

**SUNDAY-SCHOOL
MOVEMENTS
IN AMERICA**

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Sunday-school movements in America by Marianna C. Brown

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Preface

It is not unusual for a student to enter college with more interest in his fellow-students than in his books, and it was this general interest in character, rather than any especial concern about religious matters, which led me to notice that lamentable deficiency which Dr. Charles F. Thwing has so impressively described in his recent article entitled "Significant Ignorance About the Bible, as Shown Among College Students of Both Sexes." Observations among university students, and among those holding the highest degrees, showed that advanced scholars are also often deplorably deficient in biblical knowledge. Men who have enjoyed the advantages, not only of study, but of travel, of Christian parentage, and of church membership, seem hardly ashamed to show ignorance as to who David was, or who was the earthly father of our Lord. This seems incredible, but it is fact.

After leaving college the Sunday-school attracted my attention. Here I found class after class of scholars, both boys and girls, of all ages from eight to over twenty, studying year after year, and not learning such fundamental matters

as what the first four books of the New Testament are about. Scholars who have grown up in Sunday-schools in the best part of New York City reach the Bible classes, and even consider themselves ready to leave Sunday-school or to teach younger classes, without being able to tell correctly the story of the Nativity or the circumstances of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

The contemplation of this ignorance should arouse intelligent Americans. Yet worse than ignorance is to be found in many, if not in most Sunday-schools. Teachers and officers come late, act irreverently during the most solemn parts of the service, make promises which they never carry out, and in innumerable ways teach the most pernicious habits. Sometimes these evils are the result of indifference, but probably they are more frequently the result of an entire lack of appreciation on the part of well-meaning workers.

It was largely my growing interest in this subject which led me to a special study of the philosophy of education. Before forming an opinion as to the causes or remedies for the present condition of religious teaching, I also decided, at the suggestion of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, to make a careful study of Sunday-school movements in America. Accordingly, eight chapters of this dissertation are given to the uncolored history and description of those movements. Some of the material having never been in print, I was obliged to obtain it from the notes and verbal statements of

leading Sunday-school workers. In the conclusion detailed criticisms of the different movements have been omitted because it seemed more important at present to secure strong foundations for Sunday-school theory.

My study of this subject, which is here presented, was offered in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Philosophy at Columbia University.

