

THE
Sunday School:
Its Work and Workers.



BY
JOHN RITCHIE.

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KILMARNOCK:
"THE YOUNG WATCHMAN" OFFICE.
AND THROUGH ALL BOOKSELLERS.

P R E F A C E.

THIS little Book is specially intended for the help of young teachers, and for young believers who, in the will of God, may yet become teachers and soul-winners amongst the young.

During recent years, great advances have been made in this department of the Lord's service: Sunday Schools have sprung up everywhere. The Lord has stirred up much interest among His own people, and thrust many into the ranks of those who labour amongst, and seek the salvation and the instruction of the young. May He increase this interest an hundred-fold. If the following simple pages, in any measure contribute toward the help of those who are engaged in this joyful work, or interest others in it, their purpose will be attained.

J. R.

KILMARNOCK,
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Sunday School: its Aim and Object, - - - -	5
The Sunday School and the Church, - - - -	9
The Sunday School and the Family, - - - -	12
The Sunday School Teacher: his Qualifications, -	15
The Sunday School Teacher: his Work, - - -	25
Modes of Teaching, - - - - -	28
Illustrative Teaching, - - - - -	33
Preparation for Teaching, - - - - -	36
Preparation of Lessons, - - - - -	39
Order and Arrangement, - - - - -	43
Hints on Rule, - - - - -	46
The Infant Class, - - - - -	48
The Senior Class, - - - - -	52
The Young Believers' Class, - - - - -	53
The Sunday School, a Nursery, - - - - -	55
Sunday School Libraries, - - - - -	56
Visiting the Children, - - - - -	58
New Methods, - - - - -	59
Liberty in the use of Methods, - - - - -	61



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

ITS AIM AND OBJECT.

IT is now more than a century since the Sunday School came into existence as an agency for the spread of the Gospel among the young. Like all other instrumentalites used of God to do His work, it had a small, obscure beginning, and many opponents. The workers were humble men of God, unlearned and ignorant, so far as the sciences and knowledge of this world are concerned. But they were taught in the School of God; they were equipped and furnished by Him for the great work to which He had called them. Their hearts were all aglow with Christ-like compassion for the souls of the children, and they laboured, wept, and prayed for their conversion to God. The glad tidings of the Gospel were spoken with great simplicity and power, and many young hearts were won for Jesus. In spite of all opposition of men and demons, the work increased and spread itself out on every hand. The Sunday School in our day, is acknowledged in every land where Jesus' name is known. It has grown up into a great religious system, and become incorporated with the church-systems of the world. But it does not generally follow that the world's adoption of an instrumentality used of God, adds to its real power, or increases its true usefulness. The world introduces its own methods, and builds according to its own pattern, until God and His Word get but little place. And so it has fared with the Sunday School in the hands of the world. The form remains, with many appendages, but the manifested power of God is sadly

6 THE SUNDAY SCHOOL: ITS AIM AND OBJECT.

awanting. It is true there are individuals serving God among the children here and there, who are used by Him in conversions, and there are schools in which God's Word and Spirit are allowed to operate unfettered, where there is constant blessing, where the teachers are themselves converted, and earnestly seeking the conversion of the children under their care. For these, and for all that God has done by them, let us praise His name. If we were more simple and Scriptural in our service, God would bless us more abundantly, and the Sunday School, divested of its many worldly embellishments, and carnal methods, would, under the care of godly and zealous workers, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and conducted according to the principles of the Word of God, become as "a field that the Lord hath blessed."

It is with an earnest desire to help our dear fellow-labourers amongst the young, that the following simple papers on "The Sunday School and its work" are given. We need hardly say, that for many of the *details* in this, as in other spheres of labour, there is no direct "commandment of the Lord," and consequently no inflexible rule need be made. But there are guiding *principles* given in the Word of God, by which we may test the character and modes of our service, and surely it becomes all who serve the Lord Christ in whatever department of His work, to diligently exercise themselves unto such service as is well-pleasing in His sight.

The question is sometimes asked "What authority have we for the Sunday School? Is it a divine institution, or simply an expedient to supply the lack of parental care and instruction?"

We would reply, the same authority that we have for preaching the Gospel. Mark xv. 15 commands that the Gospel be preached to "*every creature*"—old and young. This is sufficient. We claim for the Sunday

School the same authority as for the Gospel Meeting. The primary object of the Sunday School is to present the Gospel of God concerning His Son to the children, seeking their immediate conversion to God. The mode of its communication may differ from an ordinary Gospel Meeting, but its object is the same. Children are lost: they need a Saviour. They are "by nature the children of wrath"—they need to be regenerated—not merely instructed. The aim of the Sunday School teacher should therefore be, to bring the truth of the Gospel down to the capacity of the youngest child in his class, and to apply it to his heart and conscience, urging and entreating him to accept and believe it for his own personal salvation.

This has been greatly lost sight of in modern Sunday Schools. Religious instruction, and doctrinal teaching in abstract form have been unduly exalted, and the conversion of the soul well-nigh forgotten. The Sunday School is looked upon by many as a kind of seminary for Sundays, where the pupils receive a course of religious instruction to fit them for places in the Church, as the instruction of the Day School fits them to fill places in the world. Hence every sect has its Sunday School, just as it has its sacraments and its office-bearers. It is the nursery of the Church, out of which at a given age the pupils pass into the communicants' class, and thence to membership of the Church, in many cases irrespective of their spiritual condition, and without even being questioned whether they have been born again or not. We do not contend for a Sunday School after this fashion: on the contrary, we believe it to be a hindrance rather than a blessing, inasmuch as it gives children the impression that instruction, and religious knowledge, instead of Christ and regeneration, constitute a Christian and secure a place in heaven. But there is no need for

conducting a Sunday School on these lines, or for copying the methods of the world in our service for the Lord, in this or any other sphere. We have the Word of God to guide us, if not in detail, at least in principles.

Let it be clearly and constantly kept before us then, that the conversion of the young is the great aim and object of the Sunday School. For this let its workers watch and pray. With this full in view, let them teach, instruct, entreat, and warn the children under their care, and bear them on their hearts before the throne of grace. To accomplish this, let them bring from the exhaustless treasury of the Word of God, its great and mighty truths concerning the ruin and guilt of the sinner, and the grace and love of God the Saviour, with freshness, adaptation, and sweetness. Then with earnestness, solemnity, and tenderness, apply them to the young and tender hearts and consciences of their scholars, looking to the Lord to quicken His Word and cause it to bear fruit. The work is great; its results are widespread. They can never be fully estimated here. Yonder in the great company of the redeemed, many a once-dull and careless scholar will be found, over whom a godly teacher wept and prayed, and who at last was regenerated, converted, glorified.





THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND THE CHURCH.

THE work of Sunday School teaching, like every other branch of evangelistic work, may be undertaken and carried on by the individual believer, in direct responsibility to the Lord. The servant of Jesus Christ, who believes that his Master has called him unto, and fitted him for this particular work, will seek means to carry it on, no matter *where* he is. He will "take heed to the ministry that he has received in the Lord to fulfil it," with or without the fellowship of others. By the efforts of individuals labouring thus, many, both young and old, are constantly hearing the gospel of God, and being saved for eternity. It was thus, single-handed and alone, with a heart filled with divine compassion, that Robert Raikes began his Sunday School amongst the needy and destitute children, in the lanes and alleys of Gloucester more than a century ago; and thus in many needy corners of our great cities, and in country hamlets in "the regions beyond," the work of the Sunday School goes on still.

But it is not only by the efforts of isolated individuals that the work of evangelization is to be carried on. Wherever there exists a church or assembly of believers, it is capable of corporate action in its worship and in its service. There goes up to heaven above, from the gathered company of the saints, the united song of praise and breath of prayer, and *out* to the world a united testimony to the gospel. It is written concerning

"the *church* of the Thessalonians": "From *you* sounded out the word of the Lord." This was their united testimony, and not the efforts of individuals only. It was the work of the gospel as carried on by the church. This principle is acknowledged still. The Sunday Evening Gospel Meeting, usually conducted in the building belonging to the assembly, is looked upon in this light. It is the church's united effort in the gospel toward the world, and not the work of the evangelist only. True, only one or two may publicly take part in the preaching; but the hearts and energies of all the saints are in fellowship in the work. In short, the gospel meeting is an integrant part of the church's work, and is conducted by it, although the preaching and practical working of it may be in the hands of a limited number, who are gifted to oversee and do it. This is exactly what we claim for the Sunday School. It is, or ought to be, an integrant part of the work of every church of Christ, and not an isolated outpost in the hands of a few dissociated workers. It is the channel through which the church may fulfil her responsibility toward the young, in declaring unto them the glad tidings of salvation. It may not be the only channel, but it is admittedly one of the best, and few, if any, have been so abundantly blessed of God. Neither the hour, the method, or the duration of an ordinary gospel meeting, are usually well adapted to the younger children; whereas the Sunday School, properly conducted, meets the need of all. There the gospel, with its accompanying truths, is told out in loving, simple words, adapted to the child of tender years, and in a somewhat different form to the boy and girl in their teens, securing the attention, and awakening the interest of the listener as no other form of communication secures it; and there are abundant proofs on every hand that the Sunday School conducted by godly workers, and on

scriptural principles, is an institution approved of God, and of infinite value in the evangelization of the young.

The isolation of the Sunday School from the church, wherever this exists, is a cause of weakness, and often a productive source of trouble. Claiming to be a kingdom of itself, its workers govern it with little fellowship or sympathy from others. The prayers of fellow-saints are seldom asked or given; and, while all the other departments of the church's work are mentioned by name in the prayer meeting, the Sunday School is often conspicuous only by its absence. Persons of questionable ability and repute, not otherwise associated with the saints, are sometimes admitted as teachers, and practices and modes of carrying on the work resorted to, which alienate the sympathies of the saints, and thus deprive many of the privilege of manifesting their fellowship in the work, who would otherwise gladly do so.

We believe, then, that the Sunday School is a branch of the work of the church, and that wherever a company of God's saints are found capable of giving forth a gospel testimony to the world, there should exist a Sunday School. No church need expect the smile and blessing of the Lord which habitually neglects His work; and surely the precepts of the Word of God, together with the example of Him who took the little child in His arms and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," mark clearly the evangelization of the young to be part of "the work of the Lord" in which His people are to be "always abounding."

The work of Sunday School teaching ought not to be wholly left in the hands of young and inexperienced believers, as it often is. Although it is blessed to see so many zealous and efficient young workers diligently engaged in the work, it is of sufficient interest to enlist the energies of the wisest and most experienced of the saints.

Although its practical working may be in the hands of the superintendent and teachers, it should, in common with every other department of the church's work, be under the godly care of those having oversight; and, we think, the oversight of an assembly should represent all its work, including the work of the gospel and the Sunday School, and not the pastoral only. The financial requirements (which, if the school be a large one, may be considerable, such as providing hymn-books, text-books, magazines, &c.) should be met by the church, and not, as in some cases, by the teachers themselves, thus all have the privilege of sharing somewhat in the work.

May the churches of Christ be more fully aroused to their responsibility and privilege in sharing this joyful service of seeking the salvation of the young amongst them, and of stretching forth a hand to gather the thousands and tens of thousands of children, for the salvation of whose souls no effort is made.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND THE FAMILY.

IT has been said by some, that where children have the benefit of a godly home, and the instruction and care of godly parents, the work of the Sunday School, is so far as they are concerned, unnecessary. Others have gone a step further, and object to the work of the Sunday School altogether, on the ground that it interferes with parental instruction, and as a consequence, they refuse to allow their children to attend it. According to their view of it, the Sunday School is a philanthropic institution, for the religious instruction of the children of ungodly and vicious parents, who either

cannot or will not undertake it themselves. It is at best in their estimation, but a "necessary evil," a temporary expedient, doing the work of the defaulting parent. Now if either of these views were correct, there might be sufficient excuse for the lack of sympathy, plainly manifest amongst certain believers, in the work of the Sunday School. But they are not correct, inasmuch, as they fail to describe the true object of the Sunday School; and on the contrary, utterly misrepresent it.

The Sunday School teacher is not a parent: he is not a foster-parent: he does not annul the parent's authority: he does not assume the parent's place. The sphere and work of the two are distinct, in no way opposed to each other, and at no point colliding. The parent has a vast and wide-spreading field of responsibility given him by God, upon which no one but himself can enter, including the instruction, and training of his children, the bringing of them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, their discipline, correction, restraint, and if need be punishment. It is hardly necessary to say, that it would be the merest affectation, for the Sunday School teacher to presume to do all this for the children under his care. How could he if he only has them for an hour once a week? Would a gardener undertake to *train* a vine, by having it under his care for an hour once a week, think you, or would he be successful if he did? The work of the parent, necessitates that the child be under his supervision, and amenable to his rule. God has invested him with a power and authority, that no one else can wield but himself, and if he fail to do a parent's part, no one can adequately do it for him. The work of the Sunday School teacher is entirely different. He speaks to the children the truths of the gospel, and presses on them their need of it. He teaches them the great foundation truths of God's word, concerning their ruin, redemption,

and regeneration. He seeks to arouse the consciences and win the hearts of the unsaved, and to teach the young believer the truths of God's word, with a view to lead him on in the ways of the Lord. To speak the gospel, and to instruct in the word, is his work, but to "train," and to "bring up," or "nurture," he does not attempt.

Christian parents, therefore, instead of giving the cold shoulder to the Sunday School, and, by withholding their children, setting a bad example to others, should be willing to send them to their classes in the Sunday School, with the same ease and interest, as they do to the Gospel Meeting, to listen to the evangelist's message. God has in many well-known cases, used the earnest appeals of the godly Sunday School teacher, to clinch the home-teaching of the parent, and to bring the well-instructed child to decision for Christ. It greatly tends to strengthen the teacher's hands, and to deepen the interest in the scholar, when the hearty fellowship and co-operation of the parents are with the teacher in the work. There is a fellowship in prayer and in labour. The teacher, seeking to press home the parent's words, and the parent seeing that the child is regularly and punctually at his class, with his books in order, and his texts and verses committed to memory. Thus as it was of old, there would be the private instruction of the parent within the home (Deut. vi. 7), and the public instruction in the law of the Lord as well, in a form adapted to the infant mind. Thus the influence and utility of the Sunday School would be greatly increased, and by the hearty co-operation of the godly parent, with the earnest teacher, the work of conversion and teaching of the young would be promoted.



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER:

HIS QUALIFICATIONS.

BEFORE we may confidently expect the blessing of the Lord on any line of service we undertake in His name, we must ascertain, by a careful examination of the written Word, whether that particular line of service be such as He approves of, and, next, whether He has called us to that particular work. In other words, the service itself must be the Lord's, and the servant must be such, as He has called to do it, in order to have His blessing, approval, and reward. This holds good in every path of service; in none more so, than the Sunday School. We have already endeavoured to show, that the Sunday School, conducted according to the principles of the Word of God, with its aim and object the conversion and instruction of the young, is a work which has the approbation of the Lord. We would now seek to ascertain who are competent to share its labour: in brief, to answer the question so frequently asked—"What are the qualifications of a Sunday School Teacher?"

It is all-important to remember, that the Lord Jesus Christ, risen, and glorified at the right hand of God, is the source from whom all ministry flows. He it is who calls and qualifies those whom He sends to serve Him

here, whether in the Church or in the world. His alone is the prerogative to raise up, and to thrust forth, those whom He desires to do His work on earth, and He finds them wheresoever He will. Man may call and appoint his fellow-man to various spheres of service, but he cannot qualify or constitute a servant of Jesus Christ. This holds true, humble as the sphere may be, of the Sunday School and its teachers. The Lord Himself must raise them up, and fit them for the work. To Him, therefore, let His people look in the day of their need. On Him alone let them wait to send forth, duly qualified Sunday School Teachers, with whom He will work mightily. But there are certain marks by which we may recognise such as He thus sends forth to do His work. The Epistles of the New Testament describe the qualifications required for special spheres of service (see 1 Tim. iii. 2-7; Titus i. 6-9), and the spiritual and moral fitness required of all who, in any department of His work, serve our Lord Jesus Christ (John xii. 26; 2 Cor. vi. 4-8). By these we may test ourselves and others, and ascertain, in general outline at least, the qualifications of a Sunday School Teacher.

First of all then, a Sunday School Teacher must be *regenerated*—he must be a child of God. This is the first essential qualification. Without this, all else is worthless. No amount of fitness in other respects can compensate for the lack of divine life: nothing can stand as an equivalent for the new birth. Apart from this, the person is dead in trespasses and sins, an enemy of God, an heir of wrath. He may be well acquainted with the Bible, and able to speak of its truths to others; he may be fully furnished with the knowledge of theology, Scripture geography, Eastern manners and customs, and many other things; but unless he has been “born again,” he lacks the first great qualification of a Sunday School

Teacher, and ought not, on any account whatever, to be encouraged or permitted to share in a work for which he is as thoroughly unfit, as a blind man would be to teach writing, or a dumb man music. We ought to set our faces like a flint, against the malpractice, now, alas! so common all around us, of admitting and encouraging unregenerated persons to undertake Sunday School teaching. Besides the evil consequences, to their own souls, of being installed in a false position (and these are serious, inasmuch as it leads them to suppose that they are true Christians, and as likely to go to heaven as others doing the same work), there is the guilt of placing the young, during the most impressionable period of their existence, under the tuition and guidance of those who can only lead them astray in spiritual things. May the Lord's people and servants be stirred up to the importance of this, and to increased vigilance and uncompromising faithfulness in dealing with all who seek fellowship with them in service for the Lord. Fear not to put the question, straight and plain, as to whether they have been born of God; press them closely. If they are the Lord's, they will take it nothing amiss, if not, it will unmask them.

Godliness.—The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit within—it is the creation of a new man, the begetting of a new life. The manifestation of this will be seen, in a sober, righteous, and godly life and walk. This, also, is an essential qualification—godliness. Lip profession must not be accepted, if divorced from godly practice. If any “profess that they know God, but, in works, they deny Him” (Titus i. 16), such a person is clearly unqualified as a Sunday School Teacher. The effect of such a person's presence would be pernicious amongst the children. There must be godliness: soundness in the faith, and blamelessness in the life: confidence among fellow-workers, and a good report of them that are without.

Light-headed, flippant professors, should not be admitted to the ranks of Sunday School workers, nor such as the world can truthfully charge with inconsistency, or to whose character moral blemishes attach. There must be a godly, consistent life, adorning the doctrine taught by the lip, in order to commend it to the conscience. Children quickly see where there is lacking, and reckon accordingly. They frequently learn more from what they see than from what they hear, hence the necessity of vital godliness and blameless walk in the teacher.

Love for the work.—There are many excellent Christians who have no special love for children, or ability to adapt themselves to their ways. They are talented, earnest, and well-taught in the Word; but their tastes and ideas are so utterly at variance with those of the young folks, that they have no patience with them. The least irregularity puts them on edge, and irritates them. They *do* the work, but it is because they *have* to do it, and not for any special love they have for it, or enjoyment in it. Now, wherever the sphere of such individuals may be, it is very evident it is not in the Sunday School. It is hopeless for any one to attempt to work amongst the young, if he does not feel “quite at home” in the midst of a circle of spirited, restless children. Children soon know those who love them, and draw confidingly to them. They will respect and obey such a teacher, while another would find them unmanageable. Love for the young, and a desire for their souls, should form an important qualification then, in every Sunday School Teacher.

Devotedness is another important requisite. The Sunday School teacher must give himself to the work, and throw all his energies into it, if he would be successful. Half-heartedness is of no use here; it takes a thorough, downright earnest soul to work for God, patiently plodding away week after week, and

year after year, it may be, among the same children, sowing the seed of the Word, and battling against every foe that militates against its growth. Impatient workers who must see fruit forthwith, need not come to seek it here, although at times, in God's good purpose, the seed may soon spring up, and the child give unmistakable evidence of having passed from death to life, with little labour. But such is not the general rule in Sunday School work, at least so far as we have seen it. Rather would it seem to be, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The light of the gospel is flashed into some souls in a moment, and they pass both consciously and confessedly from the shadow of death into God's marvellous light. The transition is the work of a moment in their case, experimentally, as it is actually with all in God's sight. But in others, there is the gradually deepening conviction of sin, the ever-increasing desire for salvation. There is first the darkness, next the twilight, then the dawn of gospel light and love. The moment of the new birth is as real and as actual, in the one case as in the other, but the enjoyment and manifestation are different. The former, in special cases and at special seasons, may be witnessed among the young—and we should always welcome such seasons, and praise God for them—but the general rule would seem to be the other mode, which leaves room for earnest prayer, and patient, watchful labour for the conversion of the children committed to our care. There must, therefore, be devotedness and patient toil. It is perfectly contemptible to mark the way some would-be Sunday School teachers carry on their work. They come to their classes one Sunday, and absent themselves the next, without giving any notice. A holiday finds their places vacant, and a shower prevents them leaving home. Their children soon see that they have no interest in them, and behave accordingly, or drop

off and cease to come. To be a successful soul-winner in the Sunday School, there must be thorough, self-denying devotedness to the work, and cleaving to it in spite of opposition, discouragements, and difficulties. A Sunday School teacher who is not prepared to sacrifice his own ease and comfort, to attend to his class, has no business there at all. He evidently has mistaken his calling, and rather than drag along until his class gets scattered from him, he should quit it, and leave room for God to supply another in his place.

Acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures.—It is desirable, if not essential, in all who serve the Lord amongst the young, that they be familiar with the Word of God, and able to quote it correctly. We would not discourage any who, with true hearts yet limited knowledge, are seeking to serve the Lord Jesus, nor would we wittingly put a barrier in the way of the youngest saint, whose heart has stirred him up to share this blessed work, yet, it would seem to be the way of the Lord, to detain the young believer in the place of a learner, before he is called to fill the place of a teacher. It has ever been the Lord's way with those whom He has called to serve Him in honoured places in His kingdom, to have them alone with Himself, listening to His voice, before He sent them forth with His message to others. Thus it was with Moses in Midian; Elijah at Cherith; John the Baptist in the deserts of Galilee; and Paul the apostle in Arabia. They were there alone with God, receiving their education and training for future service; and it would have fared badly with them in their after-life, if that important period had been omitted. We do not contend for "an educated ministry," as the term is generally understood, which consists of a round of dead languages, a stock of dry theology and traditions, and an air of superior understanding and mental ability. All this may exist without grace, and be as

powerless to do work for God as David was in Saul's armour. But the servant of the Lord, even in the humble sphere of the Sunday School, should be equipped and furnished with the truth of God, and able to speak with authority and certainty, what God has taught him while in communion with Himself, from the pages of His holy Word. It is a sign of defective acquaintance with the Scriptures if a Sunday School teacher requires to hammer away from the third chapter of John, or the third of Romans—important though they be—fifty Sundays in the year. There is plenty of scope and variety in the fields of Scripture, and the diligent student who seeks to daily gather manna for his own soul, and help and guidance for his own path, from these holy pages, will come forth having God's truth bubbling up in his heart, and able to speak it with freshness and power to others.

Children are keen critics : they soon discern when their teacher is deficient in Bible knowledge, and lose confidence in him. But it need not be. The Book is in our hands ; the Holy Spirit dwells within ; and by prayerful meditation, and diligent searching of the Holy Scriptures, we may be possessed of the mind of God, and able to say, "Thus saith the Lord," when we speak to others.

Ability to communicate is another requisite. There are many excellent and well-taught believers who seem to lack the power to communicate to others what they know and enjoy themselves, at least in any public capacity. They have drunk in the truths of God's holy Word, and fully benefitted by them in the refreshment and sustenance of their own souls, but they find difficulty in speaking to others of the things they have seen and heard. Now, while we would not lay down any hard and fast line, or discourage the weakest saint from sharing the joyful labour of making known the glad tidings, even with stammering lips, yet, it does seem needful that all who, in any sphere, seek to

teach, should have some ability to communicate intelligibly to those who hear them. It is painful to sit and listen to some expositors and preachers as they flounder away in their subject, evidently enjoying it themselves, but utterly unable to convey to others the faintest outline of what they want to be at. You have to suppose, and surmise, and infer, it may be this, or that, or the other thing, and at the close you rise with the unsatisfactory feeling that you are sure of nothing, and that nothing has been gained. Now if this be so in the case of grown-up folks, who generally come to listen, it must be so in greater measure among the young. Children are, as a rule, volatile and restless. Unless their attention and interest in the subject can be sustained by its attractiveness, they do not usually put themselves much about to ascertain its value. If the thing spoken is beyond them, or communicated in a hum-drum fashion that begets no interest, they will give over listening forthwith, and betake themselves to frolic and mischief. The teacher who can hold his children by the ears, and sustain their attention and interest as he expounds his subject, has generally a well-behaved class, while he who, either from inability to teach, or dearth of matter, drags wearily along, looking at the clock and hushing his children into attention every other minute, will have riotous and insubject pupils. This ability to communicate may be developed by use. Many of those who now fill important places in the service of the Lord, began their ministry with stammering lips. Even "Moses, the man of God," confessed himself to be "slow of speech and of a slow tongue," yet, by "reason of use" his tongue and speech gained power, and were abundantly used in bearing Jehovah's message to His people of old. Even where this ability is but small, if there be true devotedness to God, and to the work, He will bless it. The one talent laid upon the altar of the

Lord and consecrated to Him, to be used for His glory, will not be rejected, if he who owns it, will seek to use it to the best advantage, and in the most efficient manner, in the honourable service of Jesus Christ, his Sovereign Lord.

Ability to Rule.—The Sunday School teacher must also be able to govern his class, and to control it. An unruly, insubordinate class of children is a perpetual annoyance in a Sunday School. It is almost hopeless, moreover, to expect any real work of the Spirit of God among the children, if there be continual bustle and inattention prevailing among them. Where the teacher's authority is unrespected, his words generally fall to the ground unheeded. It is a mistaken kindness to allow children to become their own masters, and to ignore godly rule. A class in the Sunday School ought to be a little empire, having its teacher as absolute ruler. He should seek to gain the confidence of his children, and rule firmly, yet in love. Once their confidence is gained, they will unvaryingly respect and obey him, without the need of much correction, and without the sense of restraint. The more interest he shows in them, the more confidence they place in him, and then the management and control of the class becomes comparatively easy. Teachers who seldom see, or care to see their children, save on Sunday, and who shew no interest in their welfare, beyond lecturing them in the class, are those who generally find most difficulty in controlling them, while others who shew a friendly interest in the present, as well as the eternal welfare of their children, recognise them on the street when they meet them, visit them when they are ill or absent, and have them in their hearts to live and die with them, find no difficulty in maintaining order and commanding respect amongst their scholars.

There may be other qualifications: these are the most

indispensible. Above all, let there be spirituality of heart and life; a walk before God and with Him from day to day; a purposed heart cleaving to the Lord; and a conscience void of offence toward God and men. Thus shall the Sunday School teacher be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use," and both he and his work shall be blessed and made a blessing.





THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER: HIS WORK.

HE one great purpose of our God, in giving up His only Son, and sending Him to earth, was, that sinners might be saved. As it is written—"God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might *live* through Him" (1 John iv. 9).

The presence of the Son of God here among men, His incarnation, His life, His death, and His resurrection, were for the salvation of the lost. As He, Himself declared—"The Son of man is come to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). The present work of the Holy Spirit on earth among men, is to convince them of sin, and to regenerate them, through the Word. The preaching of the Gospel among all the nations, and to every creature, has for its object, the out-gathering of a people to Christ, who, believing the glad tidings, shall be saved; for the Gospel of Christ "is the power of God, unto salvation, to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16).

The distinct and definite aim of every God-sent messenger of the Gospel, ought therefore to be, to declare His message in such a manner, that those to whom he comes, may hear and understand it, in order that they may believe it, and be saved. This holds good in every department of evangelistic effort, in none more so than

in the Sunday School. There, the aim of every worker ought to be clear and fixed, his purpose firm and sure. He should seek the salvation of his children's souls, he should labour to win their hearts for Christ. For this, let him watch, long, and pray; with this in view, let him study, search, and equip himself for work, before he meets his class; and to gain this great end, let him teach, question, entreat, and warn the children under his care. It is perfectly true, that apart from human agency, God could reach the hearts and consciences of young or old; but this is not his usual way. "It pleased God, through the foolishness of *preaching*, to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21). It has been His sovereign will, to choose His people to declare His message, and through their lips to make known His Gospel. In the humble sphere of the Sunday School Teacher, this holds true. His is the honour of carrying the message of life and peace to needy souls, and of winning them for Jesus. True, he cannot do this in his own strength, or by his own wisdom, but, in the case of every true and heaven-sent labourer, the word will be fulfilled—"And they went forth, and *preached* everywhere, the Lord *working* with them, and confirming the Word" (Mark xvi. 20).

It is greatly to be feared, that this has been lost sight of in many Sunday Schools. The *instruction*, rather than the *conversion* of the children, has been set up as the mark; their *education*, rather than their *regeneration*, has been sought after. Now, that it is all-important, that they should be instructed in the great foundation truths of God's most holy Word, no one will deny; on the contrary, every godly teacher will consider it part of his work to instruct his class, and store their youthful minds with these great truths; but his work should not begin and end with instruction and teaching. The souls of these children, even the youngest of them, are lost, and

need a Saviour; they are by nature the children of wrath, and need to be born again, and no amount of education will fit them for heaven. These children may die young, and if they die unsaved, they cannot go to heaven. If they live, they will be less accessible a few years hence, than they are now, and more hardened in sin. Then it is beyond all doubt that they may be saved; yes, saved in their *very* early days. Thousands have been before them, and after giving the clearest proof of it, they went home to heaven. Some of God's most honoured saints and servants, whose praises are in all the churches, were converted in their early days. Their tender hearts were early won by Jesus' love; and in their youth, they served Him. Full well we know, that some there are, who doubt and question this; and others fail to see the need of pressing these things too closely. They seem to think that a child's professed conversion should be treated with incredulity. But let the thought perish, for it is utterly unworthy of one, himself the subject of the grace of God. Doubtless, there have been false professions among the young, as well as among those older in years, and some have been unduly pressed beyond the measure of their faith. We do not excuse or palliate such mistakes; we have made them often ourselves. But this we claim, and this we press, as one of the vital necessities of success in labour for the Lord among the young, in the Sunday School and elsewhere, that we look for and expect, the present and manifest conversion to God, of the children under our care; and where in any measure this has been done, the worker has not been disappointed.



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER:

MODES OF TEACHING.

ASSUMING then that the conversion of the children is the object of our labour, the question naturally arises—how is it to be brought about, and what part can human instrumentality have in a work so manifestly Divine? Then, that the work of conversion is the work of God every Christian will readily admit. It is no more possible for man to regenerate or convert a soul, than it is for him to create a world. Every genuine conversion is the work of God. But He has been pleased to use means to accomplish this. The Holy Spirit, in effecting the work of regeneration, uses the Word, and the Word reaches the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, generally, by being spoken or read. Hence the need and the value of teaching and preaching the Word. There are dangers on both sides here. Some are so wholly occupied with the human side of the work, that they become engrossed with the correctness and efficiency of their teaching, and leave God out well-nigh altogether. Others seem to dwell so exclusively on the helplessness of man, that they seem to have little exercise of soul about their responsibility, and, as a consequence, they neither equip nor furnish themselves for their work.

But he in whose soul the balance of the truth is steadily held, will strive to do his very best for, and give his very best to the Lord for His service, the meanwhile knowing that but for the quickening power of the Spirit, all will be without avail. To deposit the truth then in the understanding of the scholar should be the teacher's aim: it cannot reach his heart and conscience unless it does so by his understanding. He must know, in order to believe: he must come in contact with the truth in order to feel its keen edge working on his conscience. There are various modes of communication in use to make this possible. Preaching is the most common of these, but it is not generally practicable in the Sunday School. It may do well betimes to have a short, crisp address from the desk, but, as a rule, preaching or lecturing is not advantageous in Sunday School work. The congregation is there broken up, so to speak, into parts, each class having its own minister, and he having studied the peculiarity of each of his scholars, and gauged the extent of their ability to learn and retain the truth, is there to give it to them accordingly, and in such a manner as will secure their attention and sustain their interest. As a rule, vague, diffuse, and rambling addresses do not. Some teachers ransack the Bible from end to end, in a single afternoon, going over a variety of subjects without joint or point in them. This is of little value, inasmuch as the children have no idea of what they want to be at, and are often no wiser at the end than they were at the beginning. As a rule, it is well to have a subject chosen beforehand, and well studied, fed on, and prayed over, by the teacher. Thus furnished when he meets his class, his desire is to communicate to them what is blessing his own soul.

One of the modes may be called *co-operation*. That is, teacher and scholars working together, not one talking and

all the rest throughout passive. It is an absolute necessity that every scholar have *something to do*. Restless children must be employed if you want their attention. This may be done in various ways. They may read verse about of the lesson, hunt up parallel passages, answer questions, and anything else that will help to elucidate the truth and make it plain.

Another method is *memorising*. Committing to the memory texts or even chapters, and repeating them aloud. This was more common in olden times than now. Yet no part of teaching can exceed this in value. The precious seed of the Word thus early lodged in the mind, will bear its fruit in after days, and, as in some well-known instances, it may be used of God in an hour of need, when no other way of access to the Word is possible.

Questioning—or, as it was called in former times, *catechising*—is another useful method. After the subject or lesson has been gone over, the children should be questioned on its various parts, to ascertain how far they have understood the truth communicated. It was the custom of the Lord Jesus to ask those who had listened to His teachings, “Have ye *understood* all these things?” (Matt. xiii. 51), and it would be well for all who seek in His name to preach and teach His Word, to follow His example. A great deal of truth may be communicated, and very little of it understood, yet, it is only what has been grasped by the understanding that can affect the conscience and the heart. One of the reasons that so little fruit is seen in the conviction and conversion of those who listen habitually to the truth and gospel of God, may be found in the fact, that so little of what is preached and taught has been understood. We are told in the parable of the sower, that “when anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and *understandeth it not*, then cometh the wicked

one and catcheth away that which was sown" (Matt. xiii. 19), and, in striking contrast to this, it is written concerning the seed that fell into the good ground and bore its fruit, that "he that received the seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and *understandeth* it" (Matt. xiii. 23). The use of such means as will reach the understanding with the truth should be the teacher's constant study. *Questioning* enables him to find out how far he has been successful in doing so. It shows where the children are in darkness, and in what measure they have received the truth into their understanding. The amount of ignorance and misapprehension it sometimes reveals is amazing. A Sunday School teacher was questioning the classes at the close of the lessons one afternoon. The subject had been "David slaying Goliath." Pointing to a seat of girls, he asked, "Can any of you girls tell me who slew the great giant?" One little girl replied, seriously, "Jack, the giant killer." Poor child, she had been made more familiar with that subject at home, in all probability, than with the other, but it served to show how little her understanding had received from the Bible lesson of that afternoon. Never allow the children to *guess* in answering. If they cannot give the answer, instruct them. In some cases, it does well to reverse the order, and allow the children to ask the questions, and the teacher to answer them. Senior classes will readily do so when the opportunity is given them, and the questions often reveal their exercises of soul, and enable the teacher to deal with them. "Teacher," said a quiet-looking boy, one afternoon, when such an opportunity was given, "doesn't it say in the Bible that we must 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling' in one place, and in another, that it is 'not of works, lest any man should boast?' Does the Bible contradict itself?" The boy's question gave an excellent

opportunity of showing to the whole class—who were much more interested in the question when it came from one of themselves—the difference between working *for* salvation, and working it *out*.

Application is an all-important feature in teaching: that is, the taking of truth in general, and applying it to individuals. Abstract truth, or truth taught without being applied to those whom it concerns, effects little good: the application gives it point. Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb, although full of solemn teaching, produced no conviction in David's guilty conscience, until Nathan put the point on the parable, by applying it in the words, "Thou art the man." When the Lord Jesus communicated to Nicodemus the necessity of the new birth in the well-known words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," they drew from Nicodemus a question which shewed he had not personally applied them. It was then that the Great Teacher gave the direct home-thrust to the learned Rabbi's individual conscience, by saying, "Ye"—not merely man in general, but you, yourself—"must be born again." Let us seek in His name to thus deal with the children He has entrusted to our care. Let us not seek their entertainment, or even their instruction merely, but remembering, that with all their gentle, winning ways, these children, if still unregenerated, are enemies of God, and need the sharp incision of the truth to awaken them to know their need and to see their danger. Until this has been gained, little indeed has been accomplished by all our labours.



THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER :

ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHING.

IT is now pretty generally admitted among all who seek to communicate the truth of God to their fellow-men, that illustrative teaching holds an important place. Those who go forth into the world with the message of the Gospel, find, that in order to bring the doctrines that they desire to teach within reach of the common people, they must illustrate them. And for this they have the highest authority, and the best example. The Lord Jesus, during the years of His public ministry, largely made use of illustrations. The birds above His head, the lilies around His feet, and the objects everywhere present to His eye, were used to illustrate the truths He taught. In no sphere of service for the Lord, has illustrative teaching been more effectual than in the Sunday School. By this means, what would otherwise be uninteresting, and likely to receive a listless hearing, is made to beam with interest to willing listeners. They may be used both to *attract* and *explain*. How often a listless class has been roused to attention by the simple introduction of an anecdote, and how often some obscure truth has been made plain by the use of a simple illustration. There are various forms of illustrations

which may be used. The highest, because they are Divine, are THE TYPES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. What a large and wealthy field is here for the teacher of the young, a field in which the children never seem to tire. There is such a variety too, suited to every aspect of the truth. For example, we have the *ruin* and *need* of the sinner told out, in such types as the Leper, the Serpent-bitten Israelite, and the lame Mephibosheth; his *danger*, by the man-slayer pursued by the avenger of blood, the death of the first-born of Egypt, and the antediluvians destroyed by the deluge. And where have we a better picture of the Gospel fore-shadowed, than that in the Brazen Serpent, and the Paschal Lamb? These, and many others like them, are of immense importance in the instruction of the young. Then we have what may be called OBJECT LESSONS FROM THE SCENES AROUND US. It was the custom of the Great Teacher to make free use of the objects everywhere around Him, to illustrate His teaching. Seldom, if ever, did He speak to the crowd or the individual, without the use of illustration or metaphor. He used the *water* of the well of Sychar, to illustrate the living water; the *sower* and his *seed*, to illustrate the preaching of the Word and its results; the *vine* to express the fruitfulness of His people, and the *lily* to denote their humility. In addressing a crowd, where men of different ranks and occupations were massed together, His illustrations were so varied, that all might apprehend the truth. A sower sowing seed, an enemy tares, a woman baking, a merchant buying, a company of fishermen drawing the net to shore, are all to be found within the compass of one address. A marriage-feast, a shepherd with his flock, a highway robbery, the falling of a tower, and many other passing events were used by Him to press home the truth on the hearts and consciences of His hearers. For an infant class, THE BLACK-BOARD is a useful mode of

illustrating. Outline texts, and drawings chalked on it, always interest the little ones. **SCRIPTURE PRINTS**, illustrative of the manners, customs, and dress of Bible lands are useful; only, it is well to see that they do illustrate, and not darken the truth. Many in use are far from scriptural. **ANECDOTES**, wisely chosen, and applied, are also helpful. But illustrating, like every other good thing, may be either overdone, or misapplied. Illustrations and anecdotes should only be used when they are distinctly applicable to the subject. It is worse than useless for a teacher to fritter away the precious time, relating anecdotes, and reciting stories, that neither have point nor application. As the feather is to the arrow, so ought the illustration to be to the subject. The *truth* has the point on it, the illustration may help to lodge it.





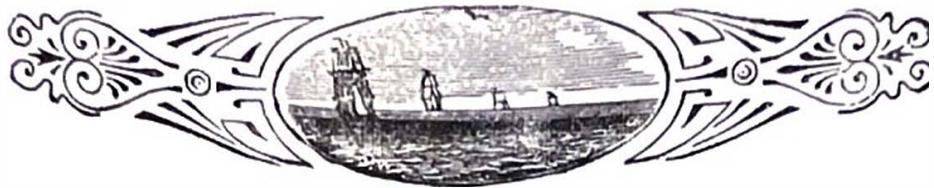
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER:

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING.

THE Lord has been stirring up His people during recent years to see that the only real preparation for ministry is that which is obtained in "The School of God." Very few indeed of those whom the Lord has called to serve Him, and used extensively as the channels of blessing to others, have been trained for their path of service in the authorized and popular way. They have not come from the study of heathen mythology, and rationalistic theories, such as are to be found in the colleges and high-class seminaries of the world. They have been raised from lowly paths in life, and called from obscure corners of the earth, where the Lord Himself had been educating them for the work to which he had called them. This is the only kind of "training" that is of any real value in the service of God, and the only "preparation for the ministry" that will produce an efficient and well-furnished minister of Jesus Christ. We do not, in writing thus, desire to throw the least discredit on the work of schools and colleges, or detract from the value of a useful course of education. We believe, on the contrary, that every young man and woman should use every lawful

means for the culture of their mental and intellectual powers, and store their minds with useful knowledge of every kind that is likely to be a benefit to them in life. This is quite a different thing from spending years—and generally the best and most important years of life—in acquiring an education and fitness for what is professedly the service of the Lord, which chiefly consists in heathen writings, and infidel book-lore; and from the study of which, as many a Christian young man who has gone through the soul-withering process has confessed, it is well-nigh impossible to come forth with an unsullied mind. We need hardly expect a race of spiritually healthy men to emanate from the schools and colleges of the world, when this is the kind of education that they are bound to excel in, before they can receive their diplomas. All this is absolutely useless in the service of the Lord. If the owner of it should fall into the Lord's hands after he has completed his education, and been pronounced as duly qualified by man, he may be stripped of the more dangerous parts of his accoutrements, and after a process of training in "The School of God," he may spiritually survive their pestilential effects, and be sent forth in the service of the Lord. Such was the case with Moses. After he had acquired "all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and "was mighty in his words and works" (Acts vii. 22, R.V.), he had to be taken into the "backside of the desert" alone with God, and there fitted for his Master's use. And so it was with Paul the Apostle. He had been brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts xxii. 3), and he had "advanced in the Jews' religion" beyond many of his age (Gal. i. 14, R.V.), but after he was converted, the Lord led him away into Arabia, and there, during the space of three years, stripped and furnished him for His service. But such cases are very scarce. It is a rare thing to meet a young man just out from the college,

having a healthy spiritual tone about his spirit, or a clear gospel ring in his preaching. There are such cases, and we thank God for them, but unfortunately they are becoming very rare. The bulk of our young men get toned down in their spiritual temperature immediately they get within the college gates; and by the time their education for the ministry is completed, they are so heady and puffed up, and so full of conceit, that the Lord cannot use them at all. They can talk on religious and theological subjects fluently, and give critical and finely polished essays on scientific subjects, but where is their unction and freshness? How few of them are used in the awakening and conversion of sinners, and in comforting and edifying the saints! It would almost seem, as if the saints had ceased to expect anything to be done by their instrumentality, and had begun to look for the blessing of the Lord to come through some "irregular" channel. It is acknowledged by many of those who recognise and uphold "an educated and regular ministry," that the blessing has come of late years through other sources, and the educated men themselves have been obliged to acknowledge it, and even to sit at the feet of the "unlettered and ignorant men" whom the Lord was using. All this is a sorrowful illustration of the inefficiency of human training for Divine service. Those who are to do God's work, must be educated in God's school. They must know Him, and be acquainted with His ways. This is as true of the Sunday School Teacher, as it is of the evangelist or pastor. He must be Divinely fitted for God's work. A good English education is not enough: ability to talk to the children on Bible subjects, is not of itself sufficient: there must be the prepared heart and the instructed soul: the clean hands and the godly walk. Thus, and only thus, can the believer be a "vessel meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 20).



PREPARATION OF LESSONS.

IN recoiling from the cut-and-dry discourses, and the written essays, commonly used by preachers and Sunday School teachers, many have gone to the other extreme. They go to meet their classes without being duly "furnished" for their work. Some have sought to justify this course by referring to Matt. x. 19, 20, R.V., where the Lord Jesus, in speaking to His disciples of the time when, for His Name's sake, they should be brought before kings and councils, gives them a special promise that it shall be given them in that hour what they shall speak, and bids them not be "anxious" what they shall say. But surely this has no direct bearing on the subject of preaching or teaching the Word of God. We do not doubt the power of the Lord in being able to supply His servants, in a moment, with all that they require for their work; indeed, we have over and again proved, that in an emergency, when there was no possible opportunity of knowing what would be required, the Lord has given the needed word. But this is not His

usual way. He commands His people to "search the Scriptures," and "compare spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. ii. 15). He bids His servants "give attendance to reading," and "meditate upon these things" (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15). Even although there may be considerable acquaintance with the subject, it is well to refresh the memory and the soul by meditating upon it, before speaking of it to others. Whatever truth is dwelling in our own souls richly, yielding sap and refreshment there, God's Spirit is likely to use in blessing to others. A great philosopher was wont to say, he studied the various subjects before lecturing on them, not because he lacked something to say, but because he desired his students "to drink of a running stream, and not of a stagnant pool." Now the Sunday School Teacher should be like the running stream when he meets his class, and not like the stagnant pool. The truths he utters to the children should be living in power within his own soul, then they will flow with power from his lips in blessing to others.

It is to be feared that many Sunday School Teachers are sadly deficient in this kind of preparation for their work. We have known some go to meet their classes without even reading the portion on which they were expected to speak, and others only to give it a hurried and superficial glance over. Need it be wondered that there was little blessing with what they said, and little interest among those that listened. It *may* have been sound; it *must* have been dry. We do not contend for an elaborate and finely-finished speech or sermon, or for the orthodox division of the subjects into a firstly, secondly, and thirdly, and so on. But there is nothing more to be deplored in Sunday School work than the ill-digested, vague, and rambling speeches, that some teachers periodically treat their children to, got up on the spur of the moment, without premeditation or arrange-

ment. It should be the Teacher's earnest endeavour to meet his class abundantly prepared and furnished, that is, his mind and heart should be well stored beforehand with the truth he is about to impart to them, and with a great deal more. He should be thoroughly familiar with his subject on all sides—historical, spiritual, practical. There should be no indistinctness or vagueness in his mind about what he is going to teach; he should be fully master of his theme, and his theme should be fully master of him; bubbling up like a fountain in his heart, burning like a glowing fire in his bones. Then when he speaks, it will be as the out-pouring of the living stream, and his children will listen, and be blessed.

But this cannot be obtained on a minute's notice, nor without some labour; and we would not be forgetful that many earnest teachers have but little time to give to the preparation of their Sunday lessons. Well, be it so, there is all the more need to use diligently what is at their disposal. They should begin early in the week to read over the portions of the Word which will form the subject for the following Sunday's lesson, and meditate upon them for their *own soul's profit*. Whatever "helps" they can lay hold on, they should gladly avail themselves of them. A good Reference Bible, with a Cruden's Concordance, and any other Biblical help within their reach, that will enable them to grasp the subject with their understanding. Especially should they pray for the enlightenment and teaching of the Holy Spirit, that they may get it well into their heart, and have utterance to speak of it with their lips to others. Having gained an understanding of the truth, and received blessing from it in his own soul, the teacher should next seek guidance as to how much, and what parts of it he will bring before his children when he meets them. The age, capacities, and spiritual condition of his class will greatly help him to determine this.

If his children are very young, a small part of the subject—the simplest part of it—may suffice. If older, they may be able to take up the whole of it. He should remember that they will carry away less than what they hear. Even when he secures their attention, and engages their interest, a large per-centage of the truth will be forgotten, or become unfruitful. And above all, let the truth be lovingly, faithfully, and earnestly applied to the consciences of the children, leading them to test the condition of their souls, to convict them of their sin, and to lead them to Jesus, to receive Him as their Saviour, and to honour and obey Him as their Lord.





ORDER AND ARRANGEMENT.

IT must be evident to the most casual observer, that in many of our Sunday Schools there is an utter lack of proper organization and godly order. In recoiling from systems of work and worship, in which there is little room for the operations of God's Spirit, or for the preaching and teaching of His Word, some seem to have gone to the opposite extreme, namely, that of recognizing no system or order of any kind. In their opinion, everything that resembles order is formality, and every attempt at arrangement is spoken of as "a curtailing of liberty." They seem to think that everything should be left in chaos, subject to the off-hand management of anybody. Now, we may say at once, that we do not believe in this at all; and, for the following reasons:—First, because it is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God; and, second, because it has proved to be both impracticable, and disastrous to the work of the Sunday School wherever it has been practised. The basis of this notion in the minds of those who entertain it seems to be, that because in certain gatherings together of the people of God—such as around the Lord's Table, or a prayer meeting—there is no pre-arrangement, therefore the same rule ought to apply to

every other kind of meeting. But this betokens extreme ignorance of Scripture, and lack of a sound mind in its application. A company of God's people assembled for worship, or to wait on God in prayer, may safely count on the guidance of God's Spirit in prayer, praise, and ministry, to the edification of all. But in a Gospel Meeting, or a Sunday School, it is entirely different. There *we* gather the unconverted to speak to them the Gospel of God, and it is the responsibility of those who do so, to see that such order and arrangement is observed, as will be for their comfort, and prevent the occurrence of anything that would detract from the solemnity of such a meeting, or that would assist the devil to make the truth inoperative. This especially applies to the Sunday School. Order and arrangement, authority and obedience, should characterize it, wherever it exists; and with a very little attention, this could, as a rule, be ultimately secured.

Although no hard and fast line of action, or stereotyped arrangement of classes may be possible, or even desirable, yet, there are certain rules as to the classification of scholars, size and arrangement of classes, etc., which seem necessary to the comfort and management of a Sunday School. The following—although not perhaps applicable in every case—we have proved to be efficient for comfort and general usefulness, and now submit them to the consideration of our fellow-workers.

1. The *classes* should, as far as possible, be formed of children of similar age and ability. This will enable the teacher, as a rule, to speak to them altogether, and to deal with subjects or aspects of truth suited to the capacities of the whole. The lack of this is a fruitful source of inattention. Little ones having no interest or capacity to receive what is being said to elder scholars, while they are being spoken to, and elder ones having no patience to listen to teaching suited to an infant class.

2. The *size* of the classes is a matter of considerable importance. As a rule, *eight* or *ten* children are quite sufficient for any teacher of average ability to manage well. In the case of *senior* classes, where less management may be necessary, or of *infant* classes, for which, usually, there is a separate apartment, there may be a larger number in the class, but for practical management, the number named is sufficient. When there is a lack of teachers, it would be better to make the need known to God, and among His people, that the lack may be supplied, rather than drag along with classes of unmangeable size.

3. The seats should be arranged, wherever possible, as three sides of a square, the teacher occupying the fourth on a chair or stool. This arrangement enables the teacher to see the faces of all the children, and to have entire command of them. Another advantage of it is, that there is no need for talking loudly, so as to disturb other classes, that may be near.

4. A teacher should never leave his class for any purpose whatever, during the time that they are gathered together, else all sorts of disorder may occur. If he has to provide them with hymn books, text cards, or other necessary things, he ought to supply himself with the quantities required, before the children gather, or be supplied by the person in charge of the school, at his class. It is a cause of frequent disorder and annoyance to the whole school, when a teacher leaves his class, to wander through the building gathering together his equipage, and by a little vigilance and attention this might easily be avoided.

5. Before beginning his work, the teacher should see to the physical comfort of his class, that there is no over-crowding, uncomfortable seats, etc., and that chatterers, and ringleaders in mischief, are separated as far as possible from one another.



HINTS ON RULE.

IT is indispensable to the comfort and spiritual welfare of a Sunday School, that its teachers have some ability to rule, as well as to teach. There are many excellent Christians whose minds are well stored with truth, and who have the gift of utterance in making it known to others, who seem, notwithstanding, to lack entirely the ability to rule. The sphere of such workers, whatever it may be, is clearly not the Sunday School, for there the ability to govern is quite as needful—if not more—as the ability to teach. Children do not, as a rule, come with the fixed purpose of listening to what is being said by their Sunday School teacher, as their parents would come to hear an exposition, at least, it is not a general rule to find it so. The teacher, therefore, has to tax himself with the work of securing their attention, and, if need be, of restraining their carelessness; he has to rule, as well as teach. His class is a little community, of which he is the governor; and it will be for his comfort and their profit, if he has them in subjection to his authority, which should be one of firmness, coupled with love. There need be no severity, and there ought not to be laxity, but the children should be given to understand, from the very hour they enter the class, that they must *obey* their teacher, and submit to his authority in everything. In days like the present, when the spirit of law-

lessness is so rapidly spreading in the world, and the sin of "disobedience to parents" so fearfully on the increase amongst the young, it is (and especially if the class be composed of children who live all the week amid scenes of anarchy) a work requiring great skill, and one which casts the worker constantly upon God for grace and patience to "rule well." It is almost useless to begin teaching, until attention is secured. To teach amid a hub-bub of talking, is to sow seed in a whirlwind, yet some teachers go on, so long as they have a solitary listener; the others being meanwhile engaged in some interesting game, to the annoyance of the whole school. Whispering, laughing, and playing of tricks, should on no account be tolerated by the teacher; better stop the lesson and deal with the offender, than go on attempting to communicate divine truth to minds pre-occupied with frolic. It is painful to hear a teacher shouting—"Order! Silence, boys!"—and threatening to put them out every other minute. It is perfectly evident that such persons have mistaken their calling in becoming Sunday School teachers, and it would be a mercy for all concerned, if they could but find it out, and quit the work.

In the case of unmanageable children, who, after having been tried in every possible way, and it may be, in various classes, have made up their minds not to obey, it would be better far to dismiss them from the school, rather than allow them to rule it; but, in ordinary cases, where rule and discipline are practised, the expulsion of a scholar would be exceedingly rare.

Finally, let the teacher always have something to say to his children that will interest them; this will go a long way to keep them attentive and in good order. A message fresh from God, well illustrated, and adapted to those who hear it, and poured forth from a heart and lips in communion with God, seldom fails to be listened to.



THE INFANT CLASS.

ONE of the most interesting departments of the work of a Sunday School, is the Infant Class. By using this term, we mean the very little children, generally those who are unable to read, or to read so as to keep pace with others older than themselves. It is a very rare thing to see a class of this description well managed and conducted, so as to maintain the attention of the children. Indeed in many Schools there is no such class at all. Many think it would be so much lost time, to spend an hour speaking to a dozen little children, full of volatility, and apparent listlessness. We think quite the opposite. We believe that a class of very young children may be, under God's blessing, one of the best and most fruitful classes in a Sunday School. We believe in the possibility of children being saved while very young. We believe that their infant minds can be made to understand the truth of God, and their young and tender hearts opened to receive it, at almost an incredibly early age, much earlier than most of us believe. It is with this in view that the Infant Class should be formed, and with

this object it should be conducted and taught. It is quite true, that in many Schools the younger classes are all but a failure, and from their ill-governed and unruly state, in most cases a source of annoyance. But this arises chiefly from the fact, that an unsuitable person is selected as the teacher, or that he has an unsuitable place for the proper management of his class. Anybody or everybody will not do for the teacher of an Infant Class. Indeed so far as we have been able to discern, there are comparatively few who seem to be well adapted to this particular work. It requires one with no ordinary amount of skill and patience; one who can make himself as one of themselves, and yet command their respect and obedience; and withal one having a love for children, and ability to keep them interested in the truth that he communicates to them.

In order to do all this effectively, there should be, wherever possible, a separate room for the class. It is simply impossible to give a number of little children that character of teaching that they require, crushed up in the midst of a dozen or more classes in a crowded room. Where a separate apartment cannot be had, the class may be held at a different hour in the same place as the others, and where even this cannot be conveniently done, there may be a certain measure of privacy secured, by having a corner of the room screened off from the rest. But a separate room is the only really practicable place for the proper management of an Infant Class.

The modes of communicating the truth of God to a class of very young children must necessarily differ from those adapted to classes of boys and girls who are able to read, and to intelligently follow the ordinary Bible subjects of the Scheme. As a rule, it is best to speak to them altogether:—that is, if the Infant class occupies a separate apartment. The seats should be comfortable, with backs, and arranged

on a sloping gallery, each seat rising behind another sufficiently, to allow all the children to *see* the teacher. This simple arrangement is a great convenience, and enables the teacher to have each child in the class under his eye, which in the teaching of an Infant class is a point of great importance. If the greater part of the children be unable to read, no books will be required, and, in that case, the teacher will be wholly dependent upon the *oral* and *illustrative* methods of communication. In telling the children Bible stories, and in seeking to instruct them in the great foundation truths of God's Word, it will be necessary to adapt them to their infant minds, and to use such words in describing them, as the youngest child in the class will not fail to understand. The language need not be babyish; it must not be vulgar: it ought to be simple. Young children are especially fond of *stories*, therefore the narrative form of communication should hold a prominent part. The types, the parables, and the biographies of the Bible, may here be largely made good use of. How often a class of little children, apparently in utter listlessness while their teacher was labouring to teach them the *doctrine* of substitution, have been suddenly called to listen with the utmost attention, and the keenest interest, by the teacher introducing as a word-picture, the story of Isaac bound to the altar on Mount Moriah to die, and the ram caught in the thicket dying in his stead. The *Black-board* may also be used to illustrate many Bible truths, which otherwise would not be intelligible to the infant mind. *Anecdotes*, when judiciously used, also help greatly to "make the message clear and plain," but they should be short, and to the point, and above all *true* to the letter. Anecdotes and stories should never be told unless they *illustrate* something; they are only *aids* to explain Bible truth, not *substitutes* for it. They should be simple,

appropriate, and obvious, calculated to carry—as the feather does the arrow—truth to the infant mind.

Pictures and objects hung on the wall may also be used with advantage, only it should be seen that they *do* illustrate and not obscure the truth the teacher desires to communicate. *Verses of Hymns* sung or repeated; *verses of Scripture*, in connection with the subject, repeated by the children, and *Questions*; all help to keep up the interest, and clinch the truth on their young minds. Above all, a proper teacher is essential to real success. One having ability and aptitude to teach, a loving heart to sympathize, and faith to lay hold on the living God, for the conversion of the little ones to whom he is the Lord's messenger, bearing the Lord's message.



THE SENIOR CLASS.

IT has been found one of the greatest difficulties in Sunday work to secure the continued attendance of boys and girls after they have reached a certain age.

At the very time, above all others, when the path of life is beset by manifold dangers, the Sunday School teacher finds himself deserted of those scholars over whom he is watching with a jealous eye. This is particularly the case with such as are still unconverted, whose parents may exercise no control over them, or who are not sufficiently interested in their spiritual welfare as to send them to their class. This is indeed a trying ordeal for the godly teacher, which he must in many cases be content to bear. We think, however, that if the classes for senior scholars were made more interesting than they generally are, the teaching adapted to their age and intelligence, and the whole surrounding of the class rendered attractive, by lawful and godly means, that some at least might be prevented from running away and plunging into indifference at this most critical period of life. It is by no means desirable to prescribe a rule for the conducting of such classes ; they differ so much in those who comprise them, but we would offer the following suggestions:— The senior class above all others should have a suitable teacher: one “in touch” with his scholars, having their confidence, and well able to teach and manage them. If possible, the class should be in a separate apartment, or at least in a part of the room as far removed as possible from the “infants” and “little children.” Boys and girls in their teens do not relish being huddled together with youngsters learning to read, and repeating three-word texts. The Gospel and the truth of God should be plainly, fully, and intelligently taught them, and pressed home on the heart and conscience.

THE YOUNG BELIEVERS' CLASS.

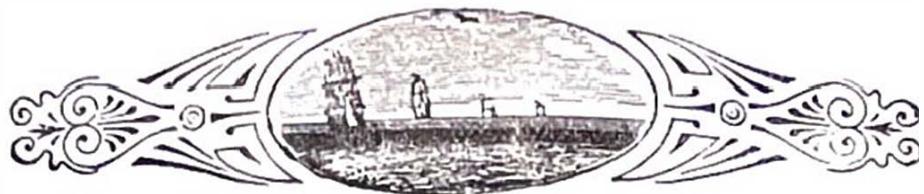
IT is to be expected, that in Sunday Schools where the Gospel of God's grace is being constantly and earnestly pressed home by a staff of godly workers, there will be a constant and steady ingathering of souls to Christ. Not always in large numbers, being awakened and converted within a few days, but more generally in the ordinary week by week plodding of the earnest watcher for souls. While we rejoice over their birth, and share with them their new-found joy, it is our privilege and responsibility to see that they are cared for, and fed as new-born babes in the family of God. It occurs to us, that in many cases this care is sadly lacking. Many who are ready enough to rejoice when sinners are being saved, do not seem to show the same activity in becoming "nursing mothers" (1 Thess. ii. 7, Greek) to those "new-born babes," or in setting themselves to "shepherd" (John xxi. 16) these lambs of Christ. For this very reason, God may not entrust us with the care of many of His little ones. He will honour those in being the instruments of leading them to Christ, who will addict themselves to minister to their needs afterwards. A young mother must be prepared to deny herself many indulgences, and give her attention to the infant that God has given her to nurse and tend. When a sinner is born again, and opens his eyes as a new-born babe in the family of God, his needs in one sense have been all supplied, but in another sense, they have only begun. At such a time the Lord would say to those to whom He has given the ability, and in whom there is the heart, "take this child away and nurse it for Me" (Ex. ii. 9), and He would have us carry the lambs in our bosoms, as He does Himself (Isa. xl. 11).

In every Sunday School there should be a form of

instruction suited to the requirements of such; in other words—a “Young Believers’ Class,” where truths such as they require should be expounded and taught, as they are able to hear them. They should have the Gospel in its fulness unfolded to them: such as we have it in the Epistle to the Romans; the believer’s heavenly calling and position in Christ, as taught in the Epistle to the Ephesians; the sacrifice, priesthood, and example of Christ, as presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the constitution, fellowship, worship, and ministry of the Church, as in the Epistles to the Corinthians;—in short, the whole range and scope of the faith as it was once delivered unto the saints, including the practical portions of the Word, giving the commandments of the Lord concerning domestic, ecclesiastical, and personal godliness. It is a great mistake to keep young believers always and forever at the Gospel, as if God had provided nothing else for them. Begin there, undoubtedly, and establish them well in the grace of God, but do not end there. Do not leave them to “find out” the footsteps of the flock for themselves. It is the work of a shepherd to lead his flock to the pastures, and to see that they get at them. The “Young Believers’ Class” in the Sunday School should partake of this character; it should be the “nursery” of the Assembly, out from which, in due time, young saints would naturally be led into fellowship with the people of God gathered unto His Name, and where they would receive their “training” as Sunday School teachers. We know such classes where every young believer, after having a few months’ instruction in the things of God, has gone forth to teach others, and to win them for Christ. It is needful, however, to have a fit and proper person to take the care of such a class.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL A NURSERY.

WHILE we must never lose sight of the fact, that the chief object of the Sunday School is to present the Gospel to the children, and to seek their early conversion to God, it is also true that the Sunday School partakes of the character of a nursery for the babes in Christ. Blessed be God, in every healthy Sunday School, there is a constant adding to the number of the saved. Boys and girls, some at a very early age, receive God's Gospel into their hearts, and become part of the household of faith. There is Divine life begotten in them, and it begins to manifest itself in various ways. Not perhaps in the same manner as in a full-grown man, especially one who has gone deeply into open sin. Nevertheless it is there, and those who have spiritual discernment, and who watch for the "blade" and the "ear" before the time of the "full corn" has come, will welcome the faintest pulse of this new life, and make it their business to cherish and to feed it. There should be provision made for this in every Sunday School. A class in which young believers, new-born babes in Christ, will receive the simplest and most elementary teaching suited to their necessities, watched over and guided by one who has the heart of a "nurse or nursing mother" (see 1 Thess. ii. 7) to cherish and care for them. From observation, we think there is often a lack of this nursery character in Sunday Schools: a lack of simple, solid, and attractive teaching, coupled with affectionate advice and loving counsel, and the consequence is, that a number who have been truly born again, slip through, and get lost sight of, whereas, had there been some care bestowed upon them, they might have grown up to become workers and helpers in that circle where they were brought to Christ. Let us then seek to make the Sunday School a nursery for babes.



SUNDAY SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

IN an age of reading like ours, it is well to supply our young folks with such books as will both interest and instruct them. Boys and girls will read something, and if they do not get sound and healthy literature put within their reach, the devil will see to it that their cravings are satisfied with that which is vile and hurtful. The people of God, and especially those who labour among and have the care of the young, ought to use every influence within their reach to prevent the minds of the children, whom God has committed to their care, from being polluted by reading the vile demoralising books and periodicals that teem in thousands from the press on every side, and find their way into the hands of our boys and girls in every rank of life. The most effectual way to do this, is to fill their hands with something better; to provide them with the use of books of a healthy, sound, and scriptural character, that they could take with them to their homes and read in their spare hours. Many of the children who attend our Sunday Schools have no such books at home. Their parents do not possess them. The weekly newspaper, or the trashy novel with its sensational stories and romances, reeking with crime and immorality, and every sensual and devilish thing, is the only "library" they have access to. Many of them would willingly read other books if they had them, and so would their parents. It is by no means a difficult thing to procure such books, and to have them accessible

to the children who attend our Sunday Schools. It can be set agoing very simply, and without much expense, for example, in the following manner:—Get a simple case with shelves, like a cupboard, to hold the books, and a suitable person to act as “librarian.” If any of the teachers have spare books, let them make a beginning by presenting them, or, if they have not, a small purchase will do as well. Then invite the saints to do likewise. Fix a night in which those presenting books could bring them; or if a “collection” be agreed on, then suitable books could be bought by the superintendent and teachers. They need not be expensive. They ought to be attractive, and, above all, *sound to the core*. Novels, secular or sacred, should have no place. Good stirring Gospel stories, biographies of earnest Christian men and women, lives and labours of missionaries in other lands, and books on Bible countries, suitable for children of various ages and conditions. Have a list of the books and their numbers. When a book is given out, let the name and address of scholar, number of book and date, be noted; a week, a fortnight, or a month, as may be thought best, allowed for reading, and a time fixed and duly intimated for changing books. If the books are covered with a plain durable cover they will stand longer, and those receiving them should be exhorted to keep them clean, and in most cases this will be done. By this simple means, many of our dear scholars, and those in their homes, may have the Gospel presented to them; halting ones be brought to Christ, backsliding ones restored, and the lambs of the flock encouraged and led on in the ways of the Lord.

VISITING THE CHILDREN.

NOT only in case of sickness, or absence from their classes, but at ordinary times it is well to pay the children a visit at their homes, in every case where this is possible. The children themselves will be delighted, and in many cases, so will the parents. Some who have little care for their own souls are nevertheless glad when some one takes an interest in the souls of their offspring. To secure the parents' confidence, even should they be unconverted is an all-important matter, and a personal visit will go a very long way to bring this about. We have known cases, where, previous to such a visit, the parents showed little or no interest in their children coming to school, but ever after, the teacher had their warmest sympathy: the children were there in time, with their texts and verses committed to memory, all owing to the enlisted co-operation of the parents at home. Then there is often an opportunity for speaking a plain and pointed word to the parents themselves on the Gospel, and for inviting them to come and hear it preached.

In larger schools there are one or two who give themselves specially to the work of visitation, and who accompany the teacher when a visit is made to the home of any of his scholars.

In the case of any of the scholars being ill, the other children in the class should be told by the teacher the cause of absence, and the sick one specially remembered in prayer. Where there is no one specially undertaking the work of visitation, it would be well for two of the teachers to visit together. In this work "two are better than one," and the fellowship of a co-worker is seasonable. Where the homes of the children are not accessible, an invitation to come and see the teacher, or in case of sickness, a little remembrance sent by post, will, in some measure supply the lack.

NEW METHODS.

WE live in wonderfully active times. Everything goes at tremendous speed. Commercial, political, and even social business, must all be transacted in the shortest and most expeditious way.

Old methods must give place to new: the customs of our fathers do not suit the times. Even in religious matters the changes are manifest. The old creeds, the traditions of by-gone centuries, will not do for the professedly more enlightened and advanced age in which we live. So men say, and they are suiting the action to the word, by discarding them one after another. Something approaching a revolution is abroad in the religious world, not only in its theology, but in its methods and style of work as well. The old is rapidly passing away; the ancient order of things will soon be reckoned among "the things that are not." But, what is being put in its place? If the old is being given up, of what character is the new that supplants it? These are the questions that flit across the mind, as we see year by year the rise of some new religious system of worship or work on the ruins of the old, proclaiming its superiority, and urging its claims among men. We do not find fault with the demolition of ancient methods. If they are not of God, the sooner they are demolished the better, but we want to make sure that we get something that *is* of God in their stead. We are not only to "cease to do evil," but we are also to "learn to do well," otherwise we may give up one evil only to fall into a greater. We cannot help thinking there has been a good deal of this in recent years in Sunday School work. What advances have been made! What a revision of matter, mode and manner since our early days! What a gigantic affair it has grown into! How attractive from what it once was! The old-fashioned hum-drum

thing we formerly called the Sunday School, with its long "Bible Lesson," its "Memory Texts," its "Proofs and Parallel Passages" finds no place in the "advanced" department of the religious world now: it is far behind the times. But what have they got instead? Is there more of God in it? Do the Holy Scriptures find a larger place in the new system? Are the children converted to God in greater numbers? Are they more familiar with the things of God than those of earlier times? These questions must be answered in the negative by those who narrowly watch the course of events in Sunday School work. There has not been a spiritual advantage by the many changes. Exactly the reverse, as we think. The introduction of music, recitations, and a whole list of buffoonery of more objectionable kinds, has attracted the crowd, and driven out God. Even in places where better things might have been expected, there has been a return in measure to these miserable expedients. Only the other day, a programme was sent us, in connection with a Sunday School treat, conducted by believers professedly gathered unto the name of the Lord, in which there were parts to be played, that would have better suited a concert or a pantomime, yet all this was to be done in the name of the Lord, and under the pretence of imparting *spiritual* instruction to the children. Let us be on our guard, and resist the attempt of the devil to thus stamp out the work of God in the circle of the Sunday School. We may be old-fashioned; far behind the times, and subject to many other infirmities, in the eyes of the "advance" column who are itching for "the leeks and the garlick," but nevertheless, let us cleave to a living God and to the Word of His grace, imparting to those who hear us, what He has taught and blessed to ourselves, in His own way, and in faith that He will use it to others.

LIBERTY IN THE USE OF METHODS.

IT has always been the case, that those who do no work themselves, are the readiest to prescribe what ought to be done by others. This will be so in every department of Christian work. We have noticed it particularly in work amongst the young. Here, there is a special line of service, for which God gives special gift and grace to those whom He calls to serve therein. It is not given to *all* to actively serve in this particular circle. The needed qualifications and necessary tact, are not the lot of every believer. That these are essential, over and above the moral condition common to all who serve the Lord Jesus Christ, few will deny. A love for children, and ability to adapt oneself to them in the presentation of the truth, are just as indispensable as having the truth itself to teach. In the exercise of this ministry, the Lord's servant must seek the channels and modes of instruction most suited to those to whom he seeks to minister, according to the wisdom God bestows. He will not be hampered by conventional forms ; he will not be fettered by hard-and-fast lines of action ; he will seek the nearest and most direct way of access to the mind, the conscience, and the heart of his hearers. Nor ought he to be in anywise interfered with, in thus fulfilling the ministry he has received in the Lord. He is the servant of the Lord, and not of men. He has to study to please his Master : not his brethren. Unless it be, that he departs from the plainly-revealed will of God, and transgresses the distinctly-written commandments of the Lord, his fellow-saints have no right to interfere with him. But this is just where some are apt to err. They would dictate to the Lord's servants, and impose a yoke upon them, which the Lord has not imposed. They would

legislate in matters on which the Lord has given no commandment, but left his servant free to exercise his own judgment, according to the circumstances in which he finds himself. Take, for example, a class of infant children. Some would forbid the use of a blackboard, a picture, or an object, as aids to secure the attention of the children, and to assist the teacher to elucidate the subject. They seriously consider such things to be a departure from the faith, and a return to the "beggarly elements" of the world. They characterize the employment of such methods as "a want of faith in the simple Gospel of the grace of God" to convert the children, and as "a substitute for the Holy Ghost." But is this a fair and honest representation of the facts of the case? In our small experience, we are happy to say, we have never come across anything of the kind, although we happen to know a number of esteemed brethren in Christ, and honoured servants of the Lord, who use these very methods, with constant tokens of the Lord's approval and blessing. That there may often be a misuse of such things we do not question: that some have sadly abused them we frankly admit. Certainly the tendency of the times is to turn away from solid scriptural teaching, to frivolous novelties. These things we need constantly and earnestly to guard against. Nevertheless, we claim for our brethren in Christ, whom God has called to this particular service, that they have liberty to use, if they see fit, such means as we have mentioned, without being molested, or upbraided as in defection from the faith, by those who themselves seem not to have been called or qualified by God, to share in this important service. On all matters on which God has spoken in His Word, let there be obedience to the very letter; but where an all-wise God has left His servant at liberty, let none attempt to legislate.

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