

# CHURCH FEDERATION

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nancy are accidents. Economic conditions interfere with a normal home life. A large proportion of men and women do not have the money necessary for the rearing of a family. The gravitation of population toward the cities is unfavorable to domestic happiness. It is hard to have a home in crowded tenements or in gilded palaces. Children are not wanted in hotels, apartment houses, ocean liners and summer resorts. With time divided between society and business, men and women have no room for religious instruction. Children are given into the care of nurses, governesses and school teachers. Individualism is one of the fruits of Protestantism, but a one-sided emphasis of it has helped to disintegrate families. The increasing wealth and luxury of our country wean men away from the enjoyment of the simple pleasures of the home.

These statements raise problems for the sociologist, the statesman and the reformer. These men have, under God's guidance, an important work to do. Their work is not any less divine because their methods are scientific. Still, the mountain which rises before Zerubbabel must become a plain, "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

The spirit which makes a Christian home must come from Christ through His Church. Science is to give wise direction to the spirit of love and service. Then the home will become what it ought to be, viz.: a scientifically religious factor in the Christian education of men.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

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HON. JOHN WANAMAKER

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The Sunday School is commonly understood to be a school of religious instruction devoted to the education of children and youth. Its use of the Sabbath Day for its meetings naturally settled its name, but the name alone does not constitute a religious school. It is a religious school, however, because of its origin and its single purpose, to inculcate a knowledge of God that thereby there may be brought about a personal relationship between man and his Maker.

The Sunday School is differentiated from the secular school, in that it does not tax the public for support and in that its order is in part religious worship, uses one text book, and that the highest, and in the teaching of the Holy Bible aims definitely to influence the scholar in a religious life and build him up Christian character. By this statement it is not to be inferred that the supporters of the Sunday School hold to a belief that other schools and institutions of learning are not engaged in forming character—no fair minded person could have such an opinion. It is, however, a fact that no public school can properly include culture along any religious lines; therefore the Sunday School is not a superfluous or visionary work, but an absolutely necessary adjunct in completing the education of all who become its scholars.

But above all other facts there stands a warrant for the Sunday School in the direct revelation of God in the Holy Bible, whereby it is appointed that the young as well as the old are to be instructed in His Word—that the child is a part of God's family, born to the privilege of vital union with the Church and entitled to a right of schooling in the laws and love of God. Ample proofs exist that it was God's plan from the beginning of the world for the young as well as the more mature to be made acquainted with His will, that all might regulate their lives for the greatest happiness and usefulness.

Josephus declares that from the days of Moses the Jews assembled in their synagogues every Sabbath, not only to hear the Law read, but "to learn it accurately." It is of record that the instruction of the young in the teachings of the Law began so early that if any one of the Jews was questioned concerning these Laws he could more easily repeat those Laws than his own name. He also affirms that the synagogues and homes of the Jews were really houses of instruction, that parents, tutors, and teachers imparted instruction in the knowledge of the Law, that young people from their earliest youth might bear the image of the Law in their souls.

Deutsch is authority for saying that eighty years before Christ schools flourished throughout the length and breadth of the land, and education had been made compulsory. Such schools are reported under expressions such as "house of instruction," "house of learning," "house of the teacher," "house of the Master," "house of The Book."

It appears that the Sabbath Day assemblages in the synagogues were not confined to public worship, but religious instruction likewise was provided for. Such instruction was counted above all things important by the devout Israelites. To live in a community where there was no Bible school was forbidden to the godly Jew.

Such was the Bible school idea and system of the Jews at the time that Jesus of Nazareth was born into the land. In line with a Jewish youth's privilege and duty, the Christ was soon found at the Holy City, sitting in the midst of the teachers, hearing and asking questions. Not long after He went about all Galilee, its cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues.

Not many sermons of His are recorded, but He is often set down in The Book as in "the private house," "temple court," and "by the wayside," as a teacher of the truth, in addition to His mission as a preacher of righteousness. It seemed to be common for Him to be accessible to questioners and the answerer of questions. He would say, "Have you not read in the Scriptures?" "What think ye of Christ?" "Whose image and superscription is this?" and "as teaching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that it was spoken unto you by God?" At the close of His earthly ministry He charged His followers saying: "Go ye therefore and make disciples—scholars—in all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command of you." This was the starting point of Christ's Church. Groups of men, their families and their households, received the truth from those who were personally associated with Christ; upon what they were taught they organized churches, children being specifically mentioned as coming under apostolic instruction and care.

In laying the foundations of the Church the Sunday School foundations were laid with them, and they are therefore inseparable. The object of both is to teach the Word of God, bring souls to Christ, watch over them and build them up in the religious life. If either fail in this, it is off the track and loses its opportunity. It was a lost step for the Church when the Sunday School was suffered to become largely a child's school, taught almost wholly by women teachers, excellent as they may be. I mean that the rating it has received through the apparent neglect of it by men has been most hurtful to its work, account-

ing in part for the great difficulty of holding in its ranks the youth rising to manhood.

People are very likely to treat you as you treat them, and the treatment of the Sunday School by the Church officials and parents as a whole has changed the estimate of its value by our young men and women as well as by men of maturer years who come into the Church late in life.

The Church cannot make a greater mistake than taking it for granted that men and women are satisfied with what they get of the Bible in sermons. I verily believe that good preaching creates an appetite for Bible study, and given the proper accommodations, with teachers who know the Word of God and are able to impart knowledge, there would be a great revival of interest in Bible history and Bible doctrines on the part of thoughtful, busy men who hunger for the Bible and are conscious of their need, but do not care for Sunday School musicals, socials or semi-religious sensations.

That loyal and strong arm of the Church, the Young Men's Christian Association, realized the defect in Church organization and its Sunday School departments when it established Sunday Afternoon Bible Conferences, now largely attended in every city. I believe the new and great prosperity that came to the Young Men's Christian Associations began with the influence of these classes for the study of the Scriptures.

The Men's Brotherhoods, where successful, owe it alone to the binding links of Scripture study. The city and country are full of forgotten men, or at least of men who feel that the Church makes no sign to them except for contributions. The Church and its schools will find that it can have the men if they have anything to offer that will help men to live their lives and aid them in doing their daily work.

The pulpit is the head and heart of the Church, and the Sunday School is its right hand. The over shepherd and chief teacher directs the under teacher shepherds. The flocks are on every shore and street, young and old, and hungry.

Martin Luther declared that every child should be put under catechetical instruction, that he ought to know the main truths of the Gospel, the facts of the life and work of our Lord by the time he was nine or ten years of age. The early Methodist and Moravian Churches always gave the first place to the Bible, and

one of their first cares was for the children, that they might be instructed for the religious life.

Whitefield and Wesley were great preachers, and the hardest iron softened into coals which kindled and burned under the breath of their preaching, but John Wesley did more than preach, he took the pincers and hammer of the Weekly Class Meeting, Monthly Love Feast and Quarterly Conference; he systematically screwed up the Churches in methods of training and maintaining teachers. He recognized the worth of the Sunday School agency and immediately incorporated it into the policy of his undertakings.

Whatever supervision the Church provides for the flock by Elders, Deacons, Stewards, Vestrymen, Consistories and Trustees, stops short in its responsibility when it fails to cover the Sunday School side of the Church work.

In the Memoirs of General Grant it is quite plain to be seen that his achievements were largely due to his personal attention to details; where it was possible he personally saw his subordinate officer and with a full knowledge of the situation gave his instructions face to face. If the Sunday School had been born of worthy Robert Raikes, at Gloucester, England, or of any mere man, it could not have survived in the cold and hunger and perils from within and without through which it has come.

Many clergymen and laymen—thank God, not all—have figured it over, counted it up and dropped it; picked it up again, and dropped it. The fact is, it cannot be counted up in a worldly way. It was given by the Divine Father to ancient Israel and a spiritual arithmetic is needed to measure the divine leaven still remaining in it, much hindered but not totally destroyed. It has suffered from ignorance, indifference, spasmodic and languid interest, but it has always had a small remnant of God's earnest and active souls whose faith has never flagged or failed, and they have not been without reward.

The last twenty years have witnessed a new awakening of interest throughout the world in advancing Sunday School plans and programmes. The heart of the improvement in methods and results is in the unanimous concentration of its leaders everywhere to insist upon the training of teachers and grading the schools. Pledged to this advanced idea to a greater or less degree, the International Convention held at Toronto in June last reported the existence of 141,112 Sunday Schools with 1,457,483 teachers and 11,251,009 scholars, connected with 125,000 churches.

Supervising this work are the denominational societies and boards in their respective fields, and also a State or territorial organization in each of the States and territories—for example, Pennsylvania (of which I know best) has each of its sixty-seven counties organized, and in many of these counties there are township organizations to promote institutes, councils upon teaching and methods, conducted by the Field Secretaries and Visiting Teachers and Christian Workers. The Teachers' Normal Classes, conducted last year, had in them 3,732 students, 913 of whom completed the course and received the State Diploma at the annual convention in Philadelphia, attended by upwards of 1,400 delegates a month ago. The forty-seven State organizations are federated in the International Interdenominational Association that unifies, strengthens, supports and leads in the Sunday School work.

There is much in the outlook to encourage and much more to criticise in present conditions. Too much, far too much, is expected of the Sunday School, hampered as it is by the low and hasty conceptions of its place and possibilities. I fear for Christianity far less from the infidelity and scepticism of the times than from the indifference and incompetence of Church officials, upon whom largely rests the responsibility of the dry Church wells and Church machinery rusty from non-use.

By all the tests of the years the Sunday School has proved its excellence as the agency in chief of pioneer evangelization in city and country.

What our great Methodist Church did in its early days, by planting Sunday Schools and by circuit preachers in making churches out of them; what the American Sunday School Union is still doing in establishing schools, has had more to do than we shall ever know, more than forts and fleets in safeguarding the American nation. Out of City Mission Sunday Schools outlying Churches are born. The work is not all done yet, and it deserves to be better done.

To briefly summarize the whole situation:

1. It must be admitted that the old time insistence of religious instruction in the home is not in the plan or at least in the programme of the Church.
2. That the youth and young men and women must find Bible

interlocutory teaching in the Sunday Schools and Bible Unions or not get it at all.

3. That the Sunday School fires burn low in a large percentage of the Churches, and the growing youth run away from what is offered, as the hungry rats run away from an empty barn.

4. That the twentieth century, with its great enlargements of facilities in universities, colleges and private schools, with its vast expansion in railroad, financial and general business enterprises, demands that the Universal Church call upon its Christian men to think straight, see clearly, and pull themselves together for a forward movement in everything that pertains to the work of the Church, Sunday Schools and Christian Associations with at least the same patriotism for the Kingdom of God that is cherished for our National Government.

5. That the initial steps must be the revival within the Church in recreating the men needed in leadership, that they may give themselves in larger measure to Christian work, rather than give their wealth alone.

6. That we affirm our belief in the goodness of the old organizations of the Church if put in working order and kept going.

7. That each Church and Sunday School be urged to give the year 1906 to bringing in the tithes and proving the promise of God in Church work by magnifying the study of the Bible and cutting out for one year everything that does not distinctly connect with it.

8. That as directors must direct in insurance companies, the overseers of the Church must oversee, or perils and loss will bring to judgment all who have accepted personal official relationship therewith.

9. That grateful as we must ever be to the godly men and women who have given unsalaried service to the Church and its schools, it is in this age vital, if the Sunday Schools are to be resurrected, sustained and lifted to higher usefulness, that no one shall be permitted to undertake the teacher's place without first giving satisfactory evidence to the pastor or his representative of being properly qualified by a knowledge of the truth and fair ability to impart that knowledge to others. It is recommended that it were better to combine classes under good teachers rather than have small classes with poor teachers.

10. That inasmuch as by general average not more than one out of fifteen of the adult members of the Church attend Bible Classes, an earnest and continuous effort be made by the office bearers of each Church to interest parents, that the fathers and mothers assist the teachers in bringing the proper influence to bear upon members of their own families.

11. That the movement going on in the universities, colleges and theological seminaries to establish foundations for Bible pedagogy, and the beginning of courses of instruction for Sunday School management and teacher training, are most commendable and worthy of all encouragement.

12. That wherever it is possible to maintain a local teachers' meeting it be urged upon the Churches of a district to unite within their denomination for a union teachers' meeting under a competent teacher, that may have to be compensated by the Churches for the service rendered.

13. That we regard Federation in Church work as one of the most potential means of securing the maintenance of the observance of the Sabbath as a day of freedom from employment, giving opportunities to engage in Bible study and Bible work, in improving our Sunday Schools in teacher training, adult and other graded classes, and in labors for civic righteousness.

The battle is on and this Federation Council summons us. General Grant said, when discussing a defeat at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, "Whoever first assumes the offensive is sure to win." He did it. He won.

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## WEEK-DAY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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THE REV. GEO. U. WENNER, D.D.

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On the question of education two positions are held by American Protestants, and these two seem to contradict one another. One is that there should be a public school, open to all children without regard to creed. The other is that religion is a vital factor in education.

When our country was young and Protestantism was the prevailing type of religion, these two ideas dwelt peaceably together.