

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL QUESTION

CONSIDERED

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CHAPTER I.

Why do not churches of Christ favor Sunday-schools?

This question is often asked, and is as often partially answered.

We now propose to answer it with some degree of fulness.

OBJECTIONS TO SUNDAY-SCHOOLS PRESENTED.

1. The first objection to Sunday-schools as organizations, separate from the church as an organization, or society, is that they are NOT AUTHORIZED either directly or indirectly, by the New Testament. That is to say, Sunday-schools, consisting of superintendent and other officers, with treasury and literature of their own are not mentioned in the New Testament. Therefore we cannot have them without going beyond what the new covenant scriptures set forth for our guidance. We cannot have them if we abide in the doctrine of Christ as presented in the New Testament. And the apostle John says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." (See John's 2nd letter and 9th verse.) This means that for churches of Christ to adopt Sunday-schools would be for them to transgress, or go beyond", the doctrine of Christ, and thus not abide in the doctrine of Christ, and thereby let go their hold upon God and Christ. This answer ought to be sufficient to satisfy every one who has ordinary reverence for God, and Christ, and the Bible.

2. Another reason why churches of Christ do not adopt Sunday-schools is because they cannot have them in the FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH. The New Testament teaches that faith concerning Christ and his gospel is produced by testimony. (See John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:17) It teaches that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (See Romans 14:23) This being true it is evident that churches of Christ cannot adopt Sunday Schools, as extra organizations, without committing sin. It is sinful to do anything without faith, and no one can believe that it is God's will that Sunday Schools should exist in churches of Christ, because there is no divine testimony to that effect. This is a sufficient reason against them.

3. The DIVINE DOCTRINE OF CONSISTENCY will not permit

churches of Christ to adopt the modern Sunday School as an organization. The apostle Paul says, “ Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” Rom. 14:22. That apostle thus wrote concerning the eating of meats, which were lawful (1 Tim. 4:3) but were not expedient when eating of them would be offensive to certain brethren. But the Sunday School is not mentioned in scripture as among LAWFUL things, and therefore if churches of Christ would adopt them they would condemn themselves in all that they say against other people adopting things that are not mentioned in the divine teaching. That is to say, churches of Christ speak against praying to God in the name of the mother of our Savior, and against what is called infant baptism, and the mourner’s bench, and the anxious seat, and against depending on emotions as proper evidence of pardon. Those churches speak against these things, and many others, because they are not mentioned in the new covenant scriptures, and thus because they cannot be adopted by faith, and are therefore sinful. This being true it is evident that if the churches of Christ would adopt the modern Sunday school, which is not mentioned in the Bible, they would condemn themselves in all that they may say against nearly all other humanisms in religion. Moreover, their religious enemies could then apply to them this scripture: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another thou condemneth thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” Rom. 2:1 In other words, churches of Christ understand that if they adopt the modern Sunday school, as an extra organization, they are inconsistent if they speak against any religious device or doctrine which is not divinely forbidden by name. They also understand that to adopt anything that is divinely forbidden opens up what may justly called a FLOOD GATE OF ERROR which will permit the doctrine and practice, and thus the worship and work, of the church to be corrupted in almost every conceivable direction and degree.

SO-CALLED REASONS FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS CONSIDERED.

The so-called reasons in favor of Sunday-schools are three in number, and are as follow:

1. Many people LIKE them, and thus they are POPULAR.
2. Many people profess to see NO HARM in them.
3. Many people say that they do MUCH GOOD.

These so-called reasons shall now be considered in the mentioned

order.

1. The fact that many people like the Sunday-school, and that it is popular, should not be regarded as a solid reason in its favor, for there are many other things which people like, that are popular, but are not right. Many people LIKE intoxicants, such as whisky, beer, ale, and wine, but that does not make the use of those drinks, in any measure, right. Many people LIKE to visit theaters, horse races, dances, and other places of entertainment, but that does not prove that visiting such entertainments is right. Neither does the fact that many people LIKE Sunday-schools prove that they are right. On the contrary, it is often true that what mankind NATURALLY LIKE IS NOT BEST FOR THEM. This is generally true when that which they like tends to relieve them of responsibility, and thus contributes to their ease and indulgence. Herein is found the secret of the Sunday-school being popular with many people. It proposes to do for children what their parents are INCLINED to neglect and are thereby ENCOURAGED to neglect. That is to say, what is proposed to be done for children in the Sunday-school encourages parents to neglect studying the Bible so as to be able to teach their children. Thus we learn that the Sunday-school is popular with many because it contributes to their ease and indulgence.

2. Many people profess to see no harm in the Sunday-school. But one great harm has just been mentioned, and that should be sufficient to satisfy any mind. Another harm is, that those who advocate the Sunday-school thereby admit a principle which will prevent them from opposing any other religions humanism unless it be divinely forbidden by name. But the only reason why many people cannot see any harm in the Sunday-school is that they have never studied the Bible so as to understand it. Their case is like this: An English grammarian writes these two sentences: 1. The horse runs swiftly; 2. The horse runs swift. He presents them to a man who has never studied English grammar, and asks which of them is correct. The answer is, "I can't see but that they are both correct." "No," says the grammarian, "the first is correct, but the second is not correct." Then he tries to explain the difference between adverbs and adjectives in grammar. But the words *adverb* and *adjective* are both a mystery to the man who has never studied grammar, and after hearing a half hour's explanation he says, "I can't SEE ANY HARM in saying, 'The horse runs swift.'" Then the grammarian says, "The reason you can't see anything wrong in using such a sentence is because you have NEVER STUDIED ENGLISH GRAMMAR." On the same principle it may be said to all who say that they CAN'T SEE ANY HARM in Sunday-schools, that the reason is that they have NEVER STUDIED THE BIBLE ON THE SUBJECT. They lack the Bible information which would enable them to understand what is harmful from a Bible point of view.

3. But many people say that much good is done in Sunday-schools. With equal truth it may be said that much good is done by many other religious errors. Even the error of Mormonism has done much good. But the good done by any and all errors is more than overbalanced by the evil resulting from them. Besides there was much good done when Moses and Aaron said, "Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (See Num. 20th chapter.) Three millions or more of people, together with their flocks and herds, were supplied with abundant water. But God charged Moses and Aaron with not believing him (Num. 20:12), and with rebelling against him (Num. 27:14), because they spoke "unadvisedly." Ps. 106:32,33. This Bible fact should always convince mankind that no practice nor act should be regarded as right because some good results come- from it. But if a religious practice, or a single religious act, be not authorized of heaven it should be suspected as being evil in its FINAL RESULTS, even if it be good in APPEARANCE and IMMEDIATE RESULTS. For instance, some good may result from quieting a child by telling it ghost stories, but who will say that the evil resulting therefrom does not many times overbalance the good accomplished? So it is with Sunday-schools. They do SOME good, but they do MUCH harm. The first harm that they do is in preventing parents from being impressed with the responsibility of teaching the Bible to their children.. The next harm is that instead of children receiving at least a half dozen lessons in the Bible each week from their parents they receive but one, and that a very short one, from a Sunday school teacher. Another harm resulting from the Sunday- school is that teachers in such schools are without authority over the children in their classes, and they are, generally, permitted to do as they please. Finally, so little is required of children by their Sunday-school teachers, especially where the humanly-arranged lesson-leaf is used, that the end in view is not accomplished. In other words, Sunday-school teachers do not study the Bible so as to be able to TEACH IT ARIGHT, and Sunday-school children are not required to study the Bible so as to LEARN IT ARIGHT. Thus it may be safely said that the good accomplished fay the Sunday-school is many times overbalanced by the evil resulting therefrom. Therefore churches of Christ do not and *should not*, and MUST NOT, and DARE NOT adopt the "Sunday school as an institution to teach the Bible to their children.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

What then shall the members of the churches of Christ do in regard to teaching the Bible to children This is an important question which should

be scripturally met. We meet it by direct appeal to the Bible, Rom. 15:4 informs us that "whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning." Let us then learn what God said to his ancient people on the subject of teaching children. In Deut. 6:6, 7 we read that God said to Israel, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Then in Deut. 31:9- 13, we learn that every seventh year the entire Jewish nation, as consisting of men and women and children, and the strangers that dwelt among them, should be gathered together for the purpose of hearing the law read. In Ex. 12:25-27 we also learn that Jewish parents were to explain to their children what the pass-over meant. Add to all this the New Testament teaching that fathers are to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph.6:4), and the fact that Timothy from a child had known the holy scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15), also the fact that the faith of his mother and grandmother is mentioned with approval (2 Tim. 1:5), I say, add all this to what we have learned in the Old Testament record, and we have sufficient divine testimony to direct the churches of Christ aright on this subject, That testimony sets forth that parents should teach the Bible diligently to their children and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, also that the Bible should be publicly read to the people, and explained to them! If we be asked at what age parents should begin to teach their children, and the children of their neighbors, I answer that Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Therefore children should be taught in the scriptures as soon as their attention can be gained. As the historic parts of the Bible are easiest to be understood children should be taught those parts first, and in the simplest language. If I be asked what we should do by way of teaching children on the Lord's day, I answer, by the light of the Sacred Text, that, if we would do our whole duty, we should, at 10 o'clock or some other suitable time, "gather the people together, men, women, and children," also the strangers that are within our gates, or the outsiders that dwell in our neighborhood. A copy of the Bible or New Testament should be given to each one. To them all, as a mixed audience, we should then read one chapter or more. An elder of the church or some one else who may be appointed or approved by the elders for such work, should do the reading with the best explanation that he may be able himself to make, or, by questions to draw from the best informed of those who listen. The reading should be distinct and the sense should be given, even, as is mentioned in Neh. 8:8. When this has been done for a half hour, more or less, then some special attention may be given to the children who may be present. In Mark 4:34 we learn that when Christ was alone with his disciples "he expounded all things" to them. That is to say, what he had publicly

PREACHED BE PRIVATELY EXPOUNDED,—He formed them into a special class, and taught them by themselves. May we not do the same with children? I believe that we may do so with great advantage, forming a separate class of each grade of learners and, in a certain sense, PRIVATELY explaining the lesson just considered in PUBLIC, using such words and illustrations as will enable even the least informed to understand the lesson, though they may not be able to grasp what is commonly said to a mixed audience. Some may object to this because, they say, "it looks like a Sunday-school," Such reason for an objection, would lead those who urge it, if they would be consistent, to object to congregational singing, introductory exercises when a discourse is to be delivered, and a formal invitation, followed by an invitation hymn, when a discourse is ended. All such practices make us seem like the sects. But the objectors to whom we refer admit that the end in view is to teach the word of God so that it will be understood by all who have ears to hear, and they should not object to such a "method of teaching children as will accomplish the end in View WITHOUT ORGANIZING AN EXTRA SOCIETY. Thus while the churches of Christ discard "the Sunday-school as a human organization or society they believe that it is lawful to engage in such teaching of the Bible, both at home and in the meetinghouses, which will probably give children tenfold more of correct information in regard to the Bible than any Sunday-school that was ever organized by man. In accomplishing this end churches of Christ are learning that it is best to spend the time intended for children in the public assembly by reading and explaining the gospel records and the book of Acts of the Apostles. But at home all other historic parts of the Bible should be read and explained chapter after chapter. Then the doctrinal questions should be considered as the age and understanding of children will enable them to grasp the meaning thereof. By so doing the divinely appointed end will be accomplished, no harm will be done, and God's name will be glorified.

One thought more should be expressed. Those who object to forming classes sometimes refer to 1 Cor. 14:31-38 as evidence that only one person should speak at a time in the public congregation. But they should consider that when classes are formed there are as many audiences as there are classes, and so there is but ONE SPEAKER to EACH AUDIENCE. If such speakers or teachers modulate their voices as they should then several can teach at the same time in a meeting house without confusion. But the forming of classes is left to the decision of each congregation. In every assembly where one or more persons in good standing will object to the forming of classes they should, not be formed. It is not expedient to form them if so doing become offensive to even one brother or sister who is in good standing. The same is true in regard to women becoming teachers of classes in a meeting house. Though women are not permitted to teach the public congregation, yet the

God of nature has by nature ordained woman to be the child's first and most constant teacher, and she often makes a good teacher for a class of children. But where there is objection to any woman teaching a class, then let the objection prevail, if it be urged by one in good standing. Thus the forming of classes and having a sister as a teacher of a class in the meeting house must be left to each congregation, even as employing a preacher and holding a protracted meeting must be left to each congregation to decide for itself. I can find as many objections to a congregation employing a preacher and holding a protracted meeting as any man can find to forming classes of children and having women to teach them. But no one can justly claim to be a disciple of Christ and yet object to a church gathering all of every class to the meeting house or elsewhere, putting a Bible or New Testament into the hands of each one who can read, and then reading and explaining the word of God to them. THEN LET THIS BE DONE EVERYWHERE, WITH DILIGENCE, AND TO GOD'S HONOR AND GLORY.

CHAPTER II.

SCRIPTURES QUOTED.

"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. And that their children who have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." Deut. 31:12, 13. "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

"And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." Ex. 12:26, 27. "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

"And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. And it shall be on that day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee. Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster, And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron too) upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon to the Lord thy God. And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and thou shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly." Deut. 27:1-8. "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

"And it shall be when he [the king of Israel] sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that

which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them': That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." Deut. 17:18-20. "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

"Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst." Isa. 5:13. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee. . . . Therefore the people that do not understand shall fall." Hos. 4:6, 14. "Whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

REMARKS CONCERNING SCRIPTURES.

The foregoing scriptures which have been quoted from the Old Testament clearly show that the leaders among the Jews were required to gather the people together men, women and children, and read to them the law which God had given them. Those scriptures also teach that parents should explain to their children what a certain service of the Jewish worship meant, likewise that the king whom the Jewish people might choose to rule over them should read in the law given to them during all his life. Finally, the scriptures which we have quoted clearly teach that God gave special directions to the Jew, or ancient Israelite, by which he might learn the law for his own sake, and then teach it to his children for their sakes. Then, the passage in Rom. 15th chapter, which has been five times quoted, sets forth that everything written to fleshly Israel was written for the benefit of spiritual Israel. Therefore all that was written to show fleshly Israelites how to save themselves and their children from the evil results of ignorance was intended to show spiritual Israelites how to save ourselves and children from ignorance and its evil results. This does not mean that the Old Testament teachings on this subject is binding upon us, but, rather, that it indicates what God's plan was in trying to save his ancient people from the ruin which he knew would come upon his people if they would permit themselves and their children to be ignorant of his word. What we have quoted further shows that ruin really came upon ancient Israelites because they lacked knowledge of God's word.

Priests and other leaders failed to gather together the men, women, and children, and read the law to them as God had directed. Parents neglected to teach, their children as God had directed. As a result the people became more and more ignorant, and finally went into captivity because they had no knowledge of God's word.

NEW TESTAMENT CITED.

Now, then, what does the New Testament teach on this subject. It first teaches that our Savior taught mixed multitudes. See Matt. 14:15-21. In his teaching our Savior did not ignore little children, but called one of them and spoke of him as a model in regard to the humble disposition which his disciples should have. Matt. 18:1-4. This informs us that the little children possess the humility necessary to make them good subjects for Bible instruction. Then we should bear in mind that our Savior said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matt. 11:15. Again, in Rev. 2nd and 3rd chapters we learn that seven times the Savior said through the apostle John, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." All this, when taken together, clearly shows that children, even little children, should not be ignored by the church in its endeavors to convert the world. To let the devil have undisputed and unmolested opportunity to train children in his ways until they reach their fifteenth, or, perhaps their twentieth year, give preachers from fifteen to twenty-five dollars a week to preach the gospel unto them, and thus try to preach the devil out of them--to say the least this is not good RELIGIOUS ECONOMY, to mention nothing about BIBLE DOCTRINE. Certainly it is not in harmony with the Savior's statement, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." – Matt. 11:15.

CONCLUSIONS STATED.

What then shall be done? It needs only to be mentioned, in order to be admitted, that parents are divinely ordained to be the first teachers of children. For that reason fathers are commanded to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6:4. As a father I helped to rear a family of children, and, as I consider my efforts to train them, I confess that nothing concerning their early life has left on my mind such a pleasing recollection as the eagerness with which they listened to Bible stories which I related to them. After I had told them one or two they began to call for them,

and seemed unsatisfied to go to sleep at night until I had told them a Bible story. Sometimes they would request me to tell them a new story, but often they wished me to repeat one of the old ones. That method of giving them the Bible before they could read so interested them in the divine word that they would request their mother to read to them in the Bible when I would be absent from home. In due time they all obeyed the gospel. And though they have not all remained as religious as I desired them to be, yet I am persuaded to think that relating Bible stories to them when they were young laid the foundation for all the good which they have since manifested. Moreover, as such a plan is authorized by divine wisdom and benevolence, I am so well satisfied that it is altogether the best that if I had another family of children to rear I would begin to tell them Bible stories at the earliest date that I could interest them in any kind of a story when told in the simplest language. "What God said to his ancient people in regard to training their children, even when they were small and did not know anything, should cause parents and guardians to be deeply concerned in regard to the children under their charge. Then what is said in the New Testament on that subject should intensify the interest which all should feel in the spiritual welfare of children committed to their care. Finally, the oft repeated conclusion in regard to this subject which is charged to Roman Catholics should not be forgotten. They are accustomed to say, it is reported, that if children be given to them till they are seven years old they will become Catholics, and in view of their power over children it is probably true that what Romanists say concerning the training of children is correct. There is a divinely implanted curiosity in children which must be gratified. They are by nature eager listeners and rapid learners from their infancy. Parents and other guardians should be careful that the children under their charge shall listen to that which is true, rather than to hear what is fabulous. Therefore Bible stories should be related to them, and not Mother Goose fables. If the story of Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still be told a child then a truth is imparted but if a child be told of a cow jumping over the moon then a falsehood is imparted, and damage is done. A certain young lady was heard to say that she had been taught to believe in Santa Claus just as firmly as she had been taught to believe in Christ, and that it was difficult for her to reject the one as a myth, and yet accept the other as her Savior. Then let all who have the tender, credulous, and receptive minds of children to deal with be careful to deal with them sincerely. They should also deal with them plainly, and use the simplest words in explaining the scriptures to them. Both at home, and in the meeting houses, those who would teach little children should relate to them the historic parts of the Bible in the form of stories told in the simplest words. Parents generally entertain their children with stories of some kind, and they should bear in mind that the most important stories are found in the Bible. Therefore they should study the Bible

and become familiar with it in order to be able to teach it to their children. Teachers, guardians, grandparents, and all others, should do the same.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL DECEPTION.

What shall we say then of a Sunday school which will have a Santa Clause performance on or about the twenty-fifth of December? I say that it is a RELIGIOUS DECEPTION and I say concerning all teachers, guardians and parents who engage in such a performance that they are RELIGIOUS DECEIVERS. They ought all to be horrified at the thought of imposing such a deception, or any other kind of a falsehood on the little ones. Such misconduct is closely related to misleading the blind in regard to the way in which they should go. God said to ancient Israel, "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way." Deut. 27:18. And, what will he say to those who mislead children?

CLOSING REMARKS.

In conclusion it should be stated that the Bible is divided into history, law, and prophecy. This is true of both the Old Testament and the New. The history found in the Bible is the easiest part of the Bible to be understood, and it must be understood by all who would grasp the meaning of either the divine law or prophecy. Divine history is the best explanation of the divine law ever written. To understand divine history is necessary in order to understand divine law or doctrine, and when the divine history and law are both understood then the divine prophecy unfolds before the mind. This method of dealing with God's book cannot be reversed, nor in any measure changed, without confusion being the result. That is to say, no one can possibly understand divine prophecy, nor even the divine law, without first understanding divine history as found in the Bible. Here is where Sunday-school teachers fail. Probably not one of them ever adopted the method of studying the Bible, just mentioned. On the contrary, they generally undertake to teach law or doctrine, regardless of history. Confusion is the result. As for the International series of lessons it is, with few exceptions, so absurd that it beggars "description. Unless it has recently been changed it is so arranged that it passes over tenfold more than it is arranged to consider. Such an arrangement makes it impossible for those who adopt it to understand the divine history, and this means that they cannot understand either divine law or prophecy in

their connection, and thus in their divinely intended application. Therefore a Sunday-school, in which the International series of lessons is adopted, is a school in which children are taught how to misunderstand the Bible. It may be safely said that no one who knows how to study the Bible so as to understand it can be favorable to the International series of Sunday-school lessons. This statement may seem extravagant to certain readers because it reflects on some who are supposed to be good scripturists. But I believe the statement to be correct; I know a man who favors the mentioned series, and yet is held in high esteem by many as a scripturist. But when I examined a book that he wrote concerning the relations of Christians to civil governments I found that he had blundered in nearly every instance that he had made a statement concerning Old Testament history. As a result he blundered in near or about all the doctrine which he advocated that depended on understanding such history. Therefore I state it as a conclusion, to which there is probably not one well established exception, that no one who understands the value of divine history in relation to divine law and prophecy is favorable to the International series of lessons for Sunday-schools, nor favorable to Sunday-schools for training children in the Bible.

CHAPTER III.

WHY SUNDAY-SCHOOLS ARE POPULAR.

The popularity of the Sunday-school has, in a measure, been previously considered. In the first chapter of this series it was stated that one reason for its popularity is that it is supposed to make up for the indifference of parents in regard to teaching their children in the Bible. And in this we found one of the most serious charges against the Sunday-school as an institution. It needs only to be stated in order to be admitted that whatever tends to lead parents to feel indifferent concerning their own obligations to their children is a damage. The God of nature has by nature ordained parents to be the first teachers of their children. This is specially true of the mother, and then by special law the father is told to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4. But when parents are impressed that some one else will teach their children in the scriptures they are liable to feel that they don't need to study the Bible for their children's sake. Many of them love their children so devotedly that were it not for the thought of what the Sunday-school will probably do for them they would search the scriptures with care in order to teach their children aright. But in view of what is proposed in the Sunday-school they suffer themselves to remain ignorant of the Bible, and thus it is that the Sunday-school results in a twofold damage—a damage to parents and

a damage to children. Parents do not inform themselves as they otherwise would, and children are not instructed by their parents as they otherwise would be. As a result the children are easy victims for the skeptic who is sometimes found in common schools, but more frequently in high schools, colleges, and universities.

TESTIMONY AND REMARKS.

I was once talking to a mother concerning the education of her children. She said, "Their teacher tried to teach them infidelity, but I fought it night after night with the Bible." That mother acted the part toward her children which the gospel enjoins upon parents, and especially upon fathers. If mothers and fathers would study the Bible as they should in order to teach their children aright more good would be accomplished. Were it not for the Sunday-school parents could be more easily influenced to do their religious duty toward their children. Then the exhortation to send children to the Sunday-school would be changed to this: STUDY THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN. As a result the divine order of parents teaching their children would not be so generally supplanted by the human order of children teaching their parents. Suppose that instead of preachers and others proposing to teach children the scriptures they would simply instruct those children to ask their parents to read the Bible to them, What would be the results? How many parents would refuse to read in the Bible to their children if those children would make a request to that effect day after day and night after night? Some probably would refuse for a time, but certainly a large majority of them would soon yield. Think of children pleading with father or mother, or with both, to read the Bible to them, and at once a picture most tender and touching is presented to the mind.

AN ILLUSTRATION PRESENTED.

What would be the result in course of a hundred years, or even fifty, if a society should now be formed in any town or city that would offer to feed and clothe all the children therein found? Some parents, of course, would not permit any society to feed and clothe their children, for they regard that as their duty, also a precious privilege. But would not a majority, in course of time, yield to such an offer, especially as in so doing they would have less to do, also more time and money for other things? Desire for ease, indulgence, fun, frolic, and love of money, would ail appeal urgently to many parents to

permit some one else to feed and clothe their children. This appeal would be specially urgent if it could be made to appear honorable for parents to permit others to feed and clothe their children, and thus, in course of time, one of the noblest purposes of parents would be weakened, if not paralyzed, namely, the purpose to provide food and clothing for their children. Well, thus it has been in regard to spiritual food and clothing for children ever since the Sunday-school was commenced. Instead of parents studying the Bible in order to furnish their children with spiritual food and clothing they generally permit others to feed and clothe them. That is to say, they send their children to certain professed spiritual feeders and clothiers who have not learned either to feed or clothe themselves aright. As a result, the most commendable purpose of parents is generally weakened, and in many respects utterly paralyzed, namely, the purpose to give to their children spiritual food and clothing through the divinely ordained channel.

WHAT CHURCHES SHOULD DO.

While considering the Jewish law on this subject we learned that God required men, women, and children to be gathered together, and that when thus gathered the law should be read to them, also that the parents should diligently teach that law to their children. We also learned, in the New Testament, that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Rom. 15:4. Now then, let churches of Christ everywhere gather the people, men, women and children; that is, gather all together who have ears to hear, and read the Bible to them, especially the New Testament. Read distinctly and give the sense, and cause them to understand. Neh. 8:8. While doing this the example of the child Jesus should not be forgotten. His mother and foster-father found him "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions." Though he was but "twelve years" of age, yet he said that he must be about his "Father's business." Luke 2:42-49. This suggests that twelve years is probably the average age when children become responsible before God, and when, they should be about their divine Father's business. Some may become responsible earlier, while others, for want of natural aptness to understand or want of instructions, do not become responsible till they are older. Perhaps the best standard by which to measure their fear of dying without becoming Christians! Children that are not responsible do not fear to die without obeying the Savior, but those who know enough to be afraid to die without becoming Christians show that they are responsible. Parents should consider this and always strive to be faithful to their children in regard to their spiritual welfare, even as they generally are in

regard to their physical welfare. Parents should, indeed, feel more horrified at the thought of their children being neglected spiritually than for them to be neglected physically. And they should feel as much ashamed to commit the spiritual feeding and clothing of their children solely, or even chiefly, into the hands of others as they generally would feel at the thought of permitting others to feed and clothe their children physically. An occasional meal or a garment occasionally given to a child is not regarded as a disgrace to the parents of that child, but for others constantly to feed and clothe, the children of respectable parents is, generally, a serious humiliation to such parents, even when such help is necessary. There are multitudes of parents who will work till their fingers bleed rather than have others cumbered with the physical care of their children. And if it was not for what is proposed by the Sunday-school there would be multitudes of parents who would study the Bible till their heads would ache rather than to commit the spiritual training of their children chiefly into the care of others. Let sectarians, who do not profess to regard the Bible as a sufficient religious guide, have Sunday-schools if they wish them, but churches of Christ should know better than to adopt humanisms in either religious worship or work. According to Deut. 28th chapter God intended that his ancient people should be set "on high above all nations of the earth, " that they should "lend unto many nations" and should not "borrow" from any, also that they should be "the head, and not the tail, "but should be "above only" and should "not be beneath. " Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ did not intend that his church should occupy a less prominent position among the religious denominations during any period of the gospel age. Why then should churches of Christ copy such an institution as a Sunday-school *t lom* sectarian denominations? To ancient Israël God said that when they would succeed the heathen, "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise." Deut. 12:30. As such directions to fleshly Israël were written for our learning should we not learn thereby to be governed by the word of God in the spiritual training of our children rather than to copy after denominations not mentioned in that word? How then should churches of Christ do that have an organized Sunday-school, **THEY SHOULD DISBAND IT.** All the officers should resign, and then the overseers and deacons of the church should unite in gathering the people together, men, women, and children, and then, at each gathering one of the most capable men among them should read one chapter or more, and for a half hour or more, just as may be regarded best, the lesson read should be expounded or explained, asking and answering questions. Then parents and other guardians should be exhorted to expound the same more fully in private, to those under their charge, even as the Savior did to his disciples (Mark 4:34; Luke 24:27), and as Aquilla and his

wifedid to Apoilos. Acts 18:26. If parents and other guardians wish to begin to do this private expounding in the meeting-house by calling children into little groups or companies in différent parts of thehouse they are only carrying out what has been begun by theone who did thepublic reading and expounding. This will then be a f ull imitation of theSavior's example. Be PUBLICLY TAUGHT and PRTVATEDY EXPOUNDED. Let this be done by all theChurches of Christ every Lord 's day. Then let parents and other guardians go over the same lesson with their children as often as possible in course of the following week, reviewing in connection therewith the previous lessons in the same book and chapter.

By that method thescriptures will be understood and impressed so as to be remembered. When once made familiar the mind will work easily over them, and then they will be a delight. The plan of going over a Bible lesson but once with the average child, and then leaying that lesson, is a mistake. In ail other departments of learning theadvantage of frequent repetition is generally understood, and the advantage thereof in studying the Bible would be understood if people would only exercise their UNSANCTIFIED common sensé. Nothing more than this would be necessary to enable mankind to know that a Bible lesson needs to be studied, and *repeatedly* studied by a majority of our race, in order to be understood and appreciated so as to be remembered.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL IMPEACHED.

What then shall we say of the modern Sunday-school with its teachers who have seldom studied their lessons, and with thelesson-leaf distributed, glanced at, recited from and thrown down, or perhapa carrted home and used for waste paper? IT IS A RELIGIOUS FARCE. This is not aimplly my conclusion, as may be seen by the following article from a prominent sectarian paper called *Herald and Presbyter*:

Dr. Thwing, Président of Western Réserve College, treated the familiarity of the young men and women who enter our colleges, with theScriptures, by sending them twenty-two Bible allusions in Tennyson's work. They were such as these:

(1) My sin was a thorn.

Among the thorns that girt thy brow,

(2) Like Hezekiah's, backward runs

The shadow of my days.

(3) Joshua's moon in Ajalon.

(4) Ruth among the fields of corn.

The percentage of correct answers was less than forty-three for the men, and a little more than forty-five for the women. Of the eighty-five, no less than forty knew nothing about the story of Esau, or that of Ruth, or the mark of Cain; seventy-five did not remember ever hearing about Hezekiah and his shadow on the dial, and sixty-six confessed their Ignorance of Jonah and his gourd. One said that Joseph of Arimathea was the father of Christ, and wore a coat of many colors!

Now these young people were all students in what we call Christian colleges, and most of them, probably, went there from Christian homes, and had attended church and Sabbath-school. Their ignorance in regard to these leading statements in the Scriptures seems almost incredible. When I went to college I could have answered everyone of these questions as readily as I could repeat the multiplication table, and so could nearly, if not all, of my fellow-students. Who is to blame for this amazing neglect of the great classic of our language—God's book for the world? Primarily the parents. Even those who profess to be Christians do not try to instruct their children in the Bible as in the days of my boyhood. They depend too much on the Sabbath-school. And there we get merely selections from the Scriptures, and very little idea of the divine Book in its entirety.

To the foregoing testimony I wish to add this: "When I had finished writing the first of this series of articles I read it to four disciples of mature life and good observation, and one of them said at the conclusion of it that her first objection to Sunday-schools was that they caused parents to neglect the religious instruction of their children. Such witnesses, I am persuaded, can be found in many places, and that too among the maturest and best of mankind. Thus the Sunday-school, when considered in its last and lowest analysis, will be found to have undermined the divinely ordained responsibility which parents should feel for the religious instruction of their children.

MORE TESTIMONY.

Several years ago a pastor of a certain Christian Church showed me a card on which was printed the following in substance:

RALLY OF PARENTS.

All parents and friends of children are requested to meet with the children at the 11th Christian Church next Lord's day morning and bring their Bible with them. The purpose of this rally is to interest parents in the religious education of the children.

Having read what was printed on the mentioned card I asked the pastor something like this: "What's the matter? Sunday-school a failure?" He answered, "It's not satisfactory, and we intend to try to interest the parents in the work of teaching children. " I then said to him that all humanisms in religion when fairly tested would be long enough all the religious humanisms now existence would be laid aside. God divides honors with no one, neither does he propose that the honor due him through the family and the church, as divine institutions, shall be divided between them and humanisms. "I am the Lord, "he says in Isa. 42:8, "that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Will he then give his praise to the Sunday-school or any other human societies?

CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

In conclusion I state that in the Savior's address to the Sadducees is set forth the chief reason for much of the Sunday-school's popularity. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God," Matt. 22:29. This statement tells the real story. The Sunday-school originated in Gloucester, England, in the year 1781. A man named Robert Raikes is supposed by many to have been its founder. But Chambers Encyclopedia says that his claims may "be fairly contested by Ludwig Hecker, of Ephrata, Pa., who, about 1739, commenced 'Sabbath-schools' for the poorer classes around him." But there is no evidence that either Hecker or Raikes had obeyed the gospel in its fulness, nor that either of them even knew what the gospel is. Thus the Sunday-school was strictly earth-born. Like the Endeavor Society, it was conceived and brought forth on the outside of the Bible and the church which was intended for the pillar and ground of the Bible among mankind. Both of those institutions originated and gained confidence among multitudes because of their unacquaintance with God's word. Both of them have "a form of godliness but deny the power thereof," in that they deny, by implication, that God's divine power has given unto Christians "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." 2 Tim.

3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3. The existence of such societies is a constant denial of the foregoing scriptures, also of the following: "And ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:10. DANIEL SOMMER.