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Statistics of Sunday schools in the United States for 1916 show a much larger aggregate of Sunday school scholars than any previous report has ever given. The net increase in the last ten years is more than 6,300,000, with a gain of between 15,000 and 16,000 schools.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The best revelation of the character of God is that "God is love." In His dealings with the world as well as in His revealed Word, God is presented as righteous, just, holy, the Fountain of Life and Light, the Holy One, but the supreme revelation of His character is that He is love. It is not enough to say that God is lovely or loving, but He Himself is "love"—"the incarnation of unselfish benevolence." We may, therefore, safely trust ourselves in the hands of Him who is love, we may joyfully welcome His discipline and be assured that He will always do that which is best.

Christian workers sometimes forget that in the work of winning souls to Jesus Christ the Word of God must be presented to the soul. Dr. McCheyne used to say: "It is not our comment on the Word that saves us, but the Word itself." Many unconverted people rarely ever read the Bible. It is, therefore, necessary to bring the Word directly into their mind and thus remind them of its dignity and power. It was the testimony of Philip when he sought to bring Nathanael to Jesus, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." The Word of God is the channel through which the Spirit of God usually brings salvation to the soul.

There is power in the sufferings and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to touch the human heart and turn the penitent soul to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. An incident is told of a young lady seeking Christ, who was told by the evangelist to kneel and repeat the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah using the personal pronoun "I" "my" and "me" instead of the plural. Soon her heart was melted as she read, "He was wounded for my transgressions; the Lord hath laid on Him all my iniquities." In surprise she exclaimed, "Oh, is this true?" When she realized that these are the words of God she cried out, "Then I am saved, for all my iniquities have been laid on Him and through His death I am saved." It is this personal apprehension of Christ as our Substitute and our Saviour that gives to the soul pardon, peace and joy.

"In the Heart of Africa" is the striking title of a booklet of 48 pages just issued by Rev. Charles L. Crane, of our Congo Mission. It contains "Facts About Africa and Our Congo Mission in Question and Answer Form." The booklet grew out of suggestions made to the writer by a compiler of a similar work for juniors in the Sunday schools, and is designed not only to supplement that work in the Sunday schools but also to furnish material for mission study classes and missionary societies. This book will furnish general information that all societies will want to know. The striking frontispiece is "A Silent Appeal," a map showing almost all of Africa black—1,900 years in darkness, with the following inscription underneath the map: "The Heart of Christ Broken for Africa. The Heart of Livingstone Buried in Africa. Is Africa on Your Heart?" The price of the booklet is ten cents. Orders may be sent to the Woman's Auxiliary, Peachtree and Tenth Streets, Atlanta, Georgia, or to the Executive

Committee of Foreign Missions, 216 Union Street, Nashville, Tennessee.

The Bible has been designated by the Department of Labor as one of the books to be used in the literacy test for aliens under the new immigration law recently enacted by Congress. Passages will be selected from the Bible in more than one hundred languages and dialects. The reason for the use of the Bible in such literacy tests is not because the Bible is the Word of God, but because it is now the only book translated into virtually every language in the world. The Department gives this fact as its reason for the selection of the Bible and adds: "Translations of the Bible were made by eminent scholars, and what is more to the point, the translating was done by men whose purpose it was to put the Bible in such simple and idiomatic expressions in the various foreign languages as would make it possible for the common people of foreign countries to grasp the meaning readily and thoroughly." Thus does God make His Word to be known and honored more and more among all kindreds and tongues.

Rev. John W. Davis, D. D., LL.D., one of our Church's veteran missionaries to China, died at Soochow on February 24. A letter just received by the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions at Nashville, Tennessee, from Rev. C. N. Caldwell, secretary of our China Missions, conveys the information that his death came just one week after the death of Rev. R. A. Haden, who lost his life in the Mediterranean when the French ship "Athos" was torpedoed. Dr. Davis and Mr. Haden were the only two male evangelists in connection with the North Soochow Station. Dr. Davis went to China in 1873 and was the oldest of our foreign missionaries in service on the field at the time of his death. It was through his influence and personal friendship with Prof. J. R. Blake that the Elizabeth Blake Hospital was established at Soochow. He was born in Salisbury, North Carolina, July 25, 1849, and was ordained by Concord Presbytery in 1873, soon after his graduation from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. No particulars of his death have as yet been received, but it must have occurred very suddenly as the Committee had not received any previous announcement of his illness. He was a man of scholarly attainments and sincere consecration. His death makes a serious breach in the thin line of workers in China.

A letter from Mr. Wilbur Kewlinger, the American Consul at Malta, written to Mrs. R. A. Haden, details the circumstances of the death of Rev. R. A. Haden, missionary of our Church to China, who lost his life while trying to save others when the liner "Athos" was torpedoed in the Mediterranean on February 17. The consul writes: "It was my very painful duty yesterday to have to telegraph you of the death of your husband, Mr. Robert Allan Haden. On Monday (February 19), Mr. J. L. Smith, a British Consul in China, called on me and stated that he knew Mr. Haden on the Messagerie Liner 'Athos;' that the ship was torpedoed without warning at about 1 o'clock on February 17; that he was certain that Mr. Haden had gone to the as-

nineteenth century, Gladstone occupies a place of great eminence. Of him Lord Morley, his biographer, declares that he went no further for his social doctrines "than the Sermon on the Mount, where so many secret elements of social volcano slumber." And it must be conceded that the growing democracy of the English people is to be ascribed to the potent influence of the Bible on them for a thousand years. It was not Cromwell alone, or the Puritans who surrounded him, who derived inspiration for constitutional liberty from the Bible; every other great leader who has left an enduring mark has found his incitement in the same exhaustless fountain of truth.

It was no merely sentimental and passing impression which led Garibaldi to say: "The Bible is the cannon that will make Italy truly free." After the battle of Manila and the extraordinary defeat of the Spanish fleet at Santiago, the editor of one of the most influential newspapers in Buenos Ayres declared that the success of the United States was due to the fact that it was a Protestant nation and that its people were nourished on the Bible.

For the Christian Observer.

The Background of the Reformation.

BY REV. HENRY E. DOSKER, D. D.

Every coming event in history casts its shadow far ahead. This must necessarily be so, because all history is an organism and one event stands intimately related to another. Nowhere is the relation between cause and effect more obvious than here. What is, is a prophecy of the thing that shall be.

And thus in the case of the Reformation, whose four hundredth birthday we celebrate on the thirty-first of October of this year.

The very fact that this year 1917 is chosen, as was 1817 and 1717 and 1617, for the anniversary year of the Reformation, and not the birthday of Martin Luther, November 10, 1483, indicates that the whole Protestant world recognizes in the nailing of the ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg, the birth hour of the movement. An event as important as this could not possibly have happened by mere chance or have arisen spontaneously on the horizon of the sixteenth century.

If, therefore, we recognize the organic character of history, it may be well for us to ask ourselves the question: What was the background of this wonderful event, how was it made possible? The middle ages were largely ecclesiastical in their development and history. The history of the middle ages is, then, the history of the Church. Wherever we look we see her face. She is always in evidence; nothing happens without her cognizance or interference. The whole civilized world, with all its cares and aspirations and worries and hopes and fears, in all ranks of society, feels the thrall of her power. Her voice decides every question: In the realm of the State as well as in her own, in that of art as well as in that of science.

The system of Scholasticism had come to perfection under the hands of Thomas Aquinas, 1227-1274. Every dogma had been finally fixed and settled, through the processes of Aristotelean dialectics. And thus, although the Scholastics knew it not, the foundation was laid for later Rationalism. But the Nominalism of William Occam, a century later, had shaken the walls of Scholasticism. Here and there protesting voices were raised, which under the spur of the activities of the Humanists, rose to a clamor, to open dissent and to ridicule even.

Thus it is that the Renaissance opened the way for the Reformation, although of all her great leaders none joined the movement for ecclesiastical liberty, once it had started. But this new growth of human intelligence, this rebirth of the spirit of research and criticism and independent thought, in a word, of individualism, passed like a shudder through the entire body politic as well as ecclesiastical of its day. Thus three things were born: (1) A free laical spirit; (2) a free intellectual spirit; and (3) a free ecclesiastical spirit. And in this threefold development lies the background of the Reformation.

1. As to the laical spirit. The Crusades had changed the face of Europe. Knighthood was decadent, and this decadence was hastened by the discovery of gunpowder. The serfs became freedmen, or freemen, and began to congregate in villages and even walled cities, away from the tyrannical power of the knightly castle. Thus the free cities arose, whose artisans and traders became wealthy through the demands of the endless wars. And as they grew wealthier they grew more independent from their over-lords, because they bought "grants and privileges" from the sovereign himself; and

With that judgment Andrew Jackson would have agreed, who, during his last illness, pointed to the family Bible and said: "That Book, sir, is the rock on which the Republic rests."

The work of the Protestant Reformation is far from completed. Arrested in certain sections of Europe in the early years of its development, it has never come to fruition in some lands which needed it most. Retarded even in America, where liberty has reached its noblest achievements, it is at this very moment fighting to gain a supremacy which alone can keep our country free. The stupid and iniquitous sectarianism which has driven the Bible from our public schools, and left those centers of intelligence to be the prey of infidelity and immorality, is yet to be overthrown. Signs are multiplying that the people of America will soon demand that the civilizing power of the Bible shall no longer be denied to the rising generations. When that hour arrives it will be clear that, as in the sixteenth century, so in the twentieth, intellectual versatility and spiritual freedom are intimately related.

from the Church, because it antagonized them step by step. The monasteries were also factories, but they paid no taxes. The Church forbade the taking of interest and the wealthy burghers naturally would not lend money without it.

Moreover, the conditions of the peasantry, especially in Germany, had changed for the worse, since the Roman law about 1450 had replaced the old Salic law. Under the latter their condition was satisfactory, they were well clothed, well housed, well fed. Life was cheap, the forest free, the commons open to all peasant cattle. Under the new law their commons were taken by the nobles, their ancient privileges abrogated, they were reduced to a state of absolute servitude. They hungered for liberty and the flames of the Reformation fed eagerly on the combustibles of this popular unrest.

2. Nor was it different with the intellectual status. The world of human thinking had burst its bounds. The Humanists glorified the pursuit of letters above that of theology, the "Queen of the Sciences." The human intellect was like a butterfly just breaking away from the pupa state. It was spreading its wings for the flight and adjusting itself for the fatal leap. Read Andrew White's "Struggle Between Science and Theology," and one will see how portentous was that leap and how fatal the consequences for the age-long supremacy of scholastic dogmatism.

Nicholas V, Pius II, Julius II, all these had been advocates of Humanism before Leo X, the pope of the Reformation, came to the throne. They fanned the flames, which were destined to imperil the house in which they lived. And how intense was the sense of liberty on the part of Humanism, is evident from the works of Boccadelli and Machiavelli, Aretino and Valla, Erasmus and Reuchlin. All fear of the frown of the Church had departed.

The discovery of the art of block printing had served to spread literature like chaff from the threshing floor. And that of the American continent had served like an electric shock which passed through and utterly paralyzed all former conceptions of the world's shape and size. Intellectually the world was ready for just such a daring "coup" as the Reformation when it came.

3. As to the Church itself, not in vain had a cry arisen—of which the time element was lost, by reason of its continuance—for "reformation in the head and members."

Rome had become a den of thieves, the Vatican a veritable brothel, the scandal of the Holy City had filled the nostrils of Europe like a horrid stench, the frightfulness of such papal characters as Alexander Borgia had shocked a world not easily impressed, the character of bishops and priests and monks was almost without exception unworthy of the name of Christ, and the care of souls was everywhere neglected.

Moreover, between Germany and the Papacy an age-long quarrel dragged its weary length. The German people were bitter against the papacy. They resented the appointment and excesses of foreign bishops sent to them; their liberty-loving souls rebelled against the autocratic assumptions of the papacy. Above all, their thrifty souls resented the endless exactions and taxations, the ever recurring demands on the German purse. The gold of Germany was ever drained off toward Rome, and it filled Germany with bitterness.

It is easy to see how under these conditions the Reformation could originate, develop into a great menace to Rome, and finally achieve its independence from the ancient Church. In the social, intellectual and ecclesiastical conditions of the world in the sixteenth century, we find, therefore, the background of the Reformation.

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For the Christian Observer.

"IF A MAN DIE SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?"

BY REV. STUART NYE HUTCHISON, D. D.

"If a man die shall he live again?" We stood beside the grave of a friend who had been taken in the very prime of his usefulness. He had been possessed of a splendid equipment for life's work. Early in his youth he had consecrated himself to the best things. He had everything to live for. Life, with its boundless possibilities, stretched away before him, when suddenly without warning he was called away.

No man can contemplate such a death without deep questionings concerning immortality. Can it be possible that God would have made a man in His own image, after His likeness, and breathed into him the breath of life; that He would have given His Son to die for him; that He would have fitted him for a great task, counselling and guiding him with infinite love and patience, and then after all that permitted him to sink into the grave forever? To entertain such a thought is to deny the wisdom of God, and to raise another problem far more difficult of solution than all the mysteries of immortality.

In these lines of Whittier's "Snow Bound" he has expressed what every thinking soul must feel:

"Yet love will dream, and faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just),
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day,
Across the mournful marbles play;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever Lord of Death
And Love can never lose its own."
Norfolk, Va.



Books mentioned in our Review Columns may be ordered of publishers direct, or from the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Virginia, who have every facility for furnishing promptly and at lowest prices, any book in print, as well as all other requisites for Church and Sabbath school work.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

From Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston:
"A Child's Religion." Mary Aronetta Wilbur. \$1.00 net.
"The Road to Understanding." Eleanor H. Porter. \$1.40 net.

From Little, Brown and Company, Boston:
"The Adventures of Paddy the Beaver," and
"The Adventures of Poor Mrs. Quack." Thornton W. Burgess. 50 cents net each.
"The Boy Scouts on Crusade." Leslie W. Quirk. \$1.25 net.

"Finding God in Millersville." A Personal Experience. The Reilly and Britton Company, Chicago. 50 cents.

"Bible and Mission Stories." John Baxter Creswell. Richard G. Badger, Boston. \$1.00 net.

"Home Labor Saving Devices." Rhea C. Scott. J. B. Lippincott Company. \$1.00 net.

The White Queen of Okoyong, by W. P. Livingstone, author of "Mary Slessor of Calabar." This is a true story of adventure, heroism and faith that will stir the heart of every child of God who reads it. It is the life story of Mary Slessor of Calabar, but is written specially for girls and boys who are looking forward and dreaming dreams. This new book tells of Mary Slessor from her early going to the cotton mill to the time of her death, but special emphasis is laid upon the early years of her service. The new edition of the older book entitled, "Mary Slessor of Calabar," reveals her more mature life, the days of wisdom, love, charity and great usefulness. The author is the editor of the "Record of the United Free Church of Scotland," and has placed the Christian world under a real debt of gratitude by preparing this shorter young folks' edition of the story of Mary Slessor. It is a splendid book for Sunday school libraries and for mission study classes, especially of young people. The thrilling story of this noble woman is a remarkable example of "the communi-