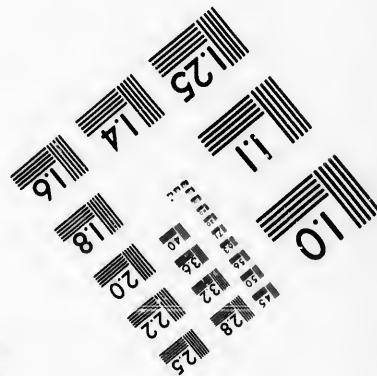
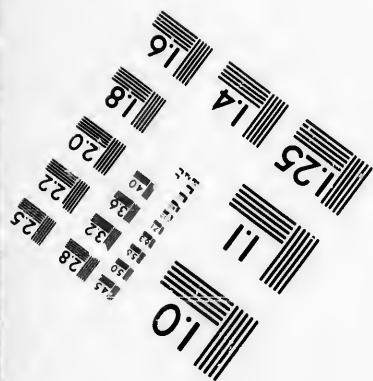
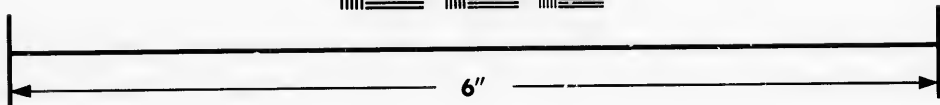
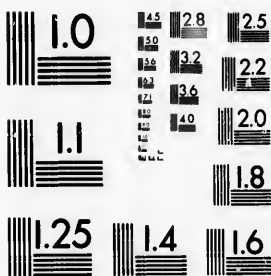


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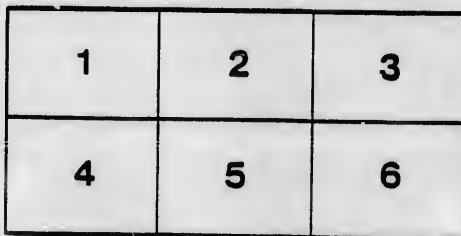
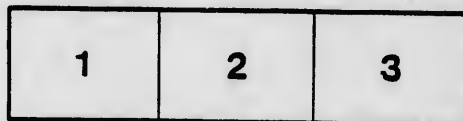
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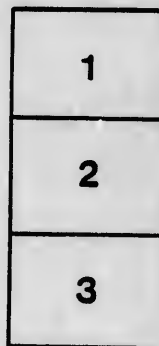
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**"A Neglected Opportunity of the Churches."**

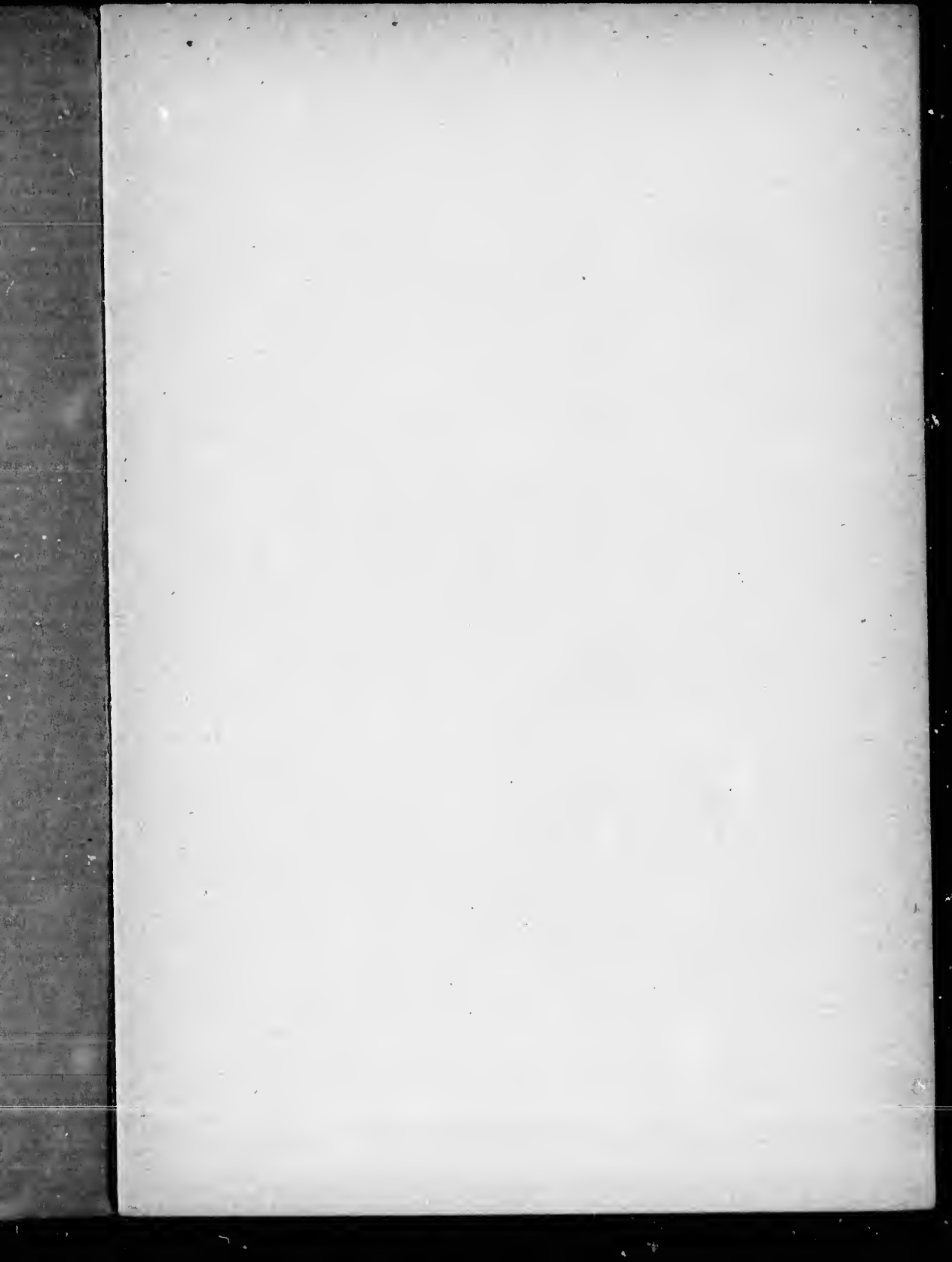


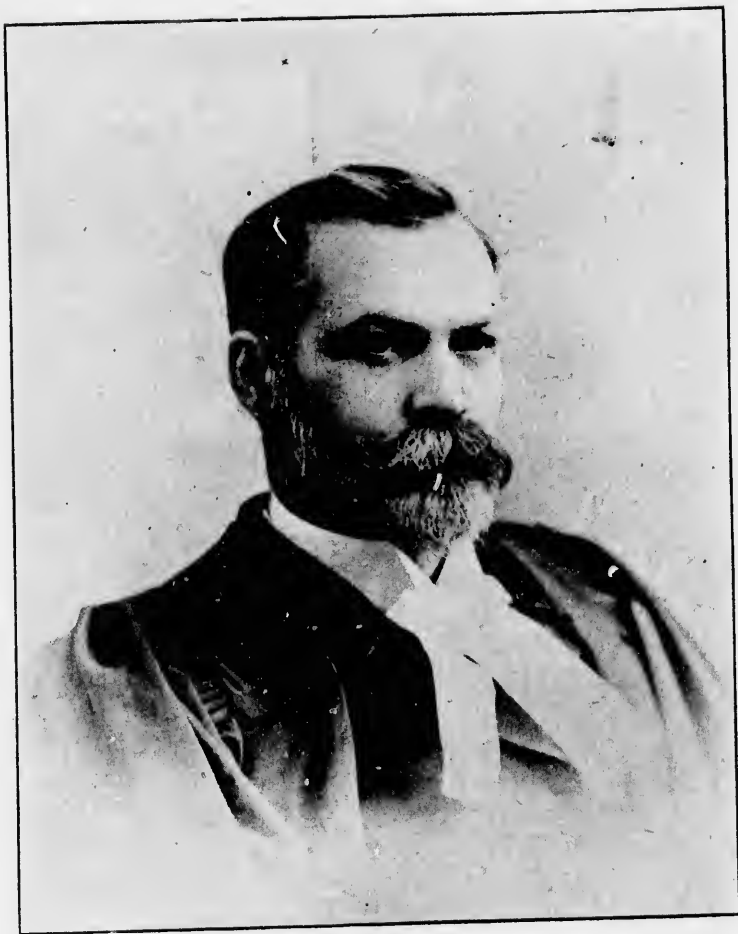
**CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS**

Before the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec,  
at Montreal, June, 1896

**BY SETH P. LEET, B.C.L., MONTREAL.**







S. P. LEET, B.C.L.



CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF ONTARIO AND QUEBEC.

BY MR. SETH P. LEET, BARRISTER, MONTREAL.

"A NEGLECTED PRIVILEGE."

June 10th, 1896.



**B**EFORE delivering what I suppose will have to be designated in the Records of the Union as the Chairman's address, allow me to say how much I appreciate the honor which has been conferred upon me by my brethren of our churches in electing me to this position. It came to me entirely unexpected and unsolicited, and I am sure undeserved. If in any way any have thought I have deserved it, it is a pleasing indication that the spirit of the Master is in the hearts of my brethren; that small services wrought in His name are remembered. This, I trust, will be an encouragement to others. I would also like to add to the words of welcome which have been so happily expressed by the Pastor of this Church. It is, indeed, an added pleasure to me, to stand in Zion Church, which is honored with such honorable and holy memories, and, as a member of this church, and as Chairman of this Union, to welcome you to the annual gatherings of our churches here, and I do trust that the sessions of the Union may be very helpful to you personally, and to the churches and causes which you represent in your various fields of labor.

While I recognize and appreciate the honor accorded me in electing me to preside over this Union, I think no one, who has not enjoyed the privilege, can quite appreciate the responsibility which it involves. I refer principally to the responsibility of preparing and delivering the Annual Address.

My ideal of an address on such an occasion as this, is, that it should be addressed to the churches rather than to individuals, and be one which in virtue of the information given, or suggestions offered, should help the churches to do better work for the Master, and in the line of our particular principles.

In trying to conform to my ideal, I found a good deal of difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to the channel into which I should direct your thoughts to-night, but finally decided to try and say a few words to you about one of the most blessed privileges the churches have, and to indicate some of the ways in which I think it can be best employed.

Many look upon turning to Christ and the doing of work in His name as duties, and so we hear of the religious duties and obligations of churches and church members.

Now while this statement of the position is a true one, and that aspect of our relation to Christ and His work is not to be overlooked or forgotten, there is a higher and better way of regarding the attitude of a man to his God and Saviour, and the manner of his showing his appreciation of His grace and love. It is that of privilege.

When we compare human knowledge with the Omniscience of God, when we compare the strength of man with the Omnipotence of God, when we compare all the powers of man, taken together, with the Infinite God; how impotent and ignorant do we appear, and we feel constrained to take up the cry of the King of Israel, when he said, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

Then when we think that the God and Creator of all this wonderful universe has given us a life which shall out-live the heavens and the earth which we now see, that the God and Creator of this unlimited and inscrutable universe, so loved *us*, as to give His only Son to be incarnated in *our flesh* and die to redeem us, who had rebelled against him, and to make us kings and priests to Himself; how can we help being overwhelmed with a sense of His grace and love, of the honor and glory bestowed upon us, and how can we regard anything that our limited knowledge or puny strength may do to please Him, as simply a duty? Oh! my brethren, what a privilege to be recognized as a child of God, to be able to say with a consciousness that it is true, "Our Father, who art in Heaven," how can anyone help adding, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

It seems to me that anyone who shall meditate seriously upon God's grace and mercy must be constrained to seek opportunities to express his appreciation of the great honor and privilege conferred upon him, rather than to wait to be asked and urged to do something for the Master as a fulfilment of a duty.

Now among the ways in which a child of God may show his appreciation of this relationship, the most important, and that which really includes all others, is to seek to spread abroad among his brethren in the flesh the knowledge of God's goodness and love, and to bring them into the fold of Christ. Christ declares that he came to save that which was lost, and when he left, His command was "To go and make disciples of all men, teaching them to believe all things whatsoever he has commanded."

Now the very purpose for which churches are organized, is to teach men these things that He has commanded.

The methods adopted by the churches to this end may be broadly divided into two: Preaching and Teaching.

The preaching services of the churches are, for the most part, arranged and conducted for the benefit of adults. The teaching services for the children between the age of five and fifteen: and while I would not for a moment criticize or try to detract from the importance of the preaching services, I do think the teaching department of the church has not received that attention from the churches that it deserves.

It is, of course, unquestionable that the working force of the churches at any particular time is largely among the adults, and that the efficiency of all branches of the churches' work depends upon strong and vigorous adult membership; therefore, it is in the interests of all the agencies employed by the church for the Master, that there should be strong, energetic, intellectual and spiritual preaching, but if Christ's kingdom is to increase, and the church is to grow in power and efficiency, the teaching department and especially as regards the children and youth, must be specially looked after, and our young people prepared for the duties and privileges of adult Christian life.

In this teaching department I think the churches have not fully appreciated their position.

As I have just stated, the churches need strong, vigorous, intellectual and spiritual preaching to maintain their spiritual power, but in so far as preaching to adults leads to conversion the results are meagre compared with the work amongst the

youth. Statistics compiled in the United States show that 85% of the additions to the churches come from the membership of the Sunday School.

Now of course that cannot all be credited to the Sunday School as apart from the church, but it shows the class from which recruits for the kingdom are secured.

If a man in business found that a large portion of his profits was derived from one department, would he not exercise himself specially to develop that section and to maintain its efficiency; but what do we see the churches doing in relation to its work?

If we look at the money expended in the building of suitable edifices and the furnishing of them, we find that three-fourths, if not more, of the expense is made in connection with the preaching services and for the benefit of adults. When we look at the education of the religious teachers, we find the same great disparity.

Now, when it is so universally admitted, that the impressions of youth are more lasting, that the minds and hearts of children are more susceptible to holy influences, should not more effort be made during this period of life? It has been well stated by Mr. Gladstone, that "forming" was a greater work than "reforming." Is it not, therefore, as important work to so guide a child that he may never wander from the fold as it is to win back one who has gone astray?

Some years ago during revival services in a city in one of the United States, many children were brought to the Master; but during the same meetings the Governor of the State was converted. The newspapers and the community at large regarded the conversion of the Governor as a most notable thing and much was said about it, and certainly it was an event worth noting and rejoicing over, but the Governor died two or three years after and no doubt went to be with the redeemed. Little notice however, was taken of the numbers of children who at that time found the Saviour; but among them was one little fellow who is now doing a great and glorious work for the Master as a Foreign Missionary. We have no right to judge or make comparisons, but have we not some reason to believe that the conversion of that little fellow was at least of equal importance with that of the Governor?

Have we not also in God's Word strong reason for believing that our Master regards with special favor the little ones? Has He not declared "That of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"That their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." "That except we become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." "That it is better that a man should be drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to offend."

Then again, when God in His infinite knowledge and wisdom created this world and prepared it for man, he might have peopled it with adults, but in His infinite wisdom he only created two, and the first recorded words of God to man are, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth;" and ever since that time God has exercised the creative attribute through man, even His Son came as a little babe, the Son of Mary. What a wonderful privilege is this, that God takes man into partnership as it were, in the creation of immortal souls.

Who can look upon a new born babe, without having called forth in his heart the holiest and tenderest emotions? Who can look upon such a one and think that a new eternal life has been ushered into existence, without a feeling of awe and reverence? In that little heart and life what possibilities there may be of good to the world, the lives of many a humble babe has proved; and on the other hand, there may be developed a character, the very thought of which fills us with loathing, disgust and horror. And when we think that as how we teach them and live before them may depend whether the one character or the other shall be developed, is not the feeling of awe and reverence turned to one of pain and trembling?

Oh! my brethren, is there anything in the universe second to this duty, more important and glorious than this privilege—the privilege of continuing the work which Christ came to do, to save the souls of men from perdition? Is it not a terribly humiliating fact that children should be born in Christian homes, that they shall be sent to the Sunday Schools and attend the services of the church, and still be claimed by the powers of evil? That these little ones, who when ushered into this world are children of the kingdom, who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, shall ever be let stray from the fold, shall have ever been for one moment estranged from God!

I am very glad to say that much has been done, and that at no time in the history of the church has more real interest been taken in this question than now; but we need to do more; and I venture to make some suggestions here, as to the directions in which I think more may be done.

First of all, I do think the pastors of our churches should make this subject more often the theme of their public discourses; that the children should be oftener got together by themselves and addressed by the pastors. That in our Sunday Schools, they should receive more attention from the church, especially the primary and the senior departments. That our Sunday School rooms should be as well furnished and equipped, as light and airy, and as cheerful, as the church; that there should not be two purses, one for the church and one for the Sunday School. That, notwithstanding the opinion of my friend who wrote to the *Congregationalist* some time ago, I believe the Sunday School ought to be a department of the church, directly under its control; and that the church should feel that it was as much responsible for its maintenance and efficiency as for the ministrations of the pulpit, and the services for the adults. That in the training of our ministers special attention should be given to fit them for the teaching department; and it should be considered as important to train them in the art of teaching, as in the principles of preaching; that they should be turned out of college as competent to take charge of a Normal Class in the instruction of teachers and elder scholars, as to fill a pulpit acceptably. That as much care should be taken to educate and train teachers for the Sunday School, as for the day school.

I know that in order to carry out all that I have suggested, means a good deal of time and money, and some change of methods; but I believe it has got to be done, before we can fulfil our obligations and responsibilities; and will be done when Christian people rightly appreciate this neglected privilege.

At whichever of the operations of the church we may look, when we consider the work to be done and how it is to be done, I think we shall come to the conclusion, that relatively the church must pay a great deal more attention to the education of the youth than it has done in the past; and this may be done, as I have said before, not by neglecting anything that is now being done in the way of making the preaching strong and effectual, but more in the way of strengthening the teaching department.

It seems to me that this is the only solution of the burning question of Church and State Schools, which is being fought out now in this country, in England, and in other countries. The church has got to take hold of the matter, and attend to the religious training of the youth, entirely apart from the State.

Arrangements may be made, possibly, to have the secular and religious teaching done in the same buildings; and possibly, different portions of the same day, or different days in the week, may be set apart for one or the other; and sometimes, perhaps, the same teacher may take charge of both. These are questions of detail and arrangement; but to do it as it is being attempted to be done now, will, I believe, always result in more or less failure.

The Roman Catholic idea and practice is the only one which can be worked satisfactorily; that is to say, that each denomination should look after the education of its own children, by teachers who are competent to teach their particular religious beliefs as well as general education; but as that to my mind it is absolutely impossible to be done satisfactorily in mixed communities, the only solution is to have the education of the State, and of the Church, entirely divorced. I do not wish to be misunderstood here, as that statement might be understood to mean by some "to kick the Bible out of school." It would not involve that at all. In so far as the Bible is a book of history, either of nations or of men, in so far as it is a revelation of creation, in so far as it contains a code of moral laws, I can see no reason why it should not be made a text book in the schools of all denominations of Christians; but when we come to its spiritual and religious teachings, the relations between God and man, of sin and its punishment, of righteousness and its rewards, of the church of Christ and its history, then the church should have entire charge of the teaching of its own children; and only those who are qualified to deal with these things should be employed to teach. For my part I would not have a prayer read by a teacher who could not enter into its spirit.

The question may be asked here, "If it is not done in the Public Schools to some extent, how can it be done? as the Sunday Schools in their limited time cannot accomplish this work?" I admit this at once, and it is just because it seems to me that the church thinks it is doing it somewhat now through the Public Schools, that I raise this protest here; for I am firmly convinced that the religious teaching which is being attempted through our Public Schools is of very little use indeed, and it is of worse than no use if the church is relying to any extent upon it, and not exerting itself in other directions. It is not only the duty but the privilege of every church to provide for the religious teaching of the children of its own members and adherents.

This is, of course, being partially done by our present system of Sunday Schools; but I am sorry to say very inadequately and inefficiently.

As has been said, not much can be done in the hour, or hour and a half once a week given to the Sunday School; but a good deal more might be done than is being done at present, if teachers were better trained, and better rooms and equipments were furnished. Pastors, church officers and parents, should take special pains to attend every Sunday School Convention and Institute within their reach, and try in every way to increase and improve their knowledge and appliances. The churches should also take advantage of the Society of Christian Endeavor, and other societies of young people, to impart knowledge of their own church history, and church history in general, and what is being done in the religious world and in the Missionary field. Normal Schools should be arranged for the training of teachers for the Sunday School, and for these other departments. Another department in which I think our churches should take more interest, is that of providing good religious literature. I do think we ought to have a manual or catechism for our Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies, setting forth in concise form those religious and spiritual truths which we hold. Good libraries should be provided in our Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies. We ought to have a first class denominational paper coming into our homes every week, which should keep us posted, not only upon our local affairs, but upon the affairs of our denomination the wide world over, and be a leader in religious thought. Our Publishing Company is doing the best it can; but we want a better paper, and we can only get it by the churches taking the matter up and realizing that it is of vital importance to have the right kind of a denominational paper. If our churches would give an average of ten dollars a year to this department, you would be surprised at the result.

Then if our distinctive principles and history are of any special importance, (and I am sure we all believe they are,) our people, old as well as young, need to be taught them. Whether they should be oftener proclaimed from the pulpit or not, I am not quite sure, but that they should be more often proclaimed in some way, I am certain.

There should be two or three occasions in the year, at least, on which Congregationalism, its *raison d'etre*, the work of the



churches, and of the noble men and women they have produced, should be set forth before our people.

If the principles of our order, the history of our men and churches, and the place they have held, and the work they have accomplished, in the religious, political and intellectual life of the world were better known and understood, we should all be better men and women, as well as better Congregationalists; and would be less troubled about so simple a thing as permitting the delegates from our churches to pass acts as well as resolutions.

Our churches must be got to appreciate better the great privilege which is theirs as co-workers with God, in caring for the children of the kingdom, or else they can never grow.

The great movements of religious energy to-day in the direction of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Christian Citizenship, and the suppression of intemperance and other glaring evils, cannot be accomplished with only enough to take the places of those who are now in harness; for now the additions to Christ's kingdom do not keep pace with the increase of the world's population.

No one expects that the additional laborers are to be got from the ranks of those who are now adults. If then, they are to be got at all, and I believe they are, they must come from the children of to-day and the future. Dr. Goodell, whom Joseph Cook called "the model preacher and pastor of the Mississippi Valley," in his volume entitled, "How to build a Church," says:

"He who builds the church of Christ must save the children, if we save the children we save the world. The world is most easily and effectively saved in childhood. . . . Life and death are in the training of the children. The generation which takes the most children along with it for Christ, will do most to build this Kingdom, and to thin the ranks of the opposition. . . . Shepherds increase their flocks by carefully nursing the lambs; so pastors must enlarge their folds by caring for the young. How can we bring men to Christ? Bring in the boys, then you will have the men. . . . Seek the children early, seek them faithfully. The pastor's best work will be in giving direction to their life at the start. The pointing of the gun determines the entire course of the ball. There is no escape from these truths."

I appeal then to the churches, to make the care of your children and youth a special subject of thought and prayer. In the Sunday Schools of our churches in these two provinces, there must be to-day between nine and ten thousand scholars; there must be three to five thousand children and youth besides, in connection with our congregations, who ought to be there. Of this large number of twelve thousand to fourteen thousand

children and youth, directly connected with our churches, and I suppose it would be a large estimate to say 25% of our Sunday School scholars were declared Christians.

What a field there is for work, my brethren. Do you not think that one in four of these who are outside the fold might be got to decide for the Master this year, if you laid yourselves out for it? If that could be done what a glorious year our churches would have, and what joy there would be in heaven. Will we not try?

Let us make this year a Children's Year! Shall we not take for our motto this year, our Lord's word to Peter, "Tend my Lambs"? and whether we are more interested in the Sunday School or Y.P.S.C.E., or Mission, or College, or Publishing Company, let us think specially of the children and youth, and try and make our work tell as regards them specially.

Let our College create a department to train its students to be teachers of the word, as well as preachers. Let those who give to Foreign Missions, give as giving to rescue from heathen darkness some mother's darling, who is as sweet and dear to her as yours is to you; and as innocent and pure before God. Let those who give to Home Missions, remember that they are giving to bring to Christ some other mother's girl or boy, who some of these days will stand side by side with your children, to battle against evil and wrong, and bear the banner of the Cross in this our fair land; nay, they may be the fathers and mothers of men and women who shall bear your names, and in whose hearts your blood shall beat. If you give to the Publishing Company, think that you may be sending a religious paper week by week into some home, where it will be the only religious reading they have.

Let the churches inscribe over their doors the words of the Master, "Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And when they come in, as they surely will, let us then take them up in our arms, put our hands on them and bless them—the loving Jesus will bless them and us!

It is said that the crowds who went to listen to Cicero would go away after listening to one of his magnificent orations, exclaiming, "What eloquence, what beautiful diction, what logic!" but that the Athenians who crowded to hear Demosthenes, as soon as he finished were wont to rush from his presence, with the cry of "Let us fight Philip!"

I know that the impression that this address shall make upon you will not be Ciceronian, but I pray that it may be Demosthenian; that with the help of the Holy Spirit we shall be inspired to go out and fight more vigorously against the enemies of our little ones. That we shall with more than Athenian zeal, even a Christ-like zeal, determine to save the children of our homes and of the world, from the power of the Devil and for the Kingdom of Christ, and when we have done that, the prayer that the Master taught us will be answered.

I like the ring of that rallying song of the ladies of the W. C. T. U.—

“It's coming, it's coming, the time for which we pray.  
“We'll take this world for Christ's own Kingdom,  
“Some glad day.”

and when that day does come, “a little child shall lead them.”



