

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH AND THE YOUNG AFTER THE REFORMATION

WE now come to the times which followed the Reformation. We do not give a history of education in any part of the United Kingdom. A few general statements must suffice. We shall speak of the general school system in England and Scotland.

The subject of Education in ENGLAND is at present a burning one, and not easy to discuss without trenching on politics, with which we have no concern. England has long been distinguished by great public schools, where, it is said, the exceptional few receive impulses and guidance which make them scholars of high attainment before they go to the University, and where the great mass of the boys and youths acquire perhaps little definite knowledge, but are taught manliness, with its virtues of courtesy and truthfulness. The public or parochial schools of England had not the same position, nor did they fill the same place, as the parish schools of Scotland. There were two societies with widely spread schools: the British and Foreign School Society,

in which the Bible and Bible morality were taught; and the National Society, connected with the Church of England, and teaching the principles of the Church of England. The enormous growth of population made all the schools entirely and visibly inadequate in numbers; and many voluntary efforts were made to increase their number up to the needed figure, the National Church taking a conspicuous lead, until about a half of the pupils at school in England were in Church schools. In A.D. 1870 a political compromise was effected by which the Church was to retain the management of her schools, to which, however, Government grants were paid according to the number of the pupils. Instead of rates those Church schools were further dependent on voluntary contributions. There is difficulty in maintaining this compromise, as a large party objects on abstract principle to the State supporting Church schools, and a large party objects on the specific ground that the Church of England makes her schools not national but denominational by teaching her formularies in them, and filling them with a "Ritualistic" atmosphere. It does not seem possible to maintain religious education unless by connection with a church, and accordingly many are now proposing to banish all specific religious teaching from the national schools. It is a sad controversy, with issues far deeper than the political controversy estimates.¹

The Reformation brought into prominence the duty

¹ The latest attempt to settle the educational difficulty in England was an Act of Parliament passed in 1904 giving Church

of the Church towards the children. Nowhere was the duty more thoroughly understood than in SCOTLAND. The *First Book of Discipline* contains Knox's views of the National Duty. They are the views of a statesman. It proposed (as we saw before, page 111) that the ancient revenues of the Church should be divided into three parts, and devoted to the maintenance of the ministry, the education of youth, and the support of the poor. The allowance to be made to ministers from the third devoted to them was moderate, the provision for the poor was wisely conditioned by the Apostolic requirement that the able-bodied were to work for their bread, while the aged and infirm were to be the charge of the parish of their birth. As to the third for education, a school was to be attached to every church; a grammar school or college was to be erected in every large town; a large endowment was to be given to the three Scottish Universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen (Edinburgh had no university at that time). But the barons and lords, and the many pensioners of the old Popish Church, kept hold of the revenues, and the scheme of national education, like the rest of this liberal programme, was never fully carried out. It was not the fault of the Protestant Church that the reality fell far short of the dream. The ideal floated before men's minds for three centuries, and the Parochial Schools of Scotland were an approximation schools under certain restrictions and safeguards a share of the rates. This has led to a bitter controversy, many Nonconform-

ists refusing to pay such rates, and some large districts refusing to carry out the Act.

to it, maintained by a tax upon landowners and tenants and the levying of very moderate fees from the children. The whole scheme of education was superintended and developed by the Church. The greater part of the new schools built in lately previous years to meet the wants of new population in mining districts, or in the outlying parts of large parishes, was either provided by the Church or connected with the National Church, though erected by private enterprise. The present system is the result of an Act of Parliament passed in 1872. While in the Act there is no provision for religious teaching, there is in the Preamble due recognition of its importance. Under this Preamble many schools maintain, as "use and wont," religious instruction. There is no provision in the Act for securing the religious profession of the teachers. It is, in short, the severance of the school from the Church—from all Churches. The system was for long made intolerable by what was called "payment by results"—the results ascertained by a hasty visit of a Government inspector separately examining every pupil. It is now somewhat improved, separate examination is discontinued, and the inspector reports on the general character and tone of the school. The result of the Act upon teachers has been much better pay and a greater sense of drudgery. The result upon the pupils has been that if they wish to proceed beyond the elements of education they must go to a "secondary school" in some city or town.

To complete the outline of the history of schools

in connection with the State in England and Scotland we have anticipated.

To recur to the early work of the Church. There were curious deep-reaching controversies whether a child was saved in baptism by his own faith or by that of his sponsors, or by that of the church into which he was baptized. But it was admitted that Baptism established a relation between the child and the Church, and that, in virtue of that relation, it was the duty of the Church to take measures for the instruction of its young members, "who were received into the bosom of Christ's congregation."¹ "Of necessitie is it that your honours be most careful for the vertuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm;" "of necessitie we judge it that every several church have one schoolmaster appointed."² Not that the parents were excused from their own duties. "It is your duty, with all diligence, to provide that your children in time convenient be instructed in all doctrine necessarie for a true Christian."³ The School and the Home were expected to work together for this end; and the schoolmaster was a subordinate official of the Church.

So long, therefore, as this was realised, the Church might be regarded as in some sense discharging her duty to her children. Whether she had any public and special service for them on Sunday was a matter of detail, although the propriety of such a service seems

¹ *Book of Common Order*, chap. ix. p. 188 (ed. 1836).

² *First Book of Discipline*, vii. i. 1, 2.

³ *Book of Common Order*, chap. ix. p. 188 (ed. 1836).

obvious. One can further understand that a Church might refuse to organise or to conduct Sunday Schools on the ground that they were a device to relieve parents on the one hand, and schoolmasters on the other, from their responsibility for the godly upbringing of the young. One can see how a General Assembly (A.D. 1799) might object to children being set for training under Sunday teachers whose own qualifications had never been tested by examination, when ample provision for their instruction had been made by the Church through her own qualified schoolmasters; and, further, how it might warn parents against delegating their duties to persons whom the Church had never authorised.

But, nevertheless, Sabbath Schools waxed and grew during the decades of the nineteenth century, and they must be regarded as the modern Church's attempt to discharge her duty to the children. As the State increases its hold on the week-day schools, and diminishes the amount of religious education, there is thrown upon the Church an increasing responsibility. The case for Sunday Schools is not put on the strongest ground when such schools are regarded as substitutes for parental training; their defence is from the side of the Church, not from that of the home. And it is the same with Children's Churches, Children's Guilds, Boys' Brigades, and all other devices for bringing the young up in attachment to the Gospel and the Saviour. It is easy to see, and if need be to show, how they tend to mislead parents who rest upon them, and so regard themselves as relieved from their own obligations to

train their children. It is easy on the other hand to reply that, as a matter of fact, fathers and mothers are leaving their children to grow up uncared for, and that the Christian homes from which children are beguiled into the excitement of those classes and bands are homes in the air, things of romance, but not found in actual fact; and that, in short, if children did not get good influence in the schools, they would have to grow up without it. This endless debate may be carried on, but the ultimate truth has to be considered and not overlooked, that those institutions are the Church's portion of the needed work, and not a substitute for home training at all.

The Church's portion will vary with circumstances, and it seems clear that in many cases the Church must take a larger view of her duty to the young in populous and careless districts. In those densely-populated regions every Sunday School teacher knows that many of his pupils attend three or four schools, some five,—I have known a case of seven,—with this result that lessons are prepared for none of the teachers, and the moral influence of each school is almost nullified. Many have advocated an arrangement between churches, whereby the Sunday Schools shall meet at the same hour, and the peripatetic pupil find no open door in another when one is closed upon him. But is not the deeper question stirred as to what becomes of the poor child when doors are thus closed? He has gone to all those schools because he liked them better than the alternative of staying at home, or hanging about the grim and

grimy streets without even an open shop-window to enliven his weariness. It is a shallow sneer that says he goes to the Sunday School for the "treats," twice a year or so, for he finds a treat every week in the welcome and the warmth and the restful shelter. Might not, then, the churches, besides keeping the same hours, try to keep the children occupied in the same place the greater part of the Lord's Day? Not for constant lessons by any means, but for readings to them, for singing, for such entertainment, in the spirit of the Gospel, as would make the Holy Day be expected with eager joy, and be felt as training for this life and the life beyond. It would need relays of good people from the congregation to maintain such an institution, but I believe it not only could be done, but would be easily worked. I have tried it with success in a poor district.

In connection with the Church also there might well be a children's service every week in church, with the minister in the pulpit, and everything adapted to the purpose. It is true that many ministers have not the gift of preaching to children, but all who try have found that young hearts take the will for the deed, and are so pleased when we take pains for them that the pains become a pleasure, and the task to the preacher grows easier with each new attempt. Though some congregations are supposed to grudge that their ministers preach to the children, it is soon found that many of the aged draw comfort from sermons to the young, and that many ministers have learned how to teach simply and clearly from having tried to keep the

attention of the children. "The exercise of children in every church shall be great instruction to the aged and unlearned."¹

In all this there might be use made of Christians of all ages, and even of children. If the children of some model home were to be accustomed to do work on Sunday, instead of merely having all done for them, a lesson of the joy of self-sacrifice would be learned of infinite value. Who has not seen with poignant pain that when some good man was driven by what he believed to be his duty to spend his time in good works away from his home, his own children were neglected, and weeds grew in their lives because no flowers were tended! And might not that good man have often had them with him, so that they shared or imitated his delightful labours, and with their books or pictures or magazines were entertaining friendless little waifs while he was speaking to the adult outcasts? For it seems to be a law of life that when a father lets his children share his own enthusiasm, whether its sphere be politics, or work, or religion, they grow up in his likeness and reproduce his character. But it cannot be so if he is harassed when with them, and usually taken away from them, by the claims of some unknown avocation whose echoes and traces they learn to fear with weariness. One other point has to be noted. It is impossible to defend Sunday Schools where is neither training nor testing of the teachers. Mere kindness, a moral life, some knowledge of the Bible are indispens-

¹ *First Book of Discipline*, vii. 3.

able, but they are not all. "Apt to teach" is a fair translation of the meaning of St. Paul's requirement for "Elders," and it is clearly needed for the teacher of the young. There might be a Guild of Teachers who have been tested, and even trained, and it might be an object of honourable ambition for members of the Church to be enrolled in that Guild. As in the Wesleyan Church the training might be found in trial and experiment. It would naturally follow that the school should be visited and actually examined by the Presbytery or some appointed delegates of that Court in Scotland, by the Bishop or some delegate of his in England. Of England I speak with hesitation, because of very limited knowledge, but in Scotland I am sure that it would be a great blessing to Presbyteries to take such charge of the work for the young done in the several parishes within the bounds. The unity of the corporate Church is weakened and like to perish when an incumbent or minister is left to his own devices for doing or avoiding work, without supervision. Strong testimony to the power of public opinion, to the "increasing purpose" running through the ages, is found in the fact that silently, but very really, the Church of Christ in every branch and denomination is adopting very similar plans for doing its duty to the young. If we are told to leave it all to the Law of Growth, we must reply that the Law of Growth does not supersede Gardening, but calls for it.