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THE WAY

TO

BLESS AND SAVE OUR COUNTRY:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA, AT THE REQUEST OF THE  
AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,

MAY 23, 1831.

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AMERICAN SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

PHILADELPHIA:  
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*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”—Proverbs xxii. 6.*

HARDLY any thing, I believe, is more difficult, than to incorporate the conviction with our settled habits of thinking and acting, that the most common and familiar truths are often the most important. They are like household faces and voices, which strike us the less, for having been with us from our childhood. It costs us an effort to enter into the spirit of trite proverbs and every-day quotations from any writer, however fraught with wisdom, either human or divine. To say, for the thousandth time—

“ ’Tis education forms the common mind,  
Just as the twig is bent the tree’s inclined,”

is to compress volumes into a single couplet; and is no less true than it was when the felicitous comparison first occurred to the poet’s mind; and yet, how threadbare and uninteresting has it become. How few, of all the thousands who receive its indelible stamp in the nursery, ever stop to think of its mighty practical import.

Thus it is, I apprehend, with that divine aphorism which I have chosen for my text, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* What words were ever more fitly spoken by mortal lips; and yet have these “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” so long been familiar to our eyes, that we little think of their intrinsic and inestimable value. Can we spend the present

hour more profitably, than in subjecting them to a minute and careful examination?

As every science and course of instruction depends, essentially, upon a few elementary principles, and that of Christian education as much as any other, so a familiar acquaintance with these principles is essential. Before we undertake to teach, it is extremely important that we understand the primary laws of thought and feeling; and that we have an intimate acquaintance with the elements which we are to arrange and combine, so as to strengthen every faculty, and to secure the most perfect developement of symmetry and beauty. And, whatever our ultimate object may be, we must begin at the beginning. We must commence with the simplest combinations, either of characters, substances, thoughts, or affections. This holds true, whether we would construct the most ordinary machine, or measure the height and magnitude of the stars;—whether we would unlock the stores of literature in a foreign language, or fathom the deepest and sweetest wells of our own;—whether, in short, we would, in any way, concentrate and direct the mighty energies either of matter, or of mind. He who should wait for his son to understand *Paradise Lost*, before he would teach him the first lesson in two letters; or, who should attempt to bend an oak of fifty circles, would be about as wise, and about as successful, as the parent who should wholly neglect the religious instruction of his children in their tender years, and then undertake to change their habits, and mould their hearts, in the strong maturity of passion and appetite. We must begin the work early, or we shall “labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought and in vain.”

The elements of things never change. The laws both of matter and mind are immutable. What they were three thousand years ago, they were yesterday, and always will be. The same intellectual and moral cultivation which was needful then, is required now. The same motion which swayed the

reason and the conscience before the Christian era, or before the flood, would, in like circumstances, sway it still. And the same course of instruction and discipline which formed a good moral and religious character in the time of Solomon, would produce similar results at any other time. If it was then true, that children trained up in the right way, would not depart from it, it is still true, and will be in every coming age. For the young mind and the young heart are every where alike. Children are just what they always have been. They have the same constitution; the same physical, intellectual, and moral susceptibilities; the same bias to evil; the same plastic nature; and they may, by the blessing of God, on early and pious training, be moulded into the same virtuous habits.

And what is true of one child, at any given time, is true of a thousand, or a million. The meaning of the text, obviously, is not, train up *this* child, or *that* child, but train up *any* child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Here and there a mournful exception there possibly may be. One child in an age, or a country, thus piously educated, might possibly bring down a father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave; but if the earth should consent to bear one such reprobate upon a thousand leagues of its surface, the general rule would not be affected.

It becomes extremely interesting, therefore, to inquire,

*What it is to train up a child in the way he should go?*

*How it is that such training forms a permanently virtuous and pious character?* And,

*How the whole youthful population of our country may be thus piously educated?*

I. What is it to train up a child in the way he should go? Here a few preliminary observations will, if I mistake not, lead to a clear and satisfactory answer. The elements, or first principles of education, and indeed of all science, and

all things, are extremely simple. We know, for example, that the sublime, and almost incredible discoveries of modern astronomy, are based upon numbers, lines, and angles, which are familiar to a little child. How few and simple, too, are the substances which constitute this great globe, with all its solid ground and restless waters; its smothered fires and teeming population! The philosophy of mind, so wonderful, so illimitable, so godlike—what are its elements but the simplest thoughts and perceptions imaginable! And the science of morals, reaching, as it does, from earth to heaven, from the lowly cottage up to the “throne of God and the Lamb,” on what does it rest, but the simple principle of love!

One of the most striking characteristics of the present age is *simplification*. Almost all our improvements in mechanics, in the arts, in the use of natural agents, and in the science of education, consist in the discovery and application of more simple principles than had before been observed. Hardly a month passes without some new invention, or discovery, by which power is gained, or dispensed with; and by which human labour is rendered at once more perfect, and more productive. And who can look at these great benevolent institutions, which are the glory of the present age, without being struck with the simplicity of their principles; with the unparalleled extent and efficiency of their operations? How much more is done to enlighten and save mankind, than the world ever dreamed of, till the current century, and with how little comparative cost. It is sufficient, here, just to name the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union, which now holds its seventh and brightest anniversary. Who would have believed, thirty years ago, that so many denominations of Christians could ever be brought to meet on common ground, in any such great Society; or that so many millions of people could be furnished with the means of improvement in knowledge and piety, with so much ease, and so little

expeuce? Verily, "it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

But while we speak of these and other astonishing improvements, in so many departments of Christian benevolence, let us not credit ourselves with inventions which are as old as the Bible itself. A little reflection will be sufficient to convince any man, that we have discovered no new principle in morals, or religion—in the spread of the gospel, or in Christian education. In all our plans for doing good, we are only approximating to the divine simplicity of that perfect command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." Our Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, what are they doing, but in simple obedience to the command, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature? All our Bible and Tract Societies, what are they employed about, but just scattering abroad those leaves of the tree of life, "which are for the healing of the nations?" And this great and prosperous Union, what is it doing, what can it ever do more than is implied in these few monosyllables, *Train up a child in the way he should go?* As there never was a more simple plan thought of for renovating the world, so none could be more comprehensive, or effectual. Let it once be thoroughly tried, in any state or nation, with a humble reliance on the grace of God; that is, let every child be trained up from infancy in the right way, and how wonderful would be the moral transformation in the space of forty years! Let the same thing be done every where, and how soon would there be "new heavens and a new earth?"

What then is it to train up a child in the way he should go? The general import of the term is perfectly obvious. To *train*, is to draw from act to act, by a skilful influence—to form to any practice by exercise—to invite, allure, educate, bring up; or, as it is in the margin of the text, to

*catechise*. Thus, a young horse, or bullock, is *trained*, when he is gradually brought under subjection to his master, or when he is made docile, trusty, and useful. A soldier is *trained* for active service, when he is taught the art of war by an experienced officer, and is by degrees inured to hardships and dangers.

A child is *trained*, when, instead of being left to grow up in ignorance, and follow his own inclinations, he is brought under the influence of instruction and persuasion; of mental and moral discipline. And he is trained up in the *way he should go*, when he receives a pious education, commencing with the dawn of intellect, and continued till his character is formed and settled;—when his wayward propensities are watched and checked in their earliest manifestations;—when his opening mind is carefully imbued with moral and religious truth;—when his conscience is exercised to a quick discernment of right and wrong;—when his heart is made habitually to feel the presence of high and holy motives;—when the budding of every kindly affection is cherished by the breath of prayer; and when, in fine, virtuous habits of thought, of feeling, and of action, are gradually consolidated into great and abiding moral principles.

If the process is not begun early; if any one thing is neglected; if the parent, or other religious teacher, is incompetent, or unfaithful; if the system of religious education is not carried out; if, in religion, any aliment but the “sincere milk of the word,” is offered and received; and if the best instructions are counteracted by bad examples in the family, or in the school, then the child is not trained up in the way he should go. He may be taught to read ever so early; he may be put under the tuition of the ablest masters, in every branch of science and literature; he may outstrip all his companions in mental discipline and attainments; he may, in a popular sense, receive a finished education, and yet not be educated at all in the sense of my text. “The fear of

the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Whatever other advantages any child may enjoy, it is only when he is treated as a moral and accountable being; it is only when the truths of the Bible are laid at the foundation of all his attainments; it is only when he is taught "to fear God and keep his commandments," that he is trained up in the way he should go. It is a thorough Christian education alone, which can secure our children from vice and ruin; which can guide their feet in "the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace." But,

II. How is it that such an education forms a permanently virtuous and pious character? There is something in the power of habit, over all our faculties, whether bodily, intellectual, or moral, which I do not pretend to comprehend, and which I shall not therefore attempt to explain. The facts in the case are undeniable. Nothing is better settled than that the frequent repetition of any physical art, or mental process, begets an aptitude for the same thing, which it is extremely difficult to overcome. The unconquerable despotism of bad habits is proverbial. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The same is true of good and virtuous habits, though not in so high a degree. I am far from believing, that there are any blank leaves in the book of human nature, even at the beginning of it. Many a dark and crooked line appears upon the opening of the very first page. But still there is room to write the law of God upon it, and by the use of proper means, the law of sin may be gradually obliterated. What I mean to say is this. God has so made us, such is the constitution of the human mind, (notwithstanding the terrible blot of innate depravity, which nothing but his Spirit can ever wipe out,) that, under suitable instruction, a virtuous character may be formed, which will stand the shock, at least of ordinary temptations. This is what I call the *natural* effect of right training upon the mind; and in this view of the subject, I am borne out by

a great many striking analogies. The world is full of them. While the clay is soft, you can mould it into what form you choose. You bend the sapling of a year's growth with perfect ease; and in becoming a great tree, it most obediently follows the direction which your finger gave it half a century ago. Wherever a stream first begins to flow, there it cuts a channel for itself, and there it is likely to flow for ever. And so it is with the infant mind. First impressions are deep and permanent. Every early bias has a prodigious influence upon the future character. When these biases are in a right direction, they grow and ripen into good habits; and the man thenceforth travels on in the path of rectitude and happiness.

But while I lay so much stress upon the *natural* force of a religious education, I am fully aware, that this can never be our chief reliance. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is so in our children at the tenderest age. "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." The most pious education can never reconcile them to God. It is the Holy Spirit, alone, which can "put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." This is the only perfect security. Now, whether every child in the land would be savingly converted, if all were trained up in the right way, I do not certainly know; but I feel quite sure, that nobody can prove the contrary. Is it too much to affirm that the experiment of what, by the blessing of God, might be accomplished in this way, has never yet been tried, even upon a small scale? How many children in the world, think ye, have ever yet received as good a Christian education as it is possible to give? What if your children, or mine, have grown up under our care without being born again? What does this prove, but our own unfaithfulness? Is God slack concerning his promises? Is not the time coming, when all shall know him from the least to the greatest? And who can tell, but that during the millennium, every child will be converted, either in its mother's arms, or in the Sabbath-school.

But however this may be, no one who believes the word of God, or gives any heed to the testimony of experience and observation, will question the vast importance of early religious instruction. An insatiable and prying curiosity may exhaust itself in trying to explain *how* it is, that early training produces such mighty results; and "some man" may, if he chooses, declare that he will never believe what he cannot comprehend: but with the text and the facts before us, the path of duty is perfectly plain. We are just as much bound and encouraged to co-operate in promoting the great cause of Christian education, as if we could see every secret step of the process by which virtuous and pious habits are formed. We come now to inquire,

III. How, or by what means the whole youthful population of our country, may be trained up in the way they should go? Is such a thing practicable? Is it not too much for Christian philanthropy, with all her wealth, and all her influence, and all her faith, and all her holy yearnings, to attempt, or hope for? Certainly it is not too much. "All things are possible to him that believeth." There is obviously one way in which the blessings of religious education *might* be extended to every family in the United States, without the least difficulty, were the natural guardians of the young qualified for the responsible and endearing relations which they sustain. It undoubtedly devolves upon parents, first and chiefly, to train up their children in the way they should go; to begin the work at early dawn, and to carry it forward with many prayers, till "Christ be formed in them the hope of glory." Were fathers and mothers all enlightened and devoted Christians, (as they ought to be,) no child would be neglected. Under the cultivation which this universal piety would ensure, a transforming power would operate silently, but mightily, upon all the young millions of our country's hopes. Even then, "helps" might, no doubt, be highly useful. Parents might need assistance in carrying forward to

maturity the best systems of religious education. Many certainly would.

But how much more is foreign aid called for, in the existing state of things. What an awful dearth of piety is there, at the head of more than a million and a half of American families! From this quarter, then, a religious influence upon all who are now coming forward into life, with the destinies of the nation in their hands, is hopeless. Not one third part of them will ever be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, by those who gave them life. Must they then be left to grow up in ignorance and sin, and to pull down the pillars of the state upon their devoted heads? You promptly answer, No. Instant, and loud voices, from every quarter of this great and prosperous city, answer, No! All the managers, and auxiliaries, and agents, and depositories, and friends of this heaven-born Union, answer, No! All the Sabbath-school libraries in the land, and more than sixty thousand teachers, answer, no! And soon will the whole American Church, with a voice like the sound of many waters, answer, NO!

Here, in this blessed Union of hearts and hands, of counsels and prayers—in this flowing together of the waters of life from so many different sanctuaries, I see a pledge that every child in the city and the country, on the sea-board and by the great rivers of the west, shall be sought out, and have the opportunity of being instructed “in the right way of the Lord.” Did the time permit, and were it necessary, I might here trace the history of this blessed institution, from its precarious infancy to the lifting up of its head among the stars. I might speak of its early struggles, and the recent triumphs of its faith and its works—of the destitute regions which it has explored—of the thrilling appeals which have gone forth from the fulness of its heart—of the four hundred and fifty thousand children now in its schools—of the vast multitude of books which it has published—of the incalcu-

lable amount of good which it has already accomplished, and of its noble resolution, at the last anniversary, *to supply the Valley of the Mississippi with Sabbath-schools in two years.*

But it as little needs the eulogy as the defence of my feeble voice. It has excited the admiration, and kindled the eloquence of the statesman, as well as the divine. Mightier voices never thundered in our National Capitol, than have spoken its praises. Wherever its name is mentioned, the distinctions of party and sect are at once forgotten; and on a memorable, recent occasion, we have seen "the north give up, while the south kept not back." And then it was that the wrestling of the giants gave place to exalted moral reasonings, and mutual congratulations. But what is more than all, the character and deeds of this blessed Union are "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." Its record is on high. Its all-comprehensive and sweet benevolence is reflected from nearly half a million of happy faces every Sabbath day, and gratefully acknowledged by as many tongues. What it needs, is not the approving testimony of a humble individual, from the place which I now occupy, but the zealous co-operation of all the friends of religion, and of our free institutions; and above all, the continued smiles of Heaven upon its counsels and its labours.

I shall therefore just glance at the principles of the Union; its admirable adaptation to the religious wants of our country, and the genius of our government; and then press the duty of sustaining it, and of extending its operations upon every class of American citizens. It is the glory of this institution, that it belongs to no religious party, or sect. Here all minor differences of opinion are merged in the acknowledged principles of a common faith, and yet so as to leave each denomination at full liberty to inculcate its distinctive views upon all the children of its connection. Thus, while

each tribe in our Israel retains its own standard, all the tribes are represented in the blended studding of one common breastplate; and all move on together under His banner, "who was with the church in the wilderness." The objects of the Union, as expressed in the first article of the Constitution, are, "To concentrate the efforts of Sabbath-school societies in different sections of our country—to strengthen the hands of the friends of religious instruction on the Lord's day—to disseminate useful information; circulate moral and religious publications in every part of the land; and to endeavour to plant a Sunday-school wherever there is a population." These objects are worthy of that enlightened benevolence which founded this noble institution, and cannot fail of securing the approbation of every Christian, and every patriot. The obvious design of the system is, to pre-occupy the infant mind, throughout this great republic, with the principles of virtue and piety—to sow the good seed, and keep out the tares—to teach all the rising millions of a mighty empire, as they come up successively into life, their relations to God, their high duties, and their immortal destiny. It is, to enlighten the understanding and educate the heart—to make virtuous and happy families and neighbourhoods—to make good men and good citizens—good rulers—good and loyal subjects of the king of heaven; and, as a matter of course, good and peaceable subjects of a republican government. The design of the American Sunday-School Union is, to send abroad a moral power which shall quench all the remaining fires of intemperance, and lock up every gaming-house, and theatre, and brothel; and transform the whole army of drunkards and paupers into useful and independent members of society. It is, as soon as possible, to tear up every criminal docket, and stop all profane swearing, slander, and cheating. It is, to rescue the Sabbath from every kind of profanation, and to inculcate upon the young, every truth, and every duty, that is found in the

Bible. The grand design of this institution, in short, is, to empty the prisons and fill the churches; to expel misery and crime in every form from the land; to spread pure and undefiled religion over all the east, and west, and north, and south; and to train up our whole population for the kingdom of heaven. Such is the undisguised, the godlike design of the American Sunday School Union.

And need I stop to show how admirably, how perfectly, it is adapted to the wants of our country, and the character of our free institutions? Whose soul does not kindle within him, when he thinks of what has already been done by this institution, and of what it is now doing in every corner of the land?—How it seeks out the poor and the ignorant, and by bringing them together every week within the Sabbath-school, with children of better circumstances, introducēs them into a new world of thought, and feeling, and moral influence. How it everywhere offers to adopt the fatherless, and to assist the widow in training up her family for usefulness, and for glory. How its instructions “drop as the rain, and distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” How like an angel of mercy, it visits where the Bible is scarcely known, and no morning or evening sacrifice goes up, and no pious counsel ever flows from parental lips; and how it allures the little strangers to God whom it finds in these abodes of moral death, and turns their feet into the path of life.

Now, is any thing wanting, but just to extend the blessings of this divine charity, and establish an efficient Sabbath-school wherever there are children to be trained up in the way they should go? Would not the other means of grace and salvation follow almost of course? The Bible would certainly be there; nor would it be in the power of the prince of darkness himself to keep out the heralds of the cross. No village, or scattered settlement, that is once brought under the heavenly influence of faithful Sabbath-school

instruction, will ever consent to live without a preached gospel.

Need I speak of the cheapness of this system of religious education? When once fairly introduced, how trifling is the expence. Who, of all the sixty thousand teachers now employed, desires, or would consent to receive any pecuniary compensation? Which of them does not reap a rich reward in his own improvement, and in the pleasure of doing good? Never was so much labour performed so cheerfully, so faithfully, and so productively, for nothing. The contingent expences of so great an institution must indeed be large. So vast a territory as ours cannot be explored and organized but by the employment of many agents; and Sabbath-school libraries cost something. But who, in the last age, would have believed it possible to purchase as much entertaining and useful reading for an hundred dollars, as can now be had for thirty? I confess that I am astonished when I look into your depository, and ask the prices of your publications. That congregation, or settlement, must be poor indeed, which cannot afford to procure a handsome library.

Of the happy adaptation of this wonder-working system to the genius of our free institutions, but little need be said. It must strike the eye and the heart of every enlightened patriot, at a glance. Our government is not a government of force, but of influence. Its only sure basis is the virtue and piety of the people. In the absence of these, should Heaven in its wrath ever visit us with so dark a day, it must inevitably fall. When it is gone, you may plant the soil on which it stood with swords and bayonets; you may compel a degenerate race to cringe at the foot of a throne; and you may proudly construct the monuments of national servitude, with cannon upon the battle field; but without the living principle of moral rectitude, in the mass of the people, no country can long be free and happy.

Now, the American Sunday School Union offers to provide

the very security which is wanted, by carrying the blessings of religious education into every family ; by planting the seeds of piety in every tender mind ; by extending its adoption to every abode of moral orphanage ; and by giving its pledge, that, with God's blessing, the whole rising intellect and heart of our country shall be taught to fear God, and keep his commandments. This is what the wisest and best of our statesmen, as well as ministers of the gospel, propose to do. Here are Moses and Aaron united in counsel and in labour, for the common good. Here is the true American union, of which no Christian, and no patriot can ever be ashamed. It is the glory and safety of our country. It is an union which gives its money, gives its time, gives its influence ; and strives, in its daily prayers, to raise up good Christians and good ministers—good citizens and good rulers. It is such an union as was witnessed when Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses in the battle. An union of intelligence, public spirit, and deep moral principle, in all the members of the community, which effectually secures a conscientious obedience to the laws. That sort of union which makes every patriot a Christian, and every Christian a patriot. That union, in fine, which exists where all the members of a great family "love one another with a pure heart, fervently."

This, I hardly need to say, is the only union of religion and civil government which the friends of Sabbath-schools desire, or would consent to. For this they "long, for this they pray." And may such an union of hearts and minds, in all that can promote the public welfare, be speedily consummated by the universal prevalence of true religion. May the essential principles of the Bible be thus graven on every youthful heart, and may its life-giving spirit so thoroughly pervade all our institutions, as to animate them with a sound and enduring vitality.

But to this end, parents, teachers, ministers, churches,

and all who either love God, or their country, have a great work to do. While the American Sunday School Union must rely supremely upon Heaven for support and success, *subordinately* it "lives, and moves, and has its being" in the favour of the people; especially of the pious, benevolent, and influential classes. To such, then, let me earnestly appeal on the present occasion. And,

First, to parents of every communion, and every rank in society. Consider your responsibility, and accept the aid which is proffered you, in the religious education of your children. Sabbath-schools can nowhere exist, but by your permission and countenance. For whom do so many teachers and superintendants ask the privilege of toiling, and often under great bodily exhaustion, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and year to year? Is it for themselves, or for you and those whom God hath given you? And will you not bid them God speed—will you not help them? For whom did Christ die? Was it not for your children, and will you not bring them to him in the Sabbath-school, that he may there take them up in his arms and bless them, as he has blessed thousands of others?

But here let me earnestly caution you against devolving the whole business of religious education upon others, as if their readiness to assist you could ever excuse you from the duties of catechizing and other family instruction. I greatly fear, that even many Christian parents are in fault here; and I do know, that some devoted teachers have almost doubted, on this account, whether their labours were of much use.

Now, such neglect on your part, is most ungrateful to God and to them. It is discouraging, it is cruel! It is as if you should requite an overflowing benevolence, in offering to aid you in feeding and clothing your children, by just throwing off the whole burden from your own hands. And do not imagine that you have done all your duty, when you have secured the religious education of *your own* children. As it

respects other families, the only questions are, Do they need your assistance, and is it in your power to help them? How many are there, who cannot, or will not, decently clothe their children, and furnish them with the necessary books; and how comes it that you can purchase hundreds of the most interesting little volumes for your own children, at one quarter of the price which they used to cost? Could you have done it if the Sunday School Union had never been formed? And, can you not afford in your turn to help the Union? Is it not a debt which you are solemnly bound to discharge?

To those of you, my friends, who give your time and thoughts to this great work, as superintendants and teachers, much more might be said, by way of encouragement, exhortation, and advice, than the time will permit. Where then shall I begin? Shall I speak of *duty* as the constraining motive to action and perseverance? The theme before us, no doubt, is fruitful of such arguments and appeals, beyond almost any other. But the word *duty* is too cold—it has too little heart for such an enterprise as that in which you are engaged. It is a word which I am persuaded cannot be found in the vocabulary of heaven, and the sooner we can make it obsolete on earth the better. How strangely would it sound, to say that the angels serve God day and night in his upper temple, because they think it their duty to serve him! And surely it is high time, for the *church* at least, to emigrate from the polar circles of Christianity, and move nearer to the sun. To love God, and Christ, and the souls of men, is a very different thing from being convinced that it is our *duty* to love them. So to teach and pray in the Sabbath-school, under the constraining influence of *love*, is heaven-wide from any emotion which a mere sense of duty can excite.

Need I undertake to show you what a privilege it is, to be a Sabbath-school teacher, and would be to the greatest man in the world.

Suppose, then, for a moment, that you could summon around you every Lord's day, some of the most prosperous and influential men of business—some of the most devoted and useful preachers of the gospel—some of the ablest advocates and judges, and some of the most distinguished legislators of our country? Suppose you could do this as easily as you can now call your classes together, and could open the Bible before them, and impress its great truths upon their hearts and consciences, and give a permanent shape to their whole character? Would you not esteem it an honour and a privilege? And could you possibly exert so mighty an influence in any other way?

Well then, what are the facts in the case? Have you not actually before you, every Sabbath, some of the future ministers of the church, and rulers of the country? Some of the great merchants and bankers, jurists, legislators, and physicians of the next forty years? That little boy, who now listens to you with so much interest, and whose heart and intellect you are helping to fashion, will one day preach the everlasting gospel to the Hindoos, or the Chinese. And that other lad whom you found in a cellar, and allured to your school-room, will, in your own lifetime, be at the head of business in your city. Among those whose characters you are forming, on the eternal basis of Scriptural truth, one may be a Howard, another a Martyn; one a Whitfield, and another a Robert Hall, or Jonathan Edwards. That little child, now at the head of his class, may become another Franklin, or he may hereafter sit upon the bench of the Supreme Court, or he may one day be President of the United States!

What an influence! What an advantage, to have the first training of the young idea, and to direct the moral power of a great nation! The thought is prodigious. And yet it simply represents the actual prerogative of Sabbath-school teachers, wherever the system of the American Sunday School Union

shall be carried into full and complete effect. Nor is your influence as teachers at an end; nor has it produced its grandest results when it is seen, not only in all the common walks of life, but in the high places of society—holding the awful balances of justice; wielding the powers of argument and persuasion; presiding over all the civil rights and institutions of a great people; and shining in the golden candlesticks of the church. It is your higher privilege to assist in training up your classes “for glory, and honour, and immortality—in making them kings and priests unto God and the Lamb.” What power to do good! What honour conferred upon every faithful teacher, and need I add, what amazing responsibility, is here!

Ministers of Christ! heard ye that voice, in the hour of your consecration, “Feed my lambs?” How much the prosperity of this glorious cause depends upon your faithfulness, upon your influence. To say that it cannot go on “unto perfection” without you, is almost to say, that if it fails, or languishes, you must answer for it. On you it devolves, to *teach the teachers*, as well as the children of your respective charges—to counsel and encourage them in their arduous duties—to visit your congregations, and persuade them, if possible, to send every child to the Sabbath-school, as soon as it is capable of receiving religious instruction, and to exercise a general supervision over this blessed system of benevolence.

While the control of the American Sunday School Union, in all its vast operations, is very properly placed exclusively in the hands of laymen, they expect, they ask, I might almost say, they *implore*, your zealous and powerful co-operation. Surely, my beloved brethren, you will not disappoint them. You will not stand aloof from so glorious an enterprize. As your humble representative, I venture to pledge for you. ’Tis done. Methinks the pledge is already taken down by the recording angel. Does any one object to the record? Let him say so,

and ere it is dry, let him send up his petition that his name may be blotted out of the book!

When you look over the immense field which is to be explored and occupied by the American Sunday School Union, and behold what wide regions of moral desolation there are in our country, I am sure, dear brethren, you will not think it enough to watch over the young of your own flocks, and to see that they are fed "with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." You will also look after the sheep which are scattered over those vast regions, where there are no "green pastures and no still waters." Like the good Shepherd, you will "gather the lambs with your arms, and carry them in your bosoms." You will not rest till a fold is prepared, or, in other words, till a Sabbath-school is opened in every place of tents, throughout all the hundred wildernesses within our national borders. And as this great, this simple, this magnificent system of religious education extends its cheering influence, and "the desert blossoms as a rose," and you eagerly press on from every quarter, till you meet in the midst of one immense garden of the Lord, oh then, how loud, and how joyful will your shouting be, "Grace, grace unto it!"

Men of wealth—men of talent and influence—ye honoured civil fathers of the republic, my next appeal is to you. The managers of this glorious Union want all the aid you can give them, in extending the circle of its blessings. They thank you for what you have already done, and they ask you still to help them train up those rising millions, who are so soon to govern this great nation according to their pleasure—who will either keep the gallant ship in deep and peaceful waters, or dash her in pieces amid the foaming breakers.

Will you allow me to say, that there never was a more delusive, a more baseless vision, than that which has dazzled even some great minds, respecting the means and agents upon which the preservation of our liberties essentially de-

pend. Every thing is to be accomplished, as they seem to suppose, by the combined influence of popular education and free constitutions of civil government. Their theory is, that as we are now in possession of the freest and best institutions in the world, we have only to keep the people enlightened in regard to their political and religious rights—only to educate them well, in the common acceptation of the term, and all will be safe. Now this is a radical mistake. It is vainly undertaking to erect and support a magnificent edifice without a solid foundation. All the light and knowledge in the universe would not make a nation secure and happy, without the deep and broad basis of moral and religious principle. I hazard nothing in saying, that the Bible contains the only code of laws, or rather the elements of the only code, which can sustain our free government, or any other like it. All history and experience might confidently be adduced in support of this position. It is only by teaching the rising generation to “fear God and keep his commandments,” that we can induce them to “obey magistrates”—to “lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty,” and thus to maintain the great pillars of the state. By warmly patronizing Sabbath-schools, therefore, by visiting them often, and by aspiring to the honour of becoming teachers in these heaven-founded seminaries, you can do more to undergird the ship, and keep her on in the right course, than when you heave the lead, raise the quadrant, or stand at the helm.

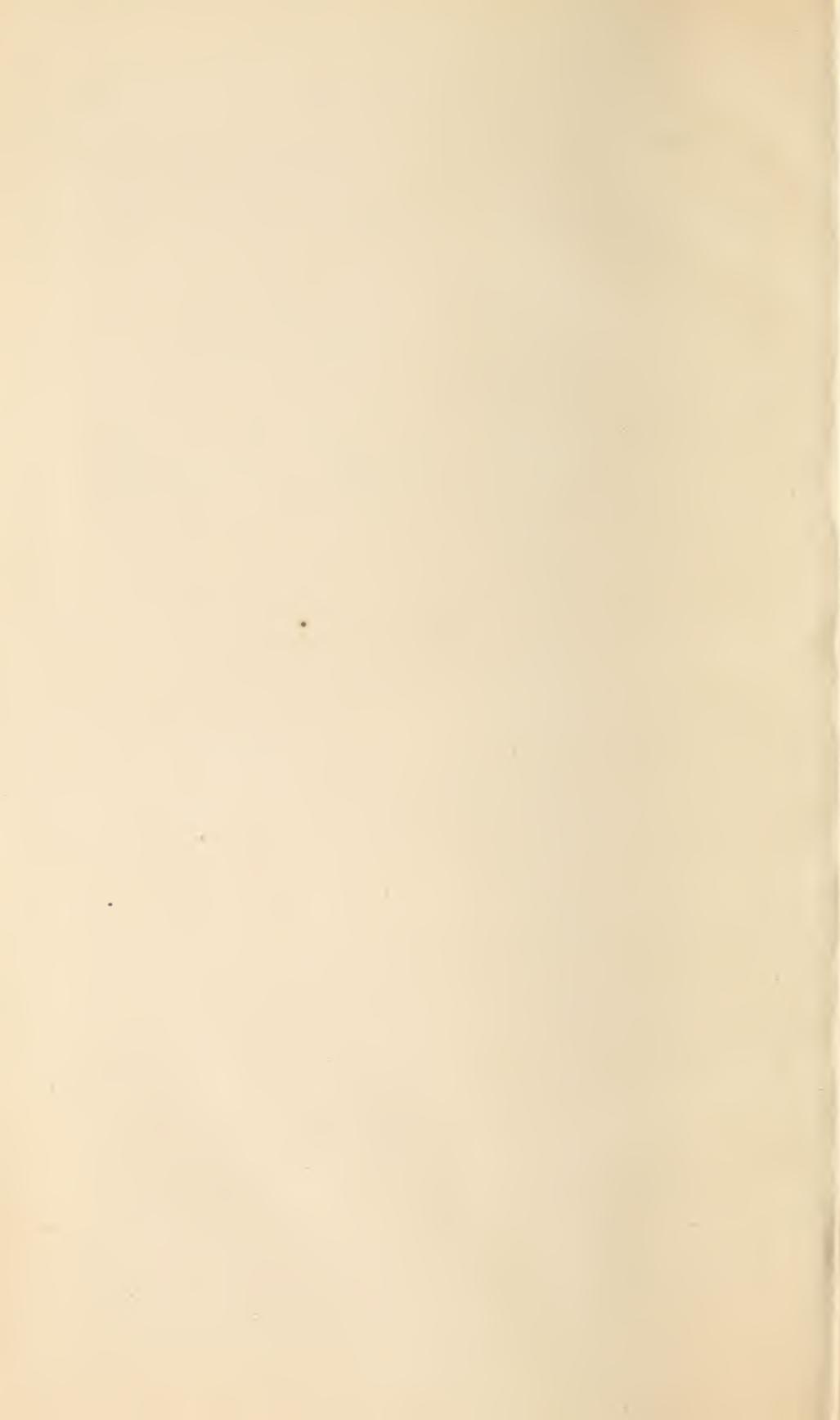
But I must draw to a close. The time which I had a right to detain you is more than elapsed. And now, ye favoured managers of this great and blessed Union! Ye parents, teachers, ministers, churches, friends of revivals, patriots, rulers, and judges of the land—under the smiles of heaven, the success of this cause depends upon your prayers and your efforts. You are all deeply, and may I not add, equally, interested in its success. By helping it forward, you advance the interest “of pure and undefiled religion”—you

promote the happiness and true glory of the nation—you honour God and bless the world.

Go on then, I beseech you, from duty to duty—from mountain to mountain—from river to river. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Never rest till the noble work is done—till a Sabbath-school is established wherever there are children to enjoy its blessings. Never rest till you hear the shout of “Hosanna to the son of David,” from all the Atlantic coast—from the shores of the Lakes and the tops of the Alleghanies, and then from *the multitudes on multitudes, in the great valley of decision!*

THE END.

















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