

BUILDING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Jean H. Mullen

At a recent Sunday School convention held in Wentworth, N. S., Rev. W. S. Godfrey, formerly professor of education at Mt. Allison University, said that a Sunday School teacher is the most important type of evangelist. He explained his statement by saying that 85 per cent of the people joining churches on confession of faith come up through the Sunday School. We can hardly over-emphasize, then, the necessity of building the Sunday School, for in so doing we are also building the church of tomorrow.

When we think of "building" a Sunday School, our minds immediately turn to increasing attendance. That is an important part of Sunday School work, an aspect with which we can never afford to be satisfied, but must be always pressing forward to new records, hoping to reach all of the many unchurched children in our communities. Various means may be employed to increase attendance, from advertising posters to contests which encourage scholars to bring in new ones.

A prominent layman in Massachusetts has inaugurated a Sunday School visitation program, in which he hires himself out on the same sort of basis as an evangelist, carrying out his plan by systematic visiting throughout a community. In every place he has gone he has helped to increase attendance and make the whole neighborhood Sunday School-conscious.

Such a program, in simple form, could be carried out by a small band of Sunday school workers canvassing the community, and could be very successful in stimulating both attendance and interest.

On this subject of attendance it should be noted that it is especially important for superintendent and teachers to be regular and prompt. The example of their own faithfulness goes far in influencing their pupils to habitual attendance.

Along with attendance goes preparation for the lesson. When both pupils and teachers are prepared, the lesson proceeds smoothly and everyone is in position to take part. All need the background of previous study to enter into the type of lively, helpful discussion that should go with the presentation of the lesson.

We have mentioned the aspect of building **quantity** into the Sunday School; let us not neglect **quality**, which, of the two, might be termed the more important.

First, let it be understood that "quality" does not refer to the people involved; any and all are welcome in Sunday School, regardless of social, political, or financial status. But once the children are established in each little group around their teacher, it is our grave responsibility to see that they are supplied with sound, character-building material.

All Sunday School teaching should rest upon the solid foundation of a thorough grounding in the Bible. Bible stories are virtually a thing of the past in most homes today, and the schools make small attempt to teach them to the children. Therefore it remains the great task of the Sunday School to educate its young people in the truths of the Bible. Nothing can take the place of this all-important angle of Sunday School work.

Simple but clear instruction in church doctrines is important here also, and will help pave the way for future clear-thinking, careful-living church members.

It is likewise the Sunday School teacher's opportunity to instil in the members of his class such beneficial habits as church attendance, tithing, memorizing passages of scripture, and giving to missions, as well as habits of reverence, Bible reading, and prayer. Again it may be observed that the Sunday School teacher is, for many children, the only source through which they are able to learn these fundamentals of Christian living.

Often the Sunday School may also be the place where personal problems are touched upon and the Christian solution reached. The lesson can—and should—be made practical to those to whom it is being presented. The Sunday School teacher can usually judge of that, and may lead the discussion out along a line having special application to the lives of those present. It cannot be stressed too much that general discussion in which all take part should be much encouraged. This is the only part of the church in which such natural and uninhabited exchange of views and problems is possible, and it is invaluable.

There remains one more phase of the subject which might well be noted here. It is in Sunday school that many children first meet and deal with the social problems of drinking, smoking, racial discrimination, immoral or unfair government, and war. The Sunday School teacher has here the opportunity to impress upon young minds the great Christian principles of honesty, purity, and love for God and fellowmen that will produce the highest type of future citizens.

Building the Sunday School? Yes, we are also building our church and our nation, and building them with God-given materials. Let us then build wisely and carefully, remembering that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

THE GRACE OF APOLOGY

Jesus said a thing one time that we are likely to forget. He said that when we come to the altar to worship God and remember that we have injured or wounded or grieved a brother, the first thing to do is to go and apologize to him and be reconciled.

What Jesus said was neither incidental nor accidental, but fundamental. It goes to the root of things. It is a major Christian virtue, this willingness and promptness to apologize for wrongs done to others.

Life is full of strained relationships and in our shortsightedness we offend and injure others unthoughtedly. Our absorption in our own affairs causes us sometimes to neglect those who have a claim upon our care. Misunderstandings arise most naturally. An inflection of the voice sometimes carries a meaning we did not want nor intend to convey. Our actions are often not a true index of our motives and heart. Out of these unintentional injuries to one another grow most of the quarrels of life. How many of these would disappear if we would hunt for our wrongs to others, and apologize for them, rather than hunting for the wrongs done by others to us, and hug closely to our bosom the ghosts of offended feelings!

Some people spend much time fretting over the wrongs others have done to them. It never occurs to them how much they may have wronged others. We can just about tell what our state of grace is by how our own thoughts turn, in moments of leisure. Is there a burden over the wrongs done to others?

Test yourself out and see which stirs you the most.

It is harder to apologize than it is to accept an apology. To accept an apology means that we were right and the other person now acknowledges it. But to apologize means to confess we were wrong. No one likes to admit he has been wrong, especially if he intended to do right. But no matter how difficult it is, there is a divine command to do it. And there is no use going to worship, no use carrying your head high, no use tramping down that "inner feeling" that you ought to acknowledge your fault, for God will not accept you, till you go and be reconciled to your brother.

All through the Bible this fundamental truth is emphasized. Forgiveness is a duty, and so is confession of faults. James says, "Confess your faults one to another." "Go . . . first be reconciled," said Jesus. All right. The Lord wills it. We will obey and we will pray that we may have sufficient grace to apologize.—Sel.

LET US GO ON

"Therefore, leaving the . . . first principles . . . let go on unto perfection."—Heb. 6:1.

Some of us stay at the Cross,

Some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised together with Christ,
Yet lingering still in its gloom;

Some of us bide at the Passover feast
With Pentecost all unknown—
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
That our Lord has made our own.

If the Christ who died had stopped at the Cross,

His work had been incomplete;
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the tomb

He had only known defeat;
But the Way of the Cross never stops at the Cross,

And the Way of the tomb leads on
To victorious grace in the heavenly place
Where the risen Lord has gone.

So let us go on with our Lord
To the fulness of God He has brought,
Unsearchable riches of glory and good
Exceeding our uttermost thought;

Let us grow up into Christ,
Claiming His life and its powers,—
The triumph of grace in the heavenly place
That our conquering Lord has made ours.

Annie Johnson Flint

THE WAY TO EXALTATION

It was a great principle of life that Jesus enunciated when He said, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Lu. 14:11. He illustrated it deftly from the choosing of rooms at a wedding feast.

Self-exaltation leads to abasement. It was this sin that occasioned Lucifer's fall from heaven. He said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God—I will be like the most high." Is. 14.

When Saul, the prophet-king, attempted to usurp the priestly office and later manifested a spirit of disobedience toward God, Samuel said to him, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, was thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? His exaltation of self brought him to a tragic end.

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of one
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