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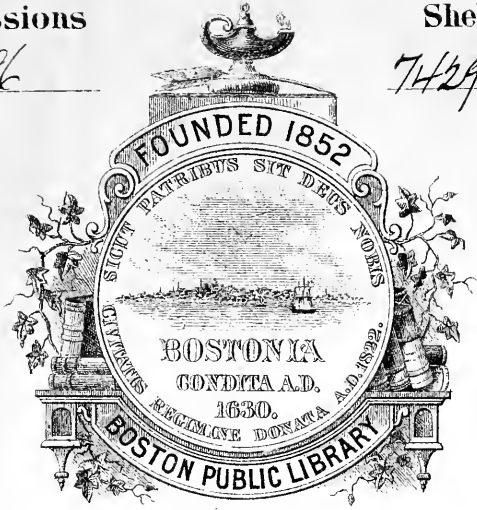
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W. B. Wisner
Benefits and Claims of Sabbath Schools.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED IN

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L. S. W.*

THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, IN BOSTON,

ON THE MORNING AND AFTERNOON OF THE SABBATH,

JANUARY 17, 1830.

BY BENJAMIN B. WISNER,
PASTOR OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON.



Boston :
PERKINS & MARVIN, 114, WASHINGTON ST.
.....
1830.

Jona's Church,

85186

Apr. 13, 1868.

REV. B. B. WISNER,

Dear Sir,—At a recent meeting of the Board of Managers of the Boston Sabbath School Union, I was appointed a Committee, to request a copy of the Sermon recently delivered by you on the subject of Sabbath Schools, for publication.

In performing the duty assigned me by the unanimous vote of the Board, I will only add my conviction, that a general perusal of your Discourse would tend to encourage those who are engaged in this work, to prosecute it with increased energy, and induce many who are disconnected with these institutions, to give them their confidence, their co-operation, and their support.

With great respect, I am Sir,

Your obedient servant,

EBENEZER G. PARKER.

Boston, February 3, 1830.

MR. E. G. PARKER,

Dear Sir,—The Sermon, of which the Managers of the Boston Sabbath School Union have, through you, requested a copy for the press, was written without a thought of its being published. It contains little or nothing new, and the facts on which its reasonings are based have nearly all, in different forms, been heretofore given to the public. Your Board are, however, pleased to think that the collection and presentation of them made in this Sermon may, by its publication, contribute something to the advancement of the great and good work in which you are engaged; and others, whom I have consulted, and whose judgment I respect, have expressed the same opinion. I have therefore concluded to submit the Discourse, with some additions in the form of notes, to your disposal.

Very respectfully yours,

B. B. WISNER.

Boston, February 15, 1830.

SERMON.



Deuteronomy, xi. 19, 20, 21.

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

THIS command, you are aware, was delivered to the Israelites by Moses, a man of great wisdom and benevolence, and under the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit. The duty enjoined is that of diligent and persevering instruction. The persons to be thus instructed are children; not very small children merely, but all the young who are yet under the care of parents, masters, and guardians; those whose characters are forming for time and eternity, and who, therefore, constitute the most interesting portion of the community. The things they are to be taught are the "words" of God mentioned in the preceding verse; the great truths of divine revelation. "Teach them," saith Jehovah, "my words:" concerning which it is elsewhere said, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." And observe the diligence and constancy with which this instruction is to be given. "Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Yea, more. "And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house,

and upon thy gates." Every possible means must be employed to make the young acquainted with the truths and precepts of God's word; and to preserve them in their minds in all their vividness and power. And all this was incumbent, not only on individual parents in relation to their own offspring; the command was addressed to the whole body of the people, in both their civil and their ecclesiastical capacity. All were to take this interest in, and see that this instruction was faithfully given to, *the whole mass of each rising generation*. And now mark the happy result that would follow the performance of this duty. "That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth." As long as you faithfully obey this command, your families and your nation shall be blessed with temporal and spiritual prosperity. "Your days, in the land which I swear unto your fathers to give them, shall be as the days of heaven upon the earth;"—crowned with the signal blessings I have promised in my covenant with your fathers, as richly and constantly as the light of day diffuses its benefits over the earth. This is God's method of making happy families, and prosperous and happy nations; having all their children faithfully and constantly taught his "words"—the truths and duties of his holy religion.

The subject, then, presented by our text is, **THE DUTY AND ADVANTAGES OF IMPARTING A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S HOLY WORD TO THE YOUNG.**

Among the various plans which have been devised for effecting this most desirable object, none appears so prominent and successful as that of **SABBATH SCHOOLS**; to which you will permit me now to invite your particular attention.

I address you on this subject, because I believe I can, with the blessing of God, in no way promote more effectually the interests of religion in this congregation, and in our beloved country, and through the world, as connected with your instrumentality; and because I am under a promise, some time since made, to discourse on this topic to my people. In the month of May last, I, in connexion with other clergymen, was requested, by the

Association which has the charge of the three Sabbath schools that attend worship with this congregation and of several others in the city, to preach on this subject as soon as should be convenient. To this request I readily returned an affirmative answer. The Association then made application to the parish for permission to take a contribution, to aid them in their benevolent and expensive object, whenever I should present it to the congregation. This request was, at a regular parish meeting, kindly and unanimously granted. For some time after these occurrences, the state of my health did not permit my undertaking the labor of preparation for the pleasing service to which I had thus been called. And since the removal of this impediment by a gracious Providence, there has been no time, until the present, when it has been, both convenient to me, and deemed expedient, to redeem the mutual pledge of myself and the parish to that laborious and most useful Association. To-day the obligation is to be discharged, I trust as readily and cheerfully by this congregation, as, I assure them, it is by their Pastor.

In performing this duty, I shall apply the passage I have repeated as a text to these interesting institutions; and discuss, in application to them, the topics it suggests in an inverted order, considering *first*, THE BENEFITS OF SABBATH SCHOOLS, and *secondly*, OUR DUTIES IN RELATION TO THEM.

I. *First*, In the spirit of the latter part of my text, I shall point out some of the important BENEFITS OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

And in executing this design, I shall have very little to do with theoretical reasonings; but shall direct your attention chiefly to well attested facts, presenting you with principles and results furnished by actual experience. And that the facts and considerations I shall present may be properly estimated, I would here remind you, that, from the nature of the case, as well as from the declarations of scripture, it is to be expected that the benefits of the Sabbath school system will be gradually developed, and a large portion of them, especially those of a more positive kind, for a considerable time unperceived. Just as, in the case of parents, while they ought to desire

earnestly and labor diligently for the early conversion of their children, yet, for the most part, we expect to see the blessed fruits of their faithful efforts developed in their children's maturer years; so, while Sabbath school teachers should seek, far more generally and earnestly than I fear they do, the accomplishment of the ultimate object of their benevolent labors in the salvation of the children brought under their influence, yet we do not expect to see the full developement of the legitimate effects of their self-denying exertions till the formation of character in their pupils is completed, and the generation on the stage have been reared under their beneficent influence. And said our Lord, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." And "another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which, indeed, is the least of all seeds, but, when it is grown, is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." And yet "another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Now the great purpose of every Sabbath school is, or ought to be, to promote this kingdom of heaven: the great business of its teachers is, or ought to be, to sow the seed of this kingdom. But nowhere in the whole world is there yet an entire generation on the stage that enjoyed in early life the influence of Sabbath school instruction. And in this country, it is stated that the first Sabbath school, in the present form, was opened, at Pittsburg in Pennsylvania, only twenty years ago:* others were established, by private and individual effort, in different cities, in 1811, '13, '14, and '15; but no regular organization for the establishment and support of these institutions was formed till January 1816, when a number of benevolent ladies in the city of New-York formed the first Sabbath School Union in America.† Their noble example was

* On the 22d, of August, 1809. See Christian Spectator, Vol. 1 pp. 347.

† Christian Spectator, Vol, 1, pp, 347, 348.

speedily followed in various parts of the country, till these benevolent institutions are found existing and flourishing throughout the land. So that it is *but fourteen years* since Sabbath schools began to be generally established in the United States. And, notwithstanding their rapid multiplication since that memorable era, the number of children in our country, computed, in May 1828, from the best data that could be procured, to be receiving Sabbath school instruction, was but about *one seventh* of that portion of our population which is between the ages of five and fifteen years.* Let these facts be kept in mind in estimating the bearing of the results that will be presented for your consideration in this discourse.†

In setting before you the benefits of Sabbath schools, I remark,

1. *First*, That they have A POWERFUL INFLUENCE IN PROMOTING INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT.

* Report for 1828 of the American Sunday School Union, p. 9.

† The author would be extremely sorry to find, that any individual who may read this sermon, had inferred from the preceding remarks, that Sabbath school teachers are not bound to seek the early conversion of their pupils. He has said that they "should seek far more generally and earnestly than it is feared they do, the accomplishment of the ultimate object of their benevolent labors in the salvation of the children brought under their influence." He would add, as expressing views in which he entirely accords, the following extract from a communication in the Sabbath School Treasury, Vol. 2, pp. 74, 75. "It is far too late in the progress of Sabbath schools, for any one to pretend, that the only good to be *expected* from these efforts with the young, is merely to withdraw them, during a few hours of holy time, from all injurious influence to which they might otherwise be exposed; or, at most, to sow the seeds of virtue and piety, which *may* spring and grow in *future life*. Examples of the most interesting character are almost daily presenting themselves, which prove, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the child of *four*, and even younger, may be, and often is, made the subject of renewing grace. And not infrequently does it occur, that children of this age have manifested a love to God, and a zeal for his glory, and an anxiety for the salvation of souls, which have made their Christian parents blush at their own comparative indifference. Are these things so? Then should they not be, to every teacher, most powerful incentives, as well as encouragements, to make new and more energetic efforts for the *present*, the *immediate* good of every member of his class? Would not every teacher do well frequently to indulge in reflections like these: 'There is not a child in my class too young to love God, or too young to die and go to judgment. Oh! then, shall I not, henceforth, labor, and pray, and act, in view of these solemn truths, and my own tremendous responsibilities? And shall I ever remit my efforts, till I have good evidence that the salvation of their souls is made sure?' Let every Sabbath school teacher remember, that the Saviour has said, "Suffer *little* children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of *such* is the kingdom of heaven." And let it be his aim to lead the *least* of those, and *all* those who have been committed to his influence, *immediately* to this compassionate and waiting Redeemer.

The great and primary object of these institutions is, indeed, to promote religious knowledge, and contribute to its appropriate influence on the heart and life. But none who hear me need be told, that the acquisition of this knowledge necessarily includes the obtaining of much information which is not itself strictly religious; and exerts a powerful influence in expanding and strengthening the mind, which is the principle object in all intellectual education.

Consider how much study and investigation, not only of the doctrines and duties inculcated in the Bible, but of history, natural, civil and ecclesiastical, of geography, and manners and customs, and how much mental effort in preparing for and performing their pleasing duties, are required in the *teachers* of our Sabbath schools; and remember that there are, of the various religious denominations, seventy or eighty thousand* men and women in our country thus employed every week in the greater part of each year; and see how the result tells on the intellectual improvement of our population.†

But this is a small item in the account. To ascertain the sum of this important influence, we must add that exerted, directly and indirectly, upon the *children* of our country. To multitudes, Sabbath schools are the only means of their being taught to read, and thus of having opened to them the inestimable benefits of a common education. This is the case, to a greater or less extent, in a majority of the States of our Union. And where the means of common school instruction are most abundant, these institutions have a powerful influence on the intel-

* This estimate will be considered moderate when it is known that the number of teachers reported in May last, as in connexion with the American Sunday School Union, was 52,663.—*Fifth Report*, p. 9.

† "We cannot leave this topic," says the Report for 1829 of the American Sunday School Union, speaking of the duties and influence of teachers, "without submitting a single suggestion to reflecting and observing men in the United States. We ask them to estimate (as far as it can be done by a pecuniary standard) the amount which Sunday school teachers contribute to educate our population. There are 52,663 teachers in connexion with our Society, and now engaged in this work; and some of them we know to be men and women, whose services in such an undertaking your money would not purchase. But, at *thirty three cents* a Sabbath, which was the established rates when Sunday school teachers, as at first, were paid, their compensation would amount to NINE HUNDRED AND THREE THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED AND NINETY SEVEN DOLLARS, annually."

lectual improvement of the rising generation. They increase the interest in general education; and lead to the establishment of new schools, or improvements in those already existing, for the promotion of that important object. To this influence the people of this city are indebted for their excellent system of Primary schools.* When Sabbath schools were instituted here, it was found that very many parents had neglected to have their children taught to read; and by this deficiency they were excluded from the Grammar schools, and thus wholly unprofited by the provisions then made at the public expense for the education of our population. The gentlemen whose benevolent labors in the establishment of Sabbath schools had discovered to them this capital defect in our system of general education, immediately brought before the town a proposal for the establishment of Primary schools. The proposal was adopted;—and thus the advantages of a substantial education are in reality furnished to all our citizens who are disposed to improve them for their children. A similar influence was exerted by Sabbath schools in New York; and, to some extent, in other cities in the Union. And in country towns, most salutary has been the influence of the Sabbath, on the common, schools. Frequent, I am informed on good authority,† have been the instances of teachers in the latter, (finding that those of their pupils who also attended Sabbath schools were more diligent in their studies and interested in making improvement than others,)

* These schools which were instituted in 1813, are taught by females, and receive all the children of the city between four and seven years of age, whose parents choose to send them. Their number at present is 57. Next in the system of public schools of Boston, are the Grammar schools, of which there are at present 9. These schools receive children of both sexes over seven years of age, who have passed through the Primary schools or received elsewhere equivalent instruction. The branches taught in them are those embraced in a good common English education. Next are the Latin school, and the English High school, in which boys are fitted for college, or taught the higher branches of an English education. A citizen of Boston may send his child to any or all the different classes of these schools at no other expense than that incurred by purchasing the necessary books. There are also two schools in the House of Industry, and in the House of Reformation for Juvenile Delinquents. Making in all eighty public schools; in which there were, in November last, 7,430 pupils; and the total expense of which for the year 1829, was \$65,500.

† A verbal statement made to me by the Secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union.

visiting these institutions, for the avowed purpose of learning by what means so happy an influence was exerted in them. In a certain town the institution of a Sabbath school was opposed by the members of the School Committee as unnecessary. But such was the superiority of those children that attended it soon manifested in the common schools, that these gentlemen were convinced of their error, and became some of its most devoted friends.* In another town where it was then customary to close the Sabbath school during the winter, so that its members were, during that time, deprived of the privilege of access to their own library, it was found that, during the period of the suspension of the Sabbath school, more books had been taken, by its teachers and pupils, from a public library in the town, than by all the other inhabitants.* These may be styled indirect influences of these institutions in promoting intellectual improvement.

Still more powerful is their direct influence of this kind on their pupils. Mental effort is continually called forth in the preparation and recitation of their lessons. The subjects to which their attention is chiefly directed are those of all others most influential in rousing and expanding the mind. In addition to which, they are constantly acquiring the general information already adverted to as connected with a knowledge of the scriptures. Their teachers, being actuated by a disinterested desire of the good of their pupils, generally take special pains to give thorough instruction, and to have the subjects and lessons attended to understood. The library of the Sabbath school is also continually communicating information to the pupils and their parents. And in these ways a habit of study, and a desire for improvement, and a taste for reading, are formed, which, as already shown, have an important influence on the employment of other means of intellectual cultivation.

'I have long,' says a distinguished literary gentleman in one of the middle States, 'been deeply interested in Sabbath schools, and have for several years sent my own children. And I have found that "in a multitude of cases, these institutions prove more effectual in rousing, anima-

* A verbal statement made to me by the Secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union.

ting, and inspiring with a thirst for knowledge, and in preparing for all that is useful and good, than, perhaps, any or all other private means of instruction whatever."* Said a Judge in one of the superior courts, in another State, to a Sabbath school teacher, "I am delighted that you have invited my children to attend; for, since they have entered your Sunday school, they have learned to love their books."† "A Sabbath school," writes another highly respectable individual, "was established in my vicinity, and furnished with a select library of books. I did nothing for its encouragement, not so much as to permit the members of my family to attend. Before this school was established, my children were not excelled by any in the neighborhood for their proficiency in study. In one year, however, I had the mortification of discovering that the children who had been in the habit of attending the Sabbath school, had obtained much more information than mine, that they had acquired a fondness for books while mine were the devotees of amusement, and that they had imbibed moral principles, which, with all the partiality of a father, were, I must confess, better than those with which mine were actuated. I therefore resolved to break through my rule, as an experiment. I sent my children to the Sabbath school. I contributed my proportion to the library, that I might not be considered parsimonious. And the experience of only a few months has convinced me that, on the principle of economy in the education of children, Sabbath schools have advantages sufficiently great to entitle them to the highest eulogium. It is my deliberate opinion, that, in the progress of education, those children who have the additional advantage of a Sabbath school, will learn at least one quarter more in the same time, than those who neglect or are denied this privilege. On the score of economy, therefore, this institution ought to be established and encouraged in every neighborhood throughout our country."‡

2. I remark as a *second* benefit of Sabbath schools, that
 THEY CONVEY MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION TO

* Rev. Dr. Miller, Sabbath School Treasury, vol. 2, p. 87.

† American Sunday School Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 333.

‡ New York Observer, of April 4, 1820, Vol. 7, p. 53.

MULTITUDES WHO WOULD NOT OTHERWISE RECEIVE IT; AND THEY GREATLY ASSIST PARENTS WHO ARE DISPOSED TO PERFORM THEIR DUTY IN REFERENCE TO THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INTERESTS OF THEIR CHILDREN.

All who hear me will agree, that it is most important and desirable that children and youth should receive faithful and continual moral and religious instruction. "The minds of the young cannot, in reference to moral and religious subjects, remain a blank a single day. They will imbibe opinions, receive impressions, and acquire habits, of one kind or another. And, from the inherent corruption of human nature, and the prevalence both of speculative and practical error in the world, those opinions and impressions and habits cannot fail to be bad, unless care be taken to preoccupy the mind with those of an opposite character."* Morality and piety are a fruit of correct moral and religious knowledge. And this knowledge, like every other, is conveyed by instruction. And, like every other kind of knowledge, it is most important that it should be communicated in childhood and youth. If not acquired then, it will, in most cases, never be attained.

But how many parents are there wholly incapable of giving their children this most important of all instruction? And of those who have the capacity, how many are there who have not the disposition, and wholly neglect it? What multitudes of children in every part of our country, who, but for Sabbath schools, would have grown up in ignorance of the very first principles of correct morality and true religion, are, in these institutions, taught them in all their purity, and thus receive some of their earliest and strongest moral and religious impressions?

But these are not the only families that are benefitted in this particular, by Sabbath schools. Those parents who feel their obligations to teach their children the truths of morality and religion, will be greatly assisted by these institutions, in this most important duty. The Sabbath was given us, in connexion with the many other benevolent purposes of its institution, that a portion of it

* Edinburgh Christian Instructor, Vol. for 1813, p. 313.

might be employed in the religious instruction of children ; and it is of the utmost importance to their future usefulness and welfare, that children should form the habit of regarding this day with reverence, and separating from it all their ordinary employments and amusements, and devoting its sacred hours to the services of religion. But what pious parent needs be told, how difficult and almost impossible it is to keep children thus restrained and employed when at home during the portions of the sacred day not occupied by public worship ; and, if the effort is successful, how apt they are to come to account the Sabbath a weariness, and conceive a disgust for the private instructions and duties of religion ? But send them to the Sabbath school ; and this serious difficulty is at once removed. They are, during the whole day, withdrawn from secular amusements and employments, and engaged in acquiring moral and religious knowledge, and performing religious duties ; and this, not reluctantly and with disgust, but with cheerfulness and delight. And now, during the portion of the sacred day which they spend at home, they are, of choice, reading religious books ; and prepared, with interest and pleasure, to listen to the instructions and exhortations of parental piety. Let the parent just manifest a disposition to help forward the preparation of the lesson for the Sabbath school, or, at the close of the day, to learn what has been recited and what instruction was given ; and he will have all the opportunity he can desire to bring the whole weight of his parental influence to bear, acceptably and powerfully, on the moral and religious improvement of his children. Thus, in the language of the eloquent Chalmers in his celebrated essay on Sabbath schools, “ the seminaries we plead for, instead of having any effect to mar, do, in fact, harmonize, at all points, with the spiritual complexion of our most decent and devoted families. Nor can we conceive any degree of piety or Christian wisdom, on the part of parents, that should lead them to regard a well conducted Sabbath school, in any other light than as a blessing and an acquisition to their children.”*

* Essay on Sabbath Schools, in the Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, as quoted in the American S. S. Magazine, Vol. 1, p. 43.

3. I add, *thirdly*, A MIGHTY INFLUENCE IS EXERTED, BY THE INSTITUTIONS WHOSE BENEFITS I AM DESCRIBING, IN PREVENTING VICE AND CRIME, AND IN PROMOTING GOOD MORALS. This would be naturally inferred from the statements already made. It would be contrary to all analogy, that so much moral and religious instruction should be given to children and youth, without laying a powerful restraint on our rising population, and having an extended and powerful influence in producing orderly and correct deportment. And the actual results fully meet these reasonable anticipations. The single circumstance of so many children, especially in large towns, being collected on the Sabbath in these institutions, who would otherwise be ranging the streets, free from all restraint, has, of itself, a very material influence in producing the effect of which I am now speaking. For, as every good thing when perverted becomes the source of evil proportioned to the beneficial effects which would result from its faithful improvement; so the Sabbath, which, when rightly observed, is the most powerful of all instruments in promoting the morals of a community, becomes, when prostituted to purposes of idleness, and amusement, and dissipation, a most fruitful occasion of the increase of immorality and crime. And especially is this the case where children are suffered to run at large, and spend the sacred hours in idleness, and amusement, and sin. But let Sabbath schools be opened, and suitable efforts be made by the friends of good order for their prosperity; and how soon is the scene most delightfully changed? In the first report of the Boston Society for the Religious and Moral Instruction of the Poor, the Directors, speaking of the two Sabbath schools then under their care, and which had been established about six months, make the following statements. "Of 336 children received into the Mason street school, none of whom are under five years of age, not one fourth could read words of one syllable when admitted, and most of them did not know their letters. And in the other school, where 164 have been received, the proportions do not essentially vary from this statement. These children are as ignorant of the first principles of Christianity, as of the ordinary school education; and some of them, as old as 10 or 13 years, have never, as we

have good reason to believe, attended a house of worship in their lives. And, in general, we have observed that their morals have been entirely neglected. The paternal restraint and instruction which are so vitally important to children, at this critical age, appear to have had hardly an existence among the subjects of our observations. From children in this state, what else can be expected, but that profane and vulgar language which is so frequently and constantly heard in our streets? Or how can we be surprised at the commission of flagrant crimes, by boys of tender ages;—crimes of so deep a dye as not only to fill the humane observer's bosom with anguish, but to require, as experience testifies, the confinement of the State Prison, as an expiation."* And now hear their statement of some of the results of their benevolent labors in this department, within less than six months after their commencement. "We have heard," they say, "of several examples of boys whose reformation has been indicated, in some instances, by leaving off profane language, and in others, by avoiding quarrelsome habits, in consequence of their Sabbath instructions. And when we inquire of the neighbors of these children, who have been disturbed by their Sabbath-breaking propensities, we have the happiness to hear the accounts of their parents confirmed, by those who have witnessed both their misconduct and reformation. One gentleman in particular, who resides in a part of the town, from which many children have been taken to the Sunday schools, informs us, that, the preceding year, he had sixty panes of glass broken on one Sabbath by boys in the neighborhood, whom he was compelled to quiet by the assistance of the police. But since these schools have been opened, he assured us he has witnessed no disturbance or depredations on the Sabbath."† And another of our citizens said, a few years after, Before the establishment of these schools, "there were generally collections of boys playing in the streets on the Sabbath, using the language of profaneness and indecency; but now, such scenes are witnessed comparatively seldom. And among the children educated in the Sunday schools, there are none known to be profane swearers, nor have I heard of one who has been con-

* p. 4.

† pp. 5, 6.

fined by public authority.”* And, not long since, one of the Justices of the Police Court in this city stated, at an anniversary meeting of the Boston Sunday School Society,† that “there are more juvenile delinquents brought before that court on Monday, than on any other day of the week; and that he was happy to say, that no Sabbath school scholar was ever found among their number.”‡ And in the last report of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, I find the following statement. “In the reports of 35 schools it is definitely stated, that no individual from their number has ever been arraigned before a civil tribunal for immoral conduct; while only two, from all our schools, are mentioned, who have been arrested; and these attended the Sabbath school, irregularly for a very short time.”§ And a few years since, “it was stated before a committee of the English House of Commons, by persons who had been much concerned in Sabbath schools, that they had never known one of their pupils become a common beggar. And Mr. Raikes, the founder of the Sabbath school system, stated, that, during 20 years, among 3000 persons who had been instructed in these institutions, he had, after strict inquiry and diligent search, heard of but one who had been committed to prison as a criminal.”|| These statements, to which it was convenient for me to turn without any laborious research, are, doubtless, fair specimens of statements that might be made, with truth, of the influence of Sabbath schools, in this particular, in every part of our country, and throughout the world. And what do they indicate would be the glorious result, in private and public morals, after a few years, if these institutions were every where established, and regularly attended by the whole body of the rising generation?

4. I add, *fourthly*, THE GREATEST AND MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OF THESE INSTITUTIONS IS FOUND IN THE PROMOTION OF TRUE PIETY.

Without this, intellectual cultivation will, ultimately, be

* Rev. S. E. Dwight, in a speech before the London Sunday School Union, in May, 1825, as published in the Amer. S. S. Mag. Vol. 2, p. 240.

† Which has charge of the Sunday schools in connexion with the Unitarian congregations in this city. There are also in the city Sabbath schools maintained by the Baptists, the Episcopalians, the Methodists, the Roman Catholics, the Christians, and the Universalists.

‡ Sabbath School Treasury, Vol. 2, p. 70.

§ p. 34.

|| Report of the Christ Church Sunday School, Boston.

only the occasion of more aggravated misery ; moral and religious instruction misimproved, will only add to the weight of condemnation that will come on the guilty soul ; and morality will have no solid basis, and will not screen its possessor from the never-ending displeasure of a heart-searching and holy God. But, possessed of true piety, the most unlettered is acquiring an enlarged understanding ; righteousness and true holiness of life are secured ; the great purpose of our existence will certainly be attained ; usefulness on earth and endless happiness in heaven are the unfailling fruit.

Now the great purpose of Sabbath schools is to promote, in the teachers and scholars, true piety. The teachers are more or less engaged, every week, in studying and inculcating the truths of God's word. And how much reason to hope it will be the means of renovating and sanctifying their souls ? The pupils are made interested in, and more and more acquainted with, the holy scriptures. And how strong the probability that very many of them, like Timothy, will find them able to make them wise unto salvation ? And in this way, both teachers and scholars are prepared for attending with interest and profit on the preaching of the word, and other stated and occasional means of grace. Multitudes of parents who had lived in utter neglect of these means, have, by the influence of these institutions, been brought to be regular and interested attendants on public worship. There are now in this house witnesses to the truth of this statement ; and there is, probably, not a congregation in the land, connected with a Sabbath school, in which they may not be found. " More has been done," says the last report of the Massachusetts Union, " than in any former year, in establishing schools in neighborhoods on the borders of towns, and in places that have been wasting for want of the stated means of grace ; where meeting houses have been visited only occasionally, and, like objects deserted, have stood with broken windows and open doors. Efforts to establish schools in such places, where there was nothing but faith to encourage effort, have been more than successful. More has been realized than hope, even in her attitude of most eager expectancy, dared to anticipate. In some places the effect has been to establish

stated public worship, where it was only occasional, and to increase the number of worshippers twofold. And in instances not a few, individuals, living in the outskirts of towns, at such a distance as hardly to visit it from year to year, have become the constant attendants on public worship.”* In addition to all this, the religious books of the Sabbath school library are continually circulating among the families with which the children are connected. And the teachers, in their visits, are often giving affectionate and pious admonition. And the scholars are bringing before the minds of the other members of their families, and exciting in them a regard for, the great truths of religion. “Parents,” says Dr. Chalmers, “in spite of themselves, feel an interest in that which interests and occupies their children; and, through the medium of natural affection, have their thoughts been caught to the subject of Christianity; and the very tasks and exercises of their children,” at the Sabbath school, “have brought a theme to their evening circle, upon which, aforesaid, not a syllable of utterance was heard; and still more, when a small and select library is attached to the institution, has it been the means of circulating, through many a household privacy, such wisdom and such piety as were indeed new visitants upon a scene, till now untouched by any footstep of sacredness.”†

And now, what are the results of these so diversified and extremely favorable applications of the means of producing and cherishing vital religion? Of the blessed effects already produced, much will not be known till the judgment day; and far more striking and happy results

* p. 9. In the report of the same Union, for the year 1828, p. 16, is the following statement, from the General Agent; “In the town of H., which your agent has visited, there is a neighborhood, where many of the inhabitants, a year since, were accustomed to spend the Sabbath in hunting, fishing, drunkenness, and profaneness; with only one professor of religion in their midst. She came to the church, three or four miles distant, and asked if something could not be done to save her neighbors? A few teachers were sent out to commence a Sabbath school there. Most have now found the way to the house of God, and attend there regularly; and one man, who had lived *eighty* years, zealously declaring to all that ‘the wicked shall not be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God,’ has set up family devotion, and gives pleasing evidence that he has commenced a new life. The whole moral character of that neighborhood is radically changed.” Might not some reader of this discourse be the instrument, by similar means, of accomplishing a similar happy result? ‘TRY.’

† Essay on Sabbath Schools in the Christian and Civic Economy of large towns, as quoted in the Sund. Sch. Magazine, Vol. 1, p. 41.

are yet to be witnessed in this world, from the instrumentality already employed. But enough is now known to convince every benevolent mind that Sabbath schools are means of grace specially favored of Heaven, and are exerting a mightier influence than any thing else, except the preaching of the Gospel, in promoting the salvation of men. Very many parents have, by an influence from the Sabbath schools which their children have attended, been brought to the saving knowledge of Christ. There are several members of this Church, who could stand up living witnesses of the truth of this statement. And their testimony might be confirmed by members of almost every other church in Christendom, that has, for any considerable time, had connected with it a Sabbath school. And of the influence of these institutions in promoting vital religion among their teachers and pupils, we have such statements, from authentic sources, as the following. "During the first year after the organization of the New York Female Sunday School Union," (the earliest association of the kind in this country,) "24 of the scholars made a profession of religion; and many others, by their seriousness, gave reason for the hope that they were not far from the kingdom of God."* And the report of the same society for 1828 states, that, during the preceding year, 66 of their teachers, and 18 of their scholars, and during the seven preceding years of the existence of their society, 418 teachers and scholars, had made a profession of religion." "In Philadelphia, when Sunday schools were first established, out of the number who were employed as teachers, there were 65 who gave no indication of decided piety. But, in two years, out of this number, 50 had made a public profession of religion."† And from 1818 to 1824, in one of the Unions in that city, 205 teachers, and 73 scholars, had united themselves with the Church.‡ And in this city, it is known to many who hear me, that of the additions made to our churches during the last eight years, a considerable and continually increasing proportion have been from among the teachers and scholars of our Sabbath schools. And similar have been their fruits in country places.

* Christian Spectator, Vol. 1, p. 583.

† Amer. Sund. Sch. Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 240. ‡ Ib. Vol. 3, p. 104.

“ In the account of a revival in the State of New York several years since, it was stated, that, of 35 who were hopeful sharers in the work, 29 belonged to the Sabbath school. And of 100 who united with a church in another place, in the course of a single year, 98 had enjoyed the blessings of Sabbath school instruction.”* In 1825 a member of a church in New Jersey wrote, “ about one hundred young persons have,” since the establishment of our schools, “ been united to the church, who, after considerable investigation, it was concluded, have all been, in some way or other, connected with the Sabbath schools of the congregation, either as teachers or scholars. We may add to this about 30 persons of color, who have received religious instruction in some of the Sunday schools, and have made a profession of religion.”† And in 1828, a clergyman in one of the towns of Massachusetts, said he was “ confident that every individual who was in his first Sabbath school, was then a member of his church. And that while some, during a recent revival, were hopefully converted from every other house in the vicinity, one large family of children, whose father, (a member of the church,) refused to let them attend the Sabbath school, (saying, he could give instruction enough at home,) was passed by without a single trophy of renewing grace.”‡ The report of the Massachusetts Union for 1828, states, “ In 69 schools, 348 teachers and 248 scholars have publicly professed their faith in Christ during the last year; besides very many who hope they have exercised faith in his atoning blood, but have not yet publicly espoused his cause.”§ And the last year they report, “ 380 teachers and 237 scholars added to the church.”|| And the report of the American Sunday School Union for 1828, after remarking that “ very few of the reports received from auxiliaries, mention the number of teachers and scholars who have made a profession of religion in the past year,” adds, “ the number of the former actually reported is 1269, and of the latter 909; which, being added to those before reported,¶ makes

* Christian Spectator, Vol. 4, p. 327. † Amer. S. S. Mag. Vol. 2, p. 152.

‡ Mass. Union, third report, p. 16. § Third report, p. 6.

|| Mass. Union, fourth report, p. 6.

¶ The meaning is presumed to be, before reported by that Society, since its formation in 1824.

7659. But we believe this," the managers subjoin, "is not one fourth of the teachers and pupils, who, after their connexion with Sabbath schools, have been taught by the Holy Spirit, and publicly professed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Such are *specimens* of the results every where realized as the fruits of Sabbath schools. And the Christians formed in these institutions, are not such as are content with a mere hope of their own salvation. They are Christians formed in the school of active, practical benevolence; Christians who indeed, generally, live not unto themselves, but for the glory of God and the best interests of men. And from these materials are forming most of the agents engaged in promoting the kingdom of Christ. The last report of our own State Union mentions as fruits of Sabbath schools in this Commonwealth, 88 ministers or young men preparing for the ministry.† And "a large proportion," it is stated on the best authority, "of the present congregations and churches in England, and of the devoted laborers in the various religious and philanthropic institutions, are the fruits of Sabbath schools. And more than two thirds of the active officiating ministers of England under the age of forty, and nineteen twentieths of the missionaries who have gone from Great Britain to the heathen, became pious at Sabbath schools."‡ "Henderson and Patterson, who have done wonders in Europe in regard to the Bible cause, both received their first religious impressions at Sabbath schools. And the celebrated Dr. Morrison, missionary to China, who has translated the whole Bible into Chinese, a language spoken by near three hundred millions of people, became pious at a Sabbath school."§

Now take these specimens, picked up here and there on the extended field of Sabbath school influence; and consider that the number of children receiving Sabbath school instruction is, in this country, at least *three hundred and fifty thousand*, and in the world, *one million five hundred thousand*; and remember how recent is the general establishment of these institutions, and how

* Fourth Report. p. 10.

† Fourth report, p. 16. ‡ Quarterly Reg. of the Am. Ed. Soc. Vol. 1, p. 32.

§ Christian Spectator, Vol. 4, p. 327.

gradual is commonly the developement of the influence of moral causes, especially on the young ; and then estimate the efficacy of Sabbath schools in promoting true piety in the earth.

5. And now, *fifthly*, let me just ask, in view of the statements that have been made,—are the intelligence and virtue of the people of this country the only security for the preservation of our liberties? And, is it a consummation most devoutly to be desired, that pure and undefiled religion be, as God has promised it shall, extended through the earth? How invaluable, then, what mind can fully estimate, **THE BENEFITS TO OUR COUNTRY AND TO THE WORLD**, of Sabbath schools?

II. I proceed, as was proposed, to inquire, *in the second place*, **WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES IN REGARD TO THESE IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS?**

And here, I think I may venture to assume, as a result of the survey which has been taken, the conviction, in the mind of every hearer, that, as parents, patriots, philanthropists and Christians, we are sacredly bound to do all in our power to promote the prosperity and efficiency of Sabbath schools. Arguments you do not need to deepen this conviction. ‘Tell us,’ you say, ‘what we are to *do*, that we may contribute to this desirable result.’

1. In compliance with your demand, I remark, *first*, **WE OUGHT ALL TO FEEL A DEEP INTEREST IN SABBATH SCHOOLS.**

Are they such institutions as we have been contemplating? Where, then, is the father, or the mother, the lover of his country, or of mankind, or of the cause of Christ, that ought not, habitually, to regard them with the deepest interest? How pervading and active, especially, ought to be the interest felt by the Church in this chief hope of her continued prosperity and enlargement, till the glorious things which her Lord has spoken concerning her shall be accomplished? And can it be that any church, or individual Christian, or philanthropist, or patriot, or parent, is indifferent to their influence and prosperity? Alas! our consciences and past conduct testify that, with very many of us, it has been strangely so, hitherto. We have known and admitted the value of these institutions, and sometimes expressed our commendation of them; but

how seldom have they engaged our interested thought? how little pleasure have we taken in contemplating their progress? how little have the most of us done to promote their prosperity? These things certainly ought not so to be. And I hope we are, one and all, resolved they shall be no longer. And that they may not, let me exhort you, (beside complying with the directions hereafter to be given,) frequently to visit one and another of our Sabbath schools. "No interest," it has been truly said, "is so deep and lasting, as that which is excited by a *personal* knowledge of facts; for, however the sympathies may be excited by what we hear or read, yet the interest raised in the mind, before long, grows faint on the memory, and the heart soon loses that sensibility which may have been awakened for an object by glowing descriptions; while a single appeal, by that object itself being presented before us, claiming a *personal* care, enlists our patronage, and will leave the most lively impression on the mind, as it has excited a *feeling* interest in the *heart*, from a *personal* knowledge of its merits."* Let me exhort you all, my hearers, to get this *personal* knowledge of these important institutions, by frequently visiting them,—if there is no other way in which you are brought to witness their interesting proceedings and results. And I do assure you, if you have a heart to feel for the welfare of mankind and for the glory of God, there is no place where you can spend a half hour with more unmingled pleasure.

2. I remark, *secondly*, that WE OUGHT ALL, HABITUALLY AND FERVENTLY, TO PRAY FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

Admirably as they are adapted to promote the benevolent ends for which they are instituted, they will effect little, none of the spiritual good aimed at, without the blessing of God; but, as to the grand purpose of their establishment, the teachers will labor, and the pupils will study, in vain. O how constant and earnest ought the teachers to be, in supplication for the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make them and their scholars wise unto everlasting life! And if the relation of Sabbath schools, to the prosperity of our country, and the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, be such

* American Sunday School Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 72.

as we have to-day found it to be, what is there for which the patriot, the philanthropist, the Christian, ought more frequently and importunately to plead with our prayer-hearing God for his effectual blessing? Especially should we remember these institutions, in our secret and family devotions, on the Sabbath; earnestly beseeching Him, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, to shed down plentifully, upon teachers and scholars, his gracious influence; that they may be interested in, and rightly understand, and feel the sanctifying power of his truth.

3. I add, *thirdly*, WE SHOULD ALL, AS WE CAN, GIVE OUR PERSONAL EFFORTS TO THE EXTENSION OF THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCES OF SABBATH SCHOOLS. This we may do in various ways.

Some, yea many, who are not now so employed, *may become teachers*. All, whatever their rank, and their relations in life, ought to be willing to engage in this benevolent and most profitable labor, whose health and paramount duties will permit, and who can obtain a share in the work. Married as well as single persons, and middle aged as well as young, wherever,—not that it is perfectly convenient, but their circumstances will admit of it, ought to be ready to enlist and persevere in this self-denying but delightful service. And many more laborers are wanting in this most promising field, than can yet be procured. I regret exceedingly to be compelled to state, that in the schools connected with this congregation several additional teachers are now greatly needed, beside those who might find employment in them were their pupils increased as they ought to and might easily be. And in the city, efforts by our denomination for extending the inestimable benefits of these institutions by the establishment of new schools, have, from the want of teachers, been wholly suspended; although not more than half the children in the city, of a suitable age, are connected with the Sabbath schools of any denomination. Brethren and friends, shall these deficiencies any longer exist? Are there not many here who will, promptly and cheerfully, make the effort, and the sacrifice, if sacrifice be needful, to come forward and supply them? Permit me to hope, and to find, that the appeal has not been

made in vain. Employment can easily be found for all who will heartily engage in the work.

Another way in which we may materially contribute to the extension of the beneficial influences of Sabbath schools, is by *all the parents in this congregation sending their children, that are of a suitable age*. I say *all* the parents in this congregation; the rich and the more elevated in society, as well as the more humble and the poor; those who give religious instruction to their children at home, as well as those who neglect this important duty, so plainly enjoined upon all, in our text, and in other parts of the word of God. You have already heard the testimony on this point, of several highly respectable individuals, referred to for another purpose in a preceding part of this discourse. One of them says, "I once thought there was no good reason why the children of intelligent and pious parents,—parents able and willing to instruct their own children,—should be sent to the Sabbath school; being under the impression, that every thing in the way of tuition could be quite as well, if not better, done for them at home. But I have changed my mind on this point. I would urge children of all classes to attend. I think it my duty to send my own children, not merely for the sake of example, and to stimulate others, whose children may be less favorably situated, to do the same, but also from a persuasion that my children are really likely to be better managed, and, in some respects, better instructed, in a well conducted Sabbath school, than under my own roof. I would, therefore, most earnestly recommend to *all* parents to patronize Sabbath schools; *to make a point of sending their own children*; and to contribute, by all means in their power, to render these institutions better taught, more orderly, more efficient, and more useful. It is in the power of every one to help forward this cause. And, if my estimate of the subject is not altogether erroneous, it is manifest, that every one who lends his aid to the carrying on of a system so fraught with advantages to the young and the old, to parents and children, to the church and the world, ought to be reckoned a public benefactor."*

The gentleman who has published to the world this noble

* Sabbath School Treasury, Vol. 2, p. 87.

testimony, was one of my honored and beloved instructors when I was preparing for the ministry. I had the privilege of being the superintendent of the Sabbath school to which he first sent his children. Those of them that have been of a suitable age have ever since attended. And the consequences have already been such, as the pious father and some of his children, will together rejoice in before the throne of God through eternal ages. And now, what intelligent or pious parent is there that hears me, who will not follow his advice and imitate his example? What parent is there that does not desire, and will not secure, for his beloved children, the intellectual, moral, and spiritual benefits, which, we have seen, result from a faithful attendance on well regulated Sabbath schools; and will not, by his own example, contribute to the extension, as far as possible, among other families that may be influenced by him, of these inestimable benefits? I desire not to dictate to, or control, any individual. But I do desire the promotion of the moral and spiritual improvement of all this beloved people. And, under the strong influence of this desire, I do earnestly recommend, and respectfully request, that you *all* send your children, that are of a suitable age, immediately and constantly to the Sabbath school.

Other ways in which parents and others may contribute to the extension of the happy influence of these institutions are, by *assisting the teachers in their efforts for the moral improvement of their pupils; and inducing others to commit their children to their benevolent care.* The parents and the elder brothers and sisters of the Sabbath school scholars should contribute, with diligence and cheerfulness, to their regular and punctual attendance; to their being well prepared with, and thoroughly understanding, their lessons; and to their receiving from them, and retaining, their proper moral and spiritual impression. And all should be ready to improve every opportunity to induce their friends and acquaintances, and especially the poor around them, to send their children, and continue their regular attendance. Very much more might be accomplished among us, in this way, than has been hitherto. Many of the children already in the schools, might, each, induce other children to attend. The

teachers in visiting their scholars would, on inquiry, find children of their neighbors, who do not belong to any Sabbath school, and might be induced to attend. And many whose circumstances will not admit of their becoming teachers, might devote a small portion of a week-day or of the Sabbath, to going through our streets and lanes in quest of children to be directed to some well conducted Sabbath school. Nearly all of us, were our hearts alive to the subject, might, in various ways, contribute to the increase of the numbers, and efficiency, of these admirable institutions.

Another way in which we may aid this good work, and the only additional one I shall mention, is, *by our pecuniary contributions*. Although the instruction in all our Sabbath schools is perfectly gratuitous ; it is at once apparent that their efficient management must be attended with very considerable expense. Rent is to be paid for a number of the school rooms. Class books and other papers are to be frequently provided. And libraries are to be established, and supplied with new publications as fast as they issue from the press, and are needed in the schools. These, and other incidental expenses are continually to be provided for. And how shall they be provided for? By the teachers and superintendents? Those who give their time, and solicitude, and labor to this benevolent work? many of them devoted to arduous employments, during the week, to procure a subsistence, so that they have little or no time for reading, and other means of intellectual and moral improvement but the Sabbath, and, with a most commendable self-denial and a spirit of true benevolence, entirely forego this personal advantage, and devote nearly the whole of the day of sacred rest, except the portions of it spent in the house of God, to the anxieties and the toil of training our children in the ways of virtue and of eternal life? Must they also sustain the burden of meeting the pecuniary demands of their schools? They are willing to sustain their share. They do contribute for the purpose, constantly and liberally. But they cannot do the whole. For a large portion of the funds needed, they must depend on the Christian community ; and to them they confidently look for the needed assistance.

The Boston Sabbath School Union, in whose behalf more particularly I address you to-day, has under its direction the Sabbath schools, in different ways, connected with the Evangelical Congregational Societies in this city, including the three schools that attend public worship with this congregation. They have under their care, 18 schools; containing upwards of 2000 pupils, and nearly 300 teachers. For the accommodation of several of these schools, room-rent has to be paid. All of them are furnished with libraries; which, it is very important, should be considerably increased. Heretofore it has been usual to appropriate \$200, annually, for the increase of the libraries in the schools; but, in consequence of their scanty means, this Society, since it received the charge of the schools, about a year since, from the Society for the Religious and Moral Instruction of the Poor, has been able to spare only \$59 for this important purpose. They also greatly desire, and, if teachers can be obtained, (which they cannot but anticipate,) they intend speedily, to establish new schools; for the accommodation of which rent will have to be paid, and which must also be furnished with libraries. And, with these pressing demands upon them, when debts already contracted are paid, they will not have a dollar in their treasury; and they have no resource from which they expect to derive assistance, for several months to come, but from the contribution they now ask from this congregation.

Their claim is before you. And I doubt not it will be favorably received. The poor will cheerfully give their mites to aid an object, to them so richly fraught with blessings; and those favored with a competency, and with wealth, will show, by their liberal contributions, how justly they estimate the intellectual, and moral, and religious improvement, of their own beloved children, and of the rising generation of this ancient and highly favored metropolis. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." And, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

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