

**The Indispensableness of Early Religious Culture to the Perma-
nency and Prosperity of American Institutions.**

**THE
ANNUAL SERMON**

**IN BEHALF OF THE
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.**

APRIL 5, 1859.

**BY
REV. CHARLES WADSWORTH, D.D.**

**PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
1122 CHESTNUT STREET.**

NEW YORK DEPOSITORY: 375 BROADWAY.

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SUNDAY-SCHOOL BENEVOLENCE.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

ALL well-conducted Sunday-schools have some plan for *training* the children to *habits* of beneficence. Intelligent Superintendents and Teachers feel this to be an important part of *Christian Education*.

Its *present* influence upon the child is *good*. It settles the fact in his mind that there are those whose condition deserves pity; and thus his *sympathies* are excited. *Gratitude* for his privileges and blessings is inspired, and a motive presented for *generosity*. A distinct view of God's distinguishing goodness to *him* may lead him to *repentance*. The practice of liberal giving in the Sunday-school will have a happy influence upon the *future* life of the child. The liberal child will make a liberal man. If the Church is ever to have a membership practically acknowledging the principle of gospel stewardship, this principle must be instilled into the minds and hearts of the children who are soon to be its members.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS SHOULD HELP SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

We do not say that, under all circumstances, the contributions of Sunday-schools should go to the establishment of other Sunday-schools; but we are constrained to say that there is no more *appropriate* work for our schools than to provide Sunday-school instruction for the neglected children of our own country.

1. The work is of sufficient *magnitude* to demand the co-operation of all our Sunday-schools. Three or four millions of our American youth have no Sunday-schools, or other means of religious instruction. Some counties with a large population have not a single school, and many other counties have very few. Multitudes of American children are growing up in practical heathenism.

2. To plant and sustain Sunday-schools is a work that children can *understand*. Their personal knowledge and weekly privileges show them just what is implied in planting a Sunday-school where none now exist.

3. The results or *fruits* of this form of benevolence are *plain*, and the *returns quick*. Children, especially, need to *know* that they are doing good *now*, that they may not be discouraged, but stimulated to do more. We cannot expect children to have the faith and patience of men and women.

4. Planting Sunday-schools costs, comparatively, little money, and the little that children have to give may, in this work, do great good.

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SERMON.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain :

"In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

"And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low."

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1-4.

THE man who, now or hereafter, rises to advocate the American Sunday-School Union, must at the outset humble himself out of all self-conceit of originality, and, as a gleaner after gleaners, saying things which have been already said and perhaps better, only reiterate those familiar truths which his hearers will be sure to regard either as platitude or plagiarism.

On such an occasion we have no need of a text

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as involving a theme for elaborate exposition. The occasion presents its own subject. It was the wont of the great Preacher to use as texts God's unwritten oracles. A bird, a flower, a city on a hill, a fruitless fig-tree,—these were subjects of his earnest discourse. And we would to-night imitate his example.

The American Sunday-School Union is a great thought of God flung before us for consideration. And upon it, as an unwritten revelation, we would discourse simply and humbly.

The portion of Sacred Scripture I have read is, therefore, not for elaborate exposition, but as an inspired illustration of the grand principle which this association rests upon and develops. The design of the inspired penman in these verses, is to set forth *the wisdom of early piety*.

This he does by metaphorical representations of the disadvantages under which religious culture must be begun in the later periods of life.

The first figure is taken from the meteorology of the seasons in the land of Judea. There the weather in spring is in general bright and fair,—seldom foul or cloudy. The day is genial with sunshine, the night lustrous with moon and stars. But the winter is a season of wild inclemency: thick clouds obscure the heavens, the rain pours heavily upon the cheerless and seething landscape, and though now and then there may be a momentary lull of the storm, a partial lifting of the shadows, a struggling sunburst, a fitful flash of stars, yet the promise disappoints us: the clouds return

again, the storm rages. And such are the contrasts between youth and old age: the one is the spring-time, when the husbandman can work; the other, the winter, when he must repose. And the man who hath not remembered his Creator in the days of his youth finds that with the buoyancy, the hope, the anticipation of his young life, have passed his advantages for religious culture, and that amid the gloom and despondency of age that culture is like winter husbandry, when the sun is darkened and the earth swept by storms.

The other figure is military: the language is descriptive of a beleaguered fortress, whose bravest defenders have been slain or are sadly weakened by watching and hunger; whose keepers tremble; whose menials, grinding corn for food, cease in despair; whose walls are in ruins; whose doors and windows are kept darkly closed, and the voices of music hushed through fearful despondency; whose trembling watchmen are startled, as at a foeman's tread, by the very voice of the wild bird that builds its nest in the crumbling battlements, and which only awaits the final assault to be carried by storm and given up to destruction.

The interpretation of the figure is apparent. In youth the heart was as a stronghold nobly garrisoned: many a gentle and graceful instinct was there, as an angel-guard against evil, and the soul with comparative ease might have been sentinelled for virtue. But, as the man grew in years, passions strengthened within, and temptations pressed sorely without. And when age comes, the immortal fort-

ress is a scene of despondency and terror: its bulwarks have been beaten down; its resources are exhausted; its strong men bow themselves; its hopes of ultimate deliverance have wellnigh perished, and the soul seems about to be given up to the power of the destroyer. Both figures teach the same truth: they set forth an earnest argument for religious culture; for the active toil of the *spiritual* husbandman when the sun shines in the genial spring-time; for the earnest watch and ward of the *spiritual* soldier before the walls of the fortress are battered and the garrison slain under the fierce assault of the besieging foemen.

Now, this is just the truth which this Christian association rests upon and develops:—*The importance of early religious culture.*

Let us consider it in some simple practical aspects, as it has to do with *the Individual; the Nation; and the Church of Christ.*

First, with the Individual. The Sunday-school system assumes and acts upon the truth *that the best time for true moral culture and for genuine religious conversion is the season of early youth.* That a principle lying confessedly at the foundation of all physical and intellectual development, so that a man's life takes its character and complexion from the training of childhood, should lie as well at the foundation of the true religious culture; and that children, instead of necessarily growing up in iniquity, may be, and should be, from the first, trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Let us not be misunderstood here. We have surely no sympathy with the notion that a child, however carefully trained, would, without the divine work of regeneration, grow up to be experimentally a Christian. Education is, as the word itself denotes, not an *infusion*, but an *eduction*; not a quality imparted, not a grace added, but a pre-existent principle brought forth, strengthened, developed. If the nature be depraved and unholy, no education can change it. As the innate ferocity of the lion's whelp will surely display itself in the monster's maturity, so the native carnality of the child's heart will have its development in actual sinfulness.

Men may philosophize as they will upon the possibility of educating children out of all that is evil and into all that is good. Nevertheless, the concurrent testimony of all time proves that, spite of all mere moral culture, every child of the human race has grown up a sinner. And this not because of any educational deficiencies, but for the simple reason that the child is of a race constitutionally sinful. Train a young tiger as you would a lamb, amid green fields and sweet pastoral vales, led by day and folded at night by the loving care of a shepherd, and yet, when its sinew has waxed strong, if in your sport with that pet tiger his fang break the skin of your finger and one drop of your blood fall on his hot tongue, then, with flashing eye and a wild roar, he will be upon you in his strength and rend you in pieces. The lamb will grow up a lamb; the lion, a lion. The physio-

logical and psychological principles of species are, spite of all modification by culture, positive and permanent in their essential character.

And train up a child as you will,—let angels rock its cradle, and bear it in their hands, lest its young feet stumble,—nevertheless, just because it has a human nature, the *φύσις*, the *ψυχή*, the *πνεῦμα*, of the species, it will grow up to be a *man*, and not to be an *angel*, and will still need the miracle of regenerating grace, if it grow up a Christian.

And yet this philosophic truth affects not the play of the grand law we are considering. All sacred and profane biographies, all observation, all experience, alike set forth the fearfulness of the error that will leave childhood to grow up in wickedness with the hope and prayer that by-and-by divine grace will convert it.

Unquestionably does God desire the training of children from their cradle in ways of holiness; and as unquestionably there is a style of Christian culture, differing essentially from natural culture, termed "*the nurture and admonition of the Lord*," which God himself has instituted and so promised to bless to the conversion of its subjects. Be our theory of human depravity or of regeneration what it may, there is nothing in it which conflicts with this statement. If the Holy Ghost work immediately or directly upon the soul, then that energy will more probably be exerted before the conscience has been seared by iniquity and the heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. All natural analogies lead us to expect this; and the

fine metaphors of the text are a divine warrant for deducing from physical analogies the principles of God's operations in the economy of grace.

Or, if the Holy Spirit operates mediately or through the instrumentality of truth, requiring, as conditional to regeneration, that truth be received and apprehended, still the same expectation remains; for the truth whose comprehension is necessary to saving faith, being among the simplest of all moral truths, can be apprehended by the child as early as its educational life begins. The child old enough to understand natural obligations can understand as well spiritual obligations. If it can grieve at a father's displeasure, and trust to a mother's love, and turn from childish disobedience to seek parental forgiveness, then it does understand all the philosophy of religion involved in repentance and duty and faith.

Indeed, we go further than this, and maintain that, even intellectually received, or as forms of doctrine, the truths necessary to salvation are best apprehended in childhood; that the intellectual opinions or judgments little children form of high theological mysteries are nearer to the realities, and so truer, than the metaphysical elaborations of the ambitious rabbis of theology. For example, I come to one of these men of academic erudition, and I ask, "*What is God?*" and he answers, "God is a self-existent, independent, absolute, infinite Spirit; without emotions, for emotion implies succession; without dwelling-place, for pure spirit has no relations to position; with-

out, indeed, any resemblances or analogies by which we can figure or conceive of him. Now, this may be all very profound and philosophic, but, alas! not very comforting.

God is what? An absolute and infinite *Spirit!* Ah me! that mysterious and awful word *Spirit!* No marvel that the disciples on Tiberias were troubled, as through the wild night came a wondrous form walking on the billows, and they thought it was "*a spirit.*"

And so, when I look forth on the immensities of the universe, struggling to behold the invisible and to compass the incomprehensible, and, catching glimpses as it were of an absolute and infinite Spirit, am told that it is God, then I startle and stand back in the wild night, as the mighty seas roar around me, as from the forthgoing of some awful and incomprehensible Phantom.

But, sick of this vain searching to find out God unto perfection, I turn from the school of the rabbi, and find me a little child, happy and trustful in its unambitious and earnest instincts. And I say again, "*What is God?*" And the child answers, "*God is my Heavenly Father.*"

And I know better now, for I know as much as I can know now. God the Spirit is my Father in heaven.

I go to the theologian and say, "*Sir, what is heaven?*" and he answers me with learned discourses about essences, and elements, and developments, and adaptations,—with physical theories of another life, and intellectual and moral theories,

till the heaven to which I had so fondly looked as an enrapturing reality seems to me now, in its ethereal refinement, such an unfamiliar realm of unsubstantial spirituality, that I recoil from its glorious gates as if they opened only upon the spheres of immortal life weird and spectral. But I turn again to my child-teacher, and I ask, *What is Heaven?* And the child answers, "Heaven is my home beyond the grave; Heaven is my Father's house of many mansions;" and I know better now.

These are a child's answers. *God is my Heavenly Father! Heaven is my glorious Home.* And these answers are more in accordance with the words of Jesus, and so truer to the grand realities, than all the profound deliverances of philosophy.

And we might affirm this same thing in regard to all the grand truths fundamental to Salvation.

Nay, we might go much further, and show it to be not unlikely that the undeveloped mind of the child, in its metaphysical analysis, is, more than the mind matured under philosophic culture, a type of the life that peoples immortality.

We do not say that what we term the intellectual faculties as distinguished from the moral, being conditional to earthly life, do really, as apparently, decay in old age, falling off as only rudimental to immortality. We do not say this; for, so far as we can judge, our intellectual are indispensable to our moral powers, and must go with us to eternity. But this we do say, that our present intellectual exercises, subordinate to moral

culture in toilsome search after knowledge, will not be needed in the after-life.

Newton has not ascended to glory to pursue there his old scientific researches, and to spell out, as on earth, with glasses and calculus, the laws and processes of creation, and to pace it, as it were, with slow intellectual footsteps, in laborious measurement of the universe. No! he has gone rather as a little child taught by a parent, to sit in adoring faith in the Divine presence, and learn directly from God of the immensities of creation and the laws that govern it.

The old giants of theology have not gone to their eternal home to search either the broad fields of nature or the brighter page of revelation, for the deep thoughts of God seen as through a glass darkly. No! they have gone, all of them, to sit as little children at the heavenly Father's feet, while he teaches them, by mysterious and direct communication, all wonderful knowledge, as the truth is in Jesus.

Ah me! that glorious oracle of God which declares that though in heaven there shall be no night, yet they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because God and the Lamb shall be the light thereof,—*i. e.*, that, though intellectually we shall be in no darkness, but shall see as we are seen and know as we are known, yet our knowledge will result from none of those painful intellectual exercises,—that faith and not science will be the law of the scholarship,—the darkness

being dispelled, not by finite instrumentality, but by the direct illumination of the Spirit of God.

There does seem in man's moral culture an analogy to vegetable development, the *first* and *last* conditions being alike,—the seed, after progress through flower and fruit, finding its last development again in the seed-form, and so the *emotional* of childhood, after its earthly intellectual struggles, reaching its last and highest condition again in the emotional. That in our higher after-state, as in our childhood, the moral will carry it over the intellectual; that, so to speak, the soul itself will be rather a trustful, loving *heart* than a cold understanding; and that here Christ's words have a literal significance, and even in the development of his intellectual faculties a man must become like a little child, or he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

But, be all this as it may, sure I am that there is nothing in any true theory, either of man's depravity or regeneration, antagonistic to the thought that a child should not be left to grow up in sin with a view to future and adult conversion, but ought, from its very cradle, to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And this is the truth this Society recognises and acts upon. Assuming the possibility of such heavenly training, it is urged on in its work by all the mightiest motives of time and eternity; by the solemn fact that so many die in childhood,—so that in any given case the fearful likelihood is that, if not converted early, there will be no con-

version; by the consideration that every hour's delay weakens the power of truth, by hardening the heart and searing the conscience, strengthens the controlling power of sinful habits, adds to the evil and takes from the good of the child's after-influence in his day and generation, shortens the earthly period of the soul's discipline and development in personal sanctification, diminishes positively the glories of immortality,—wherein the recompense of reward, though altogether of grace, is yet according to our works,—by motives, in a word, involving every consideration of the child's earthly and everlasting interests, and so urging to activity by the incalculable worth of the soul, and the grandeurs that make up eternity,—by all such motives is it urged to bring children, at the first dawning of intellectual and moral life, to the feet of Christ in repentance and faith.

This is this Society's grand aim and effort. Acting on the patent laws of God's universe, *it takes advantage of opportunities*. It brings gospel truth to bear upon the soul in its most impressible conditions. In the nursery and by the cradle-pillow it lifts the cross of the gracious Redeemer. It guides the *lambs* from moral wanderings, into the green pastures and by the still waters where the heavenly Shepherd leads. It scatters its holy literature as leaves from the tree of life in all their pleasant places. It pours into the story-loving ear the matchless tales of Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Gethsemane, and Calvary, and links all the clustering and tender

associations of childhood with the gracious truths of the oracles of God.

It acts, in a word, precisely on the principle of the text's metaphor. The years of early youth are the moral spring-time, and it plies its spiritual husbandry when the soil is soft and the sunshine genial, and delays not its work to the chill and stormy winter, when the light of the sun and the moon and the stars is darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. It has learned of Solomon to look upon the young heart as an immortal stronghold,—if not already watched and warded each with its angel, as, at least, more easily carried and garrisoned for heaven than in those later years when the man, given up to strong passions, hath no will over his own spirit, and is as a city that is broken down, without walls,—when the virtuous principles within are sadly weakened, and into evil habits has gone all the earnest strength of manhood,—so that the soul has its fitting emblem in a besieged fortress, exhausted of its resources and weakened in its defences, whose melodies are hushed, whose windows are darkened, whose battlements are unwarded, whose strong men bow themselves, while around the mighty hosts of evil pitch their encampments, and plant their ordnance, and advance their banners, preparing to carry it by fierce assault and give it up hopelessly to the destroyer.

And, learning this from Solomon, it would persuade that young heart to open its door to the Great Captain,—“to remember the Creator in the

days of youth, before the evil days come, when the keepers of the house shall tremble and the strong men shall bow themselves."

Now, although we have but just entered on the consideration of the importance of early religious culture as it has to do with the individual, yet we are pressed by the remainder of the subject, and go on to consider, as the second thing proposed,—

The importance of this principle in its reference to our nation.

Beyond all controversy, the American Sunday-School Union has, alike in design and results, a grand work to do in our national education. And had we the limits, it were easy to show the vast importance of that work even in its lowest aspect of simple mental cultivation, and, apart from its higher religious bearings, on this ground only we might build a strong argument and urge a resistless plea in behalf of your Society.

There are, at this very moment, large and rapidly increasing portions of our land depending on your Sunday-school missionaries and literature for their first and simplest rudiments of learning. So far in many cases has our immigrant and pioneer population gone in ignorance, as to despise and decry education, as an enervating and over refinement; and if in the midst of them these matchless civil franchises do not prove suicidal,—men casting into the ballot-box votes that they cannot read, and which, so far as they go, decide the destinies of the nation,—if all this do not happen, it will be only because these men have been taught the

alphabet in your schools and learned to read from your publications.

But we have no limits for this argument: our theme leads us to consider only the religious training of the nation,—to show how your Society looks upon America as yet in the years of its early youth, and labours to train its grand national life in this same nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In this labour, this Society acts upon the acknowledged truth that practical religion is necessary to national prosperity. This is true universally. No form of government is either self-creative or self-conserving; none has ever existed without a powerful and pervading religious element. A nation of atheists is simply impossible; because some divine sanction is essential to the influence of law, and obedience to law is the condition of national life. And so we find all the old pagan and philosophic builders of States resting their structures on the religious rock, and drawing from a theologic faith the strongest motives to political obedience. And if this be necessary in regard of national life slowly developed under armed despotism, how emphatically is it true of our life!

“Our nationality,” says an eloquent orator,* “is to an extraordinary degree not a growth, but a production. It had its origin in the will and the rea-

* Rufus Choate.

son, and so depends upon the will and the reason for its preservation."

And even this is not the whole of the truth. For the will and the reason which constructed our nationality were a will and a reason purely and practically Christian. Its authors and finishers were more than statesmen: their faith and hope rested not on political science and sagacity. They looked for its preservation to no power that was in it of itself, but ever, and only, to a power descending to it from on high. A constitution of self-government created by selfish will may be dissolved again by that same selfish will, hopelessly and forever; and the will and reason which would conserve a self-government must be essentially Christian. Our national edifice rests on two grand gospel truths,—the equality of human rights, and brotherly love equal to self-love,—the first resulting in our sectional and state self-respect, the other in our system of grand federal compromises.

Take away from us, therefore, our pervading evangelical influences, and we fall in pieces at once and forever. And what then? I speak not of such disseverance as it looks to the eye of statesmanship and philanthropy, but as regarded by enlightened Christianity. What is this American nationality as seen from the platform whereon we meet to-night,—the platform of a philanthropy broad, far-seeing, comprehensive, Christian? What, in our evangelical reckoning, is its worth and its mission,—seeing in it, as we must, a divine purpose of wisdom and love, working not hurriedly with

man's fiery and headlong progress, but in that great majestic patience, in those cycles of immense sweep, wherewith Jehovah ever achieves his deep counsels,—working by and through those convulsions of human passion that have rocked the cradles and dug the graves of old empires,—turning and overturning old systems for the establishment on their ruins of an everlasting kingdom whose monarch is God? Seeing this in our nationality,—judging from the marvellous providences that have guarded and glorified it, the marvels of its birth, the marvels of its preservation,—the opening here of a new continent for a new civilization,—from its grand central position on the earth, from the strong hold it has on the world's sympathies, from the contrasted condition of all other nations, the deep darkness of heathendom, the clouds that overshadow, the volcanoes that underlie old European Christendom, threatening to render it presently all missionary ground, or, at least, to leave it, amid political convulsions, only enough of Christian strength to keep aflame the disturbed fires on its own holy altars,—from the mighty influences and sources of influence which our land embodies, the power within us, and the power from on high that is descending upon us,—from all this, I say, judging that our nationality is the development of a glorious providential thought running through all time, God raising us up, and conserving, and rendering us mighty, with a purpose grander than all purposes of statesmanship, all dreams of philanthropy,—grand with the greatness of divine mercy in the

salvation of a race,—just that we may stand forth, in the embodiment of all moral power, God's mighty instrumentality to work out the world's political and evangelical redemption, the grand mount flung up amid the waste of generations, whence the apocalyptic angel, with the everlasting gospel of peace to men and glory to God in the highest, is to spring to his last embassy and take flight over a world,—thus seeing, thus judging, this nationality of ours seems worthy of preservation at all hazards, with all sacrifices, through all time,—not merely for its own sake, not merely for ours, not merely for our children's sake and that of our children's children for a hundred generations,—but preserved as well as a divine instrumentality for the salvation of a world, preserved for the love of Christ and for God's great glory.

And, thus reckoning its truth and ministry, this Society is working for its preservation, by underlaying its institutions with an adamant Christianity, training its young children for God and for glory, making the national character Christian in the only possible way,—as the composite of individual Christian character.

And in this work you are acting on the philosophic law of the text,—working with the nation, as with the individual, "*in the days of its youth.*" Here is the power and the promise of your labour. We are yet a young land. Amid the hoary and ancestral nationalities of the old continents, America, like a child of hopeful heart and undeveloped strength, keeps holiday in God's fields and rests in God's

cradle. A giant babe, indeed, a child of mighty bone and mighty muscle,—whose manhood will be as Samson's, rocking the pillars and bearing away the gates of the world's old despotisms,—nevertheless, only a child yet, its heart open, its character unformed, to be trained for God hopefully under this great law of early culture.

Speaking of the preservation of American nationality, says the same great orator we have quoted, "In training American patriotism, you must begin with the infant. Let the first word he lisps be Washington; tell him the story of the flag as it glitters along the road; bid him listen to the old-fashioned music of the Union; lead him at eventide to the grave of his great-grandfather, the old soldier of the war; bid him, like Hannibal at nine years old, lay his hand upon the Constitution and swear reverently to observe it; lift him up to the height of American feeling; show him on the map the area to which America has extended herself, the climates that come into the number of her months, the silver paths of her trade wide as the world; tell him of her contributions to humanity and her protests for free government; keep with him the glad and solemn feasts of her appointment; bury her great names in his heart; contemplate, habitually, lovingly, intelligently, this grand abstraction, this vast reality of good, and you will do much to transform this sentiment of surpassing beauty into a national life that shall last while the sun and moon endure."

Now, this is all said eloquently and well,—said as

a great statesman, as a true and pure patriot: still, it reaches not to the depth of our argument,—the true argument. It reached not, indeed, to the perfect application of the principle he had in hand as a statesman and a patriot: that principle was, the necessity, in the preservation of a nation, of reproducing and perpetuating “the first principles, the ancient freedom, the masculine virtues, the plain wisdom, of the original.” And surely it did not escape him that foremost among those first principles and masculine virtues on which our nationality was builded was *practical Christianity*.

It was not a love of man, but a love of God,—not a love of country, but a love of Christ overmastering and crucifying all love of country, a personal consecration to the gospel superior to all philanthropy, to all patriotism,—that planted the germs of our national life on Plymouth Rock and Jamestown.

Our nationality had its origin not in mere “will and reason,” but in a changed, Christianized, regenerated will and reason; and the will and reason that conserve it must remain regenerate and Christian. We have no faith in any philanthropy or patriotism, any sense of responsibility to country or to man, any lofty pride or profound sentiment of nationality, that takes not alike form and spirit from the gospel of Christ.

Those ministries of popular education which, as educating thought, imparting knowledge, strengthening the judgment, evolving practical statesmanship, deepening the old memories of a common past, pouring prophetic glories over a dazzling and

limitless future, producing or strengthening what the world calls civilization, philanthropy, love of country, popular liberty, loyalty to civil order as the old common law of the race, do, indeed, enlighten the natural will and reason,—such ministries are good in their sphere and place: they beautify the fabric of our freedom with things fair as the Ionic pillar at the portal and graceful as the fairy arch that spans it. But then, alas! they lay no eternal rock at the foundation: they are effects, and not causes,—rather decorative than constructive.

The Bible, with its free gospel upon the young popular mind, reproducing the old personal and social godliness, the strong, deep-rooted, living faith, which inspired our first state-builders,—this is the adamant on which our nationality was founded and on which it must rest.

Without this, there is before us no dazzling and limitless future; without this, we are at sea upon stormy waters, and our confederative ties are as fretted cables when the bark drives towards breakers. Without this, we can readily believe that the social elements—powerful, positive, enthusiastic, extravagant—of our great Western population may be moulded and hardened into the most monstrous developments.

That population may become radically and thoroughly *Infidel*. We are scarcely a braver or wiser race than were Frenchmen when the old forces of civilization combined in volcanic proportions, and the mountain of their nationality rocked, and all

things pure and lovely and of good report went down in the fiery flood of political atheism.

It may become thoroughly and politically *Papal*. Talk not to me of Anglo-Saxon instincts and intellect. The elements with which superstition has to do are rather moral than mental. Man comes to his religion oftener through his passions than his intellect. If the old Hebrew race, fresh from the miracles of the Red Sea and the Nile and overshadowed by the very Theophany of Sinai, could turn suddenly from that communion with a revealed God to worship an idol,—if the old Latin race, with its literature and arts and poetry and eloquence, its grand ancestral glory, its imperial and historic past, amid the splendid monuments of its intellectual civilization, could entemple the Beast even on the banks of the Tiber,—then who will dare confidently to predict that the American mind shall never bow down to Romanism?

It may become positively *barbarian*. Alas for this boasted law of development and progress! What says the history of our race, written everywhere,—in the death-dust of Egypt, on Etruscan marbles, in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, in the fossil literature of the grand Augustan world? What says it all but this?—*That without the Divine breath the fair body of civilization crumbles back to the dust again!*

Verily, if in this holy hour the grim Turk rules in barbaric pomp on that golden hill of Zion where David worshipped and Solomon walked in his glory,—if the wild Arab pitches his tent on the shore

of Galilee and the war-horse of the Moslem feeds in the manger of Bethlehem,—who dare assure me that, in generations soon to come, the Goth and Vandal may not be rocked in the old Puritan cradle, and the owls of old Night brood and nestle in the eagle's own eyry?

Sure I am, if there be a lesson written in fire and blood on all past history, it is that any depth of degradation is possible—nay, probable—to an irreligious progress,—that civilization hath within it no essential principle of life, but depends for its very being on a power descending to it from on high.

Such, at least, is the belief which your Society professes and acts upon: that our national life depends upon evangelical influences; that the hopes and destiny of this republic can be realized only as a vital and vigorous Christianity is disseminated through the land; and, with such philosophic and practical faith, the American Sunday-School Union takes its place amid the mightiest instruments of our national prosperity. Indeed, over all the other great missionary associations that are seeking more thoroughly to evangelize the nation, yours has all the advantage which an earlier culture gives. You get the start of all adversaries. You are abroad in God's husbandry, with the good seed of the word, in the dewy morning, before the enemy is there with the tares.

With your Sabbath-school missionary watching the young child as it springs from the cradle, and casting your pure, free, sanctified literature into

the home-circles of the new society, we are warranted. in all principles of human nature and all historic experience, in predicting a future permanency and glory to our land which shall realize the grand destiny God has offered us in the regeneration of our species and the redemption of our world.

Yours is a practical wisdom profounder than the statesman's. Like him, indeed, in training the American nationality, you begin with the infant; but your training is more powerful. The first word on the young child's lip is not "Washington," but "CHRIST JESUS." You tell him not of our storied war-fields, but of Gethsemane and Calvary. You bid him listen, not to the music of the old colonial battles, but to the grand old psalms that the Pilgrim Christians sung in the sounding aisles of the wilderness. You overshadow him, not with the flag of our nation, but with the Cross of our blessed gospel. You bind his young heart, like Hannibal's, not so much to his country as to his Creator. You lift him up to the height loftier than all American feeling,—the height of true Christian feeling. You open his wondering eye to the relations, not merely political, but religious and evangelical, which America sustains to all peoples and nations. You tell him of all God's past miracles,—more marvellous than the old Hebrew signs and wonders,—bringing forth and preserving and strengthening this great Christian nation as the instrument whereby the race is to be emancipated and the world saved. And in this

you have done much to realize this great idea of Christian faith, to develop this glorious purpose of Divine love, in a national life that shall be for man's good and God's glory while the sun and moon endure.

You are, at least, striving, while America is yet in the days of its youth, to train up its national life "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" And in doing this you are doing a work whose importance no language can exaggerate. Ah me! this grand American nationality, as it seems to-day to a wisdom that is from above!

In its youth yet! Yes, indeed, a child yet,—but a mighty child! Like the wonderful babe that slept in the rushes of the Nile, upon whose training for Jehovah depended such immense issues,—all the miracles of Israel's deliverance, all the imperial splendours of the old Hebrew race, all the infinite glories of the Messianic redemption,—in whose frail ark, so seemingly imperilled, lay cradled and incarnate one of God's loftiest plans and most magnificent purposes.

Such seems this young nation,—a national life involving in itself God's grandest designs of redemption to our race and the world, and yet asleep on the wild tides of Time, as the child Moses in the Egyptian river,—tossed by stormy waters, pressed upon, like the Nile's fierce monsters, by all forms and powers of evil. A life so nobly gifted, so fearfully imperilled, is our young nationality. And now, Christian influence, like the nursing mother's watch, can train it for Je-

hovah; now, on this true law of early culture, a nursing piety can sit by its young pillow and teach it to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven,"—can lead its young feet into the ways of obedience,—can train it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—till presently it shall stand up in its maturity, on this mount flung up for the enthronement of the man-child, the development of God's eternal purposes of mercy, crowned, glorified, a conqueror, and more than a conqueror,—the chains of a race shivered at its feet, the kingdoms of the world conquered lovingly for Jesus.

But leave this work undone for another quarter-century,—this work of early culture your Society is doing; leave it undone upon the heart and conscience of this generation of youth; just allow the children that now are, to grow up in ungodliness, and then send, if you will, whole armies of earnest missionaries to labour with the unrighteous. Yet, alas! the babe will have sprung from its cradle into the strength of an infidel and unholy manhood, and, setting its mighty feet upon the Bible and its brazen face against the heavens, and trampling all precious things under foot, will perish in the flash of God's awful thunderbolts!

III. Now we have small limits left us to consider, as we proposed,—

Lastly, the importance of the principle of the text in reference to the Church.

You have only to look carefully, and you will perceive a beneficent, evangelical influence in the reaction of this Sunday-School Union upon its own

managers and patrons, overpaying a thousandfold all its sacrifices and toils. There is in this work a self-culture and discipline finely preparing the Church for its millennial state.

While the American Church is essentially apostolic, yet formally it is a novelty,—a new development of ecclesiastical life, under new influences of popular and civil freedom. It is yet emphatically “in the days of its youth,” and demands the peculiar culture of childhood. Its dangers are the peculiar dangers of youth, born of its intense egotism, its ambition, its warm and unrestrained impulses. Our very freedom in religion tends to foster rank growths of ecclesiastical licentiousness, bringing forth fruit in the bigoted arrogance of inquisitorial opinion. This boasted catholic toleration encourages an intense religious sectarianism, whose charities are measured by its creeds, and whose ethical sympathies are no broader than its theological agreements.

Let us not be misunderstood here as objecting to Christian sects. An honest love of denomination is unquestionably a good thing,—altogether in harmony with God’s laws in creation. From the flowers of the field to the grand systems of the firmament, all classified orders of life are emblems of these Christian sects with their specific differences.

And the same law is patent in former religious dispensations. Under the common theocracy, the various tribes of Israel went forth, each with its own leader and bearing its own banner; and that

generous emulation, between the champions of Judah and Reuben and Gad, as to which should plant a banner first on the walls of the conquered cities of Canaan, was the secret of the strength and glory of the old Hebrew name. And we would emulate this spirit in our militant Christianity. We give thanks to God that, for the exercise of all our constitutionally different tastes and judgments in minor things, there is space and sphere in our American Zion; and we would no more change all these healthful and happy Christian sects into one compelled composite of denomination, than we would transform all our sweet homes, with their separate boards and firesides, into one broad pantisocracy of socialism, or consolidate all the separate and shining worlds of astronomy into the huge bulk of one starless continent.

A warm, genial, generous love of denomination is a goodly and graceful thing: nevertheless, there is a thing called sectarianism, which is of another shape and another spirit. Zeal for forms of faith, consistency, Christian fidelity, some men call it. Arrogance, folly, intolerance, treason to God and man, self-willed, persecuting, inquisitorial bigotry, *we* call it,—born of little minds, of shrivelled hearts, of benighted consciences, confounding large things with small things, false issues with real issues, the contour of the shadow with the composite of the substance, the plumes of the soldiery with the spoils of conquest, the music of the march with the shock of the battle,—a spirit loving a church more than Christ, inspiring the

strife of armed men for the seamless robe of Jesus—the bickering of rabbi and priest about mint and anise and cummin, while the heavenly fire pales on God's golden altars. And this, like all foul growths in a virgin soil, is likely to thrive in the heart of the young Church under our grand catholic liberty.

Now, it is just in its powerful tendency to repress this spirit that your association reacts so beneficially on the Church itself. This type of sectarianism withers under the pervading influence of a society which gathers all Christian sects in a common effort to give a common gospel to a common world.

Here is the philosophy and the foundation of true Christian union;—not that false show of union that parades its platform-professions of brotherhood only as a pleasant interlude to fierce, pulpit uncharitableness,—the chivalrous salute of the knights of the old tourney ere they lay lance in rest and rush into battle,—the sham courtesy of resolutions of Christian union exchanged on our outside platforms at stopping-places of the great Church-road, while in each separate ecclesiastical car there is blazoned the placard that no traveller is allowed to stand on the platform when the train is moving,—not this transparent hypocrisy, which may self-deceive a preacher, but which the people understand and despise as shallowness and a shadow,—but that true catholic union, not indeed in form, but in spirit, in purpose, in labour, in affection, in heart,—that old Pauline brotherly kind-

ness, which, respecting all opinions, loves meanwhile all men, subordinating all minor differences to the reach and play of a glorious common effort, believing, with Christ, that Satan's house is not divided, and so bidding every man God-speed who is casting out a devil,—this, I say, is the noble Christian brotherhood in a great work which your Society fosters. It brings the whole ecclesiastical life under the power of the great law of compromises,—a law under which, by blending of things specifically different into lovely combinations, God works out in nature and in man his grandest phenomena,—a law producing all fair things in *nature*, from the lowest union of simple elements into composites of beauty and power,—the atmosphere, the ocean, the rocky mountain, the huge bulk of earth,—up to the complex harmony of composites,—the blending of mountain and river and sweet pastoral vale into one fair landscape,—the mingling, in the flower's leaf, the rainbow's arch, the sunset heavens, of various and distinct colours in one aspect of beauty,—the concord of musical sounds of different compass and power into one grand and rich harmony,—the adjustment of forces distinct, seemingly antagonistic, into the vast resultant motions of the astronomy of the universe ;—a law of compromises, working as well morally all great things in MAN, the reciprocal softening of all mental and moral qualities in the true composite of character,—the concession of abstract individual rights and interests for the sake of the complex civil life of States,—seen in the practical life of all men

great in their generation,—not great in one monstrous virtue, but in the symmetry of all virtues,—seen in the noblest forms of national life, made up of separate interests, sprung from different dialects and conditions and states, all mutually emulous, mayhap envious, yet, in the inspiration of a great commonwealth, forgetting all meaner interests in a broader national interest wherever a hostile foot crosses the common border or the common banner of their battles is borne high in air;—yea, a law working God's highest harmonies even in the spiritual and immortal,—that union of the celestial hierarchy, throne and dominion, and principality and power, and angel and archangel, ascending and descending, in Bethel's old vision, standing distinct, yet together in their high orders, around the one throne, blending all their myriad voices in the one mighty hallelujah unto God and the Lamb.

This great law of compromises for the sake of union,—this holding in abeyance all personal preferences or prejudices in regard of smaller things for the sake of one controlling master-interest,—this great national and Christian law,—your Society recognises and acts upon, and so works out the finest form of a grand composite Christianity.

Its tendency to this end is twofold,—*objective* and *subjective*.

It does this *objectively*. It is conditional to the power—yea, to the very existence—of its missionary life, that the children who come under its influence should be so trained in a broad catholic spirit that when they assume visible Church-mem-

bership they will love one another. I do not say that these children will grow up without denominational preferences; for I know that, under any culture, there will be developed those specific differences, intellectual, emotional, æsthetical, which lie at the foundation of ecclesiastical canons and creeds; but I do say that, let them gather into sects as they may, they will never grovel in sectarianism. Studying together the same sweet lessons of heavenly truth, blending their voices in the same sweet songs of Zion, joining in the same prayer, disciplined to the same gospel, trusting in the same Saviour, walking towards the same bright home in heaven, as they go forth from your missionary schools a broad catholic love will pervade their Christianity; and as easy were it to shrivel back into an acorn the giant oak of the mountains, as to force back their charity, in its free and fair strength, to the miserable shells of a Pharaëic and priestly sectarianism.

Meanwhile, *subjectively*, upon the managers and patrons labouring together in this great work, the reaction of this practical evangelical alliance will be to fill every heart with a catholic spirit, around which the iron chains of bigotry will fall off as smoking flax from a Samson.

Men that labour together in a common cause so vast, so glorious, will love one another. As well might you get noble-hearted mariners into a dispute about ship-carpentry and sea-water while lowering the life-boat to save drowning men, or fellow-soldiers into an envious quarrel about

plumes and banners while storming side by side some Sebastopol or breasting shoulder to shoulder the fierce tides of battle, as to excite Christian men, united in a work like this, into pitiful strife about non-essentials.

Here comes in the play of the great law of compromises, subordinating all things smaller, all things meaner, to the sublimities of a mighty end and a common master-purpose.

Men firmly disciplined to their peculiar creeds, yet, in the inspiration of an immortal brotherhood, coming up from the miasmatic mists of the old Meribahs of metaphysical strife,—the valleys of vision filled with the dry bones of ancestral and historic controversies,—to stand together on the serene mountain-top, where the radiant sun shines and the dews of heaven lie fair and soft,—some common Pisgah overlooking Canaan, some common Tabor with its transfigured Christ.

Sects, distinct, conservative, strong in the love of their own faith and forms, yet, for man's good and God's glory, working together, as the stars work, each in its own sphere and with its own periodic motion, and time, and velocity, and temperature, and types and tribes of life, and peculiar internal economy, and external glory,—yet all moving together in the grand harmony of system and cluster and universe, lustrous each as a distinct gem, yet all blazing together in the regalia of the one only living and true God!

Such a broad catholic Christianity, I say, does this American Sunday-School Union contemplate

and develop; and simply in doing this it proves itself worthy of all the encouragement of our labours and prayers.

This is just the training the young American Church needs as it rises from its cradle to the tasks and trials of manhood.

If, as it seems to us, this American nationality is to be God's peculiar instrument in the world's political and evangelical redemption, then our American Church, as the great fountain of the universal Christianity that is to be, must manifest within itself the type and the stature of true millennial piety; and what it wants is not mere wealth, or zeal, or power, but simply mere *love*, a baptism from on high, that shall disciple us all visibly unto the same Master, with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In the Church's bigoted sectarianism is found the strong obstacle to the present advent of the latter-day glory. That mighty angel of the Apocalypse will not bear unto the nations a divided gospel! God's Spirit will not enstamp our dissension and discordant Christianity upon the millennial Church. The distinct tribes must go up, not as jealous and rival bands, but as the one Israel of God, with one banner over them, and that banner love, if they would conquer the Canaanite.

There must be, from root to spray, a nobler development of the inner life of love, ere the heavenly tree shoot its branches and shower its fruit to the ends of the earth for the healing of the nations.

This was just the burden of Christ's pleading prayer, uttered in his hour of sore travail, as he entered the shadow to tread the wine-press alone, for the Church he was to purchase with his own blood,—not that it might have wealth, or learning, or philosophy, to cope with the old heathenism,—but "*That they all might be one, that the world might believe.*" And the world will not believe otherwise. For it is a shrewd, thoughtful, logical, common-sense world, to say the least of it; and you cannot persuade it that this divided Christianity, this bigotry of sect and creed, this self-seeking, intolerant, uncharitable exclusiveness, is a spirit from heaven,—that men pausing at the very passes of the Jordan to intone a shibboleth are the army of the living God marching on the high emprise of redemption to the victory of the world.

"*That they all may be one—that they all may be one,*" not, indeed, in form, but in spirit, in purpose, in labour, in affection, in heart! This was the Saviour's prayer. And of this prayer is this Union working out, with all its increasing power, the practical answer. It is training the young American Church into the higher life of love, according to our text's law of hopeful culture,—sowing the seed of love in the sunny spring-time, when the skies are genial,—planting the sentinels of love in the fortress before the windows are darkened, and the doors shut in the street, and the music of affections hushed under the reigning power of sectarianism.

Thanks be unto God, I see, in associations like

this, blossoms whose fruit shall be the purple clusters of the latter-day Christianity. I perceive here a ministry that is even now laying broad and deep foundations for the millennial Church,—a Church whose type, as seen in apocalyptic vision, was not twelve separate strongholds, one for each tribe of Israel, united indeed by some loose tie like an old feudal confederacy, but the while each frowning darkly on the other, with its gloomy ecclesiastical battlements, and its portal opening only to the watchword of its own shibboleth,—oh, not this!—but whose type was rather one glorious city, its walls garnished indeed not altogether with one but with twelve manner of precious stones, having not indeed one mighty gate for the whole host, but twelve separate gates, with twelve angels, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and yet all these twelve gates opening to the same city, through which went the sealed of each tribe, the hundred and forty and four thousand, all to stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, joining their voices in the same new song of salvation, and casting their crowns together before the one throne of their God.

But we have exhausted our limits, and hasten to conclude. Most imperfectly, and with small and hasty preparation, have we considered the truth which our text teaches and this Society acts upon:—*the importance of early religious culture to the INDIVIDUAL, THE NATION, and THE CHURCH OF GOD!*—and we may not, and need not, linger with a closing appeal. Instinct with such a purpose, working

out such issues, the American Sunday-School Union needs not our poor advocacy. It has already taken its place among the very foremost of the Church's evangelical instrumentalities; and as a great, a simple, a magnificent system of religious education, embodying the mightiest moral influences and wielding them all in finest adjustment to the known laws of our nature, it comes with God's manifest credentials, an angel's beauty and an angel's power.

It comes with a divine call unto all men,—philanthropists, who love their race, patriots, who love their country, Christians, who love their church, men who see in every cradled infant an immortal spirit upspringing to eternity; who see in this nation God's last and grandest instrumentality for the race's civil and religious disenthralment; who see in these Christian denominations one Church of the living God, advancing the same banner of love to the conquest of a world for the ascended Redeemer,—to men of wealth and talents and station,—to men weaker and humbler, who yet love and would labour for the creature and the Creator,—men with the ten talents and men with the one,—spirits mighty to lead or earnest to follow,—to one and all it comes, as a call of the living God, uttered by the cry of every infant which a mother's love watches, uttered by the wild surges of our emigrant life rolling towards the Western ocean, uttered by the dying cry of great nations as they stretch their drowning hands for aid from earth's islands and continents,—a call eloquent with

all tender motives, all blessed memories, all glorious hopes, the memories of our Saviour's wondrous love, when he sought for and saved us, the hopes of casting lustrous crowns at his feet when we shall see him as he is and be with him and like him,—with a call so tender, so irresistible, so divine, does it come to us, bidding us go forth together, with one heart, one spirit, one grand catholic purpose, one constraining, overmastering, all-transforming love for our common Redeemer, to train God's great infant for its immortal manhood, and rock with an angel's ministry the cradle of God's world!

THE END.

ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

THE public exercises connected with the thirty-fifth anniversary of our Society were held this year on the 5th of April, being about one month earlier than the usual time.

The Hon. WILLIAM C. ALEXANDER, of New Jersey, on taking the chair, made a most interesting address. He gave a very clear statement of the objects and principles of the American Sunday-School Union, and made some appropriate remarks upon the magnitude of its mission. He referred in terms of unqualified commendation to the catholic principles of the institution, and rejoiced in the fact that Christians of different denominations can thus, without surrendering a single peculiarity of doctrine or order, unite in the great work of Christian evangelization. He spoke of the important influence of the Society in view of the wants of our country and the popular character of its institutions. Our government being one of *influence*, not of *force*, its only sure basis is the intelligence and moral rectitude of the people. He took the ground—which he ably maintained—that “the only way to save the country is to enlighten and sanctify it.” Our laws may be wise and equal and faithfully administered, but there are evils which can never be reached by municipal means in any country, and especially in ours. “*National morality can never prevail unless founded upon religious faith.*” History illustrates nothing more clearly than the connection which Providence has established between private virtue and national prosperity. The honourable gentleman showed most conclusively that education alone is not sufficient to secure our national safety, or to furnish a bulwark against the evils which threaten us. Knowledge is power, but it *may* be power for evil. There is no security but in the possession of that faith which is the “evidence of things not seen,” and which looks beyond the present life. In conclusion, the speaker referred most encouragingly to the happy adaptation and marked efficiency of the American Sunday-School

Union in the important work of *Christian* education, and commended the institution to the patronage of the philanthropist, the patriot, and the Christian.

The Rev. Mr. Pratt gracefully remarked that the emotions awakened in his breast were like those excited in seeing a beautiful landscape from a high mountain. But he felt constrained to turn away from the pleasant picture and contemplate that which is less cheering. Man is born with an evil nature, and mighty multitudes of children in this country are growing up without God, and without hope in the world. He asked, most seriously, what must be the consequences of neglecting these children? He contrasted, in a graphic manner, the educational institutions of Europe with our own, and showed the importance of avoiding the errors into which others have fallen. He showed that the cultivation of the mind is only a part of education,—that any system which neglects the heart and the conscience is radically defective. He contrasted, in a most interesting manner, the knowledge possessed by a Christian child in the Sunday-school with the attainments of the most scientific unbeliever, and alluded, in terms of warm admiration, to the great work already accomplished by the American Sunday-School Union. The reverend gentleman concluded his address by relating the circumstances connected with the rescue of a shipwrecked mariner upon the coast of Wales,—designed to show that those who have been saved should exert themselves to save those still imperilled.

The next speaker was the Rev. Mr. Burlingham. After an appropriate exordium, the speaker announced as his theme *the Sunday-school as the great Americanizer*. He referred, in the most emphatic manner, to the *heterogeneous* character of our population, arising, for the most part, from the rapid European immigration, and urged the importance of bringing the entire masses of our country under the influence of American, Christian principles. He believed that our American civilization is safe, because he believed in God's purposes and the certain triumph of the gospel. He said that he had little hope of reaching the *adult* foreign population of our country. They may be swept into the mighty Amazons and Mississippis of Americanism, but they will only float along as great chunks of humanity, unassimilated to the genius of our civilization. It is not enough to be Americans *politically*. The *Christian* element is the chief component of true Americanism. He showed that our main hope of evangelizing the masses of our mixed population is in the *children*. In behalf of the four and a half millions of neglected children in our country the reverend gentleman made a most eloquent and impassioned appeal. He regarded the American Sunday-School Union as a most important agency in this work. In its schools the American and foreign children are brought together, but under American leadership. He compared the Sunday-school to the keystone of the American arch. In conclusion, the speaker, in a cheering manner, encouraged the Managers of the Society to persevere in the great work to which they had been called.

The Rev. Dr. Bomberger maintained that it was not enough to admire and commend a good cause, but that all should go forth, from this anniversary, resolved more earnestly than ever, more heartily than ever, more entirely than ever, to give their hearts, their hands, their influence, and their money to this American Sunday-School Union. He thought that the Society needs no advocacy; that he would as soon undertake to demonstrate that steam is a mighty mechanical force, as to prove that the American Sunday-School Union is one of those great moral forces by means of which God is carrying forward his cause and leading the Church to its final triumphs. Its monuments are found all over the country,—monuments on which its merits and praises are inscribed in letters of gold,—monuments in the form of Sunday-schools established in waste and desolate places. He said that he had never been able to agree with those who look upon these great catholic institutions as “outsiders” relatively to the Church. “No! they are not even excrescences,” said the reverend doctor, warmly: “they are natural and legitimate growths, and are among the most beautiful branches of the great tree of life!” The fruits are among the sweetest, the most precious, the most inviting that can be found. He regarded these institutions as springing out of the very heart of the Church,—out of its sweetest love, its holiest longings, its most fervent prayers. The speaker made a most beautiful peroration, by referring to the appropriateness of holding the anniversary of the American Sunday-School Union in the early spring, and traced, in appropriate terms, the operations of nature in the spring-tide, and the operations of the Sunday-school among the masses of the young.

The Rev. Mr. Brooke was the last speaker, and, though the hour was late, was heard with very marked attention and interest. He maintained that the Sunday-school movement is to be recognised as one of those providential agencies which promises the greatest results from the smallest beginnings; and its efficiency is to be attributed, in part, to the secret and unobtrusive power of its operations. De Quincey had said that forces which are illimitable in the compass of their effect are often untraceable and obscure in the steps of their movement. The principle was happily illustrated by the laws of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and by the general laws of nature, whether operating upon objects on this earth, or upon the heavenly bodies. The greatest kingdom ever founded was at first compared to a little grain of mustard-seed, a little leaven, a little stone; but the little seed was to grow into a mighty tree, the little leaven was to work until the whole lump was leavened, and the little stone was to roll on until it dashed into atoms every adverse power! The speaker referred to the divine manifestations upon Mount Horeb, and compared the Sunday-school to the “still small voice,” unheard indeed by kings and cabinets and a slumbering world, but nevertheless rapidly changing the moral aspects of society. The Sunday-school might be regarded as an army of occupation, planting a spiritual soldiery all over the

land, or as a kind of moral fortification, located at the very threshold of society, to guard the passes of the world's destiny against the invading powers of darkness. In the most beautiful manner the speaker showed the importance of *little things*, and was very happy in his illustrations, drawn from almost every thing in nature. The passage in Proverbs concerning the four things which are very small but exceeding wise, was introduced with fine effect, and the story about Bruce and the spider was related to illustrate the possibility of learning great lessons from small things. Allusions were made to incidents in the history of Luther and Franklin to enforce the same principle, and the progress of the Sunday-school cause was traced from small beginnings, until now *seven millions* of children are under its hallowed influence. The catholic principles of the American Sunday-School Union were warmly commended by the speaker, and the war of opinion between different denominations of Christians, he said, was like the battle of Trafalgar, when two English vessels came up at night in a dense fog. Each thought the other an enemy. The firing commenced, and was continued until Englishmen had murdered multitudes of Englishmen! Shall *Christian* brethren thus destroy each other? Will not the light of eternity reveal many such examples? In this connection, an earnest appeal was made to all Christians to rally around the American Sunday-School Union; and the address was closed in the following manner:—"If these men could come back to our world again,—Luther, and Beza, and the Wesleys, and the Wattses, and the Taylors, and the Olins, and a hundred others we might mention, of various denominations,—if they could come back again to our world, and God were to clothe them in human forms, and the occasion of their meeting was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—methinks, as they bowed along, and handed the cup one to the other, the only doctrine would be, 'He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities;' and as Calvin handed the cup on to Wesley, he would say, 'Brother, we have redemption through his blood, and remission of sins;' and as he passed it to the rest, it would still be, 'God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ;' and I imagine that at the conclusion of this ceremony old Watts gives out one of his splendid hymns, and Charles Wesley strikes it up:—

"Come, let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.

"'Worthy the Lamb that died,' they cry,
'To be exalted thus!'
'Worthy the Lamb,' our lips reply;
'For he was slain for us.'

"The whole creation join in one,
To bless the sacred name
Of Him who sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb.'

And, friends, though that may be an imaginary scene, I tell you this world has got to come to it before the millennium comes."

ABSTRACT OF THE REPORT.

The Managers gratefully record the fact that no officer or member of the Board has been removed by death during the year, and call upon their friends to join with them in devout thanksgiving. In no one year in the history of the institution have so many palpable evidences been witnessed of the exceeding excellency of the work in which they are engaged, and of the divine blessing upon it. The twofold objects of the Society, viz., "to establish and maintain Sunday-schools and to publish moral and religious publications, and the employment of two different instrumentalities, *the living missionary and the printing-press*, make it proper to prosecute the work under two distinct branches; and this gave rise to the two Departments in the Institution,—the Missionary Department and the Publication Department,—the one being purely charitable, the other sustaining itself on business principles. The accounts and the finances of these departments are kept entirely *separate*.

RESULTS OF MISSIONARY LABOUR.

In no former year has the institution been able to accomplish more encouraging results in this branch of its operations, in proportion to the number of men employed and the amount of money expended. Its missionaries have indeed laboured under many extraordinary disadvantages and embarrassments, among which may be mentioned the scarcity of money, and the consequent inability of many communities to purchase the libraries and other books requisite to establish a Sunday-school; and the unusual prevalence of heavy rains, especially in the West, making it quite impossible at times to travel and prosecute this pioneer service.

It appears, however, from the monthly reports of the missionaries, that, through divine aid, they have been successful in organizing the last year more than 1200 *new Sunday-schools* in as many different neighbourhoods previously destitute. Into these new schools were gathered, at the time of the organization, more than 50,000 precious children, taught by more than 8000 voluntary and unpaid teachers!

Into each of these schools were placed, either by sale or donation, a circulating library and a good supply of Bibles and Testaments, with such books of reference and instruction, known as "teachers' helps," as were deemed necessary.

In addition to this good work of real *evangelical aggression*, the missionaries performed a work of vast importance in visiting and in various ways aiding those schools which they had planted at some previous time. It is the business of the Sunday-school missionary not only to organize *new* schools, but to labour to secure the permanency and efficiency of those already in existence. The missionaries, during the year closing March 1, 1859, rendered im-

portant service to more than 1400 schools previously organized, containing more than 12,000 teachers and more than 76,000 children !

SUMMARY.

Number of schools organized and aided,	-	-	2,691
Number of teachers employed in these schools,	-	-	20,503
Number of scholars in these schools,	-	-	128,019
Books supplied to these schools by sale or donation (not including the donations made to other feeble schools by the Committee on Missions)	-	-	144,438 vols.
Making more than 18,400,000 pages 18mo.			

In examining the reports of the missionaries of the Society for the last *ten* years, the following summary of suggestive figures presents itself. There have been organized, through their direct labours, nearly *eighteen thousand* new schools where none previously existed, containing about *six hundred and eighty thousand children*, taught by more than *one hundred and thirteen thousand teachers* ! This estimate does not include the many thousands of schools in various ways aided.

In reviewing the testimony of the men who have been the honoured instruments in accomplishing this great work, certain propositions are forced upon the mind with the clearness of a demonstration,—viz. :

I. There is a great moral and spiritual destitution in our country.

II. The number of men in the Christian ministry is not at present adequate to meet this destitution.

III. The Sunday-school is a most important agency in supplying this lack of service. It calls into active service the *lay* talent of the Church, and furnishes what has been denominated a *supplementary* or *provisional ministry*, while it acknowledges the *pre-eminence* of the divinely-appointed ministry. It is a most efficient agency in the work of Bible-distribution and evangelical colportage, not only circulating the Scriptures and a Christian literature, but securing an *organization* for the *study* of the divine oracles and the mculcation of saving truths by *living* teachers.

The Sunday-school is not only found to be a self-sustaining institution, but is in many instances self-propagating,—several schools often growing out of one. The Sunday-school, the prayer-meeting, the revival, the church-organization, is the order of moral reform and religious progress in multitudes of the new settlements of our country.

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT.

If the great and beneficent missionary work of the institution could by any possibility be entirely expunged, and the Managers had nothing to show for their long years of toil but the books which they have provided for the use and improvement of Sunday-schools, they would have accomplished a work entirely worthy of the thought, the labour, and the prayers bestowed upon it.

From small and humble beginnings the Society has proceeded,

year by year, steadily to increase the number of its publications, if not in proportion to the increase of the population and the multiplication of Sunday-schools, yet as rapidly as it seemed discreet, and to an extent far beyond the most sanguine expectations of the friends of the Society. The number of distinct volumes now on the list of publications already exceeds twelve hundred; and the Society is every year adding to it largely. Of these publications the Managers have put into circulation during the last year more than two and one-quarter millions of volumes, or an aggregate of nearly *three hundred millions* of printed pages. That is, they are making and putting into circulation not less than *seven thousand* volumes, or *seven hundred thousand* pages, a day. Some, like those in the ten-dollar libraries, are placed at a price exceedingly low,—being only ten cents each for a bound volume averaging not less than 128 pages. Others—works entirely new, on which there is the expense of a copyright or of original and costly designs—are sold, of course, at higher rates. In arranging the prices of its books, too, the Society has to bear in mind that the prices affixed to its books are those at which it undertakes to sell them to a scattered population in the new and distant settlements of Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska, and even in California and Oregon, as well as in the cities on the Atlantic border.

PERIODICALS.

Books, however, have never been contemplated by the Society as its only means of reaching the popular mind and of diffusing religious truth. The establishment and maintenance of its periodicals have always been regarded as an essential part of its work, just as much as its question-books, spelling-books, hymn-books, and libraries. As early as 1831, the Society published a weekly religious newspaper for adults, "The Sunday-School Journal," at the price of \$2 50 per annum; a small paper for children, "The Youth's Friend," at 25 cents; and a monthly magazine, at \$1 50. The arguments used then for the support of its periodicals, and especially of its weekly journal, were precisely the same as those used now. Such an agency was felt then, as it is felt now, to be a necessary concomitant of its books and its missionaries in the direct work of evangelizing the youthful mind, and in awakening the attention of parents, teachers, ministers of the gospel, and all the other natural and official guardians of youth, to the importance and necessity of this great work.

The amount of reading-matter prepared and sent to press through the periodicals of the Society each week is equal to 314 pages 18mo of its library publications. That is, the Society, through its periodicals, prepares and gives to the public reading-matter equal to a printed volume of 314 pages a week. When we consider the wide circulation of these papers and the very great avidity with which they are read, the importance of the work done becomes still more apparent. If all the reading-matter diffused through the "Times," the "Gazette," and the "Banner," instead of being

printed and distributed in the form of sheets, were circulated in book-form, it would be equal to the issue of 1,280,357 pages a day, or 466,150,000 pages a year, of 18mo pages, such as are used in our library-books, being equivalent to the publication of 62,239 volumes a week of such a book as "Maggy Spencer," or 3,236,428 such volumes a year, or at the rate of 8891 such volumes a day.

In making these calculations, we have taken as a standard one of our own well-known library-publications of about the medium size,—a book of 144 pages 18mo. It may perhaps make the matter plainer to some readers if instead of the book named we take one considerably larger, but universally known, namely, "The Pilgrim's Progress." The amount of reading-matter sent out in our periodicals is equal to the issue of 1747 copies daily of the Pilgrim's Progress.

The aggregate circulation of the periodicals at this time is 455,000 copies a month, and is rapidly increasing.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

During the year ending February 28th, 1859, the receipts of the Society in the form of donations

amounted to	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$49,831 21
Receipts from legacies	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,310 00
Income Cresson Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,445 00
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>\$58,586 21</u>

The above is separate and distinct from the Publication Department, which distributed during the year books, and other Sunday-school requisites, to the amount of \$202,426 30.

A detailed statement of receipts and expenditures will be found in the Treasurer's Report.

COLLECTING AGENCIES.

One year ago the Managers gave notice that they had resolved upon a total abandonment of the expensive collecting-agency system; and, after seven months' experience, they are clear in the conviction that they have taken the right ground, and fully believe that they will have more money at their disposal for purely charitable purposes than if they had employed a large corps of collectors.

The contributions of a single school or a single class, on a single Sabbath, may pay the expense of organizing a Sunday-school in Florida or Texas, in Minnesota or Kansas. There are single Sunday-schools in this country which have paid, in twelve months, into the treasury of the American Sunday-School Union, the expenses involved in organizing as many Sunday-schools as there are Sabbaths in the year!

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Are there not many Sunday-schools which might, with little effort, undertake to raise three hundred or four hundred dollars a year, and thus secure a Sunday-school missionary, under the direction of the American Sunday-School Union? Several Sunday-schools have already done this; and, should any school undertake to thus have a missionary of their own fail to raise the necessary sum of money, it would be easy to raise the balance by a special appeal to the parents and congregation.

2. Where one Sunday-school could not raise the entire salary of a Sunday-school missionary, might not two or three schools unite in the support of the same man?

3. Ought not every evangelical Sunday-school in our land to do something in aiding the American Sunday-School Union in sending out Sunday-school missionaries and in giving libraries to needy schools?

DIRECT PROPOSITIONS.

1. Any Sunday-school (or individual) contributing three hundred dollars per annum to the American Sunday-School Union shall have a missionary of their own, in any section of the country desired by the contributors, and shall receive from him a monthly letter, giving a report of his labours.

2. If any school will contribute one-half of this amount, we will undertake to find another school which will contribute an equal amount, thus securing a permanent missionary, from whom each school shall receive a monthly report.

3. Any school or individual contributing money to supply poor and needy Sunday-schools with books, shall, for every ten dollars, receive, from the missionary through whose hands the books are sent, a letter giving an account of the school or schools thus aided, when a desire to receive such letter is expressed at the time of making the contribution.

Responses to this appeal, or letters of inquiry, may be addressed to

REV. R. B. WESTBROOK, *Secretary of Missions,*

OR TO

REV. J. H. BURTIS, *Associate Secretary,*

1122 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA.



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THE MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION.

THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION is a national Sunday-school missionary society, composed of individual Christians of all the leading evangelical denominations. *It is the only direct missionary agency to the neglected children of the United States, and is a necessity of the times and of the country: its mission being one which can be successfully prosecuted only on UNION principles.*

Division of Labour.

The Society has two Departments,—the Missionary Department and the Publication Department, which are entirely separate in their finances: the Publication Department sustaining itself on business principles; the Missionary Department being dependent on the contributions of the Christian community. No contributions received are ever applied towards the publication of books or periodicals.

To plant a Sunday-school wherever there is a destitute population is **THE FIRST OBJECT OF THE SOCIETY.**

Summary of Missionary Labour for the Year ending March 1, 1859.

Number of schools organized and aided.....	2,691
Number of teachers employed in these schools.....	20,503
Number of scholars in these schools.....	128,019
Books supplied to these schools by sale or donation (not including the donations made to other feeble schools by the Committee on Missions).....	144,438 vols.
Making more than 18,400,000 pages 18mo.	

Summary for Ten Years.

In examining the reports of the missionaries of the Society for the last *ten* years, the following summary of suggestive figures presents itself. There have been organized, through their direct labours, nearly *eighteen thousand* new schools where none previously existed, containing about *six hundred and eighty thousand* children, taught by more than *one hundred and thirteen thousand* teachers! This estimate does not include the many thousands of schools in various ways aided.

No Collecting Agents.

The Board has totally abandoned the Collecting-Agency system. The Secretary of Missions and the Associate Secretary will assist in presenting the claims of the Society, so far as may be consistent with other duties; but it should be distinctly understood that, while their labours are exclusively devoted to the Missionary Department, their *salaries* are paid by the Book Department; so that all CONTRIBUTIONS go to the work of establishing Sunday-schools in destitute places, and supplying them with the needful books, WITHOUT DISCOUNT FOR THE EXPENSE OF COLLECTING.

Contributions.

All moneys are expended in accordance with the wishes of the contributors. Donations not especially appropriated by the donors will be expended in the support of missionaries, or in the gratuitous distribution of libraries among needy Sunday-schools, at the discretion of the Board. In most cases, money can be much more wisely appropriated if not restricted by the giver.