's admirable "Lesson System," which is still spoken of in the highest terms by Pardee, one of the most successful Sabbath school men of the age.

We took up the lesson for the following: Sabbath, after having studied it in private. Mr. Gale of Edinburgh presided, the teacher forming his class for the time, and he put such questions to us on the lesson, as we were expected to put to the children the following Sabbath, and the practical lessons were

also drawn from it. We were thus enabled to master the subject and were prepared to open up its import, as we could not otherwise have done. Then in our monthly meeting, after going through the lesson, we conversed together about the state of the school, compared notes, and after we were attending to the visitation, we conversed at their houses, especially whether we were looking after absentees, whether any scholars should be advanced to a higher class, about new scholars, how our pupils were getting on, if there were any difficulties, and how to remove them. The weekly meeting, besides fitting us better for teaching, bound us together as a band of brothers and sisters in the Lord's work, and greatly increased our interest in it. After thirty years I look back with deepest interest on the general meetings, and our blessed meetings. But in our Sabbath School meetings, the most excellent Sabbath school workers, strongly advise all that care, to attend Sabbath school institutes, or to attend Sabbath school colleges, where some of the ablest Sunday school men give lectures and model lessons in various departments. In Britain a regular course of two or three years is usually given to the evidences of Christianity, Jewish antiquities, systematic theology, Bible interpretation and illustration, and the best methods of teaching and training the young. Normal and model schools are thought necessary, for properly training secular teachers for their work, and equally if not more necessary, in the preparation of Sabbath school teachers, who excel in the far more important work of leading the children in the way to heaven.

7. How to gather scholars to the school.—In 1838 the Presbyterian Sabbath school, Hamilton, numbered sixty, but the teacher, desiring to enlarge the school, and to draw scholars from the town and they went from house to house, and asked whether there were any children not attending a school. If there were, we told them that we would be happy to see them at our school, describing our method. In a short time we doubled the school, so that in about three years we had secured 250 scholars. Since then these labours were continued 1200 in four Presbyterian schools. A method which some of us followed at Hamilton and Kingston was, when going through the streets on Sabbath and meeting boys playing, to reason kindly with them about not acting so on the Lord's day, and to invite them to attend the school. We also visited them to the Sabbath school, and at the same time sought to them of the love of Christ towards us, and His doctrine for our salvation. A gentleman once came suddenly upon boys playing marbles. He put his hand upon one before he could escape and spoke kindly to him about how to get together upon his marbles, and they have gained his confidence, told him of higher happiness to be found in the service of Christ and got him to attend the Sabbath School, and thus led him to knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

8. Having well equipped the teachers, we now follow to their work. When the hour arrives the superintendent should call the school to order by a small bell, and will till all are quiet, then he should give out some simple, stirring, evangelical hymn, such as Bateman's or Wilson's hymns, to be followed by a short prayer by himself, or directed to be read by some of the teachers leading in prayer, and to prepare them to pray in public and in private, if necessary. The prayer should be short and expressed in simple language, and relate chiefly to the work in hand, the instruction, conversion, and training of the children, their preparation for the duties and trials of life, and the progress of Christ's care in His own day. The Edinburgh scheme of lessons is one of the best in use, and gives a series of lessons from both the Old and New Testaments, with a few verses of a Psalm—a portion of scripture and a question of the Shorter Catechism to be committed to memory. About fifty minutes will be required to do the various exercises of the explaining and enforcing the question of the Shorter Catechism and the Scripture lessons. All the Scripture classes should have the same lesson. The Library—a very important department of every Sunday School—may be distributed in the classes, or going on, without disturbance to the school. In order to this, the librarian should keep a roll with the names of all the children marked in their classes, which are numbered, with the dates of each Sabbath in the year opposite the names on the two open pages. Let the librarian select the book for each child, and put in a ticket with the name of the child and the number of the book, which is marked opposite the name of the child. At the beginning of the school, each teacher places the books brought back on the end of the bench, and the librarian takes them up. At the close of the lessons, the superintendent calls the school to order, and each teacher distributes a ticket with the name of the child, retaining the ticket till the books are returned.

Another method followed in several of our best schools is this: The shelves of the book-case are provided with a