

# THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

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Vol. XXIV.

APRIL—MAY, 1913

No. 4

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## THE APOSTLES' CREED.

BY PROFESSOR STALKEE, D. D.,

*Aberdeen, Scotland.*

*I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;*

*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

For the title borne by this document there was early invented a brilliant justification. The twelve apostles, it was believed, after the ascension of their Lord but before any of them had gone forth to evangelize the world, met at Jerusalem and, by a common impulse or inspiration, uttered in succession the twelve articles of which, it was assumed, the Apostles' Creed was composed. Certain of those by whom this report was transmitted from generation to generation went so far as to assign to each apostle the exact words which had issued from his

## A LEAGUE OF WORSHIPPING CHILDREN.

BY WALTER L. LINGLE, D. D.,

*Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.*

The religious situation in England is alarming. For the past five years there has been a steady decrease in the membership of all the Non-Conformist Churches except the Presbyterian, and the Presbyterian has made a net gain of exactly twenty members a year for the past two years. There also seems to be a decided decrease in church attendance, at least in so far as the non-conformist churches are concerned. On a fine Sunday in last December all those who attended both services of all the non-conformist churches in Liverpool were counted. There were 160,721. Of course many of these were counted twice as the count included both services. When a similar census of the Liverpool churches was taken in 1902, 178,777 were in attendance. In the meantime Liverpool has made an increase of 45,000 in her population. The census of 1891 showed 157,846 people in the non-conformist churches.

The *London Daily News* recently made arrangements to make a similar count of those attending the churches of London, but gave up the idea at the earnest solicitations of Dr. F. B. Meyer and the Bishop of London. These distinguished ministers conceded that such a count would show a decided decrease in church attendance in London during the past ten years, but they felt that such a census would only discourage the people.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the brilliant editor of the *British Weekly*, in some recent editorials has been pointing out in a very forceful and stirring way what he believes to be the principal cause of this discouraging decrease and what he believes to be the only remedy. He calls attention to the fact that the children and young people no longer attend church in

England. Formerly they attended in large numbers. Just here is the chief cause of the decrease both in membership and in attendance. The only remedy is to get the children back to church. To this end Sir Robertson Nicoll (who, by the way, is a Scotch Presbyterian minister) is urging ministers and Christian workers everywhere to organize what he calls "A League of Worshipping Children" and thus by organized and persistent effort to exhaust, if need be, every resource and bring the children and young people back into the church. Some churches have already reported wonderful success. We, on this side of the Atlantic, will watch the experiment with interest. While we are watching we will do well to remember that we have a similar problem and that it bids fair to become as acute in the near future as the problem in England, unless something is done, and done at once, to stay the present trend of our young people away from the church. It is of our own problem, and not of the English one, that I wish to write.

First of all let me state the problem. The net increase in the membership of all churches (including Roman Catholic) in the United States, for the year 1911, was 859,389. The net increase for 1912 was 579,852. At that rate, what will it be for 1913? The net increase in the membership of the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1912 was 5,671. The net increase for the year 1892, twenty years ago, was 8,451. In 1894 it was 10,621. Anybody who will take even a superficial glance at the minutes of our Assembly for twenty years can see what is happening. The problem has not yet reached the acute stage that it has in England, but it is nevertheless a problem.

In the meantime in towns, cities, and villages our children, and often adults, go trooping home from Sunday school in increasingly large numbers without waiting for the church service. Many of them seldom or never attend the regular services of the church. During the past two years I have had exceptional opportunities to observe and the thing that I am speaking of is almost universal. Is there any connection between the fact that our church is grow-

ing very slowly and the other fact that our children are ceasing to attend church? I for one believe that there is a very decided connection. Not only so but I feel that he ought to do something, and do it now, to link the Sunday school to the church, before we come to the critical stage at which our English brethren find themselves. But what can be done? I am in no position to answer with authority, but perhaps I can contribute my mite to the discussion of this vital question, and at the same time provoke to good works some one who can and will make a larger contribution. I feel that there are three great agencies which we ought to set to work in an organized and systematic way to bring our children back to the regular services of the house of God and to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

### I.

This work ought to begin in the home. That is the fountain head of authority. There lies the ultimate responsibility. The minister and officers of the church having faced the real facts in the case must endeavor to make parents see them. I find parents giving three reasons why their children do not attend church services. The first one is that the Sunday school comes before the church service and that the two services are too long for a child. I appreciate something of the force of this, but there are several ready answers. The two services are not as long as the session of the ordinary day school which those same children attend. Besides at the day school they are hard at work. It is also well to remember that there are still hundreds of children, especially in the country, who are attending both these services, and they seem to be as robust as other children. If the worst comes to the worst and the child can not attend both the Sunday school and the church, I for one would say let him attend the church, and I measure my words when I say this.

Others urge that the children get nothing out of a sermon for adults and it is therefore useless for them to attend. They seem to forget that there are other parts of the service, and that

it is worth while for a little child to learn how to worship. They also forget that a little child imbibes more from the conversation of adults and from sermons for adults than may seem apparent at first glance. These same parents might raise the question with their minister as to whether all sermons and all parts of the sermon should be prepared for mature and educated persons, when there are so many immature and uneducated people connected with every congregation.

Still other parents take the ground that the children do not want to attend church and that they fear to use any compulsion or even persuasion, lest the child be turned against the church. That has a plausible sound and there is something in it, but not as much as one might suppose at first thought. If children are trained to go to church and it is taken for granted that they are going they soon cease to raise the question and soon love to go. I am speaking out of experience. If these same parents will look about them they will also discover that our best church workers and our most regular attendants are people who have been trained to attend church from their childhood. They will also discover that there are comparatively few among non-churchgoers who were taught the meaning of church services and taught to attend with regularity when they were children.

The time has come when we need to impress upon parents with tremendous earnestness their responsibility in this matter, and secure their most hearty co-operation in bringing the children back to the house of God.

## II.

The Sunday school ought to join in the movement to fill our churches with worshipping children. The great purpose for which the Sunday school exists is to win children for Christ, develop them in Christ, and train them to go out to work for Christ. The Sunday school will not be able to accomplish this end single handed. It needs the help of the church which has a divine appointment to do this very work. The Sunday school

is only a department of the church. It was never intended that it should supplant the church or in any way take its place. Sunday school workers ought never to forget this. But what can the Sunday school do? Much in every way.

It can create a public sentiment among the children and parents in favor of the church service. The superintendent can keep this thought constantly before the children. He can also issue frequent invitations to the children to join in the church services. Many superintendents fail to do this. Teachers have a splendid opportunity to impress upon their scholars the importance and duty of attending the services of the church. Teachers may also help by asking their classes questions about the sermon of the previous Sunday. Some schools increase the attendance of the children upon the church by keeping an accurate record of all those who attend and by making this a part of the Sunday school record. I know of one school which makes an organized effort to get the children to attend the regular services of the church, and it succeeds admirably. Often a whole department will attend in a body. Officers of the Sunday school may help in this work by closing the Sunday school fifteen minutes before the church service, so that there may be a little recess in which children may relax and refresh themselves. Too many schools go right up to the church hour—some go beyond. This encourages the children to go home. As I have visited many Sunday schools during the past two years I have gotten the impression that many of our Sunday school workers are not eager enough to see the children in the church. It is time for them to face the situation squarely and to use every effort to increase this league of worshipping children in our churches.

### III.

The pastor has his part to do in this great work. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the pastor after all is the key to the situation. I now speak with hesitation, for I have been a pastor and know my own limitations. But after having spe-

cialized on the general subject of religious education for two years and after having pondered much over the problems which confront us it may be that I have added a little to what I learned in a blundering way by experience.

If the pastor could be a real pastor to the children of his church he would do much towards solving the problem of church attendance. But this is difficult. When he calls at the home they are at school or at play. If they are at home they are apt to be relegated at once to the background or back yard by thoughtless parents. Yet the minister who knows how to get at them and win them will not have a great deal of trouble in getting them to accept his invitation to church, and what is infinitely better, his invitation to come to Christ.

The pastor is the great connecting link between the Sunday school and the church. He ought to attend the Sunday school if possible. The city pastor, at least, will find there his best opportunity to know the children of his church. There he also has the opportunity to win them and to earnestly invite them to attend the services of God's house.

Now we come to the crucial point. The Master says: "Feed my lambs." Does the pastor know how? It is more difficult than feeding sheep, yet it is just as important or even more important. If we will face the facts the large majority of us who are ministers will have to confess that the secret of our failure to reach and hold the children is right at this very point. We have been so busy trying to feed the sheep that we have almost entirely overlooked the lambs. Our children do not come to church because they do not find any food for their little souls in our services. We ought to do something and do it now. What can we do? I think of a number of possibilities. Perhaps there are others who can make other and better suggestions.

A few of our ministers preach a short sermon to children every Sunday morning before the regular sermon. They also have music which is suitable for children. This is a good old Scotch custom. I have watched with interest those who have tried it in our church. So far as I can see it has been a success

in every case. The children have attended and what is better many of them have united with the church. Take, for illustration, two such churches in two cities which are widely separated. One is a large church, the other comparatively small. During the past two years the larger church has received 80 members on profession and 160 by certificate, while the smaller one has received 25 on profession and 70 by certificate. Certainly the extra services for children in these two churches are not driving people away.

Other ministers devote a whole service to the children once a month and find that there are no fewer adults present on that day because of the sermon for children. I think of a minister in a rather small church in a difficult field who has done this with marked success. The Assembly minutes show that his church has received 30 on profession and 55 on certificate during the past two years.

The best way of all, to my mind, is for the minister to resolve that he will put something in every service which the children and young people can understand and enjoy, and to resolve at the same time that he will discard all technical and difficult words and use clear and simple language which an ordinary human being can understand. I can think of only one minister whose sermons interested me in the least before I was sixteen years of age. His sermons abounded in apt and interesting illustrations and were clothed in simple language. The preacher will soon discover that adults like this kind of a sermon better than the other kind. Dr. John A. Broadus, the distinguished Baptist preacher and scholar, began as a young man to preach once a month to children. He soon observed that he had more adults on children's day than on other days. He could not understand it, but determined to find out. So after preaching to the children one Sunday he walked home with a man who always came to the children's service and no other. As they walked he asked the man why it was that he came only to the children's service. He replied, "Mr. Broadus, I can always understand what you are talking about when you preach to the children." In telling this incident to the minister's associa-



tion in Baltimore in his latter years, Dr. Broadus said: "Brethren, from that day to this I have tried to preach to children every Sunday."

In my library there is a quaint old book, "The Remains of the Reverend Richard Cecil." It contains many a trenchant paragraph. I have recently had my attention called to one of these which has a message for the hour. "The state of the world is such, and so much depends upon action, that everything seems to say loudly to every man, Do Something—Do It—Do It."