

## TO THE BAPTISTS OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES.

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THE Southern Baptist Convention at Augusta, (Ga.) impressed with the conviction that more efficient and systematic efforts in behalf of Sunday Schools are needed, established a Board of Sunday Schools at Greenville, (S. C.) Among the reasons for such an organization, the following are believed to have had weight :

1. The peculiar circumstances of our times, instead of diminishing, increase the importance of this kind of religious effort. If ever Sunday Schools were called for, they are especially needed now, when so many of the ordinary means of instruction are cut off—when so many indigent and helpless claim assistance—when, more than ever in human recollection, orphans crowd the land.

Though there ought to be more schools to supply this want, there are evidently fewer than heretofore, and these few are, for the most part, in less active and vigorous operation.

Yet no immovable or insuperable obstacle exists. The chief special difficulties arise from the absence in the army of many of the tried and faithful laborers in this cause, and from the absorption of the public mind in the war, to the neglect of spiritual and eternal interests. Enough remain at home to fill the ranks, both of scholars and teachers. And though some needful facilities are scarce and expensive, they can be provided by united and judicious effort.

There is no general society among us actively engaged in the Sunday School work. From the institutions at the North, which we had chiefly depended on, we have withdrawn ; and we can never again trust them to provide for the religious instruction of our little ones. The efforts which were commenced by various societies at the South, have been suspended by the casualties of the war. And this destitution furnishes both favorable opportunity and unanswerable arguments for the Convention to enter the field at this time.

2. The object in view can be better promoted by having a general organization. So far from conflicting with whatever may be accomplished by local societies or by private enterprise, it is obvious, that, if properly conducted, it may lend them assistance and stimulus, and produce greater unity and concentration of effort upon some general, harmonious plan. The same argument, which would dispense with a general organization, because the State societies or boards have the work in charge, would dispense with the State boards too ; for the Associations could take the matter in hand. In like manner, the Associations need not undertake it, for the churches might, if they would. And the churches, too, may be spared the trouble, if all the families will only fulfil the heavenly rule of training up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The same process of

argument might also be applied to other causes, as well as that of Sunday Schools; and our general organizations for Missions at home and abroad might be pronounced superfluous and in the way. But the experience of the churches has confirmed the suggestion of reason, that in all these enterprises more can be done by united than by isolated action; and the proofs of this are especially obvious in the case of Sunday Schools. It costs about as much to sustain a missionary whether many or few be sent; but it is manifestly much cheaper to supply the articles needed for a Sunday School when many are to be furnished with the same. The work can be carried on, not only more efficiently, but more economically, if on a large scale; since what is necessary for one school will be appropriate and sufficient for many, and can be imparted to them with but small additional expenditure.

3. The object is large and important enough to demand a separate and distinct Board. The children of the land are more than half of the people of the land; and they are the portion on whose training and character depends, under God, the whole future destiny of our country and of our churches. Whatever is done to influence them, can be most easily, most thoroughly, most permanently done, while they are still within the range of Sunday School instruction. Thousands of them are in our schools; but many of these are inefficiently conducted, uninteresting and comparatively unprofitable. It is a great work to lend facilities, to impart suggestions, to give encouragements, to communicate animation and zeal, to those faithful laborers who are thus toiling amid much weakness and many disadvantages, so that they may work more successfully to win souls. And there are thousands on thousands more, who are not in our Sunday Schools, who could be reached and might be blessed by their hallowed instructions. It is another great work to rouse the churches to the condition of these heathen at home, to diffuse the spirit of self-sacrificing labor which may imitate the Saviour by going forth to seek that which was lost, to multiply the number and enlarge the extent of these schools of sacred knowledge, to spread these pioneers for the churches in all directions, bearing and teaching the Word of God, till every neighborhood shall have the blessings of the Gospel, and every household the lamp of life.

By the action of the Convention in establishing this Board, the duty has been devolved on us of endeavoring to promote Sunday Schools by all suitable measures. The method of operation, the extent of our efforts, the whole details of the work, have been left to the discretion of the Board. And it has been a question of deep and prayerful anxiety: How can we most widely—how most speedily—how most thoroughly—rouse the churches of our land to activity in Sunday Schools? The experience of the past has been carefully consulted, the successes and the failures of those who have attempted similar enterprises have been pondered, and we have

earnestly sought how to accomplish most for the cause and for the Master. We submit our proposed plans, asking the candid judgment and the co-operation of those who have required this work at our hands.

The business of a Sunday School Board naturally divides itself into two Departments. By the Missionary Department destitution is sought out, new schools are established, donations made to those whose circumstances require it, and the Sunday School spirit aroused and quickened throughout the land. For this a system of agencies is wanted, which will reach both those who appreciate the work and those who do not; that the former may contribute to supply the needy, and that the latter may have the unknown, unvalued light, kindled in their midst. By the Publication Department the various Sunday School requisites are to be provided and distributed, such as question books, hymn books, testaments and the like. It is eminently desirable that these two Departments shall be kept so distinct, that while each aids the other, it shall not be charged with the burdens of the other.

In inaugurating the work, the Board must dispense for a time with the obvious advantages which would arise from having a salaried Corresponding Secretary, devoting his whole time to the business. They have decided to rely upon the services of the present Corresponding Secretary, who has tendered them gratuitously, so far as may not conflict with other duties entrusted to him. With the assistance of other brethren, it is hoped that an efficient beginning may be made, and that the churches will cordially second and assist, so as to test what can be done on the voluntary principle.

#### I. MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT.

1. It is proposed that some member of the Board visit all the Conventions, and as many of the Associations, in each State, as practicable, to give information as to our plans and operations, to organize efforts in behalf of Sunday Schools where there are none, and to secure the co-operation of those who are already at work.

2. It is desired to appoint, for similar purposes, some known friend of Sunday Schools in each Association which the Board cannot directly reach; and thus, by an extended system of voluntary agency, to reach every accessible part of the Confederacy.

3. As soon as circumstances admit, Agents may be engaged to devote their time to the work, laboring in connection with the Boards or Societies which we trust will be organized in every State.

#### II. PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT.

1. The great difficulty, meeting us at the outset, is the lack of books, especially those of an elementary character. As these are absolutely indispensable to any progress, the Board will procure and issue them, as soon as practicable, upon the best terms they can.

2. The Sunday School requisites to which our attention is first directed, are: (1.) A Sunday School Hymn Book. (2.) A Primer. (3.) An Infant Class Manual. (4.) Scripture Questions with Answers, for Primary Classes. (5.) Question Books for Intermediate and Bible Classes. (6.) Sunday School Reward Tickets.

Arrangements are in progress by which it is hoped that all these will be speedily provided. Already we can supply the public with the "Confederate Sunday School Hymn Book," just issued under the patronage of the Sunday School and Colportage Board of the South-Carolina Baptist Convention. It is of convenient size, well printed, stitched in paper backs, and contains 137 choice hymns. Price, per single copy, 25 cents; by the dozen, 20 cents; by the hundred, 15 cents.

3. In view of the extraordinary expense now attending all publications, and the impossibility of procuring supplies from abroad, the Board will not undertake to furnish libraries till more favorable times arrive.

4. The value of a Sunday School Paper is well known. The Board are happy in commending to the churches "The Child's Index," published monthly at Macon, (Ga.) by Rev. S. BOYKIN. He offers it at \$1.00 for single copies, 50 cents where four or more are sent to one address; and proposes to reduce the price so soon as the cost of paper will admit.

### III. FUNDS.

While the arrangements of the Board contemplate an extremely economical system, depending altogether on gratuitous service, it is obvious that considerable funds will be needed, if our operations are to be on the extensive scale proposed. Our own labors we will freely give. We appeal to our brethren for aid, in order—

1. To make donations to feeble schools, or to new schools in destitute regions. Often a few dollars' worth of question books and primers will secure the establishment of a large and working school, which, when once started, the people will not willingly let die.

2. To pay the necessary travelling expenses of the Agents whose gratuitous services it is proposed to engage.

3. To enable the Board to establish such a system as to bring the necessary books, notwithstanding present disadvantages, within reach of schools of moderate means. This will involve much expense in the commencement, which, however, may soon be repaid; and the profits to our churches will far overbalance the cost of prompt, energetic, liberal measures.

Our plans are before you. We appeal to you for help, and to our Lord Jesus for his blessing, on our endeavor to benefit the children of our land. On behalf of the Board.

B. MANLY, JR., *President.*

☞ Communications may be addressed to C. J. ELFORD, Corresponding Secretary; and remittances may be sent to JULIUS C. SMITH, Treasurer, Greenville, S. C.