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# Pro and Con, A Complete Investigation of the Sunday School Question Viewed from a Bible Standpoint

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# PRO AND CON

A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF THE SUN-  
DAY SCHOOL QUESTION VIEWED FROM  
A BIBLE STANDPOINT.

BY

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## PREFACE.

Shall we teach the word of God, as we have opportunity, to both old and young? The only consistent answer a Christian can make is an emphatic—Yes! If there is a need that appeals in thunder tones to the heart and conscience of every child of God it is the necessity of constant, persistent, insistent and systematic effort to implant the precious seed of the kingdom in the minds and hearts of men. It is a gross libel upon any Christian to say that he opposes the teaching of the Bible to man, woman or child, upon the Lord's day or any other day of the week. Since the time when Jesus commanded his apostles to "go, teach all nations," it has been looked upon as not merely a duty, but as one of the highest privileges of the sons of God, to break the bread of life to every hungry, sin-sick soul. As I understand the attitude of the church upon this matter, there is absolutely no conflict (or even difference) of opinion as to the legality, expediency or necessity of diligently improving every opportunity to teach the Bible to our fellow men of every age, sex and condition in life.

The dispute arises at a very different point, and the cry that some oppose teaching the children is only dust raised to obscure the real issue, and we stand upon the one side or the other of that issue precisely as we align ourselves upon either side of the proposition: "*The Scriptures thoroughly furnish the man of God for this, as well as for every other good work.*" When I say "thoroughly furnish," I mean to include the ones who are to teach, the ones to be taught, the subject matter and the methods of teaching. We all profess to accept the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice, and however feeble or far-fetched may be the arguments of those who essay the task of defending the Sunday school and its methods, the very fact that they endeavor to array the Scriptures upon their side commits them, irrevocably, to the arbitrament of the divine rule and is in itself an avowal of the salient truth that we must find authority in God's word for the practices of the Sunday school or abandon them. It would be worse than futile—it would be stultifying—for them to deny this after laboring so hard, albeit so vainly, to show that the scriptures authorize those methods by precept, example or necessary inference.

God forbid that any one should oppose, in even the slightest degree, any effort to teach God's word so long as the plain teachings of the Bible are followed and the limitations of its precepts and examples respected. May God also forbid that any watchman upon the walls of Zion shall become guilty of the blood of God's people by failing to sound a warning when he sees their zeal outrunning their knowledge and causing them to

contemn and disregard the precepts and examples given by the Holy Spirit for their guidance. I have been severely criticised by some (perhaps justly) for opposing existing practices without pointing out a more excellent and scriptural way. In this little tract I shall endeavor to atone for the errors of my former one, either in this respect or in any undue levity, such as has been alleged against my review of Brother Ledlow's tract. The assertions, assumptions, perversions and arguments of that remarkable document were so flagrantly, amazingly and ridiculously illogical—coming, as it did, from men, of such high reputation—that it was hard for me to either think or write of it in a serious way. The humorous character of my review seemed to irritate its authors beyond measure and elicited from them nothing but personal abuse and opprobrious epithets. The style of my review was, perhaps, a mistake and I promise that this pamphlet shall be free from any such blemish. I consider it a most remarkable thing, however, that no opponent of my tract has ever had the courage or fairness to quote a single sentence of it (so far as I know) and endeavored to show that it is was the idiotic and illogical monstrosity they proclaimed it to be.

Instead of doing this they confined themselves wholly to sneers and vituperation directed at both the pamphlet and its author.

Am I wrong in concluding from this that they realized that my criticisms were unassailable? I trust that my acknowledgment of a possibility of error in my former style of exposing their sophistry and the impersonal manner in which I am determined now to investigate the subject may produce in them a change of heart and tactics and prompt them either to refute my arguments logically and scripturally, or else frankly admit them to be true. I lay down the following proposition as the only true basis of union upon the Sunday school question.

*The word of God is an all-sufficient guide in the work of teaching both old and young, and in order for our work along this line to meet the approval of God it must conform to the precepts and examples given in the Bible.*

G. A. T.

CHAPTER ONE.  
*The Law of Limitation.*

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

I do not mean to assert that God has formulated a ritual prescribing every step in the process of teaching with the exactness of a railway schedule, allowing for no variation of methods in any degree or under any circumstances, but I do declare upon the authority of the above passage that God has, by precept and example, set certain metes and bounds in this matter beyond which we dare not go, lest we bring upon ourselves the awful consequences of presumption. And let us bear in mind that we may be presumptuous, even when our intentions are of the best. Such seems to have been the case with Uzza and with Nadab and Abihu, whose history we may study, prayerfully, with profit to ourselves.

Zeal, unbridled by knowledge, is a dangerous thing and has brought many into condemnation whose *intentions* were above reproach.

The spread of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, is certainly a praiseworthy and godly work, and yet it was this very desire that led the overzealous to organize missionary societies. Really, has any argument ever been put forward in behalf of the Sunday school which could not be used with equal force in favor of missionary societies? I believe it is almost universally admitted that Christian parents can fulfill every obligation to their own children in the way of religious instruction if they teach them daily at home, and take them with them to preaching and to worship. At this point, however, we are reminded that we are under an obligation to our neighbors' children which we can only discharge by the aid of a Sunday school. This lets the cat out of the bag, and discloses the true inwardness, and exact status of the Sunday school. It is a missionary society for the children which differs no whit from the organized missionary organizations for the grown ups. The laudable wish to improve the song service led brethren to ignore divine precept and example and introduce instrumental music as an “aid.” Indeed the history of the church will abundantly show that almost all innovations have sprung from the fruitful soil of good intentions, and been warmed into life by the sunshine of a zeal that disregarded the boundaries of divine authority.

My faith in the wisdom and foresight of God, and the perfection of his inspired word is so absolute that I cannot conceive of, or credit, such a laxity upon his part, concerning the all-important work of teaching as to call for the exercise of human ingenuity to supply the deficiency of revelation. Of one thing,

at least, we may be perfectly sure; God will never hold *us* responsible for any omissions of *His own* nor for the consequences of such, but on the other hand we have abundant proof that He has always resented and punished every attempt of man to go beyond the limits He has set, or to graft human inventions upon the institutions He has ordained. Is teaching God's word a good work? If so, the Scriptures thoroughly furnish us thereto (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) and I insist that this applies not only to the things taught, but to the methods employed as well. This principle does not bind us down to the monotonous treadmill of a changeless ritual but it does designate for us the boundary lines beyond which we may not go with impunity. Within these, however, we may exercise and enjoy all the variety we wish. While I believe profoundly and contend earnestly for constant and systematic efforts to teach both old and young, I cannot, conscientiously subscribe to such broad and unqualified assertions as the following from Brother Ledlow: "You may teach at any time, at any place, in any way and to anybody." I wonder if Brother Ledlow gave that a moment's thought before he penned it? Solomon says, "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Ecl. 3:17). Therefore, I conclude Brother Ledlow's statement as to the time for teaching needs modifying, and I find that the apostle Paul has taught us that one time for us to be silent is when some one else is teaching in the same assembly (1 Cor. 14:26-31). I do not believe Brother Ledlow will accept his own rule, that we may teach "in any way" without such qualifications as will practically take all meaning out of his words. "*In any way*" would embrace all the methods of the "modern" Sunday school which he professes to condemn, all the foolishness of sectarianism and would sanction teaching by theatricals and in many other ways which I am sure Brother Ledlow would not endorse. Those who write for the edification of others should be more guarded in their expressions, for such assertions as the one above may do untold harm. Scripturally speaking, we may teach "at any time" when it will not cause confusion or interfere with the instructions of other teachers; "at any place" where the surroundings are not utterly incongruous (such as a political meeting, prize fight, etc.) "in any way" that God's people were ever taught by prophets, apostles or by the Saviour, and "any body" willing to receive instructions. Without these modifications I should unhesitatingly reject Brother Ledlow's statement as misleading and dangerous, but with these restrictions, I can heartily agree with the most ardent Sunday school advocate, for I yield the palm to none in fervent desire for the instruction of the old, the middle aged and the young in the word of the Lord in every scriptural time, way and place. Let us teach every one we can, at every opportunity, and in every way for which we have precept or example, and I am sure we will win the Lord's approval.

## CHAPTER TWO.

### *The Overseers.*

“Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

This is a very solemn charge and worthy of careful consideration. It is generally conceded that the bishops of each congregation are its only divinely authorized overseers and that they must supervise and direct all its activities whether in teaching or other work. Furthermore, I am sure that even my opponents will agree that it is high-handed rebellion against God for any person, congregation—or even the entire body of Christ, for that matter—to diminish the scope of the bishops’ jurisdiction or to attempt to place any one in authority over them in any capacity whatever. Nevertheless, in churches all over the land, we see the oversight of the most important work in which Christians can engage—teaching the Scriptures—delegated (at least so far as the selection of lessons is concerned) to a committee of sectarians who arrogate to themselves the right to dictate, not only to the whole sectarian world, but to the church of the living God as well, what subjects shall be taught each and every Lord’s day in the year, thus usurping one of the highest and most sacred functions of the local bishops. Can anyone imagine a longer step away from the simplicity of the gospel or a more open disregard for Christ’s authority over the church? I call on the true elders everywhere to heed well the solemn injunction which heads this chapter, to assert and contend for their God-given authority and to stand fast against this innovation which not only seeks to rob them of the honor and authority bestowed upon them by the Lord, but is liable to bring upon them his just condemnation as unfaithful stewards, and betrayers of the trust reposed in them by the great head of the church. It has been argued, however, that if the elders endorse these selections by using the literature, this very action makes the subjects their own choice and thus they have lost no portion of their functions as overseers. This is surely the limit for bare faced sophistry. Now, if these subjects were first submitted to the elders of each congregation, and unanimously endorsed by them all (a manifest impossibility) there might be some show of force in such reasoning. But such is not the case, as everyone knows. The plain fact of the matter is, that the elders subscribe for the literature in absolute ignorance of what parts of the Scripture will be selected, and thus abdicate in favor of that sectarian committee, resigning blindly to them this portion of the work committed expressly by the Holy Spirit to the bishops of each congregation. I ask all such how they expect to square this matter with the Lord who commissioned them and what



account they will give to Him of their stewardship in the last great day?

Some admit the gravity of this situation and say our lessons should be selected by a committee of brethren; indeed, I think some abortive efforts have been made to have this done, so that we, might have a Sunday school literature entirely our own. This, if successful, might alter the offenses in degree, but not in kind, for as surely as Christ is head over all things to the church and the bishops are his divinely appointed overseers, just so surely the latter cannot surrender any part of their prerogatives without rejecting the rule of the former and raising the flag of rebellion against Him. Men have precisely the same right to appoint a pope to rule over the church in *all* things as they have to select a committee to exercise authority over it in *one* thing. The one is no less a device of the devil than the other, and we deprive ourselves of all moral right to oppose the delegation of authority to a missionary society to send out preachers, when we ourselves become guilty of the self same offense by conferring a similar power to a committee engaged in the work of overseeing the teaching of children. The principles of teaching do not vary with the age of the students and any method which is defensible for the teaching of children is equally justifiable for instructing those of a mature age. Therefore, if it is right, in principle, to have a committee of sectarians to select subjects for our children's edification, it would be equally right for that same committee to choose subjects for all of our preachers throughout the world; if not, will some one please give us a reason why not? No valid objection can be made to the one which will not apply with equal force to the other; and no man who regards the truth can say the one would be right and the other wrong.

But you say, "Though sectarians select the subjects, our own brethren make the comments, and this is done by our best Bible scholars—men who know far more about the word of God than a majority of the elders." Well, isn't it equally true that if the international committee selected the sermons, our own preachers would do the preaching? And since many of our preachers are as inferior in knowledge to the authors of our Sunday school literature as are the average elders, why not have brethren McQuiddy, Elam and a few others arrange the outlines of all the sermons received from the central committee before sending them out for the preachers to deliver? As once remarked, what is sauce for the Sunday school goose ought to be equally good for the evangelistic gander. I admit the inelegance of the expression, but its meaning is easy to grasp, and above all it is *true*.

I am sure, under such an arrangement as the above, a great deal of our preaching would be vastly improved from a literary standpoint at least. Will not you, who advocate these methods,

for teaching our children, give us your objections to their application in preaching to adults?

I long to see the church of Christ standing as one man upon the platform proclaimed by Paul: "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do" (Phil. 4:9). We can never arrive at this blessed state of unity until we both give and demand precept or example from the New Testament for our every practice. This whole effort to set lords over God's heritage, by placing above the heaven ordained bishops of the church, men whom we deem greater in knowledge and ability is an attempt to place the wisdom and learning of men, above the wisdom of God, and must eventually result in disaster to the cause of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and in the condemnation of those who engage in it.

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### CHAPTER THREE.

#### "A Thus Saith The Lord."

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

• The very best prima facie evidence that there is no apostolic authority for the Sunday school is, that its advocates cannot agree themselves as to whether the thing belongs, inside or outside of the church. The abyssmal silence of the Scriptures upon any kind of a Sunday school leaves them all at sea, and has them guessing and contradicting one another as to just where that institution is located. They ought to hold a convention and decide this matter among themselves before asking us to swallow their unsupported assertions as to what constitutes a scriptural (?) Sunday school. All seem to be of one mind and one judgment when it comes to denouncing that vague and mystical something which they are pleased to denominate the "modern Sunday school" (though they have never even attempted to define it) in terms of seathing censure, and unite in assuring us that they have no defense to offer for it, but they are all as dumb as a peck of clams or an Egyptian mummy when it comes to producing a description of the *ancient* Sunday school, founded upon apostolic precept and example, and regulated and governed by the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

I do not go beyond the record in demanding this of them, nor can they evade the obligation upon them to produce a "thus saith the Lord" for their practice, for in their notable (and notorious) defense of the Sunday school, written by ten of their strongest men, they admit the necessity, and voluntarily assume the task of producing just this evidence, although they utterly fail in their effort to do so. Brother T. W. Phillips says on page 26, first paragraph, "Where the Bible speaks, we should speak, and

where it is silent, we should be. Plain statements, precepts and examples should guide us, and the spirit of love control." This plainly confesses that the onus of proof rests upon them. Now let them relieve themselves of it by giving us a description of the Sunday school as set forth by "plain statements" of the apostles; governed by the "precepts" given by them for its guidance, and illustrated by the "examples" recorded in the New Testament, and it sufficeth us. Having thus acknowledged their obligation to do this, they can never satisfy or unify the brethren upon this matter until they *do* it. If any such institution is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets its defenders ought certainly to be able to agree upon the initial and vital question as to whether the Sunday school is any part of the church or not, yet we find them as far apart as the poles at this very first step, with not a shred of Scripture to enable them to decide the matter and get together. Brother W. K. Rose calls the Sunday school "the church at work" and Brother T. W. Phillips says, "I would be ashamed of myself to offer any defense of the modern Sunday school, which is a separate organization from the church." But Brother A. McGary, equally earnest in contending for the Sunday school, says, "It is no more a part of the church, or the church at work, than an Odd Fellow's Lodge or any other fraternal order." Thus we find the house of the S. S. champions divided against itself and who may determine which faction of them is correct? The "separate organization from the church" which Brother McGary contends for as the only ancient and scriptural institution, Brother Phillips condemns in unqualified terms as the "modern Sunday school" whose defense would be a shame to him. Brethren, these views are diametrically opposite, and you cannot expect the church of God to follow you while traveling in contrary directions. Please get this matter settled and then tell us by what scripture you settled it—chapter and verse, please? If you will all agree to follow Brother Phillip's advice, "Where the Bible speaks we should speak, and where it is silent we should be," the contention and wrangling over the Sunday school (ancient or modern) will be forever settled in eternal silence, for no man has ever found any kind of a Sunday school mentioned in the word of God. How did it ever happen that the apostles, having written twenty-one letters to the church, were so blind to the necessities of the "nursery of the church" that they never wrote so much as a sentence to the Sunday school? Paul's epistle to the Sunday school at Jerusalem would certainly be of great assistance to the hard pressed followers of Robert Raikes. Alas! Paul instructed Timothy how to behave himself in the church of God, but who shall tell us how we ought to behave in the Sunday school? Had Brother Ledlow and his co-editors acted upon the suggestion of Brother

Phillips by seeking for "plain statements, precepts and examples" in Holy Writ, the so-called Sunday school tract would never have been written and the necessity for this one might never have arisen. Those writers seemed to have the idea that a constant reiteration of the slogan "Where the Bible speaks we should speak," would so confuse a few of the unthinking ones that they would fail to note how complete was the absence of a "thus saith the Lord" in their plea. But the great mass of the brethren are a thinking, reasoning people, and this great din about "plain statements, precepts and examples," where none are forthcoming, will only impress upon them the more forcibly the absolute silence of the Scriptures and causes them to "stop look, and listen" all the more carefully before following the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of the blind guides who would lead them into the ditch.

All I ask of those desiring to walk in the Lord's way is to take these Sunday school champions at their word, demanding of them "plain statements, precepts and examples" instead of far fetched inferences, sanctified common sense, and sophistical unreason. I protest that it is no injustice to any man to require of him the kind of proof which he himself declares necessary to the establishment of his contention, and that such declarations should not be shirked or evaded by those who make them. I here and now demand of them "plain statements, precepts and examples" from the Bible for the institution which divides students of God's word into separate classes in the same room; has several teachers instructing them at the same time, in hearing of one another; women acting as public teachers for some of these classes; lessons selected by a sectarian committee, and using text books published by a few brethren at Nashville or elsewhere, commonly known as Sunday school literature.

Here is the issue brethren, step up and meet it like men, or forever hold your peace.

#### CHAPTER FOUR.

##### *Class Teaching.*

"For ye may all prophesy (teach) one by one that all may learn" (1 Cor. 14:31). I have yet to find, in the Bible, the first instance of a number of teachers instructing separate classes, in the same room, at the same time, or in sight and hearing of one another. Such a procedure is a plain violation of the "precepts" given by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 14:23-33) and of the "plain statements" and "examples" of the entire Bible. Not at any place, nor in any age, did God ever authorize such a thing, for he is not the author of confusion. Brother Phillips says, "Only one person should instruct or teach a class at a time."

Issue

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Two teachers speaking to one class at the same time would bring confusion." This comes pretty near to "'fessing up," and having admitted this much, I cannot, for my life, see why our good brother will not be consistent and acknowledge the equally self-evident fact that two teachers teaching two different classes, divided only by an imaginary line or by a church aisle, will also cause confusion.

I have often seen pupils in one class listening to a teacher or pupil of another class, and I am sure Brother Phillips must have observed the same thing, as it is quite customary in Sunday schools. It is contrary to all ideas of order and system, and we never see such a foolish practice in any other institution of learning. Of course, I have been gravely assured, (just as you have been, dear reader) by brethren who showed every symptom of believing their own statement, that the Sunday school class method is the same as that pursued by secular schools and week-day Bible schools. To this assertion I oppose two objections: First. It isn't so. Second. If it were so, it is, on the face of it, an acknowledgment that the Sunday school is built after an uninspired pattern, and not upon the precepts and examples of the Bible.

I am quite gray, pretty bald, near-sighted in my ears and fast losing my teeth, yet I must say I have never seen this ridiculous sight anywhere outside of a Sunday school. I have never seen any other institution of learning have all, or even two or three classes reciting to different teachers, in the same room, at the same time. I have never known a school teacher so devoid of sense as to undertake so silly a thing, or school patrons who would allow such a system to be imposed upon them. The Sunday school has simply become a religious fashion. Started by Robert Raikes as a purely secular enterprise, it was adopted by the sectarians and remodeled into a religious organization, and has come to us as one of those sectarian customs to which we have been so long habituated that it seems to have become almost as dear to the hearts of some as the church itself, and its dupes have become as blind to its unscriptural absurdities, as others have to those of the mourner's bench and many similar irrational things practiced in the name of religion, which have as little scriptural authority for their existence as the Sunday school. We can come as near finding precept and example for the one as the other.

Brother Rose says, "If you would see a typical home of an ancient Israelite, you should read the word of God on the posts of the house, on the gate, on the hand and frontlet of the inmates. Besides this God commanded them to teach their children His commandments diligently sitting in the house, or walking in the way, each night and morning." Has Brother Rose arisen to tell us that he has tried all these ways, which the Lord devised, and found them a failure, that he must needs

forsake them and invent a Sunday school to accomplish the Lord's purpose more effectually? "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). Think not ill of me, brethren, because I have more confidence in the Lord's way of teaching than in the new discoveries of men, even though the way of the Lord may appear less modern and popular, and though the men advocating these newer devices be as wise and pious as Brother Ledlow and his coadjutors. Whenever God's methods are weighed in the balances and found wanting, I am sure it is the balance which is at fault. I freely admit the sincerity, piety and zeal of my brethren who have erected this modern "pillar and ground of the truth," and their superiority to myself in many ways, but I cannot bring myself to admit that they are wiser than the Almighty. The trouble seems to be that many are unable to grasp the great truth that God's word is quite a different sort of text book from any that man's wisdom has ever produced and that it has been so constructed by the omniscience of Jehovah as to be perfectly adapted to persons of every age and degree of intelligence, without manipulation, so that each one can imbibe his share of mental and spiritual nourishment from the same book, and even from the same portions of that book. In fact it is often the case that children grasp ideas from a gospel sermon or from the reading of the Scriptures which maturer and wiser minds fail to catch. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25, 26). I admit the necessity of grading the students of human sciences and agree that in the study of mathematics, astronomy or grammar it would be foolish to give the same lessons to all pupils, and should I ever become convinced that the Bible, God's own text book, stands merely on an equality with human text books, then will I heartily consent to the necessity of following the same methods of instruction employed with them and will no longer oppose the class method. This then is the first great work for your hands, brethren. Lay the foundation for your humanly devised system by showing that God's word ranks only with Smith's grammar when viewed in the light of a text book. But who will essay this task? The Jews taught their children at home and took them with them to the synagogue and temple, where they heard the law read and the teaching of the rabbis; Jesus went with his parents to worship in like manner; the multitudes carried their children with them when they went to hear the Saviour, and all through the apostolic age, and for many years thereafter the teaching was done to undivided assemblies of young and old, and although twenty-one letters were addressed to the church not one was ever written to the Sunday school.

All of these are indisputable facts and ought to teach us that God, in his infinite wisdom, has given us a text book so far beyond all the products of the human mind that we do not have to follow humanly devised methods to convey its grand lessons to the old or the young. My plea is for a return to the good, old way which recognizes the superiority of God over man as a teacher of divine things, and of his methods over our inventions in all that pertains to the carrying out of his will. "Oh, for a closer walk with God," and a more humble following of Christ, our leader and commander, and less confidence in our own devices. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

## CHAPTER FIVE.

### *Women as Teachers.*

Whatever methods are best for teaching children are also best for adults, hence we find consistency in the practice of secular schools, which divide all pupils into classes according to knowledge and ability, irrespective of age, and this applies in the college, where the students are of mature age, as well as in the kindergarten among the infants. But we do not find this consistency among those who contend for the Sunday school, for they divide the pupils into a number of classes at 10 a. m. with a separate teacher for each class (some of whom may be sisters); and then at 11 a. m., with perhaps no change whatever in the audience, the teaching begins all over again, by a single teacher (preacher) addressing an undivided assembly containing those of all ages, and I assure you hands of holy horror would be raised if the teacher at this service should be a woman, though this second teaching is no more public than the first. These two services occur in the same room, at an interval of only a few minutes and often with identically the same persons present. Does this look logical or even sensible? If we really believe people can be better taught the word of God by thus dividing them into little squads, under separate instructors, and believe it to be authorized by precept or example of the Scriptures, and that the women have the sanction of God's word for thus teaching publicly, then, in consistency's name, let us do all of our preaching that way, to the old as well as to the young.

My! what a howl we would hear from these very brethren who now accuse me of being ignorant, hide-bound and a hobby-rider because I oppose their Sunday school. After all, can anyone tell us the difference between the tweedledum of a sister teaching an undivided public assembly, and the tweedledee of that same sister teaching a fractional part of that same assembly in the same house and with the same surroundings? If anybody can, I wish they would. I have always contended—and have

never yet heard it denied—that there are as many degrees of intelligence and knowledge in an average adult audience as will be found among the same number of children. This being the case, why should the manner of teaching differ? One of the most mentally straining occupations I know of, is guessing what plea can possibly be put forward for the Sunday school innovation that has not already been worn threadbare in defense of other innovations introduced by those we are accustomed to call digressives. Take the arguments advanced by the missionary society, for instance, and compare them with the ones now being made for the Sunday school. You will begin by wondering at the familiar sound they have, and end in utter astonishment at finding them identically the same. As to the sisters who teach in the Sunday schools, I realize that they are serenely unconscious of their rebellion against God, and I pray that He may bless them for their zeal and forgive the elders who permit or persuade them thus to violate His express commands. I have never heard anyone claim that the Sunday school is a private gathering, and if such a claim were made the facts would contradict it. Being a public assembly, the Scriptures are emphatic in prohibiting women from teaching in them. Should anyone seriously claim that the Sunday school is not a public assembly, it would devolve upon him to explain just how it can change from a private convocation to a public assembly in the twinkling of an eye, without any necessary change either in the surroundings or the persons constituting it? All know that the Sunday school is as wide open to all comers as the church and if the Sunday school is, indeed, the “church at work,” as a majority of its defenders claim, then the women who teach in it are teaching in the church, the very thing Paul expressly forbids them to do. The pitiable efforts made to evade the force of this divine restriction are pathetic in the extreme—or supremely ridiculous—according to the point of view from which one looks at them. Brother Phillips says, “But we are referred to 1 Cor. 14:34, and informed that the sisters must keep silent in the churches. Yes, but do they keep silent when they sing? Do we not teach by song? When Paul wrote the Corinthian letter the perfect law of liberty had not been completed or fully made known and God was making it known through inspired men, not women. Therefore, the women were not allowed to speak *in authority* [all caps mine, G. A. T.] in the churches.” Who says so? Why, Brother Phillips, of course, and in saying it, he does violence to the word of God. If we find that, as a matter of revealed fact, there were inspired women, as well as men, in the days of the apostles, what then becomes of this profound morsel of inferential reasoning by Brother Phillips? Well, unfortunately for this smooth and plausible effort of our brother, we do find inspired women in every age of the world and the days of the apostles is no exception. So Broth-



er Phillips has lost out at this point and will have to start all over to hunt up some new way of evading Paul's command. Miriam, Deborah and Hulda were prophetesses of old, Anna was one, when Christ was a babe, and unless God failed to fulfill his promise that when His Spirit was poured out it should inspire both men and women (Acts 2:17, 18) we must believe there were inspired women (as well as men) at the very time Paul was writing. Ah, yes! here they are in Acts 21:9. Any one in the guessing business—as Brother Phillips seems to be—would make a better guess by saying that if there were any exception to Paul's rule it would be those inspired women, and that all others must keep silent in the public assembly of the church. But as we are not in the guessing business, but simply seeking for the plain way of the Lord, suppose we just let it stand, as Paul wrote it, without any exceptions whatever.

Brother Phillips further says, "The women cannot fill the pulpit or hold offices, as elders and deacons, by the authority of God. But they did teach in the days of the apostles, then why not now? Though they should not usurp authority over the man." Unfortunately for this nice, smooth specimen of rhetoric, Paul's use of the conjunction "nor" knocks it all into atoms. When Paul said, "I suffer not a woman to teach—*nor*—to usurp authority over the man" he settled it for all time that she was to do neither the one thing nor the other, jointly or separately. She was not to teach, Brother Phillips, and neither was she to usurp authority over the man, and whoever releases her from the one prohibition, thereby frees her from the other. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." That Paul's prohibition applied to public teaching is made clear, not only by the language itself, but by the recorded fact that women did teach *in private*, with apostolic approval, and by apostolic command. Yes, Brother Phillips, women have the same right to teach now that they had then and in the same way, viz—*in private*. A digressive friend of mine once said, "I don't deny that Paul taught just as you say, in regard to women teaching or preaching in public, but I have seen so much good come from women's work that I am willing to take the responsibility for ignoring that Scripture." I must confess that I have more respect for the blunt honesty of that man's avowal than I have for the evasions and perversions we have just been examining. I would rather see a man reject God's word utterly than to see him pervert it or handle it deceitfully, in order to evade its restrictions. As to that old dodge about women not being silent when they sing, its puerility and absolute silliness ought to obviate any necessity for noticing it. It is a matter of common knowledge that while we both teach and speak in singing, it is an entirely different thing from the act which the mind at once conceives when we use these words

in their ordinary sense, as Paul uses them in his command to the women. In singing the voices of all are blended together and the song, so rendered, is not an individual act of worship, but a collective one. Every one admits that the ordinary use of the words speak and teach in such passages as 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12 convey no thought of a reference to singing except to persons who are desperately seeking for some means to evade the clear and positive command contained therein. If the Sunday school is "the church at work," then those who teach in the Sunday school, teach in the church and Paul says, "it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:35).

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## CHAPTER SIX.

### *How Bring Them Up?*

"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Here is an obligation imposed upon the parents by the Holy Spirit, which the church offers graciously to relieve them of (at least partially) by instituting a Sunday school. The latter is quite a labor-saving invention for the parents and I suppose this, to a great extent, accounts for its popularity. While I am in hearty accord with the efforts constantly being made to relieve man of the burden of excessive physical labor, I feel more than doubtful of the wisdom of such an attempt in spiritual work. The passage at the head of this chapter, by its perversion, has been made to serve as the very foundation stone of that unscriptural institution yecept the Sunday school, and when any protest is made against such a misapplication of a command clearly addressed to the parents alone, we are met with the old, time-worn plea that parents do not heed this injunction, and it therefore devolves upon the church to perform their duty for them. It is merely a revamping of the old, old cry, "The Lord's plan is a failure," and we must invent something more effective to take its place or the children will grow up in ignorance of the Bible. The outcome of this effort to prevent the consequences of God's seeming short-sightedness is the Sunday school. Even if these premises were correct, it seems to me, the logical remedy would be to strike at the root of the matter, and if a society of some kind must needs be organized, let us organize one for the parents, instead of the children, so that the ones who are at fault may be instructed to obey the Lord's command and bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If Eph. 6:4 justifies the organization of a Sunday school because we are commanded to teach our children, then we have equal authority (and need) for a young woman's school to carry out Paul's instructions in Tit. 2:4, 5, a young man's school based upon the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses of the same chapter, a servant's school

to supply the necessities disclosed in verses 9 and 10, etc., etc. It would take quite a number of schools to fulfill the requirements of the Scriptures in the matter of teaching, then why be content with one? No one who advocates a Sunday school can logically, scripturally or even sensibly object to these other schools I have mentioned; we either need them all or none. In the desperate attempt to justify themselves, the attorneys of the Sunday school do not hesitate to appropriate the very identical sophistry which constitutes the citadel of sectarianism. Brother Ledlow says, "Every creature, embraces every child," yet he has doubtless often refuted this when sectarians have used it to sustain them in infant sprinkling, for the "every creature" to be taught was also to be baptized. The command to "go teach" or "preach" was applicable to those of sufficiently mature age to obey the gospel, and the very best evidence we can have that it does not imply a Sunday school to do the teaching is, that we have an inspired history of just how the apostles carried out this command to "teach all nations," and in that history we find no mention of a Sunday school, but it says they "went everywhere, preaching the word," without ever discovering the great advantages to be obtained by dividing their audiences into classes, using Sunday school literature and appointing a lot of sisters as teachers. As a matter of fact the weakness of those who defend these excrescences upon the body of Christ is never more plainly manifest than when they attempt to bring the Scriptures to their aid. There is absolutely not a single sentence in the Bible upon which they can hang a thread of logical argument. This institution can claim no higher authority than human wisdom and must forever exist in opposition to all that God's wisdom has revealed by precept, example or necessary inference.

For this reason I quote with hearty approval and renewed emphasis Brother Phillips' own declaration, which entirely demolishes the very thing he tries to defend.

*"Where the Bible speaks we should speak, and where it is silent we should be. Plain statements, precepts and examples should guide us, and the spirit of love control."* It is thus "the Lord taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Cor. 3: 19). There is no plain statement, nor even so much as an obscure allusion to the Sunday school in all God's book. There is not a single precept there to govern one or to tell us how to organize it and not a single example to serve as a model for its construction, or with which we may compare it, to see if divine pattern has been faithfully followed. Therefore, this chosen motto of Brother Phillips' drives us irresistibly to the conclusion that the Sunday school exists without divine warrant and that those who engage in it cannot expect to gain divine approval for so doing. It is a good thing to let alone. We now come to the uses and abuses


of Sunday school literature which will be considered in the next chapter. Many of our best brethren seem to think that commentaries are an almost essential prerequisite to any great knowledge of the Scriptures and only a very moderate degree of learning can be acquired without their aid. I conceive this to be an error that needs correcting and would recommend a more reverential faith in the all-sufficiency of God's word to those afflicted with commentaries. I sincerely doubt the wisdom of leaning with any degree of reliance upon uninspired commentaries. I believe, with all my heart, that a diligent study of the Bible, itself, and a careful examination and consideration of all it says upon any given subject, will result in a better and fuller understanding of the will of God, give rise to less vain speculation and erroneous views and better enable us to do that which is pleasing in His sight than will burning the midnight oil, for a lifetime, over the writings of uninspired men about the Bible, however, learned or pious they may be. I have a reverent, abiding and unshakable faith in the all-sufficiency of divine revelation. Am I wrong?

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## CHAPTER SEVEN.

### *Literature.*

Those who argue in favor of instrumental music as an aid to the song service, elevate the tuning fork to a level with the organ, and say the one is a help in precisely the same sense as the other. Our Sunday school champions go them one better, as usual, and bring the Bible down to a level with uninspired writings by saying that the Bible itself is literature, as is the song book also, and that if we discard Sunday school literature we ought to be consistent and reject the Bible also, unless we use the original manuscript. They actually seem to be so ignorant as not to know that the translation of a book does not destroy its identity nor change its status. The Bible might be translated a thousand times and it would still be the Bible, and not a commentary on the Bible. I have often noted the lack of reverence for God's word which seems prevalent where Sunday schools have full sway, but it was never so painfully apparent to me as when I first heard this argument. The love of a human institution must have grown strong, indeed, when it induces men to degrade the Bible to a common level with uninspired human writings. It is truly a sign that perilous times are upon us and that we should be careful to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." I emphatically deny that there is the remotest degree of relationship or parallelism between the Bible and the Sunday school quarterly, and it is the duty of those who assert it to produce the proof. As we are commanded to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, that command carries with it the authority for the hymn book to contain them and whenever



I am shown the scripture which commands lessons to be selected by a sectarian committee, and the comments prepared by a central committee of brethren for the use of the entire church I will no longer be found opposing such things for I will freely admit that such a command carries with it divine authority for the "literature" in which to can the comments, and you may call it a "Quarterly," "Little Jewels," or anything else you please. However, until I am shown a "thus saith the Lord" for the thing which makes the literature a necessity, I shall continue to protest against this "embalmed" spiritual food even with my latest breath. It is further urged that there is no difference between a spoken and a written comment, and as no one denies the right of a teacher to comment upon the Scriptures, it can be no sin to write these comments down and then read them. This is true, but can anyone see any relevancy in this argument to the matter at issue. Who has ever objected to an elder, preacher or any other teacher's writing down his comments and reading them to his audience? I see no reason to object to such a course so long as the comments, so written, are not made the text book instead of the Bible. The literature used in the Sunday schools, however, is no such innocuous matter. Instead of its lessons being selected by the elders of each congregation, so as to fitly meet the demands of that particular body, they are selected by a committee of sectarians who know nothing even of the existence of that congregation, much less about its surroundings or special needs in the way of teaching; the comments upon the lessons, and questions and answers are prepared by brethren at Nashville, or elsewhere, (who are equally uninformed of the local needs) and are eagerly accepted and used by the elders—Why? Simply because it is a ready-prepared, predigested food for the lambs they are commanded to feed, which saves the shepherds a great deal of labor and study in the way of preparation for the weekly (weakly?) feeding. Of course, this contributes greatly to the ease of the elders, but the Lord says, "Wo unto them who are at ease in Zion." It is not a good thing for the shepherds to have things made too easy for them by deputizing some two or three brethren to do the work of the entire eldership all over the land, nor is it a good thing for the lambs to feed entirely on predigested food. Such methods as would enfeeble strong men, will never strengthen babes. When Paul said, "feed the flock," he did not intend that it should be done by handing them packages of patent, ready prepared, predigested food, bought in quantities to last three months, neither did he mean the teachers to thus evade his other command, "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

By means of this modern scheme for making sheep-feeding easy, the devil accomplishes seven things, viz:

1. He gets his own agents a job as purveyors to the Lord's flock, to apportion their food.

2. He succeeds in deceiving the church into setting dignitaries above the bishops of the local congregations (lords over God's heritage, unauthorized by scripture to do the bishops' work for them) who send to the bishops their weekly allowance of spiritual food, ready prepared, to be doled out by them to the sheep, the lambs, the goats and the kids.

3. The elders are thus relieved of the necessity of diligent study themselves and become spiritually lazy, lose their aptitude to teach, thus becoming dwarfed in one of the principle qualifications for the eldership, and become negligent in their watch care, since the lessons are not chosen by them to meet and offset surrounding errors of doctrine. I believe the general use of Sunday school literature, more than any other thing, is the cause of such an inefficient eldership all over the land.

4. Their example incites the young members to lean on others and depend on some one else to do their studying for them and thus they all become enervated for lack of the mental exercise which God ordained for their growth in grace and in the knowledge of Him.

5. The young men are being trained and developed into Sunday school teachers instead of preachers and, as time rolls on, laborers in the harvest will continue to become scarcer, they being diverted into the channels of Sunday school activity.

6. The Bible is being degraded in the eyes of the people to a level—if not below—with uninspired literature, it being publicly argued that the one is just as necessary as the other.

7. Above and beyond every other evil growing out of its use, the Sunday school literature is gradually, but surely undermining the faith of the rising generation in the all-sufficiency of the word of God. Two replies have met me whenever I have inquired why the Bible, alone, is not an all-sufficient text-book for both old and young.

1st. We must adapt the lessons to the age and mental capacity of the ones taught.

2nd. We must have systematic methods of instruction to get the best results.

But one legitimate inference can be drawn from such assertions, viz: that the Sunday school literature, prepared by uninspired men, is better adapted to the human mind and is more systematic in its arrangement than the Bible which was prepared by the Creator, himself, for the express purpose of instructing both old and young in spiritual knowledge. The presumption of such a claim is enough to astonish and amaze those who believe that "all scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Why don't they revise the

words of the Psalmist and say, "The entrance of thy word giveth light," but our literature maketh it to give more light? My opinion is that there will never be a public, oral discussion of the Sunday school question, because no one can be found who will affirm that they have apostolic precept or example for such an institution; or that God's word is less systematic, or less adapted to the human understanding than human, inspired literature. To affirm such a thing would be to put man's intellect above God's.

A child who regularly attends worship, preaching and all church services will learn more about the fundamental principles of the gospel, the necessary steps to be taken to enter the kingdom, and how to walk in the light as a child of God than it ever will learn from the popular Sunday school class work, though it may not become as well posted in genealogy, history, ancient social customs, manner of dress, distances and geographical locations of places mentioned in the Bible, and other minutiae, which have no spiritual significance, but are the principal stock in trade of Sunday school literature. I boldly affirm that the Bible, itself, is as well adapted to the intellects and understanding of children as any Sunday school literature ever written. Are there any to deny it?

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

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## CHAPTER EIGHT.

### *How to Teach.*

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119.9).

The word of God must be our guide, and its examples our models in every effort to serve Him, whether at home or in the assembly. I am sure we will always be safe, and merit the Lord's approval, if we follow the course indicated by the quotation heretofore given, from the pen of Brother Phillips:—"Where the Bible speaks we should speak, and where it is silent we should be. Plain statements, precepts and examples should guide us, and the spirit of love control."

Since we have, in the Bible, all three of the above items to direct us in regard to teaching, we can hardly go astray if we will simply adhere to them. God spent about four thousand years in perfecting the revelation of his will to man, and we may rest secure and confident in the assurance, that when completed, this product of forty centuries of divine wisdom has left nothing for man's forethought to pre-empt, his afterthought, to revise, or his ingenuity to devise in order to carry out God's commands. In thoroughly furnishing the man of God unto every good work, the Scriptures have not failed to amply supply his

needs for the work of teaching—perhaps the most important good work of them all. Christ is the head of the church, but he is not the head of any other institution, hence he is not the head of the Sunday school. He died for the church, but who died for the Sunday school? He built the church on the rock of his own divinity, but man built the Sunday school on the shifting sands of “sanctified common sense.”

There is no need to split hairs over the difference between a Sunday school and a Monday school; Christ is not the author or the head of either one, and all attempts to show that there is nothing in a name, and that the name “Sunday school” does not imply an institution separate and apart from the church, are sheer sophistry and utterly vain. Brother Phillips says, “If you are a teacher and I am a pupil, while you teach me, Monday or Sunday, you are teaching school.”

Now I’ll venture the assertion that Brother Phillips never heard any one call a teacher and single pupil a school in his life, and if it were so called, it would be an incorrect use of language and would put the brand of ignorance upon anyone so speaking. But what I want Brother Phillips to tell us is this:—Why is it that Ezra and other Old Testament prophets, taught immense assemblies—John the Baptist instructed those who flocked to him from all the regions ’round about the Jordan—Jesus taught his disciples and the assembled multitudes who gathered about him daily and the apostles taught, for years, on every opportune occasion, both publicly and privately, all who would hear them, either singly or in groups, and yet no one ever thought of such a thing as speaking of any one of these as a school? Again—Why is it that Brother Phillips may teach great audiences from year’s end to year’s end, and the elders of the churches, or individual members may teach every day in the week and Sunday too, and yet no one ever hears the term “school” mentioned, unless the audiences are divided up into classes and organized into an institution as unlike “the church at work” as an Irish potato is unlike the aurora borealis? There is bound to be something wrong either in Brother Phillips’ reasoning or in the English language, and I am not inclined to charge the error to the English language. If you want the real reason for the discrepancy between Brother Phillips’ assertion as to what constitutes a school, and these facts I have recited, it lies just here—*Bible things can always be spoken of by Bible names.*

As long as the teaching is done in a Bible way, a Sunday school is never mentioned, but when the “plain statements, precepts and examples” of the Bible are ignored, and the teaching is done in a way unknown to the word of God, we must invent a name to designate it, and what name so appropriate as “Sunday school?”

Brother Phillips knows (and so do you, gentle reader) that all the brethren in the church might teach the Bible every day



of their lives, just as the apostles and early teachers in the church did, and no one would ever think of mentioning a Sunday school, Monday school or any other kind of a school. The word school is never used to designate an assembly of people being taught as Jesus and his apostles taught, but only when the teaching is done in some way for which there is no Bible warrant. There is no need to dwell upon this at any great length, for the facts bear me out with a force and emphasis that need no argument. I shall close this little tract with a brief outline of the way in which the word of God may be scripturally taught to both old and young; and that such teaching is more effectual than any plan man ever devised, the records of the early church abundantly show. We have "plain statements" in the Bible which show us that people may be taught singly, in multitudes or by households—saints, sinners or mixed assemblies. Here are the proofs:—"Teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19); "every creature" (Mark 16:15); "one another" (Col. 3:16); "every man" (1 Cor. 4:17); "faithful men" and "others also" (2 Tim. 2:2); "young women" (1 Tit. 2:4); etc., etc. We also have some "examples" showing just how this teaching was done. You may read them for yourselves in Neh. 8:1-9; Matt. 5; Acts 9:10-18; Acts 10; Acts 16:25-33; Acts 18:26. We also have some very "plain statements" as to who shall not teach in public. See 1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11. Furthermore, we find some "precepts" which direct the teachers to give their instructions one at a time, which obviates all necessity for dividing the pupils into classes. See 1 Cor. 14:27. It is expressly stipulated in the "precepts of Holy Writ that the bishops shall have the oversight of all work of the church" (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

Summing up all these "plain statements, precepts and examples," we learn that in order to be scriptural, all teaching must be done in harmony with the passages above cited, whose general scope may be condensed into the following items.

1. The elders must have the oversight of the teaching done in public assemblies, designating the teachers and selecting the subjects.
  2. Those taught are to be assembled together—not separated into classes.
  3. Women *must not* teach in public assemblies of the church.
  4. The word of God must be the only text book, and if uninspired writings are introduced, it must be as incidentals and not as having authority or constituting an essential element in the teaching.
  5. No one should be placed above the bishops of the local congregations, nor permitted to usurp *any* of their functions.
  6. No official should be appointed not named in the word of God, such as superintendents, secretaries, etc.
- Within these limits all may teach, to the extent of their

ability and desire and feel assured of God's approval, because the "plain statements" of His word have been regarded, its "precepts" obeyed and its "examples" honored by following them. Let us be of "one mind and one judgment," and strive, shoulder to shoulder, as the children of God should strive, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified among all that truly love Him and His ways. I send this little book out in a spirit of love to all, praying that it may be read in the same spirit, and its contents considered as dealing with issues which we must all meet at the judgment seat of Christ. Until then, farewell.

G. A. TROTT.

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### A CLOSING CHAPTER.

*By N. L. Clark.*

Solomon said, "Of making many books, there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." Paul spoke of striving "about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers;" and of men's "doting about questions and strifes of words whereof cometh envy, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Tim. 6:4, 5). These passages contain wholesome warning to the man who would become a mere "babbling" among writers or who would claim the attention of his reader merely that he might pour into the mind useless or positively injurious notions. No man who fears God and regards other men should write a tract or book unless he is fully persuaded that the interests of mankind may be in some way subserved thereby.

I approach the task before me with a feeling of mingled awe and sadness. The thought that what I here write will probably have at least a small influence in shaping the future movements of the church of God in this country, thus contributing to or detracting from the influence of that church for good, is a thought that makes me tremble. The belief that what I am about to write will not be read with the proper spirit by most of those for whom it is intended, fills my heart with inexpressible sadness. Were it not for the teachings of those Scriptures that command me as a disciple of the Christ to instruct in meekness "those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim. 2:25), to "contend, earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), etc., I could not muster courage to sacrifice the time and effort necessary to perform this task. I have seen so much of a disposition among preachers and others to "justify themselves" regardless of logic, truth, and even manly fairness, especially within the past five years, that I have almost despaired of the success, in reaching many of the leaders among us, of any effort based solely upon reason and Scripture. So long as men in matters of relig-

ion are willing to hear and desire to be heard, concerning matters in dispute, there is hope for the cause of truth in their hearts. This condition obtains among men just so long as they lovingly conscientiously, and sincerely believe themselves *right* before God and regard those opposing them as equally sincere and desirous of truth. When, however, men make up their minds to do something in the practice of religion for which they have no divine warrant, they are found ready to use any artifice, method, scheme, or instrument to accomplish their end. The tricks, underhanded schemes, the miserable perversions of God's word, the transparent fallacies called logical reasoning, the unfounded personal charges against opposers of their efforts, the open disregard of the most elemental principles of true manhood and womanhood, that have characterized religious innovators in every period of the church's history, would form, were they written, the most remarkable pen picture of human depravity this world has ever seen. The discussion among the disciples of Christ of the Sunday school question has already borne some fruit that savors of kinship to this picture. And I predict with sadness that within the next decade the Sunday school question among the disciples of Christ is going to be the cause or occasion of a repetition of those methods that but a few years ago brought so much of strife, alienation, heart-ache, and apostasy, finally ending in open division of a body once united and prosperous. I am sure that some among us will be disposed to call me pessimistic, to consider this as an unimportant issue, and to decry its discussion, at least for the present. But such persons have not read the "signs of the times." All over our country even now in many churches when a preacher is mentioned for a meeting, the question is asked, "How does he stand on the Sunday school question?" Already some of our most popular evangelists are apparently making it a rule to preach at least once during every protracted meeting directly on this question. The issue is upon us, regard it as we may.

#### THE ISSUE STATED.

On this subject there is one general issue. This issue is contained in the question, Is it right for disciples of Christ to maintain Sunday schools as they are being maintained in many of the churches of Christ in this country? Subsidiary to this question and growing out of it are several other questions each of which contains a more specific but less comprehensive issue. Some of these questions are the following:

1. Is the church as an organization for the instruction of all classes of teachable human beings in the word of God complete and sufficient?
2. Is the teaching done in the meeting of the local church on the Lord's day designed by Christ for Christians or for non-Christians?

3. Has the Holy Spirit designated the teachers of the local church or are all disciples permitted to teach regardless of sex or other condition?

4. Has the Holy Spirit said anything about how many teachers shall give instruction at the same time in the same church assembly?

5. Is the use, as text-books, of the so-called "International Sunday School Quarterlies," "Lesson Leaves," etc., admissible in the church assembled for worship and is the use of such literature productive of the best results?

These questions contain the most important issues involved in the subject under consideration. Some of the advocates of the Sunday school have tried to divert the attention of brethren from these issues by raising a *false* issue. This has always been a popular trick with innovators. The most popular false issue now raised among us on this subject is contained in the question, "Has God revealed a *specific method* of teaching to be used in the assembly of the saints on Lord's day?" Those who oppose Sunday school are asked to answer this question affirmatively and thus assume the burden of proving the correctness of their contention *against* the Sunday school. Furthermore, those who raise this question claim the privilege of defining the term "*specific method*." They tell us it means *manner of imparting instruction*, whether by the *catechetical* method, the *lecture* method, or by some other possible method. Now, this is not the real issue at all. It is simply an effort to avoid discussion of the real issue raised by the *practice* of the churches that have the Sunday school. And we who oppose the Sunday school have been repeatedly asked to commit the settlement of the great practical question now confronting the entire church to the discussion of this *false* issue! Yea, more, we have been asked to permit our opponents to *state* the proposition which we are to *affirm* and still more than this they claim the right to *define* the *terms of the proposition!!* How blind alas! to logic and fairness the spirit of delusion maketh men!

In the foregoing pages Brother Trott occasionally speaks of a "method of teaching." I have in the past used the expression in this very connection. Both Brother Trott and I have shown by the context that by "method teaching" we referred to the ones teaching, the ones taught, and the text-book used. Neither of us has used the expression in the sense given it by our opponents. To settle this point now, I am ready to affirm in debate that *God has revealed a specific method of teaching in the assembly of the saints on the Lord's day in so far as it concerns the character of teacher, pupil, and text-book.* This statement covers most of the real issues involved in the subject.

#### THE ISSUE IMPORTANT.

We are told that the question before us is of no importance,

that it makes no difference whether a church have the Sunday school or not, that we should lose sight of everything except the question of saving souls by the preaching of the gospel. This has been one of the most plausible and popular arguments with innovators of every class. Logically, it is the method of disparaging the importance of an unanswerable argument and when carried far enough it is resolved into ridicule. This argument has often been used with telling effect by the advocates of affusion for baptism. They tell us that the question of *action* in baptism is a *little* thing, that to be baptized in *some* way is the important thing. Jeroboam used the same argument to justify his setting up altars at Bethel and Dan. He virtually argued that the offering of sacrifice was the all-important thing, that the mere *place* of the offering was a matter of no importance. Among us as a people this argument has deceived many into the belief that it makes no particular difference *how* we worship God, that our worship is just as acceptable if offered in song with an organ as without it. And when Satan gets a man to believe the doctrine of this specious argument, he has the man ready to do anything in religion, provided only it looks *reasonable*.

We contend that the Sunday school question is very *important* for the following reasons:

1. If the Sunday school is not any part of the church assembly, if it is dismissed before the church assembles for worship as some contend, then it is an organization separate and apart from the church yet connected with the church, and must be tried by the same rules that apply to all other auxiliaries to the church such as the C. E. Society. Every man among us considers these rules very important.

2. If the Sunday school is the church assembled for worship, as most of the Gospel Advocate force contend, we charge it with violating God's arrangement in several particulars. Surely then it is a matter of great importance. First, it calls the church a Sunday school, thus violating 2 Tim. 1:13 and 1 Cor. 14:19. Second, it makes its principal effort in this assembly to teach the unsaved, whereas the New Testament clearly teaches that the *primary* purpose of the teaching done in the church is to *edify the saints*. See Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 22, 23-26. The teaching of unbelievers in the church is *incidental, indirect*. Study 1 Cor. 14:16, 23-25. Third, in the Sunday school *several* teachers give instruction at the same time, whereas the Spirit in 1 Cor. 14:31 says, "All can prophesy *one by one*, that all may learn, and all may be exhorted." Everyone present is entitled to *all* the instruction given by *every* teacher. The Sunday school method confines the instruction of every one taught to the efforts of one teacher, and often of a very poor teacher, at that. Sometimes those who favor the Sunday school criticize the church that have only one man to do all the teach-

ing. It is bad, to be sure, for a church to depend upon one man to do all the teaching. Yet this is exactly what is done in the Sunday school, each person taught is taught by *one* teacher only. He has no chance to receive instruction from any other teacher no matter if his teacher is the most inferior one in the school. The Lord's plan followed gives to every one in the assembly all the teaching done by *every* teacher. The divine object is, "that all may learn and all may be exhorted." On a given Lord's day Brother A may give in his teaching just the instruction or exhortation that I need. Brother B may do the same for another, and so on. But we can never anticipate such fact and thereby be enabled to classify the assembly appointing for each class the teacher specially needed.

Fourth, if the Sunday school is the church assembled in one place, women cannot scripturally take part in the work as teachers. This point has been ably discussed in the foregoing pages by Brother Trott, hence I shall not discuss it here. Suffice it to say that the advocates of the Sunday school have no scruples when they come to this point about the way to meet our objection. They simply tear out 1 Cor. 14 entire. They tell us that parts of that epistle are for us, but that the 14th chapter is not to us at all. Judging by the way some of them act I am sure they have also discarded the 13th chapter. When these brethren come to 1 Tim. 2, they change the little word "*nor*" to *or*, leaving out the *not* (Satan in Eden put in the *not*) so as to make "*teach*" in the passage the same as "*usurp authority*," whereas the Holy Spirit forbade *both teaching and usurping authority*. But what is the use of citing what God says, especially for those who knowing these things are determined to have *their* way about them?

3. We consider the Sunday school question important because it involves methods of work in the church that supplant God's arrangement for the teaching of His children. This is evident from what has already been said. The exhortation, instruction, and consequent edification of the body of Christ is sacrificed to make room for the instruction of young children and alien sinners in the meeting of the saints. The Lord's appointment for His people on the Lord's day is thus set aside to make room for an appointment of man's devising.

4. The Sunday school has ever been a cause of division among the people of God. It is far more troublesome in this particular than many other questions. This is because it comes right into the family circle of the church. Many brethren are now disturbed over the so-called "college question." But such questions do not enter into the very inner life of our church work. The Sunday school on the other hand stands in the very door of our church home. We who contend for a pure worship cannot go with our brethren and sisters into the Lord's house for His appointed worship without meeting the things we conscientiously

oppose as soon as we get to the place of meeting. This is why the subject before us is so much discussed. And it ought to be discussed until the two parties to the contention reach some ground of agreement. It is not right, it is not just to those who oppose to cut off the discussion of so important a subject before it has been thoroughly investigated.

This is surely sufficient to satisfy anyone as to the importance of this issue and also to point out some of our objections to the Sunday school.

#### EVIL TENDENCY.

One of the most serious objections to the Sunday school is the *tendency* of its influence. Does it tend to greater respect for the *church*? No. It tends to satisfy the young with the notion that the Sunday school is sufficient as a place of instruction in the Bible. I cannot see how it can do less than this. I am sure that no one can consistently argue that it encourages anyone to look to the *church* as opposed to the Sunday school for instruction. Furthermore, its methods tend to lead the young to depend upon the instruction of men who prepare the Sunday school literature for instruction. Brother Trott has discussed this point, hence I pass it. Finally, the whole system puts something between the church and the Bible on the one side and the youth on the other. I see in this a way opened for every device that man can imagine to come in the way of the sinner whose eyes are directed toward the church of God. I fear the *tendency* of the Sunday school methods.

#### A FAILURE.

Any well informed reader of these words knows that the Bible nowhere describes any such procedure in a meeting of religious people as is carried on in the Sunday school. It would be just as easy to read a full description of a mourner's bench exercise in the New Testament as it would to find such a meeting there described as is held in every Sunday school in the world. This being true, it must be admitted that the Sunday school is at best only a plan, a device, an invention of men just in so far as it differs from meetings described in the New Testament. I dare say that no man among us, reasonably well-informed in the Bible, will dispute this. Now I charge that as a method or arrangement for teaching the Bible, the Sunday school is a *failure*. Go into our large towns and cities where for generations thousands of people have been reared from infancy in the very lap of the Sunday school. This applies with equal force to those denominations that have for years taken the lead in Sunday school work. And they try to teach the Bible too. I know by years of experience both as pupil and as teacher. What is the condition of the masses of such people with reference to a knowledge of the Bible? I answer they are densely ignorant. The

ignorance of the masses in our country concerning the Bible is one of the most serious hindrances with which the gospel preacher meets in his efforts to show the people the truth. I dare say no preacher who reads this will dispute it. What is the matter? Do we need more Sunday schools? I think not. This institution "has been weighed in the balances and found wanting." For the accomplishment of its self-appointed work it has proved itself wholly inadequate. It is time for the people of God to reject it entirely and try another way. I, for one, am strictly in favor of trying to get just as close as possible to the practice of churches in apostolic days. Who is ready to help us?

#### SOME DIFFICULTIES.

Some one may read this and ask, "How shall we get rid of the Sunday school?" In many churches this is a very important practical question. Indeed where the people have for years been accustomed to it, it is almost sure to take time to get them out of some of the habits that the Sunday school inculcates. For example, people get into the habit of calling the church meeting "Sunday school." This is rather a strong habit and to be sure it is a bad one. Imagine Luke's saying in Acts 20:7, "When the disciples (in Troas) came to Sunday school, Paul preached unto them." Such habits of speech must be given up by each one for himself. On other points the correction of the "Sunday school habit" requires the utmost wisdom. Otherwise great and lasting harm may be done. Habits of long standing in violation of nature's laws usually require perserving, patient, and long continued effort for their removal. Just so it is with this case. I do not remember to have ever preached a sermon directly on the Sunday school question. I rarely mention it directly in my preaching. I believe that the better way is to emphasize *principles* until the church is prepared to make the application. In other words I believe that the only way to get rid of the Sunday school and at the same time preserve the unity of the church is to *educate* the membership of the local churches to know that there is a better way, the true way, the Lord's way.

No man can correctly charge me with disrupting a church over this question. Brethren who agree with me have so taught in places as to bring division. If so, I lament it. I always advise brethren when division of sentiment on this question exists, to be meek, patient, persistent in contending for the truth, above everything else to show the spirit of Christ and contend for *union upon the Bible alone*. I have read with shame how much older and better informed men than I advised those who favored the Sunday school to disregard the conscientious objections of those who opposed it and bring in the innovation anyway.

Another way to give up the Sunday school is to begin the practice of having three or four brethren make short talks on



the lesson for the day in addition to the class work. If proper steps were taken at the beginning, it will not be long till several of the brethren are found taking part in the teaching before the entire audience, and gradually the Sunday school will be replaced with an arrangement that is entirely scriptural.

RESPONSIBILITY OF BISHOPS AND EVANGELISTS.

Concerning the disposition of the Sunday school question in the local churches of Christ in this country, a great deal of responsibility rests upon the bishops and the evangelists. If these two classes of brethren will act prudently and becomingly among the churches, it is possible to avoid division over the question. I favor among all the brethren a healthy agitation of the subject—not to the point of engendering strife and ill-feeling, but enough to lead the masses of church members to inquire carefully and thoughtfully about the correctness of Sunday school practices. I favor such agitation of the subject in our newspapers and pulpits. Just so long as some churches will have only those preachers who are known to oppose it, so long will the spirit of division increase. In fact between these two classes of churches there is already no fellowship in the work of the church. I am aware that in penning the last two sentences written I am taking very unpopular ground. Both parties to this controversy will probably criticise me. But why should I care? Brethren, I am simply pleading for unity of action among the Lord's people on a question that threatened to tear them asunder. Oh! let us be prayerful, let us be careful, let us not suffer ourselves swept away from safe ground by either the delusion of over-zeal for ritualism on the one hand or the vain desire to keep up with the customs of a sinful and perverse age on the other. Let us weigh the whole matter in hand and try as best we can to find that position on this question that is *safest, most unquestionable, and that comports most fully with the letter and the spirit of the Lord's word.*