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VOL. I.

NO. I.

THE
BAPTIST CHURCH
AND
SUNDAY SCHOOL
MESSENGER :

FOR JANUARY, 1866.

"One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism."

EDITED BY
ELDER TILMAN R. GAINES.

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THE
BAPTIST CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL
MESSENGER.

VOL. I. SHELBY, N. C., JANUARY, 1866. NO. 1.

SALUTATORY.

IN appearing before the intelligent and christian public as a moral and religious instructor, we have felt great reluctance. Several years ago it pleased God to call us into His vineyard as a laborer; and, with a deep sense of our unworthiness and imperfections, we obeyed the call, and have ever since been striving to do something for Christ. We have gone forth sowing in tears. We have seen but little of the fruits of our labor; but the consciousness of having done something of our duty, and feeling a firm faith in the promises of God that His word shall not return unto Him void, and our labor not be in vain, we are encouraged to toil on, patiently waiting for the reward.

Having now presumed to enter a new and larger field of labor, a sense of our unworthiness seems also much increased. However inviting the field may be to our mind, yet we have many doubts as to our ability to use the pen with success, and to accomplish our great desire of teaching by *epistle* as well as word. We feel, however, a sense of duty impelling us to this work. Our desire is to advocate the cause of God and *truth*, to see a more general spread of useful and religious knowledge, and to witness more true godliness in those who profess the name of

Christ, furnishes us some of our motives to this work.

Believing, as we do, that Baptist principles are Gospel principles, we desire to labor, to the extent of our ability, in spreading the doctrines which we hold. We feel, too, that ignorance and traditions have greatly hindered the progress of our cause. The cause of truth and the righteous is always suffered "for the lack of knowledge." We have a great inclination, therefore, to hold forth the pure gospel principles which we, as a denomination, believe, and to raise truth from beneath the errors, superstitions and traditions which wrong practice has long been heaping upon some of our purest doctrines. Our hope is to establish the young in these principles, and to cause them "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our feeble efforts shall be for the welfare of our young brethren and sisters in Christ—to feed the lambs of Christ's flock.

We believe that one of the greatest aids to the spread of our principles and the progress of the gospel, is the Sunday School cause. This is, indeed, the nursery of our church. Notwithstanding the benefits of this institution, the Baptists are slow in availing themselves of its aid. Until recently, our country churches

were almost entirely without Sunday Schools. While we are pleased to see our churches rapidly adopting this cause, yet there is reason for regret that there is still great destitution in regard to Sunday Schools. It is our desire and prayer to God that all of our churches may soon be blessed with their influence. One of our strongest motives to enter upon this work is to advocate the Sunday School cause. Having had an opportunity to know that there is, on the part of many of our churches and brethren, a great desire to establish Sunday Schools and to know their true worth and the best method of conducting them, we have undertaken, while abler pens are idle, to publish a monthly periodical in which we shall endeavor to advocate *Baptist principles, and the interests of Sunday Schools in our churches.*

We expect to secure the piety and talents of some of our ablest brethren to contribute to the reading matter of our *Messenger*. We hope, therefore, it will not fail to accomplish the end for which it is designed.

It is our purpose that the pages of our paper shall contain nothing but "*glad tidings*" and *messages of peace*. We expect to guard them from bitter controversy.

Our motto is "*One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.*" This is a favorite weapon, with which the Baptists have long fought their opponents. Feeling that all the disciples of Christ should contend earnestly for the faith

once delivered to the saints, "striving to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace," and to be *one* as Christ and God are *one*, they have contended with the advocates of innovation and error for "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," as the only means of this perfect union. While we may not suffer this "sword of the spirit" to lie idle in regard to our enemies, yet we purpose to use it, gently, on the Baptists themselves. They have broken this weapon, and can make only a feeble resistance. It is true that the Baptists, as a body, have ever had the same Lord and the same Baptism; but it cannot be said that they have been of the same mind and retained the same *Faith*. They, themselves, have been split to pieces. This is a most deplorable fact. It has weakened us more than all the assaults of our foes.

With a heart that aches over our divided and fallen condition, and continued prayers to God for *union* and *peace* among the soldiers of the cross, we shall advocate "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism" in the ranks of the Baptists themselves.

And now we appeal to our Baptist brethren, and all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in truth, to come to our help—"the help of the Lord against the mighty." Give us your patronage, your forbearance and your *prayers*; and now may God bless his servants, sanctify all rightful means of advancing truth, and let His kingdom come.

BAPTIST CHURCH NOT INDEPENDENT.

THE independence of each church has long been a favorite theme with Baptists. There is a sense in which each church is an independent body; but in another and more important sense no Baptist church is independent. And it is of great consequence that this paradox, or apparent contradiction, should be understood, and

deeply impressed on the minds of our Baptist brethren.

It is true that every gospel church is an independent body. It is accountable to no other church or power on earth. There is no appeal from its decisions to any earthly tribunal, civil or ecclesiastical. Such a church has the power of discipline

in itself. It can choose its own officers, administer the word and ordinances of the gospel, receive or exclude its own members, without the direction or authority of any other body. But when we rightly view these privileges of a gospel church in its relation to the gospel kingdom, such a church has rather the office of a *servant* than a *master* or an independent body. This leads us to consider the fact that *no Baptist or gospel church is absolutely independent*. A gospel church is the servant of Christ. It must obey his laws and commands, and never devise, adopt or follow any other but his. Christ is king in Zion, and all saints or believers are his subjects. Having entered his kingdom, each local assembly of christians, as well as each individual saint, is bound to do all things according to the pattern given by Christ and his Apostles. A church has no right or authority to change the laws and ordinances of the gospel, and no power to enact new laws or establish new ordinances. Christ has given all that is necessary for the welfare of his kingdom and churches to the end of time. Persons or assemblies thus bound by a divine constitution, by laws and ordinances appointed by an Almighty King, can never boast of absolute freedom. They are absolutely dependent on their King; and it is rebellion for them to assert their freedom or deviate from one single law of Christ. The only freedom any christian or any church has in regard to these things, is the liberty of using reason in devising the wisest and most effectual means of executing the laws of Christ, and accomplishing his righteous will. Pedobaptist denominations can rightly claim absolute independence. They have cut themselves loose, and have floated off from the laws of Christ on the corrupt sea of human wisdom. They nominally claim Christ as their king; but they have changed his laws and ordinances. They have enacted new laws and established

new ordinances. They have substituted their own inventions, and have thus asserted the insufficiency of the gospel, and their ability and authority to govern themselves. We see such absolute independence as this clearly set forth in the writings of such men as Mosheim and Neander, who claim, as they do in their church histories, that, excepting the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, all "is mutable." They maintain that there was a particular order of things established in the Apostolic churches, "under the direction of the Spirit of God." This order of things, say they, was best suited to those times. But they argue that these forms may be changed to suit the customs and circumstances of after times. This power of changing the apostolic order of things, they say, is invested in the church. Such power and independence are claimed by the church of Rome, and all her offspiring. This is their practice, and is the author of all the errors and corruptions in regard to the kingdom of Christ. Such power, such independence, belongs to no gospel or Baptist church.

BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS.

If such is the nature of a Baptist church is it right that Baptists should form such bodies as *associations* and *conventions*? What authority have they for so doing? These are questions which often recur to our mind, and which we will now attempt to answer.

We have stated above that all the freedom any christian or any church can exercise, is the liberty of using reason in devising the wisest and most effectual means of executing the laws of Christ, and accomplishing his will.

Now, if to devise and consult as to the best and wisest method of carrying out the requirements of the gospel, and building up Christ's kingdom, is the object of an association, and not to enact laws and change

the ordinances of the gospel—if this be the object, we say, then the formation of associations, in which is safety because of a multitude of counsellors, is wise and lawful.

There is no plain command in the New Testament for the formation of such councils; but certain acts and movements of the Apostolic churches lead us to the conclusion that such councils are wise and useful. Those movements referred to were for the purpose of securing and maintaining peace and uniformity of practice in the churches, and to unite their efforts in relieving the poor saints and spreading the gospel.

In Acts 15, we learn that some of the Apostolic churches were greatly divided on the subject of circumcision. Certain brethren were chosen, among whom was Paul and Barnabas, to go up to Jerusalem and hold a council with the apostles, elders and church in that city, in order to advise the churches as to the best method of settling their difficulties. This council met and wrote a letter to the churches in trouble, advising them what course to pursue. Now, this act of the churches and the council was sufficient to justify our Baptist fathers in organizing associations of churches, and calling them "advisory council." When any Baptist association oversteps the bounds of an "advisory council," and begins to give authoritative advice, *tasked*, and to make laws for the internal regulation and discipline of churches, then it is "lording it over God's heritage," and usurping the authority of the Pope of Rome.

The other precedent of the Apostolic churches, which our Baptist fathers imitated in the formation of associations, is *their uniting* to send contributions to the support of the poor saints and gospel laborers of other churches. Paul said to the Corinthian church, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service." Churches sometimes united in this work of charity. The churches of Macedonia chose "the brother whose praise in the gospel was throughout all the churches," and another brother whom Paul had "oftentimes proved diligent in many things," to accompany Titus, as the bearers of their contributions. If any should inquire as to the mission of these delegates, they were directed to reply, "they are the *messengers of the churches*, and the glory of Christ." (2 Cor. 8.) This, we think, is another ground sufficient to justify the formation of religious unions in which the prayers and contributions of the churches shall concentrate, and thence flow out as "a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

If our associations follow these apostolic examples, and conciliate churches when they *ask* advice, and thus, by means of their counsels, secure and preserve peace and unity among our churches, they are accomplishing a great work. If, by means of these unions, the efforts of the churches are concentrated in sending out the gospel, they are lawful, and will accomplish a great work.

BAPTIST DOCTRINES AND BAPTIST ERRORS.

CHAPTER I.—THE ORIGIN OF THE BAPTISTS.

THE Baptists claim to have originated directly from Christ and his Apostles. They believe that the churches which were planted by the

inspired Apostles were Baptist churches. Or, in other words, that they were composed of the same kind of material, (repenting, believing and

baptized persons)—that they held the same doctrine, in the main, as is held by this denomination at the present time. The Baptists claim to be coeval with the new or gospel dispensation—that John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming of Christ and began to set up his kingdom, really began the denomination which is now honored by the name of Baptists. And it is a fact worthy of remark that this is the only denomination of christians who can claim a scriptural name. It seems that Providence has so ordered it that the only denomination that still holds to the ancient mode of baptism by immersion, as instituted by John the Baptist, is yet designated by "Baptists." To substantiate the claims of the Baptists to an apostolic origin, we would refer the reader to the great similarity of the faith (or doctrine) and practices of the Baptist churches of the present day, to that of the first or Apostolic churches.

Do the Baptists insist on repentance as a pre-requisite to baptism and membership in the visible kingdom of Christ? So did John the Baptist, so Christ, so his Apostles. Do the Baptists require faith in Christ, as the true Messiah and Saviour? So did John, and Christ, and the Apostles. Do they require all who repent and believe to be immersed before they can enter the kingdom of Christ? So did John, and Christ, and the Apostles. Therefore, we see such a likeness between the practice of the founders of the gospel kingdom and that of Baptists of the present day that we are forced to acknowledge them the same.

Did John baptize in the river Jordan? So do the Baptists perform that ordinance in a river, or in some water sufficient to immerse the whole body. Did John baptize at Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there? Did Philip and the eunuch both go down into the

water and come up out of the water? So do the Baptists.

Their views as to the significance of baptism, seem the same. The scriptures say, "buried with Christ by baptism." So the Baptists hold. Does God, in his word, say that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God?" So the Baptists maintain.

If we consider the similarity of church officers and church government in the Apostolic churches and those of the Baptists, we see an evidence that the latter have an apostolic origin. The scriptures give us account of only two offices in any gospel church—that of bishop or elder, and that of deacon. The Baptist churches hold only these two.

Were the Apostolic churches free and independent in their nature? And did they do all their business on republican principles, by the voice and consent of the members? Certainly they did, and so do Baptists.

The identity of the doctrines taught in the New Testament and those of the Baptists, in general, is another proof. The Baptists, in a word, receive the word of God, especially as contained in the New Testament, as their guide. They admit of no human alterations. And though they may differ somewhat among themselves on minor subjects, yet they hold the scriptures as their only guide of faith and practice.

It might appear more satisfactory to our opponents could we show them plainly the connection of the Baptist churches of the present day with the Apostolic churches—could we show them the unbroken chain that links our denomination to those churches. But, owing to the imperfection of our church history, this is not an easy task. We contend, however, that the chain which links the Baptist churches of our denomination to each other in every age, and all to the Apostolic churches, has never been broken. During the first three cen-

turies is where the link seems to be missing, as seen in our church histories. But a little reflection is sufficient to show any one that this is not a broken link in our history. What the apostolic churches were, in their divine organization and origin, they must have continued to be for the first two or three centuries after the days of the Apostles, with some slight but increasing corruptions. If these apostolic churches were Baptist in principles and practice when first organized, we have no doubt but that they were the same in their main principles and practice for centuries afterwards. Truth and error both work gradually on human society. And just as it takes a long time to dethrone error and establish truth in the hearts and minds of society at large, so when once established in the light of truth, especially divine truth, it requires time to corrupt and utterly change the faith and practice of the masses. Thus it was in regard to the corruption of christianity. The apostolic churches flowed down through the first century or two with much of that transparent clearness and beauty which characterized them at the apostolic fountain.

After a few centuries, "the faith once delivered to the saints," became so corrupted—the ordinances so changed, that discord and divisions occurred. There were many true, conservative christians in these churches who contended for the faith and combated the advocates of innovation and corruption; but these faithful witnesses for the truth, being in the minority, and falling a prey to the persecuting spirit of the advocates of error, rent off from even these apostolic churches—they protested, and in this way became stigmatized as *heretics*. And here, where these apostolic churches burst asunder, is where our church histories begin. They pretend to give a history of the church of Christ, but give a history of anti-Christ. These ear-

liest protestants, stigmatized as heretics, constituted the true church of Christ—His faithful witnesses. This church fled from persecution and oppression and dwelt in the wilderness—in dens and caves—and wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, and passed thus hidden through dark ages and came down to the present the same faithful witnesses for the truth. Many of these were to be found among the Waldenses and other ancient sects. So we see that the history of the true church, for the first few centuries, is the same as that of the apostolic churches. But after these few centuries this true church of Christ is to be found with the dissenters from the corrupted mass of the church, and with those who were stigmatized as heretics by them. And as the Baptists believe that the apostolic churches were essentially Baptist, so they believe that their history, for the first two or three centuries after Christ, is the same as that of these apostolic churches. And since the two or three centuries the history of the Baptists is connected with these dissenters and heretics.

But that there is no clear history of the Baptists through all the dark ages of the past, that they cannot show the unbroken chain of apostolic succession, is no argument against their apostolic origin. We believe the apostolic churches were Baptists. We know that there are now churches of the same faith and order. We have the beginning and ending of this chain of succession, though the middle swags down into the darkness of the intervening past, yet we believe the chain is unbroken and the links all there. But even if it has been broken at any time in the past, it is no argument that the Baptist churches are not of an apostolic origin. God is able to weld the chain or insert new links. We maintain that any organization of repenting, believing and baptized persons who covenant together on the terms of

the gospel, acknowledging Christ as their King, and loving him as their Lord, is essentially a gospel church, whose principles and foundation are

apostolic, whether this church has passed under the hands of those who have come down in an unbroken succession from the Apostles or not.

CHAPTER II.

MEANING OF CHURCH.

The Baptists believe that the Greek word *ecclesia* has two specific meanings as used to denote the assemblies of the saints. It is used one hundred and ten times in the New Testament to denote such assemblies. Sometimes it is used to denote the whole family of the redeemed—all the elect of God—the mystical body of Christ, as “church of the first born.” When it is not thus used to denote the saved of every age and nation now in heaven or in earth

and yet to come, it is used to denote separate assemblies of saints on the earth, as the church at Jerusalem, at Antioch, &c. As thus used to denote a local, visible assembly of saints a church is defined and believed to be a single assembly of truly baptized believers, organized essentially after the manner of the Apostolic churches, where the pure word of God is preached and practised, the ordinances rightly administered, and the laws of divine discipline enforced.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST—OF GOD—OF HEAVEN.

There are different meanings to the phrases “Kingdom of Christ”—“Kingdom of God”—“Kingdom of Heaven.” It sometimes denotes the universal and eternal reign of Jehovah, as the triune God. This dominion extends over all the universe of God—over the heavens, the earth and hell. Sometimes it imports the same as the church—the mystical body of Christ—all the family of the redeemed. In this sense Christ is king in Zion. But the expression “Kingdom of Christ” denotes the new or gospel dispensation, the reign of grace and truth which came by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. This is the kingdom which the prophet Daniel spoke of, as to be set up by God at a certain time. “In the days of those kings shall the God of

heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” Dan. 2: 44. When the days of these kings had come, God sent a mighty prophet—yea, more than a prophet—in the person of John the Baptist, to prepare the way before the Messiah, and to make ready a people for the Lord. This “Elias who was to come,” began to preach in the wilderness of Judea, and to say “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This, we are told by Mark (1: 1), was “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the son of God.” Immediately Jesus himself began preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

HOW PERSONS ENTERED THIS KINGDOM.

The setting up of this kingdom consisted in certain divine requisitions or regulations to which all who would enter must conform. Those requisitions are three, which consti-

tute a person a member of the visible as well as spiritual kingdom of Christ. *Repentance, faith, and baptism* were these heaven appointed requisites to admission into the kingdom of Christ.

John the Baptist required men to repent of their sins, to renew their lives. He pointed them to the Messiah who was shortly to come, and required them to exercise a genuine faith in him as the Saviour of the world. He then immersed all who sincerely complied with the requisitions of the kingdom, and they were fully initiated into the visible kingdom of heaven. Now, the Baptist doctrine is that to reform one's life (repent), believe in Christ, and to be immersed into the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is the only means of entering into the visible kingdom of heaven, which God set up in the days of John the Baptist and Christ. These, too, must be observed in their natural and scriptural order. Repentance first, then faith, then baptism. True repentance and faith will make any one an heir of heaven; but without true baptism he has not entered the visible kingdom of Christ. A kind of repentance and faith not genuine, with true baptism, will not make a person a member of this kingdom. Simon Magus feigned repentance and faith, and was truly baptized, but had no share or lot with the true subjects of Christ's kingdom. Repentance, faith and baptism are three doors leading into the kingdom of heaven. Baptism is the inner door and cannot be entered until the doors of repentance and faith have been passed. The door of faith stands between repentance and baptism, and cannot be entered until that of repentance has been passed. Baptism is, then, not the door into the church, the mystical body of Christ, the family of the redeemed, nor a door into a local church, an assembly of saints on earth; because regeneration is the door into the invisible church of Christ, and a vote of the assembly is the door into a local church of saints on earth. Baptism is the inner door of entrance into the visible kingdom of Christ. Jesus had no sins to repent of, needed no faith in a Saviour

other than himself; but as a man he could not enter this visible kingdom of heaven except through the sacred door of baptism. "He was made of a woman, made under the law." "He took on him the seed of Abraham." "Was made in the fashion of sinful flesh." It was necessary that he should fulfill all the law and prophets—should keep the law in our stead. Hence he said to John, in reference to his baptism, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. It was a law and regulation of this kingdom that Christ himself should enter it by the door of baptism.

We have shown that repentance, faith and baptism were the visible signs of the establishment and presence of this new kingdom of heaven—the doors of admission into this kingdom.

The Baptist view of this kingdom does not stop with its visible signs and external constitution and appearance; but they regard it also as spiritual in its nature, as consisting of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The visible and spiritual natures of this kingdom are inseparable. While repentance (true reformation), faith in Christ and baptism constitute that which is visible in regard to this kingdom, the same things express that which is spiritual. They indicate that mystical union which subsists between Christ and his church universal.—They show that allegiance and obedience to Christ their king which characterize the spiritual reign of the Messiah in the hearts of his people. These signs, which show the power of grace and salvation as revealed in the gospel, and display the visible and spiritual reign of Christ on earth, constitute that kingdom which can be both seen and felt—that blessed kingdom which is holiness and peace in the soul and in the world—that kingdom which is so small that it is contained in the heart of every believer, and yet so powerful and in-

creasing that it is destined to fill the whole world.

The Baptists have always maintained that none but rational and adult persons, who have been regenerated by the grace and spirit of God, and who have manifested this change by repentance, faith and baptism, have any right to its privileges, or can by any means enter this visible kingdom of heaven. Hence, they have ever been opposed to *infant* membership, as both unscriptural and contrary to the nature and design of Christ's kingdom on earth. They also oppose the reception of adults who have not attended to the indispensable pre-requisites of repentance, faith and baptism in their scriptural order and meaning. This seems to them to be the teachings of the gospel of the kingdom. And the Baptists have ever maintained that it is a daring and dangerous presumption in mortal and fallible man to deviate from, or change the laws of Christ's kingdom, as given by the Saviour in the gospel. They regard the gospel as the divine and infallible guide of the subjects of His kingdom. They contend that the gospel of Christ contains all the laws and regulations that are necessary for the progress and welfare of that kingdom in all time to come; and that it contains all the rules of faith and practice which are requisite to the salvation of the saints and the triumph of Christ's kingdom.

Many of the sects who protested against the early corruptions and innovations of the kingdom of Christ, and who were stigmatized as heretics, and whom the Baptists claim as their representatives and the faithful witnesses of the truth in those dark ages of the past, advocated these same doctrines in regard to the kingdom of heaven.

Dr. Mosheim, who was an inveterate hater of the Anabaptists, whose history he pretends to give, in sus-

taining the "boasted claim" of this sect to a "descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth in the times of general darkness and superstition," makes the following candid statement "Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed, in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites and Hussites had maintained, viz: That the kingdom of Christ or the visible church which he established upon earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests to oppose the progress of iniquity and to correct and reform transgressors."* The same historian says of the Menonites, or Anabaptists of a later period, that they held the same opinion in regard to Christ's kingdom. The following are his words: "The kingdom which Christ established upon earth is a visible church or community, into which the holy and the just are alone to be admitted, and which is consequently exempt from all those institutions and rules of discipline that have been invented by human wisdom for the correction and reformation of the wicked."†

These quotations the learned historian gives as the views of the kingdom of Christ as held, not only by the Waldenses and other most ancient sects, but also by the Anabaptists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And these quotations certainly contain the view of the Baptists now in regard to the kingdom of Christ.

* Mosheim's Ch. Hist. 11 vol. p. 128.
† " " " " " " p. 135.

RELATION AND DISTINCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL, AND LOCAL CHURCHES.

Having briefly defined the kingdom of Christ which God set up in fulfilment of the prediction of Daniel, also the church universal, and a local church, let us now notice the relation which these three sustain to one another.

The church universal is the most general and comprehensive in its nature. It is composed of all the elect of God—the whole family of the redeemed, of every age, nation and kindred. It began with the first individual ever pardoned by the blood of Christ, and includes all who lived and died in the faith before the coming of Christ, and all regenerated persons who have lived since that time, and all who shall yet be redeemed in time to come. We think also that it includes all who have died in infancy. Christ is the only door into this universal church. The Holy Spirit applies the blood of Christ and washes away sin. The soul is renewed and born again, and is thus led into the general assembly and church of the first born.

Baptism, we think, has no special relation to the church universal.—Hundreds and thousands were saved under the former dispensations, before baptism was instituted. And even since that time multitudes, doubtless, have died in the faith and joined the church triumphant, who were never baptized.

The kingdom of Christ, as above defined and understood, has more reference to the visible effects of the gospel, and the reign of grace on earth, as seen under the new dispensation. It is rather to be compared with and viewed in reference to the old dispensation, in which the moral and ceremonial laws held their sway, than in reference to the church of the redeemed. It is so viewed by some of the inspired writers of the gospel. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by

Jesus Christ." Lu. 16: 16. So, when we speak of the visible kingdom of Christ, which was set up and established in the days of Christ's ministration on earth, we apply it to the new or gospel dispensation, especially when we consider it in the abstract. If we view it in the concrete, or as to its effects on men, we see the kingdom of Christ embodied in the faithful followers of Christ who have complied with the requirements of the gospel and the regulations of this kingdom. We maintain that this visible kingdom can be entered only by repentance, faith and baptism. All who are really subjects of this kingdom are members of the universal church or family of the redeemed, but not all the members of this universal church are or have been subjects of this visible kingdom of Christ. Abraham and Moses, and all the saints under the old dispensation, are members of the universal church, but were never in the gospel kingdom. The thief on the cross became a member of the church universal, but not of the visible kingdom of heaven, because he was never baptized.

Local churches are formed in the kingdom of Christ, of those who have complied with the requisitions of the kingdom, who have been duly initiated and have taken oaths of allegiance to Christ. Entering this kingdom is not becoming a member of any local church or assembly. We imagine that a person could be a subject of this kingdom without being a member of any local church. When the eunuch believed and was baptized he thus became a member of the gospel kingdom, but probably was not a member of any local church until long after his conversion.—When persons become subjects of the gospel kingdom, their affection for one another as well as their social feelings, is greatly increased. Hence

it is perfectly natural that those who have entered this new state of life, and whose lots Providence has thrown together, should assemble and organize themselves into one body. And in addition to this, it was divinely ordered that such should be the case in the kingdom of Christ.

Hence, we see that soon after the establishment of this kingdom, and multitudes had pressed into it, local churches were established at many places—at Jerusalem, at Antioch, &c.—under the direction of the inspired Apostles.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

OBSERVATION and reflection are special gifts of God. They greatly distinguish His creature man above other animals; and they are designed to discharge a high office. They may perceive and interpret, in many cases, the doing of the Almighty towards us. They read the book of life, and decipher the language of events. "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" said the Saviour, intimating a just reproach to those who had no such discernment.

Events are God's language. The thoughtful and pious mind is anxious to hearken to these mute witnesses, and to learn the lessons they convey. It is a solemn thought that all of life speaks of God; is a continual development of His will; and is ever making Him manifest, with all the authority of His word, enforced by that additional and peculiar power which attends our sympathy with what is known to be present and real. The word teaches us the lessons of God's will in theory: life acts those lessons in practical effects.

The duty, therefore, of reading the page of life rightly and reverently is apparent, and must rise in importance with the importance and peculiarity of events.

In a crisis of our national and social history so unexpected and startling as the present, it must, then, evidently be our duty to study seriously the *signs of the times*. Recent events and present circumstances are significant indications of God's will.

They speak of Him, and of ourselves in relation to Him. What are the lessons they convey?

I. The times now significantly teach us *the sovereignty of God*. God is essentially and necessarily the king of all the earth—the sovereign ruler of princes. All authority is from Him in nature and in government. It is He that "filleteth every living thing with good," and it is He that "putteth down one and setteth up another." Each drop of dew, each lightning cloud fraught with refreshing for the thirsty field, as well as every magistrate and ruler among men, owes equally its being and its office to Him who rules supremely amidst "the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth."

But while this is a familiar truth, as often referred to as any other, and entertained in the mind without any conscious opposition, it is too seldom admitted *practically*. We too seldom bow with "awful reverence" before the King of kings; we do not fear and tremble, as we ought, before Him who with the sword of war may desolate, at any moment, the fairest plains; or who, with the stealthy pestilence, may in a few days lay waste our houses and wrap every hearthstone with mourning and grief.

It is true the gospel reveals, to a penitent believer, this awful Sovereign ruling in mercy, clothed in paternal smiles amidst all His royal dignity, and rejoicing in the return of His "prodigal" children to His

love and to His holiness; but the grandeur of His sovereignty is nevertheless essential to the wonder and the worth of His mercy. We never comprehend the value and unspeakable blessedness of redeeming love, until we see clearly who it is that has bowed to redeem and save, and from how high a throne he stooped to do it. The sovereignty of God, therefore, is a lesson as essential as His redeeming love. We must learn the one, or we never truly understand the other.

Now, recent events have been awfully eloquent on this point. We have suddenly seen the Supreme Ruler robed in prowess; and, as one "who giveth not account of any of his matters," scattering to the winds the hopes and expectations of millions, crushing, almost in a moment, all their strongest combinations, and rendering equally powerless the coward and the brave. Black with confusion, the political heavens have burst in a wild storm over our heads, and what seemed a fair and well cemented confederation is gone as though it never were.

Whatever the instrumentalities employed in this rapid and unlooked for catastrophe, it cannot be denied that God has brought it about. Whatever the human ends sought to be accomplished, whatever the rights supposed to be violated, and the wrongs suffered, and however necessarily and essentially upraised the Eternal One above the violence, the injustice, the crime involved in that catastrophe, still it must be admitted that God has brought it about. God in his inscrutable councils has willed it to be. He, in these events, sits on the throne as universal and irresponsible ruler. None stayeth His hand, or saith "What doest thou?"

We thus learn practically and pungently the lesson of His sovereignty, and all human thoughts, wishes, cares, wither at His feet. We thought to accomplish our earthly ends; He designed, from the first,

to shew us, as never before, that He alone is king.

Be it so! No loss too heavy, no grief too bitter, no disappointment too agonizing, if it teach us to feel, as Christians ought, the sovereignty of God.

II. But these events proclaim no less impressively *the feebleness of man*.

They have shewn us the feebleness of human foresight. In the struggle just terminated, how many human anticipations have proved futile, and how have the most sagacious minds been found at fault. The struggle for independence, which was judged to be inevitable, was deemed also certain of success. "Cotton was king," and would assuredly rule the course of events in the land of its birth. Foreign nations could not endure long the deprivation of this article, and the consequent ruin of their manufactures; they must recognize the new political confederation; and with recognition must come deliverance. What strength, too, was believed to lie in the character of the struggle—a people battling for liberty and independence. Invading armies could never learn to stand against men fighting on their own soil, and for their homes and firesides, and victory, under such circumstances, must be ours. Then, the Genius of Finance was invoked as about to fight for the South. Universal ruin impended over a people relying on commerce for their greatness when expenditure exceeded all possible supply. "Wall Street" would see its interest in peace; and monied men, true to their instincts and to their fealty to "the Almighty Dollar," would withhold their gold and arrest the war. All these, and many other grounds of confidence were ripe among us: and all have failed, in order to shew us the feebleness of human foresight.

We have also learned the feebleness of the best concerted human plans. The struggle just terminated was no crude, rapidly conceived and

ill digested purpose. Orators of the highest distinction; minds of unusual clearness and penetration had long before pointed out the path to Southern independence. Eleven sovereign States had entered on that path. Eleven grave deliberative assemblies, embodying the talent, the wealth, the will of six or seven millions of men of stern Anglo-Saxon race, had sat in solemn conclave, and had given to their national effort all the force and order of legislative enactment conceived by the ablest minds and concluded after severe and careful examination. The order and grave national character of all our arrangements became the boast of our own people, as they were the admiration of foreign nations. Our state papers compared favorably with those of the oldest political associations for dignity and weight; and the celerity with which an army was raised and equipped, with no previous preparation, filled Europe with amazement; the plan was well concerted and ably advanced; but it failed to accomplish its end, that we might learn, in this failure, how feeble are all earthly plans. And the lesson is the same, whatever our political views. One sees its failure in the error of the attempt; another attributes defeat to other causes; it matters not. It was a plan well and carefully concerted; and it failed; to shew us that the best concerted human plans are insufficient to ensure success. The feebleness and littleness of man is the lesson God is reading to us from the dark page of the recent struggle, red with the blood of thousands of our "best and bravest."

Feeble, too, is man seen to be, however strong and brave. No braver youth ever sprang to arms at their country's call than those who have formed our Southern bands.—To personal courage and physical vigor, trained from youth on horseback and in the field, was largely added that lofty element of military character arising from cultivated

mind and morals; nay, to a considerable extent, religion, the pure and devoted religion of Jesus, gave tone to our Southern soldiery; and while a Stonewall Jackson evoked the reverence and love of all, even those opposed to him as enemies, by the beauty and consistency of the highest christian principle, combined with consummate skill and courage as a general, many an inferior officer and many a private in our ranks carried into his military service the matchless power of a consistent christian life. What unsurpassed human strength, then, was seen gathered in those brave and veteran armies. But they have melted away like snow before the summer's sun, to shew us how feeble is man, even in his very pride of courage and of strength. No more important lesson is to be learned than that all human strength is very weakness; a sense of this lies at the base of all true apprehension of the sovereignty of God. We need to feel it to the heart's core, that we may learn truly to trust in Almighty strength.

III. But events remind us emphatically of the "*spirituality of the church*." "My kingdom," said the Saviour, "is not of this world." Why did he say this? His disciples were in the world. In the world, as it was, with all its forms and varieties of human life, and human occupation, and human interests, were they designed to live and labor; and if the world as it was in all those chequered varieties were to have been taken away, they would have no longer had any occupation as ministers of Christ on earth. And yet, though the world was thus necessary to their labors and their success, he solemnly enforces the principle embodied in the words, "My kingdom is not of this world." Is it not apparent, then, that there is a strong elementary opposition between the nature of the world and the nature of Christ's kingdom which is essential to be known and felt in order to

the progress of that kingdom. But how powerful are all our tendencies to the world, even though those tendencies may not be vicious in the worst sense; and how imperious may they become when, to all the ordinary ties of nature, kindred, interest, occupation, are added the kindling and inspiring excitement of a struggle for national independence—when the tocsin of liberty sounds abroad, and is echoed from city to city, from State to State, from the sea shore to the mountain top, and rolls back along the banks of a hundred rivers to the sea again; when a whole people are aroused to what they believe, whether deceived or otherwise, to be a righteous struggle; and when the blood of thousands of the noblest in the land has cemented the ties of their union, and consecrated the cause for which they contend. But all this, however specious or necessary it may seem, is nothing in the kingdom of Christ; terminate as the struggle may, that kingdom must remain unchanged and unimpaired.

But there are few that can stand this ordeal. To multitudes the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom becomes lost sight of and forgotten in presence of the supposed dignity and necessity of such a struggle; even Christians may be greatly lowered in the tone of their spiritual apprehension, and it may become necessary to dash to the ground all these worldly and national aspirations that the flock of Christ may not rush wholly out of the fold, and become lost in the whirlpool of earthly interests; and thus the events of the present times are calculated powerfully to remind us that Christ's kingdom alone is spiritual and pure, and all those other stirring interests are but of the "earth, earthy."

IV. It will be admitted, we trust, that the times are calculated to teach us *submission to God*. This is an essential element of faith, especially of ripened faith. It was this that gave to Abraham that sublimity of char-

acter that has constituted him "the father of the faithful."

Dark was the hour when, away from all the endearments of home and kindred, and long and loved associations, the voice of Jehovah commanded his servant's removal elsewhere, he knew not whither, otherwise than indicated in the words, "the country that I shall shew thee;" and darker still the hour when all the hopes that afforded consolation to that exile, and all the tender sympathies that linked him to the son of his old age, were to be rudely shattered in the sacrifice by his own hand of that beloved son. Yet he stood that severe test; unhesitatingly he followed Jehovah's guidance, away from home and friends, whither he knew not; meekly he obeyed the solemn word that called for the sacrifice of his son, and grasping the sacrificial knife he ascends the mount where the beloved Isaac is to die as a lamb on the altar. We may be unable to make such lofty sacrifices as these, but we may strive humbly to submit to the burthen laid on us; to loss of property and friends; to cruel disappointment of national hopes; to boding fears for the future; and yet know and triumph in the assurance that God never leaves nor forsakes those who trust in Him, for

V. *Trust in God* is evidently one of the most important of the lessons the times now indicate. When all earthly trusts fail, then is the loudest call to trust in God; they fail that we may trust in Him. To a believer, all of life is planned by his Heavenly Father; his successes sanctified, his errors overruled. For God is love, and the richest development he condescends to make of this blessed attribute is His love for every soul that trusts in Him. He loves as a father, a royal parent of infinite wisdom and power. How plain, when that hope stands alone unobscured by other inferior hopes, that this always was the one thing needful. How shall we now fail to trust

in God when earthly supports have thus crumbled and failed? This is the language of the times, and the solemn, precious lesson that they teach. It were well, possibly, to withhold our thoughts from any gloomy judgments on the past. We may examine ourselves without any misinterpretation of the acts of God. If we have been conscientious in the course we assumed, let us not entangle ourselves in needless self-reproach. Success is no proof of the rectitude of human measures—failure no evidence of their error. "Might makes right" with man, but not so with God. The plainest human rights have often been trampled on by power. If we were right in the struggle just past, then God has disappointed us to win us to a holier struggle; if we erred, He will forgive, we believe, a conscientious error, and will now accept that happier trust in Him for which the times so eloquently plead; and thus we shall be prepared.

VI. To learn from them the duty of *renewed activity in the cause of God*. The clang of arms and the bustle of warfare have ceased; that we may

engage, with renewed earnestness, in the warfare against sin, which was always our highest, truest service. Let all the activities of christian living and christian warfare revive. Cherish more than ever the Sabbath School. Frequent the prayer meeting; it is Heaven's treasury. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together; such gatherings are the concentration of a divine force against the power of the wicked one. War, however necessary, has far more in it of Satan than of Christ; let us now be dedicated to a warfare in which Christ is always present, is "all in all," and in which victory is certain. We are often reminded of the activity of the adversary of souls. It is a good attribute, employed in a bad cause. We have seen it in blood and carnage, in rapine and desolation. Let us imitate all that activity without its crime, in a cause that demands and will reward the highest and most devoted human efforts. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all needful things will be added."

E. A. C.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

[From the Minutes of the Broad River Baptist Association.]

SUNDAY SCHOOLS, AND THE BEST METHOD OF CONDUCTING THEM.

BELOVED BRETHREN:

"The importance of Sunday Schools to our Churches, and the best method of conducting them," is the subject on which you have made it our duty, by appointment, to prepare a circular to the churches composing this Association.

The subject naturally claims our attention, in the first place, in regard to the

I. *Importance of Sunday Schools to our churches.*

The advantages of the Sunday School cause to the rising generation, and its importance as a means of enlightening and christianizing the world, are subjects on which volumes might be written; but it is made our duty to consider, briefly, the importance of this institution to our churches. And it is hoped that our churches, generally, have already awakened to such an appreciation of its benefits as to require but little to be said as to its importance.

The importance of the Sunday School cause to our churches will appear if we consider it,

1. *As an important means of conversion.*

It should be the prayer of every pious christian that God would add to our churches "daily such as should be saved." But we cannot expect the answer to this prayer unless we use the means which God requires of us. Teaching the nations—preaching the gospel to every creature—are the appointed means.

As Baptists, we hold that no cor-
enanted or family relation, no degree
of human knowledge, no mere his-
torical faith in divine truth can pre-
pare us for rightful membership in
the kingdom of Christ. Nothing but
true conversion to God can make us fit
materials for the temple of God or
the membership of a Baptist church.
This being so, we are bound to use
every means which, either directly
or indirectly, will lead to the conver-
sion of the dear, immortal souls un-
der our charge.

The great object of the Sunday
School is the conversion of souls. As
a means of imparting religious in-
struction and making good impres-
sions on the mind, there is nothing,
except the ministry, better adapted,
under the blessing of God, to lead the
soul to Jesus. The experience of
many churches which have sustained
good Sunday Schools will testify that
they are an important means of con-
verting the young. Revivals in
such churches have sprung, gene-
rally, from the Sunday School, and
the converts added to them have
been mostly from the same ranks.

2. *As important means of edification.*

The Sunday School serves, not
only as a means of leading the
young to Jesus, and of their conver-
sion, but also as a means of impart-
ing to the young christian that di-
vine truth and knowledge which are
necessary to his usefulness and
growth in grace. It is impossible
for any one to honor the christian

name "by a well ordered life and a godly conversation" who does not know what the gospel requires of him. If ignorant of the truths, the laws, precepts and examples of the holy scriptures, he must necessarily walk in the dark, and, often stumbling and falling, will bring disgrace on the cause of Christ. It is a lamentable fact that so few professed christians, even among the Baptists, exhibit the truths of the gospel in their daily walk. It can be said of almost none in our generation, they "are epistles known and read of all men." Now, this ignorance of the scriptures is doubtless the cause of much of the inconsistency in the lives of christians. While many violate the truth and commandments of God *willingly*, many others do the same through ignorance.

Now, if our churches would all avail themselves of such a means of instruction as will impart a knowledge of the Bible to the young and cause them "to search the scriptures," the Baptists would soon appear as an army, mighty in divine truth, reflecting the "glorious gospel" in their lives, and rapidly conquering the world.

The Sunday School is just the institution our churches need to accomplish this end. In it the Bible is taught—its truths explained and impressed on the minds of the young. They thus form a habit of searching the scriptures, and deciding on their truths for themselves. There is a great deal too much tradition among the Baptists. We claim the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, as our guide; and yet we move around in the circle trodden by our forefathers, none enquiring "Were the fathers in the right way?" The children follow their parents and ministers.—They seldom ask, "Do they follow in the steps of Christ and the Apostles?" The Sunday School, rightly appreciated and conducted, would deliver us from this evil, by confirming the young in the habit of reading the

Bible and deciding for themselves. Thus our churches would be greatly improved.

3. *As an important means of causing our churches to meet every Sabbath for worship.*

One of the defects of our churches has long been that they do not meet every Lord's day for worship. The majority of them meet only one Sabbath in the month. Thus three, and sometimes four Sabbaths in each month are lost in regard to the duty and improvement of the churches. In this we fail to follow the examples of the Apostolic churches which met, as they were commanded, on the first day of each week for worship and instruction. The Sunday School is gradually delivering our churches from this sin of "neglecting the assembling of ourselves together."

4. *As an important means of bringing out the gifts and increasing the laborers in our churches.*

The custom of monthly meetings among our churches, their failure to have regular prayer meetings, and their lack of some regular, weekly means of instruction—all tend to smother the talents and gifts of our churches. But the Sunday School opens a field in which all may work with profit. The pious talents of male and female, old and young, can find abundant labor, and a fruitful harvest in this vineyard of the Lord.

5. *As an important means of spreading Baptist principles.*

Of all religious people, the Baptists should be the most zealous. We profess to believe and practise the New Testament in its apostolic simplicity and purity. We are bound, therefore, according to our own boastings, to be more zealous in spreading our doctrines than those whose claims are not so high. That the Sunday School cause will advance our principles, will appear as a fact to any one who will consider how effectually it increases the laborers in our churches, but more especially, if he will think of the class of persons who are

instructed in this institution. The Sunday School begins with the right persons at the right time. It takes the tender children and brings them to Jesus. It feeds and nourishes the lambs of Christ's little flock. Thus it is a grand fulfilment of the divine command, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Those who are best acquainted with the missionary work among the heathen, tell us that the most effectual method of christianizing them is to begin with their children and teach them after the manner of Sunday Schools.

Now, dear brethren, if we see and acknowledge the importance of Sunday Schools as a means of the conversion of our children, the upbuilding of our church members in grace and the knowledge of Christ, the improvement of our churches in regard to their times of worship, increasing the number of laborers in the gospel field, and the rapid spread of the gospel, or Baptist doctrines, throughout the world—then let no true Baptist fail to give a warm heart and a helping hand to the great cause of Sunday Schools in our churches.

Let us consider, in the second place,

II. *"The best method of conducting Sunday Schools."*

In this division of our subject, we will begin with some suggestions in regard to the starting and the organizing of a Sunday School. We will suppose that a Sunday School is to be organized in a certain church. The pastor, or some one else, desirous of getting up the School, will, at once, begin to visit the families in the neighborhood and talk to them privately. Speak of the advantages of such an institution, and solicit the aid of the most talented and influential persons. He will appeal to the mothers and sisters for their assistance, and not fail to interest the minds of the children in behalf of the School.

When it has been generally known

in the neighborhood that a Sunday School is to be organized, let it be publicly announced, and the day appointed to begin. Let the church, and especially the parents, be exhorted to come and bring their children on that day. The pastor or some one else should have an address ready against the appointed day, which will show the benefits of the Sunday School cause, and enlist in its favor as many as possible. On this occasion, the speaker should not fail to direct many of his remarks to the children. They love to know that the Sunday School is intended especially for them. Let them be addressed in this manner:

"Children, you sometimes think that very few persons care anything for children. You know that your fathers and mothers love you—that your sisters and brothers care for you. But you sometimes conclude that no one else regards your welfare. But, children, you are very much mistaken in this. Other people love you. Jesus, your dear Saviour, the best of all men, loves little children. When on earth, he said 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Why, all good people love children. A great many wise and good men love you. They have made many good little books for children. They have instituted the Sunday School for children. Oh, how much they love you, children, or they would not have done so much for you. I love you, children, and all these persons present love you; and we have met here to-day to show our affection for you in planting a Sunday School for you. It shall be the children's school, where they shall meet, and sing, and pray, and learn of Jesus."

If the children are thus pointedly and pleasingly addressed, it has a wonderful effect in behalf of the school, not only in the minds of the children, but also in the minds of the parents. And let it here be re-

marked that, unless the children are kept interested in the school, it will be a failure.

After this address is over, others might be invited to add words of encouragement, and thus show their interest in the work. This done, the school is ready to begin. Let it be remembered that it is best always to have, if possible, a supply of Sunday School books to give to the classes as soon as formed.

In organizing the school, the first and most important work is to choose a *superintendent*. Nothing will more certainly secure the success of the school than to get the right kind of a person for this office. The superintendent should be a person deeply interested in the work, with a capacity to please as well as instruct the children, and full of pious zeal and energy. It is best to appoint an assistant superintendent, so that there might always be one or the other present to conduct the exercises.—The school should never meet without one of them, if he can possibly attend.

The superintendent should now separate the children into classes numbering from four to eight. He will then assign teachers to each class. Of course the best informed, most pious, energetic, and punctual persons will be chosen for teachers.

The two most important classes are the *Bible class* and the *Infant class*. The older and more advanced members of the school should be formed into a Bible class. Some person who is well informed in the scriptures, or at least who will inform himself, and is apt to teach, should be assigned to this class as teacher. The very little children, from two to six years old, should be formed into a class, and some female, capable of teaching little ones, should be assigned to it as teacher. This is, indeed, the most important class in the school. Many persons know not what to do with the little children who cannot read. They regard them

in the way at Sunday School. This infant class, if properly taught, will advance more rapidly than any other. Just think how much children learn during the first four years of their life. And the most of this they learn from *hearing others talk*. Some learned men have said that the character of a person is generally formed against he is four years old. The teacher of this class should be able to instruct the children by *lecturing* them. More time should be spent in teaching them the knowledge of God and Jesus, and other Bible truths, than in trying to teach them from spelling books. There can now be obtained infant question books suitable for such a class. With the aid of this a competent teacher will advance the children surprisingly.

It is supposed that the school is thoroughly organized at this first meeting, that all have prayerfully consecrated themselves to the work, that the lessons have been assigned and will be well studied during the next week, and on the following Sabbath day they will assemble with joyful hearts to praise God and learn of Jesus.

The following is a suitable plan for the exercises of Sunday Schools in our country churches:

OPEN AT 9 O'CLOCK, A. M.—CLOSE AT 11

EXERCISES.

1. Sing some hymn in which all can join.
2. Read a portion of scripture.
3. Offer up a short prayer.
4. Teachers hear their classes.
5. Addresses or remarks to encourage the school.
6. General exercises in singing.
7. Dismiss with short prayer or benediction.

That a Sunday School may prosper and continue, it is important not to have the exercises too long. A session of two hours is long enough for

any school. When the exercises are too long the children become wearied, and soon feel an inclination to spend the Sabbath in some other way. In spring 9 o'clock, and in winter 10, in the morning, is a convenient hour to open. Singing seems to be the first and most natural exercise in opening. The hymn should be adapted to children and such as is easily sung by them. A number of such can be found in the Sunday School Hymn Books. The reading should consist of a portion of scripture not exceeding thirty verses. The New Testament should be read connectedly in these opening exercises. Beginning at the first of one of the Four Gospels, it should be read through. The whole school may read with the superintendent, he reading the first verse and the school the next. Suppose the scripture to be read is the third chapter of Matthew, the superintendent reads, 1 "*In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea,*" whole school reads, 2 "*And saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Where most of the children have Testaments, this mode of reading best secures their attention.

The prayer should be short, and appropriate to the occasion. It should consist of thanks to God for the many advantages the young have of obtaining religious knowledge, with petitions for divine aid to make the gospel the power of God unto the salvation of those who receive it. Children, feeling no interest in long and inappropriate prayers, lose their patience and become restless.

The prayer ended, the superintendent announces that the teachers will now hear their classes, on which they begin their work. It is supposed that the classes have well prepared their lessons during the previous week. If so, the teacher will have only to hear them recite and impart oral instruction. Many teachers think that, when they have heard their classes recite their lessons, their

work is done; but this is not all of their business. The teacher should become a kind of preacher to his class. Having carefully prepared his mind for the occasion, he should lecture the children by way of explaining the lesson and impressing its truths on the mind of each child. He should cause the class to commit to memory important parts of the Bible, such as the Lord's prayer, the Ten Commandments, and many of the Psalms of David. He should talk to them about *sin and salvation through the blood of Christ*, about repentance, faith and baptism. He would do well to tell them of Abel and Cain, Noah and Lot, all the Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, and dwell much on the character and life of our Saviour. The children should be required to memorize a hymn every week. If the teacher will be careful to impart such truths as the above, he will have the pleasure of seeing his class grow in religious knowledge, and, under the blessing of God, become meet for the kingdom of heaven.

After the time allotted to the teachers is over, it is well for the superintendent, or some one else, on each meeting of the school, to make a short address, or remarks not only to instruct, but to encourage the school. In these remarks, he should refer to the rules of good behavior, *censure* or praise the children for bad or good conduct, speak of the flourishing or declining condition of the school, and stimulate the children to greater zeal in behalf of the Sunday School. Anecdotes from the Bible, or elsewhere, should be related to please and impress the children with truth. Suppose that the superintendent tell the children that on the next Sabbath he will relate the story of "*Samuel anointing the son of Jesse to be king in Israel.*" Next Sabbath arrives and the children are anxious to hear the story. The speaker begins thus:

"Children, there was a time when

God determined to have a new king to rule over His people, the Jews. He told the old prophet Samuel to go down to Bethlehem and anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king. Samuel filled his horn with oil and went. When he got there, he told Jesse to gather up all his sons and come up to the place of sacrifice.—Jesse took all his sons, except the youngest, and went. When he got to the place where the prophet was, Samuel looked at one of the boys, a tall, fine looking fellow, and said surely this is the one, 'the Lord's anointed.' But he was mistaken; and God reproved Samuel for judging according to outward appearance and not according to the heart. Jesse then sent another son before the prophet; and he was rejected. He passed a third before Samuel; and he was rejected, also. Thus he caused seven sons, all that he brought, to pass before the man of God; but none of them would do. The prophet then said to Jesse, 'Are these all thy children?' Jesse said, no; there remaineth yet one more, the youngest, a little lad, whom I left at home to mind the sheep.—Samuel said, 'Go and bring him.' Jesse went and brought the lad. Now, he was a pretty, little, rosy-cheeked boy. And the Lord said unto the prophet, 'this is the one. Arise and anoint him.' Now, children, this little anointed one was *king David*.

"Children, when I think of Jesse's leaving his little son at home to mind the sheep, while he took the larger ones to the place of worship, it brings to mind those parents who send their large children to Sunday School, and leave the little ones at home. Little David was the very one whom God desired to meet at the place of worship. So the little children are those whom Jesus wishes to be brought to him. They are the very ones whom we wish to anoint as Sunday School scholars."

The last exercise is that of sing-

ing, than which there is none more important. Singing, such as is adapted to children, is the very life of a Sunday School. About a half an hour; just before the school is dismissed, should be spent in singing.

CONCLUSION.

"We will, in conclusion, mention a few other things which are necessary to the prosperity of a Sunday School. It is very important that persons should rightly understand the true nature of Sunday Schools. We sometimes hear persons speaking of the utility of these schools in the following manner: "I am glad you expect to get up a Sunday School here. My children have never had the chance to go to school much; but now I can send them, and they will get learning without any cost." Now, it is wrong to regard the Sunday School as a means of obtaining worldly wisdom only. It is sinful—it is making a secular use of, and breaking the holy Sabbath to use it for this purpose. God will not prosper a school of this kind. *The great design of the Sunday School is to impart religious truth, and to be a means of converting the souls of our children.* They should be taught to spell and read in our Sunday Schools; but only as a means of their conversion.

It is all important that the minister, who is the supply or pastor of the church, should take much pains to encourage and prosper the Sunday School. We have asked preachers if they had Sunday Schools in all their churches, when the reply was, "I do not know." Now, this want of interest in the welfare of children and the Sunday School cause is a grievous fault in our pastors. They ought to watch over and feed the *lambs*. It is the duty of each pastor to organize and encourage a Sunday School in each of his churches. If he cannot attend oftener, he can, at least, cheer the school by his pres-

ence, his smiles and kind word, on his regular days for preaching. Let him meet early on these Sunday mornings, and go around and shake hands with the teachers and children, dropping sweet words as he goes, and it will inspire the whole school with new life.

It is very important to the prosperity of a Sunday School that the parents take a deep interest in its welfare. Many of them can become teachers. Others who cannot, will be able to aid their children at home in preparing their lessons. They will also go as often as possible with their children, and thus be of great benefit to the cause.

The Sunday School is the offspring of the church; it, therefore, becomes all the members to give their influence in its behalf. It should be an

object of their prayers. They should remember that *this* and all other human means will be in vain without the blessing of God.

It is quite a hinderance to the Sunday School cause, that many of our schools discontinue during winter.—If a convenient room, which can be warmed, is attainable, there is no good reason for suspending during cold weather. Children will spend the coldest Sabbaths outdoors if left at home. They go to school during the week in cold weather—why not to the Sunday School? It is better to continue during winter with only a few than to encounter all the difficulties of a new beginning every spring, or the danger of the school never rising. Let all our schools make the experiment during the coming winter.

DUTIES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.

In a prize essay on Sabbath Schools, by Elder George B. Taylor, we see the *duties and encouragements* of the Sabbath School teacher so well discussed that we insert it in our periodical, and recommend it to the Sunday School teachers who are anxiously enquiring for light and encouragement in their work:

"We like to regard the teacher as the pastor of his class. Certainly, we can think of no duty incumbent upon a pastor which does not devolve upon the teacher in his sphere. We take it that the first duty of a newly settled minister is to become acquainted with his flock, to know the names, the faces, the residences, and, as far as possible, the characters of those whom he is to serve. To this end, he provides himself with a list of their names and residences, he visits them and encourages them to visit

him. Nor is he satisfied with that acquaintance which results from a single interview. It is the business of his whole pastoral career to know his people, to know them as individuals, that he may be able to sympathize with them and provide them instruction adapted to their necessities—to secure their confidence and affection, that he may be able to influence them and do them good. All this is the duty no less of a Sabbath School teacher to his class. He should know his scholars, their names faces and characters, and visit them at their homes, not merely when they are absent from school, but at other times, and for the sake of securing that affection which is the surest avenue for the exertion of a good influence. He should know them when he meets them on the street or on the road, and should never fail to stop for a kind encouraging word.

He should manifest a lively sympathy for them in all their pursuits and difficulties. In short, he should be—and he would then be *known* to be, in every sense, a warm friend. Possessed of this character and reputation, his influence over his scholars would be well nigh irresistible, and might, under the blessing of God, be used in bringing them to Christ.

It is generally, and very properly regarded the duty of the christian pastor, punctually to occupy his pulpit, and to come always prepared to address his congregation. It would be deemed the worst of folly for a man recklessly to disappoint his people by failing to preach, or for him to come without previous study, trusting entirely to what might occur to him on the occasion. Not all other excellencies could long save such a man from the neglect which he would so richly deserve. But is the Sabbath School teacher under much less obligation to be punctual in attendance and to prepare for teaching his class? Does not he equally with the minister assume to be a religious instructor? If the obligation be less in degree, is it not, at least, similar in kind? Nor is fidelity less obligatory because the service is gratuitous. Legally, we know, a contract in which there is no consideration, is not binding; but, morally, the voluntary assumption of any office imposes an obligation to fidelity which pecuniary considerations could scarcely enhance. The Sabbath School teacher, then, should regard it not merely as a matter of expediency, but of solemn duty, punctually to fulfill his engagements with his class. He should be always at his post, and always there in time. Thus would he attest his interest in his work, and afford a suitable example to those who naturally look up to him. When compelled to be absent, he should, if possible, secure a substitute, or at least communicate to his class, and to the superintendent, the fact of his

unavoidable detention. In like manner, he should, by suitable study, prepare for communicating the instruction he professes to give. It is, perhaps, a natural, but it is certainly a very great mistake, to suppose that youth, and especially children, can be interested, and instructed, without previous preparation, better than grown people could be; just the reverse is true. In some sense, and to some good degree, adequately to interest the young, requires more talent and effort than to perform the same services for the old. And he cannot be, in the highest sense, a successful Sunday School teacher who does not, both with all needful helps and pains-taking, study the lesson, and, besides, exert himself to find subjects of interest to present to his class. We are quite well aware that we are but making particular application of a principle of universal applicability, that there is no excellence without labor, no high success without attention and anxious effort. We remember to have seen one of Punch's pictures which struck us as not without deep significance. An "exquisite" has just turned from his glass with his cravat exquisitely tied. His companion surveys him with admiring attention, when the following dialogue ensues: "Tom, how do you get such a tie?" "Why, the fact is, Bill, you see, I give my whole mind to it." Yes, truly, there is nothing we do, from tying a cravat up to teaching a Sabbath School class, in which we can hope to succeed, unless, for the time, we give our whole mind to it.

Let, then, the Sabbath School teacher make it a matter of conscience to prepare to instruct and interest his class. Let him not only answer and explain the questions in the question-book, (which it is taken for granted he uses) but let him add questions of his own, and encourage his scholars to ask him questions. To do this, he must use his Bible Dictionary, Commentary, his Biblical

Atlas, and, perhaps, frequently resort to his pastor. He must take time and trouble—he must give his mind to the work of preparation—must seek light from above. Let him also, fired with the desire of communicating instruction, exert himself during the session of the school to interest his class; discarding every thought of ennui, every feeling of sloth, and using all earnestness and vivacity of manner, occupy all the time allotted for the exercise. If he will do this, he will find a rich reward in the pleasure of the work itself, in the benefit secured to his own mind, and in that conferred on his scholars.

But the main duty of the christian pastor, the one to which all others are subservient, is to watch for souls—to watch for them as one that must give account. To this end, he visits; to this end he delivers divine truth from the sacred desk. And shall the Sabbath School teacher aim at less than this? Of what avail is it that a routine of exercises be mechanically pursued—nay, that the Sabbath morning be pleasantly spent—nay, even that much wholesome instruction be conveyed, if the hearts of the scholars remain unaffected, and their souls unsaved? O! no; the end is the conversion and the salvation of the scholars. With nothing short of this, then, should the Sabbath School teacher be satisfied. At this, then, he should aim. Men rarely do great good by accident. This may sometimes be the cause, but the rule is that men do what they intend and directly attempt. The laws which pertain to cause and effect, hold as truly and as much in religion as in worldly things. If the teacher really seeks the conversion of those committed to his charge, he will use the divinely appointed means for securing this blessed result. He will deal not in mere generalities, but will bring the fundamental truths of the gospel frequently to the view of his class. He will press these truths earnestly upon their hearts. He will address

them individually about their souls, and tenderly and urgently warn them to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek the blessed Saviour. Above all, conscious that converting power is lodged with God alone, he will often and fervently pray that that power may be exerted on his scholars. He who thus feels, and thus acts, may hope not only to have an intelligent, affectionate group of scholars but, with the blessing of God, to make them wise unto salvation, and loving disciples of the Lord Jesus.

We have thus spoken of the teacher as the pastor of his class. But there are other relations which the teacher sustains, which have no analogous ones in the position of a pastor. We mean the relations to the other teachers and to the superintendent of the schools. We may very briefly say all that is needful on this point. The teachers, being engaged in a common work, should, of course, co-operate as far as possible with each other. They should also co-operate with the superintendent in all his plans for the conduct of the school, paying due deference to the authority which belongs to him from his official station. This last is exceedingly important to the good order of the school, since the scholars are apt to imitate the teachers in this respect."

If there are any encouragements to sweeten the labors of the faithful pastor, then, as the office of the Sunday School teacher is similar to that of the pastor, their encouragements are of the same kind. The faithful pastor is encouraged to labor on, patiently waiting for his reward, which is nothing less than the souls of his congregation. He sows in tears, expecting to reap in joy. He strives to turn many to righteousness, remembering the divine promise, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." The faithful teacher may look for the same reward in glory.

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