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SUNDAY SCHOOL
AN
EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITY

F. WATSON HANNAN



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The Sunday School

An

Evangelistic Opportunity

BY
F. WATSON HANNAN



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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TO MY WIFE

**WHOSE INVALUABLE HELP AND INSPIRATION
HAVE MADE MY WORK A CONSTANT JOY, THIS
LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED**



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INTRODUCTION

THERE is a widespread feeling to-day that the church has lost its hold upon the masses, and therefore it no longer has the evangelistic opportunity that it once had. The time was when a large number of unconverted people, both old and young, would attend the Sunday evening service. That service, therefore, often took an evangelistic form, and frequent conversions, especially during the winter season, were the common order of the day. Very often a successful evening service would be followed by several weeks of revival meetings. But those conditions no longer obtain in large sections of the country. In many places evangelistic meetings are not attempted at all on the ground that the unconverted no longer come to church. The serious thing is that there seems no likelihood of the unconverted changing their present attitude. If they do not

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change their attitude, the church must change its methods. If they will not come to the church, the church will have to go to them if the two ever come together. It will take the church some time to make the readjustment of its methods, and train a new group of evangelistic workers who can successfully carry the message of the church to the masses. In the meantime the church must not let up on its evangelistic effort, and about the only available field which is always ready for evangelistic effort, is the Sunday school. The Sunday school as an evangelistic field has been taken for granted rather than taken seriously.

The value of this opportunity has not been clearly sensed by the church; but now as a sequel to the centenary and other like great financial movements, there is a campaign on in the churches generally, to increase their membership in some way commensurate with the increased resources. If that is done in the near future, the Sunday school as an evangelistic field must be worked with a thoroughness and persistence with which

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it has not been worked hitherto. The greater part of the increase in church members in the next four or five years will come from the Sunday school. If the present waste in the Sunday school could be stopped and all its forces capitalized for the church, the increase in membership and general prosperity would be so great that even the most sanguine would be surprised and the most despairing would take new heart and hope. There are many difficulties in the way, such as lack of vision, poor physical equipment, such as improper buildings, inadequate training of the teaching force, want of leadership, etc.; but hard work, consecration, and a passion for the spiritual well-being of the young life of the church will overcome them.

The object of this little book is to state the evangelistic opportunity of the Sunday school as clearly as it may, and to offer some practical suggestions as to how that opportunity may be utilized. It is with the earnest hope that these suggestions may be helpful to pastors, superintendents, teachers, and parents, to

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whom they are offered, that this little book is sent forth.

Drew Theological Seminary,

Madison, New Jersey.

February, 1920.

CHAPTER I

THE PASTOR'S OPPORTUNITY

It is a very grave error to consider the Sunday school and the church as two separate and independent organizations, where the pastor is the leader of one, and the superintendent the leader of the other, and neither leaders nor organizations having much to do with each other. That is a condition which prevails in some quarters; the pastor has no vital interest in the Sunday school and seldom attends it. The superintendent has only an indifferent interest in the church and seldom attends it. His whole time and strength are expended in the Sunday school, as the pastor's are in the church. There is no team work done. The children and young people of Sunday-school age consider the Sunday school their church and the superintendent or teacher their leader and adviser. This condition ought not to be. It is not

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the Sunday school *and* the church, but the Sunday school *in* the church. The Sunday school bears the same relation to the church that the children do to the home. The church is a family. In that family the pastor has the place of father, and the superintendent, who comes into a closer and more direct contact with the children, holds the place of mother. Just as in the home the father and mother should work in the closest sympathy and cooperation for the happiness of the home and the well-being of the children, so should the pastor and superintendent cooperate in the work of the church family. If the pastor does not look after the Sunday school of to-day, he will have no church to-morrow, and if the superintendent does not look after the church of to-day, he will have no Sunday school to-morrow. Neither can be neglected without working detriment to the other. The church creates the Sunday school, and the Sunday school re-creates the church. They are inter-dependent.

In this chapter we are chiefly concerned

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with the pastor and his opportunity. A pastor is sometimes asked, "How much time do you give to your Sunday school?"

He replies: "The work of the church is so heavy and taxing that I can give no time to the Sunday school. I have a good superintendent and good teachers, and I leave the Sunday school to them. With the heavy work of the week two sermons on Sunday is all the service I am able to render. If the Sunday school is in the morning, I cannot attend because I need to prepare for my pulpit; and if it comes in the afternoon, I cannot attend, for I must rest up for my evening service."

A further question may be asked: "How much of an evangelistic opportunity does the evening service offer? How many of the Sunday school young people are in the congregation in the evening?"

He may reply: "There is very little evangelistic opportunity in the evening; only church people attend, and few of them. It is only the most faithful people I have who attend twice a day. The

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young people have had their church in the Sunday school and Epworth League or Christian Endeavor Society, so they do not come out to the evening service."

That state of affairs is not only widely true, but too true to be comfortable. The pastor is saying, whether he senses the seriousness of it or not, that he does not come into close personal contact with his young people at all; and his most hopeful and fertile field for evangelism is not worked at all. That is the serious part of it.

The reply to such a position as the pastor takes is, that his church ought to be so organized that much of the detail work that takes his time and strength through the week would be done, and better done, by laymen, many of whom have little interest in the church because they have nothing to do; and the pastor ought to be so relieved of the burdens which he ought not to bear that he could give sufficient time and personal attention to his Sunday school and young people, in order that he could make the most of his evangelistic oppor-

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tunity. The best way to get Sunday school and Epworth League young people to the evening service is for the pastor to attend their service and show such a friendly interest in them that he will be indispensable to them. It is just at that age that young people respond with all the joy of their exuberant enthusiasm to a real friendly and sympathetic interest in them. Too often they are misunderstood by older people, and they greatly appreciate one who does understand them. If the pastor has not time for his young people, they will not have time for him.

A pastor may not be able to attend every session of the Sunday school. Funerals, sickness, and other emergency calls may prevent it, but nothing will excuse him from his general attendance on his Sunday school. If he has little sympathy for the young people, they will have little confidence in him. It can be taken for granted that the pastor is interested in the Sunday school because it is a part of his church; but it will not be taken for granted in the most

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important place, namely, in the Sunday school itself, if he does not attend it. That is one institution that does not thrive on absent treatment. If the pastor is not wise, he may find that he has two churches, instead of one—an old people's church of which he is pastor, and a young people's church with no pastor. The young people will have their church, Sunday school and Epworth League, and the pastor will not be there. The pastor will have his old people's church, and the young people will not be there. If this condition prevails, the pastor has fallen upon a tragedy. If a pastor once loses his young people by misunderstanding them or failing to appreciate them, or if by neglect he fails to win them in the early part of his pastorate, it is almost impossible for him to win these young people to any sort of enthusiastic cooperation. Whoever may have to be neglected in the church, let it not be the young people, for they are the church of to-morrow. Some ministers have suggested to the writer that they thought of abolishing both Sunday school

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and Epworth League, so as to force the young people to attend church service. That method would not do it.

Two things are essential to get young people to church. The first is to show a constant friendly interest in them and their meetings, and, second, to make the church service worth while; bright, sane, wholesome, challenging. Young people will not be made to want what older people want by taking from them what they do want. Young people can be successfully led, but not successfully driven.

If the pastor says it is not a lack of interest, but a lack of strength that keeps him away, the reply is, that if the main business of the church is to get people to God, or to keep them from leaving God, the Sunday school is the most natural, ready, and hopeful field he has for exactly that work. It is far better if it needs be to let many other forms of work alone than to neglect this most important work. About the only field of raw material that he has to work on evangelistically is the field right in his

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church. He does not have to go after it; it comes to him, offers itself to him, and he is the best fitted person in the church to do that piece of work. If he wisely organizes his church, he will find many men and women who can do much that he does better than he, or at least as well, who could not begin to do the work of evangelizing the Sunday school as he can. So the school is not worked as it should be for want of pastoral leadership. If he gets his young people to church, he will not preach the worse, but the better. Nothing inspires or vitalizes preaching like having conversions in one's ministry. If he succeeds in building his own young people into the church and the Kingdom, and inspiring them with ideals of usefulness, and sending them to college to get ready for some life work that is really worth while, he will have a ministry of unspeakable blessedness; a ministry far beyond that of merely marking time or running a treadmill sort of work which is marked only by a dead mediocrity.

The pastor's enthusiasm for Sunday

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school evangelism should be a sustained enthusiasm. That kind of enthusiasm is contagious. The superintendent and teachers and pupils will get it, and conversions in the Sunday school will be looked upon as a part of the normal work of the school. If the pastor comes in only on Decision Day, he is almost a stranger, and may be suspected of having some sort of a religious trick to spring upon the school. But if deciding for Christ is made so beautiful, simple, natural and wholesome that young people will be won to it by its beauty and power, then when that work climaxes in Decision Day he will have a sort of modern Pentecost every now and then in the Sunday school. This sustained evangelism does not do away with a special well-prepared effort like Decision Day. It makes such a day inevitable. But the pastor's interest in the Sunday school not only gives him an evangelistic opportunity, but it will do more than anything else to bring the school as an evangelistic challenge into his church services. It is difficult for the pastor to stimulate

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an interest in the Sunday school among his people if he is out of the school himself.

The men of the church, through the example of the pastor, can do a great deal toward getting out of the mind of young men the false notion that the Sunday school is a child's institution. If the men are in the school, boys and young men will be there too. The Sunday school boy problem is the man problem. Solve the man problem and you solve the boy problem. There is no boy problem by itself; it is the under side of the man problem. If men are won to God in the Sunday school, the boys and youth will be. It will be hard work for the pastor, but it will be the work that will make the largest practical returns. The returns will not be in terms of dollars, but of lives, and they in their turn will see to it that the dollars come. It is an entirely mistaken notion that any work which keeps the pastor regularly out of the Sunday school is more important than the work in the Sunday school which he neglects. It is much better for the pastor to come to the evening service tired, and

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face a crowd of eager young people, than to come to it fresh, and face sections of yawning empty pews. If his object is to keep the wheels of church services in motion, that is one thing, and not a very important thing. But if his object is to get people to God, that is another and a most important thing. To do that he will either have to go where the people are, or do the thing which will bring the people where he is. And surely nothing is to be left undone which would bring his own young people to him.

It is a trite thing to say that the church of to-morrow is in the Sunday school of to-day; but many pastors act as if they did not more than half believe it, and some act as if they did not believe it at all. The best way for the pastor to get his trained workers, namely, Sunday school superintendent and teachers, to cooperate with him in the work of the church is to cooperate with them in the work of the school. What an evangelistic asset a pastor would have in his Sunday school Board if they would en-

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thusiastically engage in the service of getting the Sunday school to attend evening service, especially from the intermediate age up!

But the pastor who attends his Sunday school with an evangelistic motive can render the school an invaluable service by moving quietly about the school and finding out what the teachers are teaching, where the misfits are, etc. He will sometimes find that certain teachers will make evangelistic work, especially in their classes, impossible. He will find some teachers who in a short time can succeed in driving out, or cause to stay out, some of the best pupils in the school; and when they have emptied one class they are given another. Some superintendents know this, but they do not know how to get rid of the teachers without uprooting the wheat with the tares. Those teachers may be good people, but wholly unfitted for teachers, and the pastor may find some other work about the church which they can do well and which will take so much of their time that they will have to give up teaching,

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which is the best thing that could happen to the school. He will then eliminate by substitution without hurting anybody, and will succeed in helping everybody. These teachers will be helped, the Sunday school will be helped and the church will be helped; but the pastor cannot do that if he knows nothing about it. The pastor thus becomes an indispensable aid to the superintendent. The rearrangement or reorganization of classes and teachers can far better be done by the pastor and superintendent together than by either of them alone, especially when both are familiar with all the circumstances.

If the members of the school are not converted, why are they not? The pastor can ask that question in his study, but he cannot answer it in his study. The answer is in the school. If the main object of the Sunday school is not attained, there is a reason for it, and that reason is mostly in the school itself. The Sunday school age is the age of Christian decision, and if decisions are not made then, something is wrong. It is of more importance to the church and to the

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Kingdom to find out what is wrong and to correct it than it is to raise debts, serve on committees, or coddle a lot of malcontents. If the science of right living is to do first things first, the place for the pastor to begin his church work is in his Sunday school. If he fails there, he is like a farmer who fails to plow and plant in the springtime. He will then be like the sluggard in Proverbs: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold: therefore he shall beg in the harvest and have nothing." A man rarely feels the seriousness of a lost opportunity till it is lost beyond recall; and an evangelistic opportunity in the Sunday school is easily lost, for the young people who go through the Sunday school without becoming Christians rarely go to church afterward, and those who do not become Christians, drop out all too early. If they do not become interested in the Christian life before they reach the adult or even Senior Department, they will not be interested enough to remain long in the school. They may not be hostile to religion, but they will be indifferent

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to it, and the indifferent are about as hard to reach as the hostile.

The pastor's evangelistic opportunity is not confined to his work in the Sunday school itself, but to his pastoral work as well. He will often find in the homes of the pupils their real problems. They will often tell their parents what they would not tell their superintendent or teacher, and they will talk more freely and frankly with their pastor, in whom they have confidence, outside of the school than in it. He will sometimes discover that young boys and girls long to become Christians and join the church, but their teachers never gave them an opportunity to talk about it or take steps toward it. It may be that the teachers have not discovered it, and for fear of embarrassing the pupils or causing them to stay out of the school they will guard against anything that might lead to immediate decision. If the pastor knows this, he can wisely give an opportunity without reflecting on the teacher or embarrassing the pupil.

Pastoral evangelism in the Sunday school is not only an opportunity, it is

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also a necessity. It is about the only place that young people of Sunday school age have in which it is easy or natural for them to make decisions for Christ.

The family altar has largely fallen into disuse, in some cases almost of necessity. The industrial conditions which now prevail make it almost impossible to get the family all together at any one time during the day, either week days or Sunday. They go to business or school at different hours, they return at different hours. Some members of the families are home only over week-ends, some only at vacation time, when the home is not under normal conditions. Some have let the habit of family worship die out because of indifference. Others never observed family worship, and so it is, that children get little religious instruction or incentive at home. When family worship is observed, it is both easy and natural to talk religion, and many a New Testament lesson opens the way to emphasize the claims of Christ on the young lives in the home.

Perhaps the most important part of

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the pastor's evangelistic opportunity is to safeguard what might be called child conversion. A blunder at this point may be followed by very serious consequences in later years, total religious indifference, or even hostility to religion altogether. There are many foolish notions about what constitutes a child's conversion. Many people expect far too much of it. They forget that they are not dealing with an adult. They must not expect the same consciousness of or regret for sin in a child that they do in an adult.

The writer was told by a man who held to the necessity of child repentance and sorrow for sin as a condition of conversion that he himself had a very keen sense of and sorrow for sin when he was six years of age. That was a very unusual, if not an unnatural thing. The child must have been abnormal, or else the home training or atmosphere was very defective and morbid. A child of six ought not to have a mature person's conviction of sin. Here the pastor must use great care and wisdom. He is best

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fitted to safeguard child conversion, and keep it from perversion. A teacher is sometimes converted at or after middle life. That conversion may have had unusual emotional accompaniments, from great depression to ecstasy, and the teacher may take that as a type to which all conversion must conform. Now, children under sixteen cannot and ought not to have such a conversion. There can be no such contrast in the child's conversion as in the adult conversion, and the child is often prevented from any conversion because the teacher takes his own conversion as the type. Anything less than that would be suspected by the teacher. With a well-reared, normal child, boy or girl up to fifteen or sixteen, or even seventeen or eighteen, there may be little that is unusual about conversion. Many of them come up to their teens taking for granted that they are Christians, unless they have been the victims of some well-meant, but ill-advised teaching. What is needed now is a definite, willing, and intelligent commitment of the life to Christ, and the glad investment

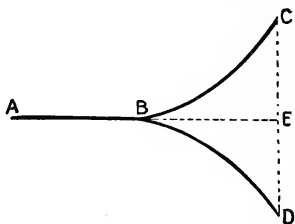
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of it in Christ's service. The church is coming to more wholesome and normal views on child conversion. There may be here and there children not of more than ten who have a morbid sense of sin, and whose conversion may have many of the features of adult conversion; but they are so rare as to be almost negligible. There are also a few children who are religiously very precocious, whose religious experience is far beyond their years. Almost any pastor will find an easy and successful way of dealing with these exceptional cases. They need special attention and direction. Handling the morbid or precocious as though they were normal would work damage to them, and danger to the normal children. A diagram may illustrate child conversion more clearly than an argument. Here consecration would be a better term than conversion, especially with B—C.

Let A B equal the child from infancy to the age of intelligent moral choice, or as some would call it, the age of accountability. During this period the child is saved by his innocency. If the child

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dies between A and B, most people are agreed to-day that he is saved. There ought never to have been any doubt about it, but large interests have often been sacrificed for small theological positions. The child up to this time is unconsciously Christian, or is being carried



in a saved state by the Grace of Jesus Christ, not by the child's choice, for he has been incapable of an intelligent moral choice. But at B, which age is very variable in different children due to temperament, training and environment, moral choice begins and the child makes a decision to remain in the Kingdom or to go out of it. He will either accept Jesus Christ as Saviour or not. If he does not, his life of committing sin begins. Before moral choice the child is saved

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by the unsought grace of God. After choice begins, the saved state is based on the consent of the child. That intelligent consent to accept Jesus Christ as personal Saviour is child conversion. The decision is as real and definite as with an adult; and Christ accepts the responsibility to give grace and wisdom to culture the child life that is based on an intelligent choice and a glad consent to be a Christian, just as he does to forgive and culture the adult who makes the definite choice and gives the glad consent to be a Christian. The experience will be different, and ought to be, but the experience will exactly fit the personality. It would be unnatural and unreasonable to expect that the same phenomena would attend both cases. The child cannot have an adult's experience. It would be wrong if he did have it because it would be unnatural. One of the most misleading and confusing methods of evangelism is to teach people to seek an experience, for the reason that no one person's experience can be the standard for every other body's experience. That

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is especially harmful when the seekers are of Sunday school age.

The experience that follows the decision is not religion, but the effect of it on the person who became religious. A person does not *get* religion, he *becomes* religious. He comes into a personal relation of harmony with God; comes into right relations with Jesus Christ; in a word, to become a Christian is not to get a thing, but to know, love, and obey a Person, Jesus Christ, and it is that rightness of relation that is to be sought rather than an experience which for the most part is a more or less rapturous emotion. But neither the decision nor the ensuing rightness of relation is dependent on the emotion or the lack of it. The decision is a far deeper and more important matter. It is the principle of obedience, love, and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

So at B there may be very little emotional disturbance. Conversion in this case is not so much a matter of turning around as it is of going forward; therefore it is a consecration. It is not a change of direc-

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tion, it is a change of motive. The child now chooses to be governed by the will of God through devotion to Christ. The child who has been unconsciously following Christ now consciously and willingly follows him. The life, then, by a growth in the grace which Christ supplies, will follow the upward curve, B—C. The accompanying Christian experience will harmonize with the temperament and need of the person. He will likely say that he was always a Christian, but at a certain time definitely accepted and declared Jesus Christ to be his Saviour. That decision is as real and vital as the decision that any person will make in becoming a Christian, but it will not have, of course, the experience of contrast that the one will who has made his decision late in life, or gone deeply into sin.

On the other hand, the child who back at B decides to go out of the Kingdom and either neglects or refuses to follow Christ, follows the curve B—D. That curve may drop quickly or slowly, but the course will be steadily away from the straight line B—E, which might

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be taken to represent continued innocency if such a course were possible. Much more will its course move steadily away from B—C. The person may plunge early and quickly into sin, or he may maintain a respectable moral level, committing no gross sins, but he will be living a life of sustained rejection of Christ. Now, let us say that he is converted when he reaches the point D, and is lifted by conversion to C. He will be now only where he would have been if he had chosen Christ at B, but he will not be as well off as if he had stayed in the Kingdom. He will have lost the experience B—C. Grace may do much for him, but Grace will not give him back the wasted years B—D, nor will it give him the satisfaction of never having broken with Christ. The only apparent advantage that he would have over the other would be a more dramatic conversion. The sharp contrast before and after his conversion would make his conversion a very striking experience. He could say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," but the advantage would be more

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apparent than real, for he would have been better off if he had never been blind. There may be some joy in "making up" after a friendship has been broken, but that is the best friendship which has never been broken.

Few thoughtful people will deny the necessity of child conversion or the fact of it; the point which must be guarded is the method of it. Child conversion meets all the needs of childhood. Christ can be trusted to do all that needs to be done by divine help for the children who are taught to commit their lives to him. But it is absurd as well as mischievous to expect or require an adult conversion of a child. It is right here that the pastor has the opportunity of safeguarding the religious life of his Sunday school children and also getting them to have that wholesome and natural view of religion that Jesus meant they should have when he said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The pastor's preaching in the pulpit on the nature and manifestations of child religion will go a long way toward se-

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curing the intelligent cooperation of both church and home in the spiritual culture and care of children. But the point that needs to be guarded most is what may be required as a condition or expression of child conversion. When anything more is expected than the nature and age of childhood would warrant, it is not help but hindrance. It is far better for the pastor to be misunderstood by a few adults who try to standardize all conversions by their own, however well meant their position is, than to mislead a large number of young people so that they will profess an experience that they do not have, and therefore be more or less insincere, or else to prevent them from becoming Christians at all, because the "experience," as it is called, lies outside of their world. A child's religion must be like a child's education, on the plane of his comprehension and needs. Nothing is more simple, beautiful, and workable than child religion, if it is not perverted by being made so mature that the child cannot grasp it. If the pastor wants to have a sane, real and

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useful religion in the life of his young people, he must guard with the utmost vigilance the first steps in their Christian experience.

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CHAPTER II

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S OPPORTUNITY

THE superintendent's opportunity for evangelism is better seen in his general attitude toward the supreme end of all Sunday school work than in any particular thing that he may do or fail to do. His helpfulness is shown sometimes by simply taking himself out of the way; that is, in not being an obstructionist. If a superintendent is hostile to Sunday school evangelism, either because he does not understand it, or because he does not appreciate its importance, or because he cannot handle it, he will make Sunday school evangelism very difficult, for he can greatly embarrass the work either by interference or indifference; that is, he can so work his program that it will not admit of evangelistic effort or give evangelism an opportunity. If he is sympathetic toward Sunday school evangel-

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ism, general and specific, he will organize the school to that end. He will select teachers best qualified for that work, he will plan the weekly program with that end in view. He will talk with his teachers about it; he will have a list of all the unconverted members of the school; he will hold teachers' prayer meetings to keep them in a sustained state of preparation for that particular sort of work. The good effect of an evangelistic appeal or emphasis by the teachers is often dissipated by an incongruous closing exercise. The superintendent knew little, and perhaps cared less, for what went on in the classes, and he arranged his closing exercises without any reference to what the teachers were trying to do. In the Sunday school the superintendent is the head master; and if he has strong leadership, he can make the school about what he wants it to be. The program for the weekly session of the school is very important. The opening and closing exercises which appear in Sunday school literature or in Sunday school hymnals are general, and may

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be taken only as a guide. They are made for use in any Sunday school, and from the nature of things can be adaptable only in a general way. There are special exercises for Thanksgiving, Missions, Temperance, Christmas, Easter, Children's Day, and for occasional patriotic services, and sometimes for Decision Day. But all these special days taken together occupy only a relatively small part of the Sunday school year, and they can be taken as exceptions for which room may be made in the Sunday schools' general policy. The trouble with many schools is that they have no policy. They meet in a perfunctory way and go through routine work with treadmill fidelity, but with treadmill monotony and deadness. Little is expected; less is done.

The wise superintendent who is alive to his opportunity, who realizes that the supreme end of Sunday school work is the conversion and spiritual culture of the young life of the church and community, and that all Sunday school methods are means to that end, will plan his program for each Sunday with as much care as

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the minister prepares for his pulpit or the good teacher, prepares the lesson. So that any Sunday, on a few minutes' notice, could be made a Decision Day with but very little rearrangement of program. A superintendent who does not plan his program for every week cannot hope to have anything that is worth while done in his Sunday school. Many superintendents are busy men, but no interests are more vital than the spiritual welfare of the young life committed to their leadership. If the superintendent believes that the end of all Sunday school work is spiritual, and that the program of the school is to help the teacher to make the spiritual appeal more effective, then he will make his closing exercise such that any spiritual impression made during the lesson can easily be conserved. A carefully prepared program is even more important with the graded lessons than with the international lesson system when all the school studied the same lesson. A brief review of the lesson by the superintendent, pastor, or some other competent person might not only save the day

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against much faulty and indifferent teaching, but could keep the evangelistic emphasis naturally before the school. The graded lesson system does not preserve that unity in the school, and the program of the session must preserve the unity where the lessons do not. The superintendent may select a brief Scripture lesson, select the hymns, and keep the prayer offered by himself or by somebody else appropriate; then have the closing service complete the opening service, climaxing as nearly as possible the general truth of the day's teaching, but climaxing specifically the truth embodied in the Scripture lesson, the hymns, and prayer in the session program.

It would not be well to stress the evangelistic emphasis every Sunday, but the whole atmosphere of the school should be kept so sympathetic toward it that it would be natural and easy for any teacher on any Sunday to make an evangelistic appeal in the class. In a Sunday school which is awake to its opportunity it will be a Decision Day every Sunday in some class.

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If Sunday school buildings were erected for serious Sunday school efficiency, there would be a large assembly room, like in the public school, where the opening and closing exercises could be held, with special rooms and full equipment where the teaching could be done. Under such conditions the worship part of the session could be planned so as to head up in several special or Decision Days, as Rally Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas, Easter and Children's Day. The program could be made progressive and cumulative. No matter what the lessons might be in the separate rooms, unity, progress, and purpose could be maintained in the worship part of the program. More could be done for Sunday school evangelism under such conditions than under the conditions that now obtain in many schools. The worship part of the program would be more like a church service, only much more brief, and in it the superintendent and pastor could cooperate very closely. Order could more easily be kept and the spirit of reverence cultivated, which is sadly lacking in many

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Sunday schools. But as we have not ideal buildings—indeed, in most cases very badly arranged and worse-equipped Sunday school rooms—we must do the best we can under great disadvantages.

A careless or thoughtless superintendent will often not only defeat good teaching but make evangelistic effort almost impossible by allowing all sorts of interruptions to come to the teachers. He will permit visitors to be taken through the school during the lesson period, or the secretary or treasurer or librarian, when they have one, to move among the classes during the lesson period. That is as fatal to good teaching as it is to spiritual impression. The superintendent should take for granted that the teacher takes his task seriously, and should not allow him to be interrupted. A superintendent may also err by letting almost any visitor that comes along address the school. Many a fine impression made by the teacher is wholly dissipated by a ridiculous story told by a stray visitor who is asked to address the school. Of course it goes without saying that the superintendent

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should personally know the members of his school as the pastor does the members of his church. He should know something of their home life, their school or business—in a word, their life between Sundays. Much of this information could be gotten by the personal effort of the superintendent himself; much of it he could get from his pastor and his teachers. He can meet small groups of his teachers frequently to talk over the unconverted members of their classes, find out what the teachers are doing to reach their pupils, that will help him the better to plan his session program for the school. He will find many ways to help the pupils and seek for opportunities to talk to them privately about the Christian life. He can also guard the whole policy of the school so that the Christian life will be clearly the ideal and goal of Sunday school effort. This makes the office of superintendent very important and responsible, but it is the opportunity of the office.

Teachers' prayer meetings led by the superintendent are not only an important

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matter but one of the most useful things a superintendent can do to keep his teachers sympathetic toward Sunday school evangelism, and also to deepen their own spiritual passion to be soul-winners. The most wholesome and effective Sunday school revivals are often born in teachers' prayer meetings. Here the pastor can often be called in to give brief talks on personal evangelism. In this way many a timid teacher can learn the art of approaching members of her own class on the subject of the Christian life.

If the superintendent feels that he is the lay pastor of the young life of the church, and that he is responsible for the spiritual leadership of his young church, namely, the Sunday school, he will leave nothing undone which he is capable of doing or getting done that will promote the spiritual welfare of the Sunday school. Giving the spiritual the right of way in the Sunday school without making it obnoxious or morbid is a very important matter—but it can be done by a superintendent whose whole heart is in the work and who fully appre-

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ciates the greatness and importance of his evangelistic opportunity.

A superintendent may be pardoned for his just pride in his success in increasing the membership of his school; but he is to be most heartily commended for his efforts to increase the membership of the Kingdom by endeavoring to win or in having won to Christ every boy and girl committed to his care. No man has a better chance than he to put the molding touch of Christian influence on the raw material of the kingdom of God.

The superintendent may easily take advantage of missionary Sundays, which come every month in most schools, to emphasize evangelism. A good missionary program with an interesting speaker who could create missionary enthusiasm would go a long way toward making that Sunday a Decision Day. The heroism and glory of missionary work, the great need of increasing the number of workers in non-Christian lands, the opportunities in the wise investment of young lives in Christian service in mission fields in teaching, preaching, medicine, law, business,

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etc., could form the basis of a strong evangelistic appeal. The superintendent could utilize all such opportunities by planning a long way ahead for them, always keeping in mind their evangelistic value. He could secure prominent men who have made a success in business or the professions to address the school on the relation of character to success in life or some such topic as would show that the advantages of life are on the side of the Christian. If these men—lawyers, doctors, authors, business men, generals, travelers, etc.—made a success of life because they were Christians it would mightily predispose boys and young men who have a notion that religion hinders in life rather than helps to become Christians. The superintendent could be on the constant look out for such men, as he might mingle with them in business or meet them at gatherings where they were speakers. In this way he could not only keep his school abreast of the live questions of the day, but also show how Christian character is related to the solution of world problems. Christianity

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could be shown not only to be basic to the highest human happiness but also to the largest human success. That would make evangelism popular because it would make religion essential.

The superintendent also can make a large indirect contribution to the spiritual success of the school. Teachers often get discouraged; pupils get dissatisfied or indifferent; parents get offended because of something that they heard about their children in the school; departmental heads in the school may become jealous of one another, and compete in an unwholesome way rather than cooperate, and so disturb the whole spirit and work of the school. Now, when such conditions prevail it is the superintendent who must not only straighten out the tangles but sweeten the ruffled tempers and get all working harmoniously and with good will again. That will help to keep the school in a temper and attitude favorable toward evangelism. The superintendent must not only be a man of strong Christian character but a man of rare diplomacy, to keep the evangelistic spirit alive and effective

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in the school. When pupils love and trust their superintendent they will confide to him many of their early religious problems, and especially when they first go to business and are faced with some of the subtle temptations of double dealing. The superintendent can be of invaluable help to them then. He can closely watch the effect of business on the boys and girls who have not become Christians, and any tendency that he may discover which will take them out of the school or from such wholesome influences he is prepared to check by having private conversations with them. He is to lay siege to that sixty per cent that go out of the school unsaved and devise means to stop that leak. He can have a small, carefully selected advisory council, made up of a few of his wisest and best teachers and the pastor, to help him make plans for safeguarding the spiritual life of the school. He may also have a like council of equally carefully selected parents to devise means of deepening the religious life in the home, and bringing them into close and sympathetic

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cooperation with the school. This council can study the home problems of the children, their work, recreation—in a word, their lives between Sundays—and make such provision for the children as will help to make permanent the religious impressions made on them in Sunday school. A larger interest in the home by the school reacts in a large interest in the school by the home.

This may seem like making a large task for the superintendency. It *is* a large task, a heavy responsibility, but it is a great opportunity. To have from a hundred to three thousand young lives committed to one's religious oversight creates a task, imposes a responsibility, but offers an opportunity. A superintendent cannot afford to take his work lightly, to imagine that a Sunday school will run itself, that children and young people will take the initiative in becoming Christians and joining the church. The success of the school on Sundays will depend in a large measure on the thoroughness of the work done for it between Sundays. The best conducted Sunday school is the

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school that is best planned. The most successful Decision Day services are those that result from the constant and consistent evangelistic work that is done by pastor, superintendent, teacher, and parent, right through the year. But it is upon the shoulders of the superintendent that the chief weight of the planning, organizing, and conducting the school will rest. He must shape its policy, he must set its standard and define its goal; he must enlist the cooperation of teachers and pupils to maintain the standard and attain the goal. If thoughtless people will pity the superintendent, wise people will envy him. He is the lay pastor of a great young church, in whose membership are the young men and women whose moral leadership is the hope of the world.

The superintendent who has taken his work as formal needs to see that it is vital; who has looked upon his office as a convenience must take it as an opportunity to do a work for God and the world that will tell on the coming ages. The evangelistic opportunity of the superintendent must be reinterpreted in the

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light of the changed conditions of to-day and a new emphasis put upon it, if the Sunday school meets the challenge of the modern world.

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CHAPTER III

THE TEACHER'S OPPORTUNITY

THE teacher is the key person in the Sunday school. He can help or hinder the work of the school more than anyone else. If the teachers cannot be swung into line, it will be hopeless to try any evangelistic work in the school. The teacher is the personal point of contact with the pupil. The end of all Sunday school teaching is to bring the pupil into right relation to God; in other words, to make the pupil a Christian. If the teacher clearly realizes this and is sympathetic toward it, Sunday school evangelism is easy, for in a more or less direct way the teacher will be doing that kind of work all the time. If the teacher is either indifferent or hostile to it, he can make all the efforts of the pastor and superintendent of little value. He can even make the work of the home of small effect.

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Just because religion is so much neglected in the home the teacher has the first and best chance at the child for evangelism as well as cultural work. A wise teacher can keep the evangelistic emphasis strong right through the year without ever making it obtrusive. The subject of personal religion is always introduced, and needs only the special occasion like Decision Day to focus all the preparatory lines of personal efforts toward the actual commitment of the pupil's life to Christ. This work will not be a drudgery but a joy if the teacher takes an interest in the individual members of the class. Some teachers have been very successful in winning all their classes to Christ by making a prayer list of all the unconverted, and praying for them daily. Then whenever a good opportunity presented itself to have private talks with individual members of the class about the Christian life, the teacher gladly took it. Some teachers who have won all members of one class to Christ ask for other classes in which were a large number of unconverted members, and

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when they have won them, they ask for still other classes. Such teachers are the most successful Sunday school evangelists we have. A few of them in any school would be of inestimable value, and if even a fair minority of such teachers were in all the Sunday schools of the church, church membership would quickly and easily be doubled. A teacher who has won the love and confidence of the members of the class can do almost anything that ought to be done with them. The teacher comes nearer to them than the pastor or superintendent does, and can do more with them and for them than they can. If pupils go through the school without becoming Christians, then teachers are more at fault than anyone else, at least in the school. It may seem hard on the teachers to place such heavy responsibilities on them, but that has a hopeful side as well, for if the pupils do become Christians, more credit is due the teachers than anyone else in the school. That balances the matter.

✓ Too much, however, must not be expected of teachers. Many teachers are

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poorly equipped for the best kind of teaching, for they have meager education and very limited library facilities. Many of them are busy people and have little time to devote to lesson study. They are to be highly commended for their fidelity to their tasks under such serious handicaps. But while they may not be great successes as teachers from the standpoint of pedagogy, they may be remarkably successful as soul-winners. Fortunately, a passion for souls does not depend upon education, nor does even great sagacity in soul-winning depend upon it. Sunday school evangelism can be engaged in by teachers of all degrees of teaching efficiency. Other things being equal, however, the best-trained teacher ought to be the best evangelist. The best evangelism does not come as a spurt occasionally in a teacher's experience, but it inevitably comes out of the teacher's whole program of work. The lessons are prepared to that end. The evangelistic emphasis is progressive and cumulative. It is the general policy of the teacher, but specific opportunities

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are sought when the matter of personal religion can be brought directly to the pupil, or to the class as a whole.

For the teacher the evangelistic preparation will come through three avenues. First, through the teaching of a book, the Bible. It ought to be taken for granted that one who assumes the responsibility of teaching a Sunday school class ought to know the Bible as a book, that is as a whole, not little isolated fragments of it. Unfortunately, that is not often true. Lesson helps have something to do with it. Teachers do not use their Bibles as much as they should. They use their lesson leaves or journals instead. Many teachers never bring their Bibles to class, neither do the pupils, so neither teacher nor class gets acquainted with the Bible as a book either to understand it, love it, or have a reverence for it. That is a distinct loss in a Bible school. Many times the key to the lesson does not lie in the text which is on the lesson leaf, but in the context which could be profitably studied if the teacher and class had their Bibles in their

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hands during the study of the lesson. A love and reverence for the Bible powerfully predisposes people, young and old, to follow its precepts. The Bible message comes to such people with an authority that is not questioned and with an appeal that is compelling. Nothing creates a love and reverence for the Bible like a knowledge of it. It can be made the most fascinating book in the world to the pupils, if they are made familiar with it. It is a book of wonder that appeals to the wonder-loving age. It is a book of fascinating stories, of intrepid heroes, of lofty ideals, of great friendships, of fine courage, of practical conduct, of inspiration and comfort. Too often the Bible has been a "far-off" book, that had little to do with life except to pronounce its judgments. Its divinity has been missed because it has not been made human enough to get near to people, especially young people. Young people too often think of it as a book of comfort and hope for good old people who are almost through with life. The picture in their minds of the use of the

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Bible, is grandfather or grandmother in the old rocking chair with the open Bible in his or her lap, and they think that when they get old and infirm and are done with the world, have had their good times, made their fortunes and lived their lives, that they too will love the Bible. It never occurs to them that the Bible can be their inspiration while they are having their good times, that it is a book of ideals by which they can shape their career, a manual of practical conduct while they are making their fortunes, a challenge and incentive to best things while they are living their lives, the foundation of their broadest culture, the key to the world's best literature, art and music, as well as treasure house of hope and consolation for old age. They think of the Bible as too serious, august, austere for youth. It is a good book for the preacher to take texts from in the pulpit, a book out of which they must read a chapter daily to keep God from being angry with them, etc. They have not been made to see the beauty, manifoldness, and power of that wonderful book

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that has built itself into the best life of the world. They think of the men and women of the Bible as extraordinary or superhuman beings, who had no experiences like ours, and therefore we can have no experiences like theirs. So the Bible is a book apart from the ordinary experiences of mankind. They think that God used to talk out loud and appear in visible form to the people of the Bible, but that God no longer comes near to men or speaks to them as he did in the olden times. The teacher has a rare opportunity to introduce the Bible in a new, practical, and captivating way to the alert and eager minds of the class. They can be made to hear God talking again to men and women and boys and girls. They can be made to feel that God is as near to them as he was to Miriam and Samuel, to David and Paul, to Mary and Lydia. They must be made to feel that God speaks by his word through the preacher of to-day, as certainly as he did through prophet or apostle, if he is equally consecrated. His inspiration may not be in the same

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degree, but he must have the same kind of inspiration to interpret the mind of God out of the Bible that prophets and apostles had to reveal the mind of God in the Bible. The Bible is a book full of God, and it meets all the needs of all our life for religious purposes. The teacher can make the members of the class feel at home in the Bible, and see how natural and right it is to walk with God, and work for God, and love and trust God now as in Bible times. That keeps the evangelistic opportunity always at the front, and it can be used specifically almost any time without going far afield to introduce it. Some one has put it something like this: "Those who are at home in the Bible live next door to God." It is easy to talk personal religion to those who are familiar with the Bible. The examples of high religious living are numerous in the Bible, and can be used easily to illustrate the beauty and power of the life lived in the will of God. But there are also many examples of those who were indifferent or hostile to God, and the tragedy of their lives

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can be pointed as warnings. A large intelligent use of the Bible both by teacher and pupil makes the evangelistic appeal easy and natural at any time. That is a very great advantage, particularly to a timid teacher.

The teacher easily can show that the Bible is not a Sunday book, but a book that is intimately related to everyday life. It has its message for home, business, school, recreation, sickness, friendship, war, politics, marriage, worship—indeed, it is a book of life. That makes the Bible so useful and practicable a book that its counsels can be heeded in all matters because it deals so sanely and helpfully with all matters. The Bible has a program for children, youth, middle age, old age. The teacher can make this practical use of the Bible so attractive that it becomes an indispensable book.

If our young people in the Sunday school were taught the practical value of the Bible to all life, their faith in it would not so often be shaken when they meet some of its academic difficulties in college.

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The teacher may not be able to master the critical problems of scholarship that have grown up around biblical study in recent years, but he can point out the practical moral value of the Bible that remains, whatever becomes of the critical problems. The moral excellence of the Bible can be lived, and its spiritual counsels followed whether all of its academic problems can be solved or not. It is not the good fortune of many of our Sunday school teachers who must do evangelistic work in the Sunday school to be thoroughly familiar with the findings of modern scholarship on the Bible. It would be very desirable if they could be, but that is out of the question. It is more important for the average Sunday school teacher who is not technically trained, if he is to be a successful Sunday school evangelist, to know the dynamics of the Bible than to know its academics; that is, to feel its religious power rather than to have mastered its critical problems. The pupils who are to be won to Christ ought to be won before they reach the age when the critical difficulties of the Bible become

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serious to them. The critical problems, so far as they are important to a better understanding of the Bible, may be carefully handled by the pastor when he is training those already won to Christ in their preparation for church membership, and in the Christian character. But a knowledge of these technical matters is not essential to the winning of the pupil to Christ, and that is the supreme end of the Sunday school teacher's work. Even with adult classes it is not necessary to go into the critical questions of biblical scholarship in order to show the reasonableness and necessity of the Christian life, however interesting and profitable it might be in the interpretation of the lesson from week to week. Love and service to God and man do not depend on the last findings in biblical scholarship. It would be a great thing if all Sunday school teachers could be first-class biblical scholars. There ought to be a department in our theological seminaries where Sunday school teachers could be trained in biblical scholarship for their task, just as the ministers are trained

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for theirs, and it is earnestly hoped that such a provision will soon be made. The only point that is raised in this book is that the immediate work of Sunday school evangelism by the teacher does not have to wait on that special training. The teacher who loves God, and loves his Bible, and loves his class, can make such use of the Bible as will make it an open door of opportunity for evangelism in his class.

Critical questions of biblical interpretation may be very important and profitable for Christians in their lifetime study and use of the Bible, but they are not requisite to that most important of all life choices—the choice of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour. A personal experience of the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the heart is the most powerful incentive to thorough and diligent Bible study. But no teacher can inspire such a love of Bible study in his pupils or lead them to a hearty and willing acceptance of its precepts who only uses it in an indifferent and haphazard way himself. He needs to study it, live in it till he be-

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comes saturated with it and gets so familiar with its whole range and outlook that he gets a biblical imagination; that is, till he can see its places, know its people, feel its truth—in a word, till the Bible becomes instinct with life to him. Then he can make it a book quivering with life and interest to his pupils. He can make them hear the old prophets speak again; he can make them walk with Jesus, until the Bible becomes the most real book in the world to them.

But how can a teacher get the time to do it? One half of the time that is spent daily on the newspaper, in a few years would do it. A pocket Testament read on the trains to and from business would greatly help to that end. One chapter in the morning and one in the evening would surprise one on how much information it would bring. Rising ten minutes earlier in the morning, and retiring fifteen minutes later at night, would help toward that end. A wise use of unoccupied moments would work wonders in giving the teacher not only a wide field of biblical knowledge but a

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ceaseless joy in Bible study. To spend a half hour on Sunday with Amos, Isaiah, or Paul would make it easy to ask if God ever called any of the pupils to a life of service. A lesson period spent with Jesus in some of the beautiful incidents of his life would make it easy to ask the pupils if they wanted to help Jesus make their country the Holy Land and their city the Holy City. To follow Paul on one of his missionary journeys would make it easy to ask if some one in the class did not receive the call to be a missionary. A happy familiarity with the Bible and the ability to make it vivid to the class gives the teacher a constant opportunity to make the evangelistic appeal.

The Bible makes religion and service so real and vital that the appeal to religion and service is always opportune. It may be that some of the bright boys and girls of high school age may be puzzled by the low ethics of some parts of the Old Testament. If the teacher is familiar with the Bible as a whole, he can quickly correct the low ethics of the Old

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Testament with the Sermon on the Mount, and those hard pictures of the war God, or the severe Judge of the Old Testament, by the revelation of a loving and forgiving Father God, in Jesus Christ. The Bible interprets and corrects itself if you give it time and are patient till it has said its last word. We do not judge the excellence of a fruit before it is ripe. Neither should we pronounce on parts of the Bible till we get the whole message before us. We will find that most of the hard pictures belong to the earlier stages of revelation; that is the green stage of the fruit. Its richness and sweetness as a ripe fruit of revelation, are found in Jesus Christ.

That broad and sympathetic use of the Bible in the class will give the teacher a weekly opportunity for quiet and tactful evangelism in the class, which will climax with great success on Decision Day.

The second avenue of approach is to *exemplify a life*; that is, the Christian life. The best way for the teacher to make

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the Christian life attractive to his pupils is to live his own Christian life attractively. Such a life makes its own appeal. It is a constant challenge. An example makes a much more powerful appeal than a precept does, especially to young people. If the pupils see the principles of right living which are laid down in the Bible exemplified in their teacher's life, so that the Christian life is a real one that can be lived every day, they are more than half won already. To many people the real Christian life seems like a beautiful ideal that all people might covet, but that nobody can live. Happy is that teacher who is his pupils' ideal of the Christian life realized. Perhaps no hour of the teacher's life in the whole week will be more sorely tried than the class hour in the Sunday school. To keep good-natured, patient, firm, self-mastered under provocation, tactful and sympathetic; to have a keen sense of humor and a high sense of reverence, is to go a long way toward showing the pupils what a strong, sensible, noble, and unselfish life the Christian life is. That

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will also mightily predispose the pupils toward accepting that life for themselves. When a pupil says, "If my teacher is a Christian, I want to be one," a great deal has been accomplished by the teacher in living the truth of the lessons he teaches. Young people do not pay much attention to theory, but they are profoundly impressed by examples. One regiment of soldiers from overseas marching through the street will do more to fire boys in the "teen" age with a soldier spirit than the committing to memory of a whole manual of arms. They want action, that which catches the eyes and stirs the imagination. They are in the age of adventure, and it is the concrete that appeals to them. To them the Christian life seems like a weak, other-worldly life, without the red blood, fine courage and dash that are so much needed in the rough-and-tumble life of to-day. They think that a Christian might teach a Sunday school class, lead a prayer meeting, or visit a hospital, but to play football or swim the Hudson, or imperil his life in some great adventure, never! A real Christian seems to

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a boy of fourteen about half human, half angel; yet it is at just that age that the lad is most susceptible to the Christian appeal. More boys and girls at that age could be won to Christ if they saw more of virile Christianity. Here the teacher has a great opportunity to show his pupils that the Christian life is the strongest, bravest, most unselfish, most virile, most human life there is. It has all that dash and daring of the world's greatest heroes; it has the clear judgment and far-sightedness of the most successful business men. It can fight battles, play games, endure hardness, and yet be tender, patient, peace-loving, and forgiving. It can be shown to be the ideal life.

Teachers, therefore, should be chosen with the greatest care, not only for their ability and willingness to teach but for their stalwart, rugged, and exemplary Christian life. A teacher will have great difficulty in impressing the noble religious truths of the Bible on his pupils, if his own life belies his teaching. He ought to talk about the Christian life as naturally and easily as he does about the

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weather. He needs to show his pupils that his religion is not put on for Sunday purposes, but that it is his life, as natural, wholesome, and attractive as his health is. Religion is not his—it is himself. The silent force of his own noble Christian life is constantly molding the lives of his pupils Godward. Religion is so much a matter taken for granted by the teacher that the pupils never think of him as obnoxious or obtrusive when he talks about it. He just lives it naturally, strongly, beautifully, and everybody knows it. A teacher may not be able to have a fine education, but he can have a radiant Christian experience, and he can make it so winsome that everybody who knows him will want to have his kind of religion. Common sense and sympathy are great assets in the teacher's equipment as a soul-winner.

The pupils more often than not think of religion in terms of "restraints" and "don'ts." They think it is all a matter of giving up and self-denial, and that does not strongly appeal to them. The teacher can show by his own life the

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liberty and privilege side of religion. Nothing is to be given up but sin, nothing is denied one but wrong. The teacher can so enter into all that is right and good, can have and enjoy all that is beautiful and true, that there seems to be little place or need in his life for the "don'ts" and "restraints" of which the pupils are afraid. They see him have all the joys and none of the regrets of life. He has so much to do and enjoy that he never feels the "restraints" of religion. Now, when he sits before his class all the fine theory of his teaching is vitalized and enforced by the power of his noble example. It will not be difficult for him to lead his class into his kind of Christian living. Much as the pupils will study their Bibles opened and made fascinating by the teacher, they will study him more.

The third avenue of approach is to introduce a Person. That Person is God. Nothing is more important in preaching or teaching than to give congregations and classes right views about God. To most people God does not appear to be anywhere around, and they are glad of

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it, for they would be afraid of him if he were. They do a good many things that they do not want God to see, and say a good many things that they do not want God to hear, and think a good many things that they do not want God to know. So they are glad that God is not around. God must be brought down out of the sky and so related to the life of the pupil that his joy rather than his terror will be in God's nearness. The teacher out of his warm personal experience of God must talk about him as though he were right there in the class—and so he is. To many people, both old and young, God only means the word of three letters, G-O-D. They have no sense of his personal presence. Young children do. To them the personal presence of God is very real, unless they have been falsely taught. Their faith is the most beautiful in the world. Their prayers are real conversations with the God who they feel is very near. But as they grow older their skies begin to lift, and their God recedes till he is lost in the dim somewhere, nobody knows where. If the

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home and Sunday school closely cooperate, even though the sky lifts, God does not recede, and children never lose their sense of his presence. That is one of the greatest things that can be done for a child—never to let him lose his sense of nearness of God. But in most cases God has slipped away by the time children reach the intermediate age, so the teacher must reinterpret God to them, so they will come again to have the sense of his presence. The teacher can often make the pupils feel the nearness of God by the way he prays to him. He talks to God as if he were as near as any of the pupils. The teacher can frequently offer a minute prayer during the lesson period, when he is teaching some matter of personal religion. He can say, "Let us ask God about it," and then talk to a present God as naturally as to a present friend, only with a reverence becoming such a closeness to God. Let those young people see that God is to be loved and trusted, not to be feared and shunned. The teacher can show them that God is so infinitely good and gracious that all

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they can ever do for him will not repay his goodness to them. The most reasonable thing in the world for them to do would be to give him their lives. God as Father, and Christ as Saviour and Brother, are to be made so near and so real that it would be, a most unnatural thing not to become a Christian. Too often young people think of Christ as the Christ of the New Testament, back in the first century, before the crucifixion. They have their conception of him as he was then. But they need to be taught how strong and brave he was as well as how gentle and loving. He is to be made their Hero of strength as well as their Ideal of love. Young people want a hero. Art often has represented Jesus as though he were good but not strong, gentle but not brave. That is not the impression that Jesus made on his age. Near the close of his life he asked his disciples what men's impression of him was, whom they took him to be; and the disciples gave the impression that Jesus had made on the men of his day; some said that he was Elijah, some Jeremiah, some John the

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Baptist—three of the most outstanding types of courage, strength, and independence known in their history (see Matt. 16. 14). Jesus impressed men with his strength and courage. The teacher can easily present Jesus not only as the Saviour of his pupils but also as their ideal Hero. The teacher deals with hero-worshippers, but here is One who is a Hero and can be worshiped. The teachers can render great service to the boys and girls in the Sunday school by giving correct ways of thinking about God. They need to realize the nearness of God as an all-powerful loving Father, and of Jesus, not as a first-century Hero, but as a present-day Hero-Saviour who is setting up his kingdom of righteousness, justice, freedom, brotherhood, and peace in the world, and who wants these young people to help him do it. A right view of God and Christ is an evangelistic appeal itself which few can resist. The call to a noble heroic service of kingdom-building also can be made a powerful appeal to young people bubbling over with energy and enthusiasm. And when those appeals are

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combined and offered by a teacher who has opened up the Bible in its beauty and power, and who himself exemplifies all that is rugged and noble in the Christian life, the result can only be one thing—that most, if not all, of the class will make a strong and intelligent decision for Christ. That kind of teaching and teachers will make Decision Day inevitable, and Sunday school evangelism a natural and constant experience in the school.

No insistence is here made on technical scholarship, or any of the unusual intellectual or social gifts that only a few possess, but just on those homely qualities that any Sunday school teacher who has consecration, tact, patience, and diligence can cultivate and use. It is not an impossible nor an improbable task for the willing teacher who wants to bring his class to Christ. This, then, is the third avenue of approach—the introduction of a Person.

The Bible is the precept, the Life is the example, and the Person is the power in the evangelistic approach to the pupil. The right use of the teacher's evangelistic

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opportunity in the Sunday school would revolutionize the religious life of the school and quickly double or treble the membership of the church.

It is difficult to estimate the good that could be done in advancing the Kingdom if pastor, superintendent, teacher, and parent all cooperated to save the whole young life of the church, Sunday school and home for God. There is no reason why this should not be done. It must be done if all these forces are to meet the challenge that Jesus gives to them to meet the great needs, and settle the serious problems of this restless and dangerous age. The hope of to-morrow lies in the evangelization and culture of those who to-day are twenty and under.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PARENTS' OPPORTUNITY

THE cooperation of the home with the Sunday school in the matter of evangelism is so important that it is surprising that more is not made of it. The home turns its responsibility over to the Sunday school and often thinks that the matter ends there. It really only begins there. The Sunday school takes the initiative in the religious training of the child, but its work will be greatly hindered, even thwarted, if the home does not do its full share of follow-up work. The Sunday school has become a necessity in the spiritual interest of the child because family worship, with its attendant religious instruction, largely has fallen into disuse in these days. This is not wholly due to indifference on the part of the parents; unfortunately, it is in many cases, but not in all cases. The present industrial conditions make it im-

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possible for many families to all be together at any one time, either week-day or Sunday, to make family worship possible. If the family is large and there is any considerable difference in the ages of the children, they go to business or school at different hours and return at different hours. Some are away most of the year at school. Some who are in business get home only occasionally for a week-end. So there can be no habit of family worship established under these conditions. That leaves religious instruction very largely to the Sunday school and makes it more and more difficult for the parents to approach their children on the subject of religion. That makes cooperation with the Sunday school fundamental if the child is to receive the full measure of religious culture to which he is entitled. The parents and teachers can keep closely acquainted with what is being done in the home and in the Sunday school. If the parents know what the teachers are doing for the religious welfare of their children in the Sunday school, Sunday afternoon would be a

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good time for the parents to follow up the work of the teacher. The subject would always be introduced, and it would be easy to talk about it. If the teacher knew that the child would get sympathy and help at home, he or she could give the child some questions to ask and have answered at home. Some helpful course of Bible-reading could be planned by the teacher that would supplement in the home the instruction in the Sunday school. The suggested readings would be on spiritual culture and service rather than along the line of the lesson. It would be devotional to help home religion rather than a Sunday school session in the home. If the aim of the teacher was the conversion and culture of the child, and if the parents would cooperate with the teacher—and, surely, they ought to cooperate in a work like that—these home readings would bear on that point rather than follow the usual course of “Home Readings” adopted by the Sunday School Lesson Committee. We are thinking here of how the home and Sunday school can cooperate in the work of Sunday school

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evangelism. If cooperation can be secured in that important work which is the most vital part of Sunday school work, cooperation in all other matters of Sunday school and home work can easily be secured. The incidental things will not be neglected if the main thing is well cared for. If parents can be interested in the Home Department, that will be a link binding them to the school and keeping them in sympathetic touch with all of its work. An occasional visit by the parents to the school, especially on any day when evangelism is to be emphasized by the superintendent or the pastor in the session program, would be helpful. Then the parents could easily and naturally follow up that work afterward. It might be well if on that day any definite stand had been taken by a pupil, for his teacher to call that afternoon, or go home with the parents and talk the matter all over together, and make the decision a permanent thing. Often parents think that teachers bring undue pressure to bear on the pupils in the matter of decision, and that the children are embarrassed

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before the class. This the parents will resent, and perhaps ought to if it is true; but if parent and teacher understood each other better and cooperated more intelligently and heartily, no such opposition would come from the home. Parents ought to be consulted about their children's church membership, indeed, also about their Christian life; otherwise opposition or indifference in the home may undo all the good that was done in the Sunday school. It is a matter of common knowledge that parents as a rule are more reticent to talk about the matter of personal religion to their children than about anything else. That is particularly true in homes where there is no family worship. Parents are often deeply interested in their children's religious development and long to see them Christians, but they do not know how to introduce the subject, and are sometimes afraid they might not be able to answer their own children's questions, or meet their objections if they raised any. Many times the children are far better educated than their parents, and so parents fear

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that they might not be able to answer their children's arguments, or explain to them how to become Christians. They may know little of the process themselves. Then, too, parents are often hesitant about trying to win their children to the Christian life because they feel that their own lives are not consistent and that they are poor examples of Christian living. Their children see them when they are off their guard and at such close range that their piety seems to be at a disadvantage. At any rate, parents do not often talk freely and frankly to their children about their souls.

On the other hand, the Sunday school teacher is constantly dealing with religious matters, and it is easy to press the claims of Christ on the pupils, so the parents have noble substitutes in the teachers of their children, if they will make all the home conditions as favorable as possible, to the work the teachers are doing. Taking the children to church and talking over the sermon at home, and showing how natural and happy and useful a life the Christian life is, will go a

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long way toward making home religion a natural topic of conversation. In this way children can be atmosphered in religion to such an extent that decision for Christ, as soon as that can be intelligently made, will be the inevitable thing. If nothing is done at home to stimulate religious interest, an appeal to a boy or girl to become a Christian comes as a shock, and they will wonder what will happen at home if they become Christians, or, if no objection is made, what help they can get. Does it seem too mature a step to take? Will father or mother tell them that they are too young to understand what they are doing and that they had better wait? Or will they say: "I wish your teacher would mind his own business. When it is time for you to join the church we will tell you"? Parents often object to their children becoming Christians because they think it will prevent them from having a good time, and it will make them old-fashioned and put them at a social disadvantage. Therefore it is better to wait till they are grown; then, if they want to take upon

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themselves the "restraints" of religion, it is their own affair and not the parents' fault. So they discourage children at the period of greatest spiritual susceptibility in their lives from becoming Christians. Then, after they leave the Sunday school and church too, and perhaps go wrong, the parents will blame the church and Sunday school for not holding their children to them after they are grown. The thing they do not seem to understand is that at just the time their children could be most easily won to Christ and built into the church they were the only obstacles to their children doing that very thing.

This false notion about the "restraints" of religion grows out of the unreasonable theory that a child in his teens should have the religious experience and the seriousness of a man of forty. As a matter of fact, the only life that is under a restraint that makes it unhappy and puts it at a disadvantage is the life that is not Christian. Religion to the soul is what health is to the body, just as full, robust, exuberant, radiant, natural, ener-

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getic, as perfect health is. Who would think of a parent objecting to a child being healthy because it would put him under restraint and at a social disadvantage? They do not see that what they ask for is to have their children physically healthy, but spiritually invalid. The Christian is denied nothing but sin. He is free to all that is right. He is the only free person. The crime against the child is that he has been denied by false teaching and unreasonable prejudice a type of religion adapted to his age, understanding, and needs. A child's religion is a *child's* religion, not a man's religion. It will express itself in a child's ways, but it will meet a child's needs and grow with a child's growth. The Sunday school sometimes has been criticized because it insisted that child religion should fit the child. The opposing theory seemed to be, better for the child to have no religion unless he could have a full-orbed adults' religious experience—which, of course, would be unnatural and absurd. Who wants a child to be a religious monstrosity? Yet that is what he would be if he had a

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forty-year-old religious experience in a sixteen-year-old heart.

Parents can be of incalculable help to the Sunday school if they will take the same attitude to the children's religion that they do to their education. They would not allow their children to have college work in the grammar school, nor would they refuse to have them go to grammar school because it was not college. We seem to deal sensibly with everything but religion.

Sometimes parents object to their children becoming actual Christians and joining the church because they themselves were received into church membership when they were children before they understood what it meant, and they were never taught anything about the Christian life. So they grew up in the church as nominal members without ever feeling that they were really Christian. Unfortunately, that has been too often true, but not because they were received into church membership at a tender age, but because they were neglected by pastor, Sunday school teacher, and parents. Pastors and Sunday

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school teachers to-day are more alive to the importance of the religious culture and the Christian nurture of the young than ever before, and the parents never had such an opportunity to get the best help for their children in church and Sunday school, as now, if they will make use of their own opportunity to cooperate with pastor and Sunday school teacher.

The home interest and cooperation often can be secured by letters from the Sunday school and visits by the teachers. The superintendent can also greatly help in tying the home to the Sunday school and enlisting its cooperation if, whenever a Sunday school pupil makes a decision for Christ, he, either by letter, or, better still, by a visit if possible, would show his kindly interest in the child and his joy in the great decision; and he could show the parents what an important step was taken, and how a most useful career might issue from that decision, if the child received the proper help and encouragement at home. The decision may be a work of the Sunday school, but a wholesome, natural growth in the Christian life

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is the work of the home. It is pathetic how many young Christians have to struggle up into the Christian life without any help at home, and often with a good deal of hindrance. It is said that about eighty per cent of the accessions to the Protestant churches of this country come from the Sunday schools; but that only from thirty to forty per cent of the Sunday school members become Christians. The blame here is not altogether with the teachers. It is partly shared by the home. If there were better home training, the Sunday school would yield a far higher per cent of its membership to the Christian life. The home ought to be more interested in the conversion of its own children than the Sunday school can be in the conversion of its members. When there is hearty cooperation between teacher and parent, or, more broadly, between the Sunday school and the home, a far greater work can be done in quiet and normal evangelism, which is more effective and permanent than any high-pressure type can be. The period of greatest religious susceptibility in the child would thus be

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capitalized for Christ. This is as it should be, and it shows what could be done if all parents, especially those who are Christians, and Sunday school teachers, took more interest in Sunday school, or young people's evangelism. Probably the greatest leak in the Sunday school in the middle and latter teen age is due to the gap between the Sunday school and the home. The Sunday school feels the perplexity of the problem more than the home does, but the home ought to feel it more than the Sunday school does. Parents say: "Our children are no longer interested in the Sunday school; they will not go. The teachers are dull, or the lessons are not interesting, so we will not force them to go for fear they will get disgusted with religion and church altogether." This is largely because when the young people were most ready for Christian decision nothing was done for them; then follows a rather sharp reaction which takes the form of religious indifference, or even hostility. The most difficult age to deal with is the mid-teen age, say from 15 to 18, when the arguing capacity is in excess

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of the judgment. Yet it is at this age that most decisions for Christ are made. Here young life needs direction, not repression. That abounding energy and budding logical faculty, those love-making instincts and rugged spirit of comradeship, which, if not rightly used, will become a vicious gang spirit—all this will express itself in some form. Better conserve these forces for the Christian life than to let them run wild just when the judgment is least competent to appreciate value or make wise decisions. This becomes a serious home problem which might be solved had teacher and parent gotten together one or two years earlier, when the boys or girls only needed a little encouragement to make the decision which would save them many regrets and their parents many heartaches.

Children are God's to begin with, and they remain his till they deliberately break away from him; and they do that for the most part because they do not realize its gravity, and at the critical point nobody warned them not to, nor encouraged them to make an open decision for Christ and come into the wholesome environ-

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ment of church life. The parents do not often notice the change which almost comes overnight, when the child who up to a certain point seemed so trustful, devout, prayerful, suddenly becomes indifferent or flippant, and religious things after that seem to him absurd or intolerable. When that takes place parents have missed one of the most important opportunities that will ever come to them to help their children become, or continue Christians. The father forgets that by the very fact of fatherhood he is the priest of the family, and the mother forgets that to her children she is the most perfect incarnation of God. The Sunday school is only a help or a supplement to home religious training, not a substitute for it. But it is a most valuable supplement and the home should make the most of the Sunday school help, and not forget to do its own part.

To children God is very real and Jesus is their dearest friend. They can be easily kept to that wholesome faith if the parents are themselves consistent Christians, and make religion a joyous priv-

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ilege in the home rather than an irksome task. Children can easily be taught, especially those who go to Sunday school, to do their work about the home and in the day school, for Jesus Christ's sake. It will be the same set of duties done in much the same way, but with a different motive. They should be taught that religion is their whole life, not the little part of it that they give to church and Sunday school on Sunday. Their life between Sundays is as certainly religious as on Sunday. They can be taught to study their day-school lesson for Jesus' sake as well as their Sunday school lesson; that they can play for Jesus' sake as well as pray.

Religion should never become a morbid experience with anybody, but especially with children. With them it should be the most natural, joyful, winsome thing in the world, a great love-friendship for Jesus Christ. This is for the most part a home task. But it is also a home opportunity of the most blessed sort. If religion is only for Sunday, it is a detached thing that has only a small place in life.

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Religion is life at its best whether in childhood, youth, or manhood. It is the health and soundness of the soul in friendly and loving relation to Jesus Christ. There is nothing stilted or unnatural about it. It is joyous without being frivolous, serious without being somber, courageous without being rash, loving without being sentimental, devotional without being sanctimonious. Piety is not oddity, but normality. Parents sometimes err when family worship is a home habit, by making it too long and too serious to be attractive to the children. When children dread family prayers they show their first symptom of religious indifference or hostility. A good time for family worship is to have it at the close of the morning or evening meal, or both, before the family leave the table. The New Testament is best adapted for family worship. The children may take turns in reading, or the father read. This reading can be followed by a brief prayer. If prayers are offered twice a day, they may be brief. Family worship need not take more than five minutes twice daily, and as part of the meal it will not be

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subject to the interruptions that would come at other times of the day. The beauty and sanity of the Christian life thus could be taught by precept and example. This would keep the religious atmosphere of the home so congenial that young Christian life could easily grow in it. Such home conditions would be most helpful to the Sunday school work, and in turn the Sunday school would greatly aid the home. Parents have not yet fully sensed the greatness of the opportunity to win their own children to Christ, or, better still, to prevent their children from ever leaving Christ.

One thing that parents overlook is that if children are not religious, it is not the Sunday school they are reflecting, but the home. If their bodies are underfed, they show it. Equally so if their religious nature is underfed, their dispositions will show it. The child has an inalienable right to religious instruction in the home. It is an obligation of parenthood. The state will not allow a child to grow up illiterate. It forces the parents, if they are unwilling, to send their children to school for

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a certain period. The state does it first in the interest of the child; the child is entitled to a fair chance in the world. Second, the state does it for its own protection. The uneducated become not only a burden upon the state but a menace to it. But the state leaves the religious culture of the child, which is more important than his education, wholly to the home or church. A man with education but without goodness may be a far greater menace to the state than the uneducated. Putting the weapon of education in the hands of a bad man makes him doubly dangerous. The man's moral character will determine whether he will make a right or wrong use of his education, and his religion will determine his character.

There is, perhaps, no neglect more common among children than their religious neglect. Parents do not seem to realize that children have religious rights, and that parents are not free from serious blame if they do not recognize those rights and endeavor to meet the obligations which those rights lay on them. The mere hearing of a child's prayers at

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night does not discharge the whole religious obligation of the home.

If children know little of religion, it is because they see little of it. If children are surprised when approached on the subject of religion, it is because they are taught so little of it at home. Children ought to think and talk as naturally about religion as they do about study or play. The Sunday school works at a disadvantage when its work is wholly unlike anything the child hears or sees in the home.

If parents expect strong religious characters to be developed in their child by one half-hour's religious teaching a week in the Sunday school, they expect too much both of the teacher and the child. One half-hour's play, or one half-hour's school a week would never make either a healthy or an educated child. Yet parents often seem to think that a Sunday school should do in one half-hour a week for the child's soul as much as the day school teacher does in from twenty to thirty hours a week for the child's mind. Religion shows its divinity in that so little of it goes such a long way.

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One of the things which the home must learn in the matter of child religion is that children are as capable of being good as early as they are of being "naughty." If they have the right teaching and environment, they will find it as easy to be good as they do to be bad, and they will be far happier in it. If children were taught religion at home as they are obedience and manners, every Sunday school lesson would be an appeal to their religious natures to bring them to their best. The danger to the child in the home that is not awake to its opportunity is that his religion will be ignored or suppressed.

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CHAPTER V

DECISION DAY

THE question may be asked, "If pastor, superintendent, teacher, and parents all cooperate and make full use of their evangelistic opportunities through the year, what need is there of observing a Decision Day? Would not every Sunday be a Decision Day in some class or department?" The answer is that such conditions would make a Decision Day inevitable. They would precipitate a Decision Day just as continuous evangelism precipitates special evangelism in the church. That sort of work is cumulative and tends to climax at given intervals. Nature's method is a process with a climax, seed time and harvest. So in grace the method is a process with a climax. The more thorough the process the more certain the climax. Old-time revivals were said to "break out," but they were not accidents. The preparation may have

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been, and often was, unconscious. In most, if not all, such cases some person or group of persons who were mighty in prayer had long been praying for a real and powerful spiritual awakening. A great many quickly "worked up" revivals are nothing more than a burst of emotional enthusiasm which lacks spiritual depth and permanency and whose reactions often leave the church worse off than if there had been no revival. In such cases a climax is forced without a due process. The climax is automatic and inevitable if the process has been thorough. The use of all the opportunities cited above will produce a climax, perhaps more than once a year, which can best be utilized by means of Decision Days.

Two good seasons for Decision Day would be Christmas and Easter. Both of these seasons are intensely religious by association, and the grounds for appeals at such times are both strong and natural. The general preparation for Decision Day which might be observed at Christmas time should begin on Rally Day some time late in September. In the program

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for that day the goal and ideals of the work for the Sunday school year might be stated in some effective way, so as to create an expectancy that spiritual results would be reached during the year. The main business of the school should be set forth by pastor or superintendent so that no special effort in evangelistic work at any time during the year would come as a surprise, much less would it seem like a trap sprung upon the school without notice. Anything that looks like a trap or trick is not only unworthy of so great and dignified a matter as the Christian life but it defeats its own end. People young or old despise traps and tricks especially in the matter of religion. If people are to be won to Christ—and that is the best way to make Christians—they must be won on a consciousness of their own need and the solid merit of the Christian life itself. Whatever is done must be done above board with an honesty and frankness that needs no apology, explanation, or defense. In dealing with young people, everything ought to be done that can be, to make it easy and natural for

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them to become Christians. Religion should be put to them positively, not negatively. They must be shown what they get, what they become, and what they will be able to do, rather than what they will have to give up. They must be made to see that all they have to surrender is what would ruin them if they did not surrender it, and that they take on all that is best in possession, in character, and in service. In a word, it is what they can and may do rather than what they must not do that must be emphasized. More than half of the "don'ts," perhaps all of them, would disappear from life, if we only put "do" often enough in their places to leave neither room nor desire for the forbidden things. This is especially true with young people, who have so much energy that they must spend it in some way; if not in usefulness, then in mischief.

Many classes in Sunday school are the despair of teachers, not because the boys and girls are vicious but because they are unemployed. The teacher has no program for them, and they are too full of life to be idle, so they get into mischief. That

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mischievous may become a habit and may become vicious if let alone. If so, it will be almost impossible to make any religious impression on such a class. They will have lost respect for the teacher and interest in religion and reverence for God. The Christian appeal to these energetic young people must be a challenge to a right and constant use of all that fine energy that otherwise might be abused, which would be worse than wasted. The objective of the school should be clearly stated on Rally Day, namely, that we are to seek, and be, and do the best. Announcing that high aim at the opening of the school activities in the autumn could easily and naturally be emphasized many times and in many ways through the year. It would never seem out of place or far-fetched. It easily could be shown that loyalty to Christ is the realization of that high aim. The best in all things is to give him the preeminence in all things (see Col. 1. 18). General preparation, then, for the Christmas Decision Day should begin in September, on Rally Day.

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Special preparation should begin not later than Thanksgiving Day. Much could be made of what we should be thankful for, and as the best expression of gratitude is service, the dedication of the life to Christ in service would be the best way to translate thanksgiving into *thanksgiving*. The teachers could talk freely and frankly about the goodness of God and the love of Christ, the beauties of gratitude and the opportunities for service, to their classes, and thus prepare the way for more direct and specific appeals later on.

Several weeks before Decision Day the pastor and superintendent should get together and agree on a policy and a program, so that later on there would be no misunderstanding or cross purposes which might defeat the aim of Decision Day. The superintendent and pastor must work together if the best results are to be secured on Decision Day. The policy and program once settled, then the superintendent is to swing his official staff of secretaries and treasurers—librarians too, if any—into line. They must plan their

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work so that nothing will interrupt the Decision Day program. The pastor and superintendent should each have a list of all pupils from the Junior Department up, who are not professed Christians or members of the church. These will form the special prayer list for pastor and superintendent.

For several weeks before Decision Day there should be held brief teachers' meetings for prayer. Each teacher should make a prayer list of all members of his or her class who are not Christians and pray for them daily. This method has rarely failed to produce surprisingly successful results. Praying for people by name, brings one into *rapport* with them, and creates an interest in their highest welfare better than any other one thing known to the writer. There is no better cure for prejudice, impatience, dislike, or even hatred, than to pray daily and by name for the person one does not like. Many a teacher by that same method has come to love a class, or the mischief-makers in the class, who up to that time he has disliked or dreaded, with a passion

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that would leave nothing undone that could be done to win them to Christ. Whenever a teacher's interest in the class dies out nothing will revive it like prayer for the pupils. Without this preparation Decision Day will have little permanent success, no matter how skillfully the program of the day itself may be conducted.

As Decision Day approaches, the pastor should give brief talks at the teachers' prayer meetings, on the art of soul-winning. Many teachers will be anxious to win their classes to Christ, but do not know how to do it. Much of the success in getting decisions on Decision Day will depend on the thoroughness of the work preparatory to that day. The teacher ought to have a frank private talk with each member of the class who is not a Christian, about the Christian life. When that is done many decisions will have been made before Decision Day comes, and on that day they will make an open declaration of the decision already made. Getting decisions beforehand is almost a guarantee of success in the public service

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on the day itself. The pastor should know the names of all who make those previous decisions, and the classes to which they belong. The power of suggestion rightly used is a great asset in evangelistic work, and nowhere more so than with people of Sunday school age. The open confession of Class A will often crystallize decisions in Class B. If a group of natural leaders in the school make a decision for Christ, almost always a large number of their followers will do the same thing. They wanted to all along but lacked courage till they saw their leaders take an open stand for Christ. The pastor can tell the teachers how to utilize all these small things, which when taken together become important factors in Sunday school evangelism. Teachers and pastor must be in the heartiest cooperation if the best results are to be secured. It may often happen that a few of the teachers will not attend the prayer and instruction meeting. When such is the case the pastor and superintendent should see those teachers privately first, and then get them together and swing them into line, even if

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Decision Day has to be postponed two or three weeks. If the teachers are not a unit in the work, the greatest success cannot be reached. Some teachers will resign rather than do this sort of work. That is an easy way to get rid of inefficient teachers. Take them at their word—accept their resignations. The main business of the Sunday school is the salvation and religious culture of the whole membership of the school, and the teachers who will not cooperate in that work are obstructive forces in the school, and the sooner they leave, at least as teachers, the better. The specific preparation for Decision Day will also provide for a visitation of the homes involved, so as to enlist the parents in the heartiest cooperation with the teachers.

When Decision Day arrives, an hour before the service, the entire Sunday School Board should be called together by the pastor for prayer and for a final explanation as to just what each one is to do in the program of the day. Every detail is to be made perfectly plain so that there will be no misunderstanding in

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carrying out the program. If decision cards are used, and in many cases they will be, they should be drafted in very simple form. On one side there could be this simple statement, "I have an earnest desire to become a Christian." Then leave a space for the name and address. On the other side there could be a little stronger statement: "I accept Christ as my personal Saviour, and shall endeavor to live a Christian life"; then follow the name and address. Ordinarily, too much is expected of the use of the card. It is made a substitute for conversion, and little is done after the card is signed except to enroll the parties as preparatory or full members of the church. The use of the card is to introduce the personal help that is to be given by pastor or teacher to this young person, who through the signing of the card has invited it. The card is an introduction to personal work. If personal work does not follow, then the signing of a card will be of little value. The pastor or superintendent ought to make it very clear just how he wants the cards used. Perhaps the most

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effective way to use cards in a Decision Day service, is to give each teacher enough cards to supply the whole class, no matter how many or few of them may be confessed Christians. A very important instruction is to tell the teachers to keep the cards in their desks or Bibles, and not to hand them out to the class till they are told to do so by the leader of the service, who in most cases should be the pastor. As a rule, he is the best-equipped person to do this, although many superintendents are very successful in Decision Day work. But even after the most specific instructions are given, some teachers will hand out the cards as soon as the pupils come in, and they will have made up their minds what they will do with the cards before they are explained and before the address will furnish the right motive for signing them. Very little may be expected from those classes. That is a misuse rather than a use of the cards. Great emphasis should be put, in the early meeting, on following exactly the program explained and agreed upon. The hymns for the opening service should bear strongly

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on the decision service that follows. After the opening service class records should be made, the offering taken and all other work of the school that belongs to the weekly routine, should be done, so that nothing will interrupt the decision service, or detract from it after the service closes. The message should be a simple, brief, clear appeal to the young people to surrender their lives in perfect loyalty to Jesus Christ both for his sake, and in order that they may help him save the world. Character and service should lie at the heart of the appeal. A challenge to the heroic both in character and service rarely fails to get a hearty response from young people. At the close of the address the leader takes a decision card, reads it and explains it; reads both sides, explains the more general and specific forms. Meanwhile the teachers take their cards and distribute them to all the members of their classes, so that no one will be embarrassed by being made conspicuous. The leader can then say that those who are already members of the church need not sign them, or better still say, "Those

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who are already church members write church member on the card." When this is done a few minutes may be given for the teachers to talk to their pupils. Then before the leader asks for the signing of the cards, either he or some one who can do it well, should offer a brief prayer asking God's help and blessing on what is about to be done. The cards may now be signed. This may be followed by a brief prayer asking God to set his seal upon what has been done and to help those who made their covenant with him to live up to it.

This is but one form for expressing decision for Christ. Pupils may stand or come forward, or record their decision some other way, but the general plan would be the same. After the school is dismissed all who have made a decision either by signing a card or otherwise, should be invited with their teachers to remain a short time for further counsel by the pastor and prayers by the teachers for those who have made decisions in their classes. That will tie the teacher closely to the pupil in sympathy and personal

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interest. The pastor should have a list of all pupils who made a decision and get in touch with them individually and collectively as soon as possible. The most important work of Decision Day begins after the day itself is over. After the Christmas Decision Day is over, begin to plan for the Easter Decision Day, in much the same way, except that the emphasis here should be put on the Conquering Christ, through the resurrection, just as the Christmas emphasis would be on the Condescending Christ through the Incarnation. But the preparation, both general and specific, would be the same.

In all evangelistic work the most neglected part is the most important part, namely, the "follow-up work." This is especially important in Sunday school evangelism. The home, school, and church must all be interested in the Christian culture of these young Christians. Parents, teachers, and the pastor should cooperate in the religious training of these young people. After Decision Day those who committed themselves to Christ should be put into training classes, the

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older ones in some evening class, preferably Friday evening, as that would be most free from school duties. This class, if possible, should be under the care of the pastor. The younger ones could meet some afternoon. This class could be led by the deaconess, or perhaps some capable Sunday school teacher, who may be willing to devote an afternoon a week to the training of these children in Christian character and in fitting them for church membership. The most serious loss to church membership has two causes: first, those who have come into church membership and then dropped out. Those who drop out or lapse are for the most part those who have not been properly trained, or who have not been trained at all for church membership. They come into the church without any adequate knowledge of either the privileges or obligations of church membership. They seldom take any part in church activities, give little to the support of the church, know little of its standards or ideals, care little for the honor of church membership, and so after a while lapse for want of interest

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because after their conversion they were not trained. So they are soon lost to the church, or if they do not drop out altogether, they remain in the church as nominal members, with little satisfaction to themselves and are of no use to the church.

The other cause is the failure to build into the church those who have been converted. Young people make their decision in the Sunday school, but nobody looks after them, and very many of them lapse without ever reaching church membership. Nobody takes the initiative toward their training, so they are lost to the church. The lapse from church membership and the failure to reach church membership could be almost entirely prevented if there was better "follow-up" work after Decision Days and other times of personal commitment to Christ. It will mean a great deal of work for somebody, but it will be the most blessed and fruitful work that that somebody will ever do.

✓ In the general work of conservation of Decision Day results, the home, Sunday school, and the church should contribute

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their part, but the specific work of personal training in the interest of conservation, must be done by some individual, and the best fitted person to do this work is the pastor himself. He ought to do it himself, or else have such oversight and direction of those who do, that the work will be thoroughly and effectively done. Many times the coming of the children into church membership will mean the establishment or reestablishment of family worship in the home. Teachers can make themselves invaluable as advisers and helpers to the members of their classes who become Christians. An occasional prayer service in the school participated in by the teachers for a few Sundays after Decision Day will greatly aid the religious impression made on Decision Day itself.

For the training of preparatory members a large number of useful books are now published, but it is the leader's use of the book or books, and especially his use of the Bible in the training class, that is of the first importance. No class will profit very much by any book, no matter

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how excellent it may be, if it is only put into their hands to read. The principles of the Christian life, the great truths of the Bible, the obligations and privileges of church membership, and rewards of service, must be made clear, vital, and practical, by the teacher. Thus the results of Decision Day may be conserved for the church and the Kingdom.

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CHAPTER VI

NET PROFITS

To meet the opportunities mentioned in the foregoing chapters it was seen that a great deal of painstaking work had to be done by a good many different people; not for an occasional event one or more times in the year, but steady, patient, unselfish work, day after day right through the year. The questions now arise, Is it worth while? Will it pay? That will depend on one's standard of values. There will be but little immediate financial return for the energy expended. There may be but little immediate return even in gratitude. There may be but little immediate return that will satisfy personal ambition. But there is no time or energy ever invested in any enterprise that will make a greater final return than the time and labor invested in saving the boys and girls of our homes and Sunday schools to Christ. It will mean more for

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the church and world than any other one thing that can be done. It will do more for law and order, for national prosperity, for public virtue, for good citizenship, for democracy, for industrial adjustment and good will, for world peace, than any of the workers either now or ever will realize.

Of course there will be much drudgery in it. Much of it will be thankless and disappointing, but that is true in all work that has far-reaching consequences. It is not easy to toil, and patiently wait before one sees the visible rewards of his toil. Some of those who toil most successfully will die before they see the splendid returns on their investment of brain and heart. But there is no investment of life that is more sure of a return in life's higher values than that. Teachers may not see it that way, and may get discouraged and give up, but that would be the greatest misfortune and blunder of their lives. This is a work that cannot be forced without peril. Men must learn something of the patience of God in the work of soul-winning. Souls must not be

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coerced. Love cannot be coerced, and evangelism is love's work, or it is not genuine. The writer knows a half dozen brilliant and very successful ministers, who as boys in the Sunday school in their teen age were the terror and despair of their teachers. Perhaps some of the teachers died before they even knew that their kindness, patience, and Christian fidelity later on led these restless boys to Christ. Since that time they have won hundreds of souls to Christ, built churches, shaped public opinion, written books, led reforms, swayed multitudes, gone to mission fields, comforted and strengthened thousands of sorrowing and weak people. How little did those teachers dream of the service they were rendering to God and the world when they were breaking their hearts to hold those unpromising boys in the Sunday school! Had they not held them, those restless, energetic boys might have found expression for their zeal in evil works, and they might have been star criminals of their day. If the roll could be called of the Christian ministry, and all the vast multitudes saved

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and helped by that ministry, should rise with them to bear witness as to how Sunday school teachers either personally led them to Christ, or gave them the first incentive toward the Christian life, few teachers would ever again be discouraged. Some one has yet to write a book, perhaps a library, on the contribution that the Sunday school teachers have made to the kingdom of God. What of the godly parents who kept their children from ever straying out into sin? What of mothers' prayers and fathers' counsels? It is almost impertinent to ask, "Does it pay? Is it worth while?"

But what of the teachers who had classes for years who never offered Christ to their pupils—the classes that went out not only unsaved, but unapproached? What opportunity lost! What rewards missed! Yet there are some teachers who make no effort to win their pupils to Christ; who hold their classes as an accommodation to the superintendent; who have little interest in teaching, and less in the spiritual welfare of the pupils; who dread the teaching hour and are glad

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when it is over; who do not study their lessons or know their Bibles, or pray for their pupils. Let us hope that their number is few. These lines are written so that if by chance this little book should fall into the hands of any such teacher, he might realize what an opportunity he is missing, and what a grave responsibility he is treating very lightly. Will it pay? Nothing pays so well.

The church of to-day was the Sunday school of yesterday. Does the church pay? To ask the question is to answer it. But our net profits are small compared with what they ought to be. Too much is wasted. We waste nearly sixty per cent of our material, and that sixty per cent, or much of it, is taken by the competitors of the Sunday school. That is not good business. No manufacturer would think of letting his competitor take the good material he wasted, and work it up into goods that would put him out of business. But out of the forty per cent saved we build eighty per cent of the churches; that is, about two fifths of the Sunday school builds four fifths

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of the churches. Suppose we saved the five fifths of the Sunday school—and they are the easiest people to reach and save that the church will ever have—what a church there would be to-morrow! To save five fifths of the Sunday school would mean to double the church membership. The church would go out of existence if it were not for the Sunday school. Where will the Centenary's million of conversions come from? Eight hundred thousand of them will come from the Sunday school. Will it pay? Nothing pays so well.

Our waste in young life, which is about the only raw material we have for evangelism, is appalling. In many of the great modern industries colossal fortunes have been made out of by-products, which hitherto had been wasted. They became net profits. If the sixty per cent waste in the Sunday school were saved, what a fortune in life and service could be made for the Kingdom! Teachers are foremen in the departments where these wastes occur. The superintendent of the school is the superintendent of all

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the departments where the waste occurs, and is knowing to it. The pastor is the president of the company, and knows that far more raw material is wasted than is worked up; and yet, Sunday school evangelism, which is to stop this waste, is not taken with sufficient seriousness to make it the settled weekly policy of the school, in which all the heads of departments, as in a successful business, would not only be in frequent consultation but in the heartiest cooperation. Yet in spite of all the waste, the net profits are great. If the war taught this country to conserve food and clothing and fuel, to save money—in a word, to stop waste for the good of the suffering world—ought it not also to have taught the church, by the terrible sacrifice of young life, to conserve the rising generation that is to take their places, and make them as “fit” as possible to do the world’s work in the interest of the kingdom of God? In industry it is material plus skill that stops waste and makes values. In Sunday school work it is intelligence plus goodness that stops waste and makes

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values. We have been so well satisfied with what we have gained that we hardly have noticed what we have lost. A teacher may feel happy over saving twenty per cent of his class, but does not feel humiliated over losing eighty per cent of it. The spirit of conservation now abroad in the world certainly ought to be taken seriously by the church. The Sunday school is not only a school of methods, it is also a school of origins. Not only the policies but the principles that are to be operative in the church to-morrow must have their rise in the Sunday school of to-day. Where is the place to teach larger benevolence in the church, greater missionary interest, better citizenship, more successful methods of church work, fuller knowledge of the Bible, stronger emphasis on religious education? The Sunday school. Where are students for the ministry to be sought? lifework decisions for other forms of Christian activity to be made? In the Sunday school. There is where beginnings are made whose ends are for the weal of the church and the world. The life must be saved to

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God before the best service can be rendered to man. The whole matter most naturally and reasonably lies back in Sunday school evangelism. The net profits will be in proportion to thoroughness with which the business is carried on, waste stopped, and material worked up into useful forms.

An important question that every Sunday school teacher might ask himself is, "What net profits have I turned into the kingdom of God as the result of ten years of teaching and personal endeavor to win my pupils to Christ?" Just the asking of the questions might stir up a new passion in the heart of many an indifferent teacher. The fact that national prohibition has removed one of the most dangerous menaces to the young people ought not to lessen a whit the endeavor to save the sixty per cent of the pupils who are said to go out of the school uncommitted to Christ. The removing of the menace creates a better atmosphere and environment in which evangelistic work can be done, and makes it more inexcusable if it is not done. That is

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not a well-conducted business which only pays its overhead expenses. That is not a successful army which only parades and skirmishes. That is not a successful Sunday school which only goes through routine forms and does not get the young people who are fresh, eager, earnest, committed to Christ. It is a far more dramatic thing to get an old gutter drunkard saved than it is to keep a fine boy from going to the gutter; but it is far less valuable both for the church and for the world. It is good to save the soul after the life has been lost, but it is far better to save the life so that the soul will not get lost. To conserve seventy years of life to the church is better business and better religion than to reclaim ten years to the church after sixty years have been wasted. If half of the money and effort that are expended to get people back into the church who were allowed to slip out of it were used to keep them from going out of it, there would not be so many broken-hearted pastors and parents, nor would there be such a tragic waste of life in the world. The largest

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gains and the largest losses to the church are in the Sunday school.

It is not a good thing for the church to be so busy in trying to get what it has not that there is no time or strength left to hold what it has. It is not good business to spend so much time polishing up old rusty material that it allows its bright, new material to rust out for want of use. The church should not lessen its evangelistic effort to reach those out of the church, but it should double its efforts to conserve those who are in the church. It is impossible to fill a tank by having a pipe running ten gallons a minute into it, as long as there is a pipe at the same time drawing twelve gallons a minute out of it. The thought of such a thing would be absurd. The tank will soon fill if the leak is stopped; so will the church. It takes far less effort to keep the boys and girls in the church than it does to get them back into it after they have gone out and found other interests and companions that may have no relation to or interest in the church. While they are in the church their interests and

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friends are there. The duty of the church is to make it worth while for the young people to stay in it.

As a nation we have been great wasters. It was said some years ago that our Western farmers wasted more grain than was raised in all of France. We are learning better things in these days. Our national savings have taken two forms: First, Reclamation. By artificial irrigation, thousands of acres of land which had been considered not only useless but hopeless desert have been reclaimed from their desert waste and made into gardens, pastures, and grain fields. Experimental stations have been established to show the possibilities and profits in "dry farming" when water could not easily be gotten. The productive area of the country has been greatly increased by reclamation. Second, Conservation. Much land that years ago would have been allowed to "run out" has been conserved. Our waterways, forests, orchards, useful birds, big game, etc., are being conserved as they never were before. Then better sanitary and factory laws, better work-

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ing conditions, the elimination of child labor, have been conserving human life; and with better schools, homes, and recreation centers the efficiency and happiness of mankind have been greatly increased. The net profits of these two forms of saving, reclamation and conservation, may not be easily tabulated, but they would be surprising if they could be. The same two methods of saving have been practiced by the church, but the main emphasis hitherto has been on reclamation. The chief effort has been to reach and save those who went deeply into sin; those who had become human deserts. That has been a great and blessed work. The church may well be proud of it, and the world may be grateful for it. The church must neither cease nor even lessen its reclamation work. But that work is too slow and disappointing to give much hope either to the church or to the world, if it is the only work of saving that the church does. The new emphasis must be on the other form of saving, namely, conservation. If two fifths of the Sunday school which

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is conservation supplies four fifths of the church's gain, one sees at once how much more profitable conservation is than reclamation. Reclamation only supplies about one fifth of our church increase. That could not balance the death rate, lapses, etc., of the church. The serious thing that the church has not fully sensed is that while it has conserved two fifths of its fertile land it has allowed three fifths of it to become desert; that is, it is letting its own land "run out" much faster than it is reclaiming other land, and so the desert is encroaching upon the fertile land. Churches in the big cities are dying out, and yet the childhood of the cities is not dying out. The children are either not reached for the Sunday school, or they are not held in it, saved and built into the church. The need is not less reclamation, but more, vastly more, conservation. Something must be done to conserve the three fifths of our Sunday school which are wasted. The more conservation that is done, the less reclamation will need to be done. There will abide these two methods,

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reclamation and conservation, but the greater of these is conservation. A thousand children saved to the Kingdom are worth far more to the church and the world than a thousand middle-aged and old-aged people rescued for the Kingdom. An eminent judge in Brooklyn said to a courtroom full of people, in the hearing of the writer, this significant thing, that he had been sitting on the bench for five years, and that during those five years twenty-seven hundred young criminals had been before him for sentence. Of that twenty-seven hundred, not two per cent had ever been in a Sunday school of any church—Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish—and that not one of them was attending any Sunday school during the period in which the offense was committed. That is a commentary on the Sunday school which deserves careful attention. The Sunday school does not make criminals. It gives young people better incentives to the worth while in life than any other institution we have. It teaches that goodness is not only the foundation of happiness, but of

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all real success as well. Think of the heart-aches to fathers and mothers, think of the cost to the state, think of the menace to society that would be averted if those twenty-seven hundred young criminals had gone to Sunday school rather than to the street corners and the saloons, the common schools of crime in these days. Is there a lesson of encouragement to Sunday school workers in that judge's experience? Does Sunday school evangelism pay? Nothing pays so well.

The law of harvest in nature is like in kind and proportionate in quantity (see Gal. 6. 7, 8; 2 Cor. 9. 6). The law of business is the same. Other things being equal, the more that is wisely invested, the larger the returns, the larger the net profits. That same law holds good in Sunday school evangelism—the larger the investment, the larger the net profits. If the net profits are not as large as they ought to be from the Sunday school, it might be well to ask a few questions. Pastors, how much have you invested in the Sunday school? Has not your investment there made a larger return

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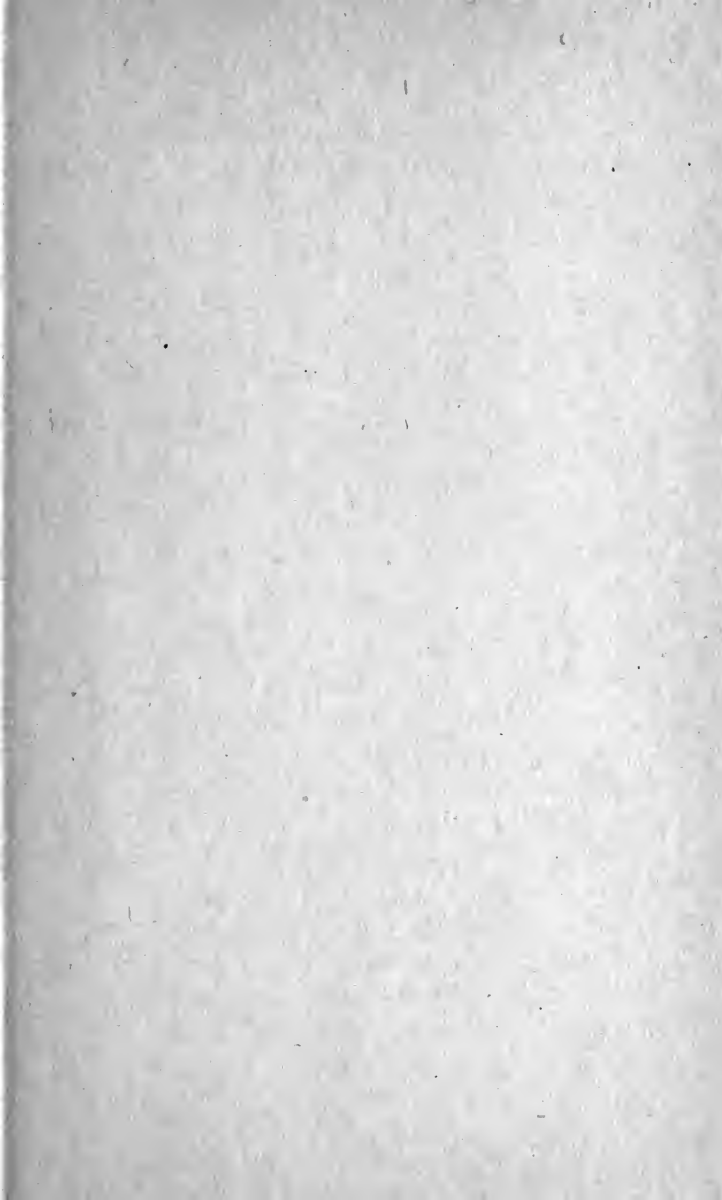
than any other investment of like amount anywhere else in the church? Did you invest in the Sunday school all you could? If not, will you do it now? Superintendents, how much have you invested in the Sunday school? Have you been disappointed at the small returns to the church from your schools? Could you expect any larger return on the investment you made? Teachers, what investment have you made to win your classes to Christ? Does your work seem somewhat of a failure? But have not the returns far exceeded your investments? Parents, what have you invested of home training in cooperation with the Sunday school to win your own children to Jesus Christ? Have your children failed to realize your expectation of them? What part of your investment failed? Frankly, is it not true that the net profits are more than could be really expected from the investment made?

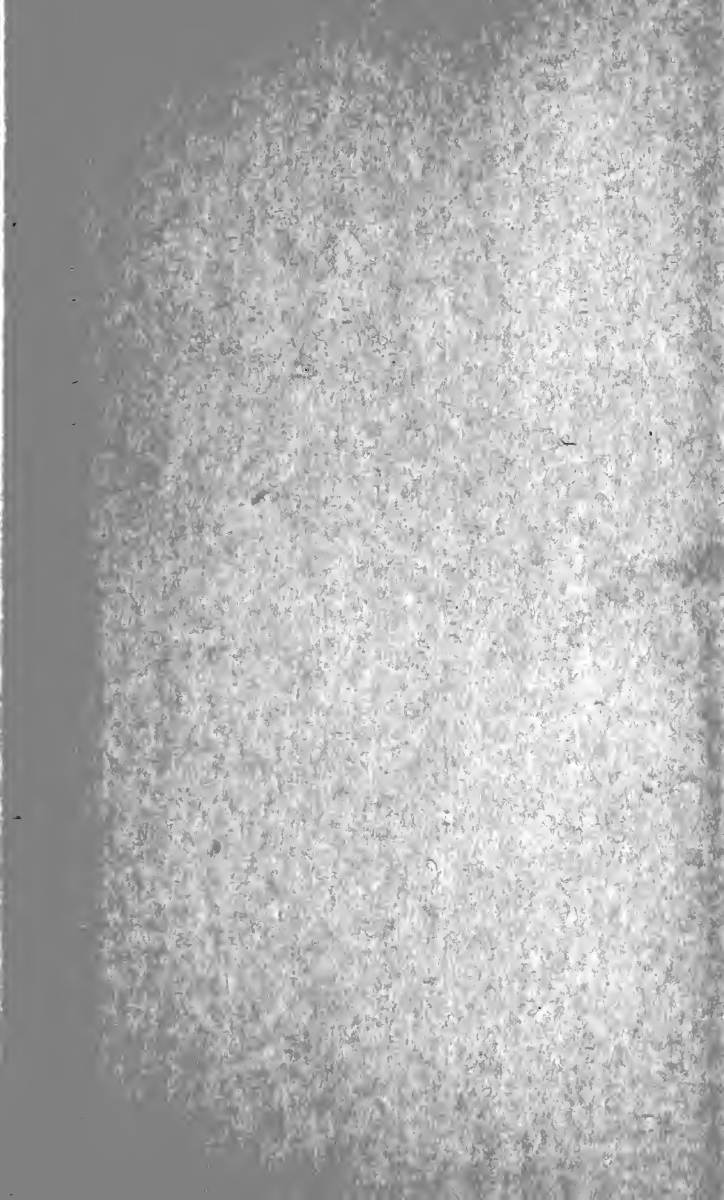
What might the net profits be if the nearly half a million of trained Sunday school workers, and if the millions of parents, seriously and persistently in-

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vested hand and purse and heart and brain to keep and train for God the young life committed to their care? No work is more profitable, more blessed, more hopeful, than winning the fresh, unspoiled young life of the Sunday school to Christ. The day of march has come, for the church in this great work of Sunday school evangelism. What is done in the next five years in the Sunday school will determine what the church will be in the next fifty years. If the church is to maintain its place of moral leadership in the world, its first business is to save its own young people who are now in the Sunday school. The largest net profits from its efforts in personal work and the investment of its money will come from the Sunday school. The Sunday school is the church's greatest evangelistic opportunity, both for to-day and to-morrow.

The net profits are the conservation of life, large churches, happy homes, good citizenship, public virtue, civic and social righteousness, true patriotism, vital religion, industrial peace, national prosperity, and world brotherhood.



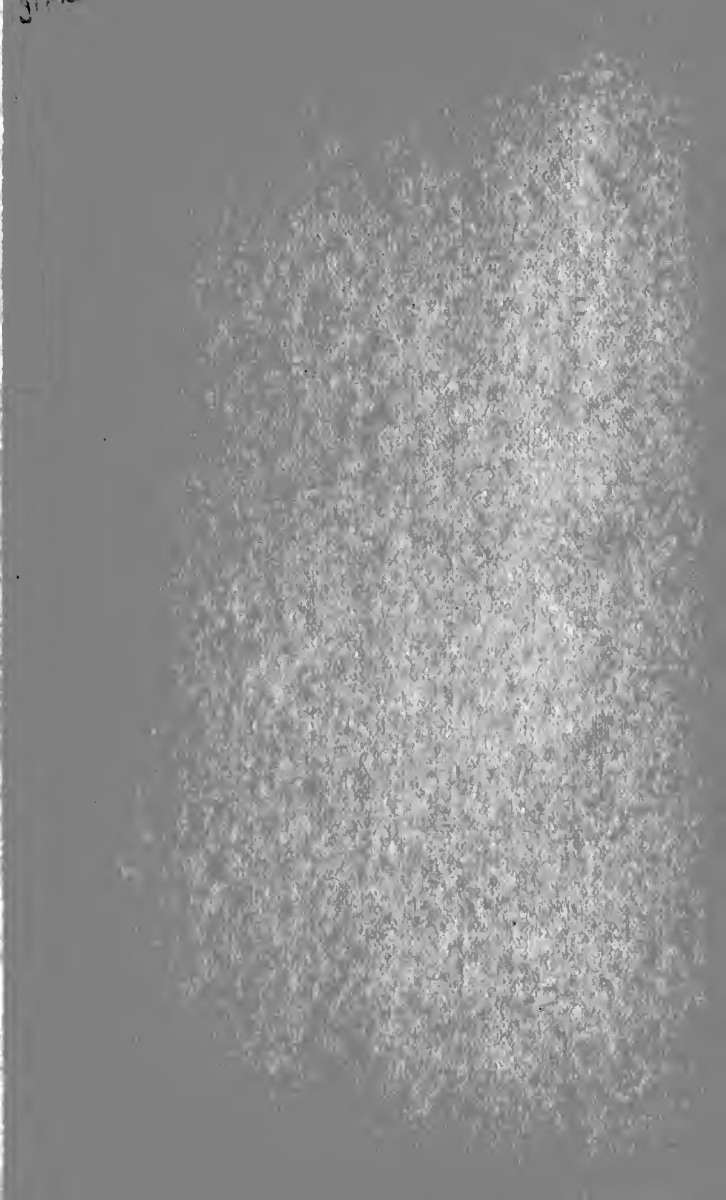


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