

reported, is not at variance with his voice in revelation. My convictions become also deepened by the lessons of ecclesiastical history, that the ordinances of religion need to be observed in close conformity to the will of their author. If their original purpose be misapprehended, they become means and occasions of the grossest superstition; if that purpose be correctly understood, and the ordinances observed in their original simplicity, with strict conformity to their founder's will, they have a singular efficacy in preserving or restoring purity of principle and practice. At the same time, he who is deeply imbued with the spirit of Christianity, while he acknowledges his Lord's authority in the ordinances, does not feel bound, like a slave, to any outward form as having in itself some peculiar holiness. Ritual observances ordained by heaven, he yet subordinates, and makes tributary to that true holiness of heart which is the ultimate object of all God's discipline and culture. From the outward he directs his thoughts and desires, like an affectionate child, to that Spirit whose in-working alone can fit him for his humble station in the kingdom of God on earth, and here mould him for his destined activity and glory in the kingdom of God on high.

DIVINE INFLUENCE IN THE WORK OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

(From the Watchman and Reflector.)

We give below extracts from the excellent address of Rev. J. R. Scott, of Portland, delivered at the late Anniversary of the New England Sunday School Union, in Fall River. The great truth insisted on in the address, may well commend itself.

MR. PRESIDENT,—Before speaking to the resolution which has been put in my hands, permit me to say a word in regard to the Union. I am glad, sir, that an effort is being made to revive its efficiency, and that its financial affairs have been so adjusted, as to preclude any apprehension of trouble from past embarrassments. We have reason, also, for gratulation, that the services of a brother have been secured for the more active prosecution of the objects of the Union, whose interest in Sunday schools, and opportunities for experience, along with his energy and good judgment, augur so well for the future usefulness of the society. That such a society ought to exist, and that the Baptists of New England are well able to sustain it, and that we cannot be true to the cause of Christ, and to our denominational interests, without such a one, vigorously supported, I have never for a moment doubted. That this is the fact, is sufficiently clear, from what the Union has already accomplished, despite the untoward events, to which allusion has been made; but it is more clearly demonstrable from the history of similar organizations among our neighbors of other denominations. It is enough to refer

you to the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society,—and I do this, not in the spirit of sectarian jealousy, if it is lawful to learn from an enemy, it surely is from a friend. As I have contemplated the energy and the success with which the affairs of that society are managed, and have seen its growing influence on the prosperity of their denomination, I have seen with one of Virgil's rustics—"Indeed, I do not cry; I rather wonder." So far from envying, glad I am to know that our Congregational brethren are doing their best to impart efficiency to this lovely institution among them; but I wonder that we Baptists have been so slow to profit by their example. Since it has been decided that our Union *shall* live, let us determine, brethren, that it shall have a flourishing existence. It may be rendered an agency of great value to our churches; let us make the most of it. Let us concentrate our means in enlarging its operations,—let us make it to the Baptist Sunday schools, what the Massachusetts Society is to the schools of the Orthodox Congregational churches, and we shall be amply repaid for the most liberal outlay of our resources in its support. Without detaining you further, I will read the resolution:

Resolved, That in the work of Sunday schools, it becomes the churches to rely less on outward machinery, and more on Divine influences.

The resolution, sir, seems to imply that the churches are in the habit of *relying* too much on outward machinery, and I fear that this is true. It says not a word against the proper use of means. We may, and we should deem it important that the number of scholars be increased, that the schools be well officered, and furnished with competent teachers, that there be a large and attractive library, that suitable periodicals be circulated, that the best question books be adopted, that the monthly concert and the weekly teacher's meeting be maintained, that absentees be looked up, and that new measures be judiciously employed to keep up and increase the interest of the school. It certainly cannot be said that in any of our schools there is too much of all this. In how many is there a most lamentable lack of it? The truth is, if a Sabbath school is worth sustaining at all, it is worth all the outlay of time and money and pains, that the most enthusiastic friend of the institution ever considered it entitled to. If we overlook the truth, we may as well overlook the entire fact that the Highest has ordained the coming of his kingdom through the instrumentality of means. The war shout of Israel is—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and who is Gideon? The angel tells us, as he summons the unsuspecting youth to his high commission—"the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor!" And though he knew it not, as he timidly threshed out his father's wheat by the wine-press to hide it from the Midianites, a hero's heart did

beat in his bosom, and he was the fittest man in all Israel for that service. God seeth not as man seeth; he may choose his agents and his instruments, where man would be little likely to look for them; and yet those agents and those instruments shall be expressly suited to their purpose; and whoever thinks a meagre outlay of skill and strength and resources on his part, is all that is demanded of him, be he a Sabbath school teacher, be he minister, be he in whatever department of the vineyard of the Lord let him rest assured, he is not the man whom the king delighted to honor; for they only that be *wise*, skilfully adapt means to ends—"shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, forever and ever."

Still, my brethren, they are strong who are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and let Gideon come to forget how impotent and worthless a thing the sword of Gideon is, save as it is coupled with the sword of the Lord, and defeat shall at once remind him of his presumption and rebuke him for it. And so if we would secure the real object to be aimed at, in our Sunday school exertions, it is of vital consequence, that we be ever mindful of the sole source of their efficiency. The Sabbath school is indeed a most happy stroke of Christian policy; for how could we proceed more hopefully than to take the child before his mind has been preoccupied by error, before time has developed and habit confirmed his innate depravity; while the heart is most susceptible of impression, and inculcate on him at this hopeful period the invaluable lessons of the gospel. This is being wise to win souls. It is acting in harmony with the laws of mind. Surely a glorious harvest *must* crown such culture.

Yes, it will, if but one more requisite be added. But this wanting, that soil will yet be sterile. The seed will die in the ground. There must fall the dews and rains from heaven, and the sun must shine down from heaven in his strength, or there will be no germination. Perfect the outward machinery of our schools may be; but without an agency superior to all human influences, the results looked for, will not follow. We may be so charmed with the beautiful working of the engine, as to forget to ask whether it is really *doing* any thing; and from the fact that the results of Sunday schools efforts have not kept pace with the progress of eternal facilities for their prosecution, may we not reasonably conclude that this resolution is true?

Mr. President, the resolution reminds us of scenes that we have ourselves been privileged to witness. We have known what it is to be conscious of the presence of God in the Sabbath school. The very atmosphere was impregnated with Divine influence. Deep solemnity reigned. All sat in