

Articles by George Walker

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Escuela Biblica in Miami

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Were you to live in the “Magic of the Sun,” you would find over fifty thousand children enrolled in the schools, all speaking the most musical of all modern languages... Spanish. For the most part, all of these children have been able to come from under Fidel Castro’s “Curtain of Smoke.” Their homeland and all that they held dear has been taken from them, and is now considered as another Communist satellite in orbit.

With such an invasion of Cuban children to this city, came the corresponding responsibility of having an “Escuela Biblica” (Sunday School) for them; here’s how it all got started:

A sister in the assembly (a missionary who had to leave Cuba) went to the coin-operated laundry which was next door to the Gospel Hall. (An American would be “all at sea” in this neighbourhood, as it is practically all Spanish speaking.) It wasn’t long before she was engaged in conversation with a Cuban refugee who had come to do the family laundry, bringing his three children. It is not difficult to engage in conversation with people who have so much in common, so the sister was soon getting the details of the family history.

“What are the children’s names?” (A very good way to get an Escuela Biblica started is to find out the children’s names.) “Well,” the father replied, “the older boy is Genaro. Indeed I am very glad that I was able to escape with Genaro, because he would soon have been

taken into Castro's militia. Boys with fertile minds are watched carefully, and even though they are very young, they are taught that the State is everything. Parents are old-fashioned, and do not understand the New Life (Communism), and so they are taught to cast to the wind all parental restraint."

Soon there was quite a long conversation, while the laundry was spinning around in the machine. "Do you know, my good friend, that right next door there is a Sunday School where your children will be taught to love their parents and to love the Lord?" The father became interested, and it was not long before the whole family started to come to Sunday School, bringing their friends. Today, more than half of the Sunday School in this assembly is comprised of Spanish speaking children.

Well, what about Genaro now? He is just like any other American teen-ager, and speaks English with little or no accent. It was his father who suggested that the best way to undo all of the atheistic brain-washing which is done by the constant repetition of slogans would be to make the children memorize Bible verses. At the beginning, all of this was done in Spanish, and it must be said that the English speaking children and teachers had to be most patient; but then, those who spoke Spanish had to exercise the same patience when they listened to the texts in English.

It wasn't long before the Spanish speaking children wanted to show off what they had learned in school, and so today all verses are said in English. The children would rather have their lessons in English, and it is very amusing to hear them speaking English now with a real southern drawl.

Genaro's father and mother also came to the Escuela Biblica to make sure that their children behaved as proper Cubans. It was a great favour that they had been allowed to come to this country, and as guests, they must be on their best behaviour.

Not many weeks passed before a visit was made to the humble dwelling of this family, where questions were asked freely away from the Escuela Biblica. (Visitation in the homes of the Sunday School scholars is a very old-fashioned method of contact, especially during these days of special selling "gimmicks"; no doubt there are many new, modern approaches, but the personal contact with teacher, scholar and parent seems to work like magic here.)

On that first visit, Normita, Genaro's younger sister, actually jumped up and down with joy that someone from the Escuela Biblica had come to see them. To her, the going was to be all on her part, but a visit in their own home seemed too much of a bonus all at once. Her bright, dancing black eyes just shone when she was asked for her school book. She had long black braids hanging down her back, and certainly there was no hiding her Siboney features. (The Siboneys were the Indians which Columbus discovered living in Cuba when he found the island and called it "the most beautiful island that human eyes had ever seen".)

As Normita was encouraged to read from her book, "Deek and Chain and Puf and Espot" soon began to make sense. (Dick and Jane and Puff and Spot.) However, there were questions which needed answers, that bothered the father and mother, and all the answers could not come out in the one visit. There was an

invitation to have a meal with the family, and much and all as large quantities of garlic are not relished by British palates, the taste for souls offsets it all, so the invitation was accepted, and later constant visits in the home soon paid off, when father and mother both professed to be saved.

It was Norma, the mother who first asked about baptism. In the Escuela Biblica, she had learned that Believers in the Lord Jesus should obey the Lord in baptism, but there were still a few obstacles in the way. It was not hard to get rid of some of the pictures around the house ... these "Saints" had never done anything for them anyway, so that was no chore. However, there were a few very special ones; these had been brought from Cuba with them, and were special wedding gifts from their friends back there. After all, who would see them, hidden behind the door, especially the small statue with the gold crown?

Nevertheless, the sharp edge of the Word was very penetrating; "Slay them, cut them to pieces." And then, one day it happened! If there was to be consecration to the Lord, all idols and fetishes must go, and so, all of the family got into their old car and travelled toward the ocean. The paper shopping bag bulged with "Saints" on their "last ride." It was Genaro who led the "Sing-along" in Spanish, as one by one, the "Saints" were baptized, but they never came up to walk in newness of life. "En la cruz, en la cruz, de primero vi las luz" ... (At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light.)

It was not too long after this that the real "explosion" came. Friends of long years standing had thought that it was all right to go to the Escuela Biblica, where children

would be taught respect for older people, and where the weeds of atheistic Communism would be rooted out, but to actually throw one's prized possessions into the sea was a most barbarous act indeed! And the straw which broke the camel's back was when the father and mother got rid of their cigarettes and refused to go to the dancing "Fiestas" which all Latins love. It was then that the line was drawn, and our friends had to "go it alone." So it was that in the Escuela Biblica, not only the truths of salvation were taught, but the truth of separation as well. How easy it is for Christians to "peacefully co-exist" with the world when we are to stand up against all the fiery darts of the wicked one!

Just one week after the baptism of several Cuban believers, Norma brought a little box to the Escuela Biblica. It was a great decision she had made, but so great was her joy in the Lord, that she was determined to do it. You see, when all the "Saints" were drowned in the Atlantic Ocean, there was something she had kept back... it was a solid gold crown, worn by her "Patron Saint." While she still retained this, she felt that she had not really given the Lord His rightful place, and so it was brought to Sunday School and given to one of the brethren. Only one word escaped her lips when it was done ... "Ya." In other words, she had completed the business, and meant to be "all out" for the Lord.

Thus it was that not only did they learn about Salvation and Separation in the Escuela Biblica, but they learned Surrender as well.

Former friends rarely ever visit this family today, but those who go to the Escuela Biblica always have a warm

welcome, so that today they have more friends than ever.

Certainly we are all agreed that the Escuela Biblica is most important, and will only succeed in the measure that there is the personal contact in the home by the teachers.