Articles by G. C. Sprunt

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The Sunday School and Its Work (October 1968)

From Food for the Flock, October 1968.

Sunday School Management

Read: I Corinthians 14:33, 40

In the two verses which we have read together, you will notice these statements: "God is not the author of a tumult, or unquietness," and "Let all things be done decently and in order." These words are equally true for Sunday School work as for any other function in the church — for Sunday School work is part of the testimony. No school can remain long in a healthy condition where there is not good order and godly management.

We know there are small companies of believers in many places, and all the responsibility of the Sunday School, as well as other matters may fall on one or two brethren. Let them keep at it and God will bless. In larger schools, one brother should have the general oversight of the school, and should be free from the responsibility of teaching a class. Such a one is known as Superintendent. He has a heavy load to carry.

The Superintendent should not act in an arbitrary way, so as to cause the teachers to feel that they are "under authority," but he should give leadership to the school. Once-a-month teachers' meetings are a good thing. The Superintendent can ask for the free expression of opinion. At such meetings all matters can be fully discussed and all sides heard. When there is not oneness

of mind, it is wise to give time that the matter may be more fully considered. A Superintendent should not force things through that might mar the harmony among his teachers. There is wisdom in the proverb, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Organization of Classes

At these meetings the organization of classes and the promotion of pupils from class to class should be discussed. Might I offer the suggestion that eight or ten scholars are all that an ordinary teacher can well manage. The children should be, as nearly as possible, of the same age. This enables the teacher to speak according to the intelligence and capacity of the pupils. The habit of older girls bringing very young brothers or sisters to the class should be discouraged, as it distracts the attention from the lesson and is a real hindrance. Younger children are better taken care of in the Tiny Tots class. The classes should not be huddled together, if it can be avoided.

When it is desirous to re-arrange classes, this should be done, as far as possible, with the full knowledge and consent of the teachers concerned. Teachers are to be considered in this matter, especially when they show a special interest in the spiritual welfare of any particular scholar. On the other hand, teachers should be willing to part with scholars, even if personally attached to them, when it is for the scholar's welfare and for the general good of the school. I think too, that children should not be transferred from one class to another against their own wishes, for often they are lost to the school because of being changed against their will. The work of

organizing the school requires much prayer and patience.

When children are being changed from one class to another, it is better to speak of "promoting" children rather than of changing or transferring them.

Visiting

Visiting is a very important factor in Sunday School work and in the building up of attendance. Visiting should be done, calling at the homes of the scholars periodically. (Every three or six months is not too often). This gets the teacher in touch with the parents and creates interest, sympathy and support in the school. Absent scholars should be followed up at once. It may be that there is sickness or some other reason that would call for aid. One Sunday School teacher recently lost two scholars. The cause was that a little girl from another class had been ill and away from the school for six weeks. Nobody called. The mother noticed the lack of interest and sent the child to another Sunday School—her two companions went with her. As a result of lack of visiting one sick scholar, three were lost to the school.

A godly teacher visiting a home from which she missed several of her scholars, all belonging to the same family, learned to her deep regret that an enemy had been at work raising prejudice in the parents' mind against the Gospel. The parents had forbidden the children to attend that Sunday School any longer. The children were very sad, for they were very much attached to their teacher and she to them. She pleaded with the parents but all seemed to no purpose. They would not yield and she was reluctantly about to leave. Fixing a loving, longing look on the little ones who stood around, she, with tears in

her eyes, kissed each of them a "good-bye." This caused the children to weep bitterly. It was a touching sight — too strong for the parents to withstand, for they saw the true love of that godly teacher expressed thus. They relented and at once declared their children could return to their places in the Sunday School, which they did. There is wonderful power in love!

Another good way to get in personal touch with the parents is at the Sunday School outing. This is very helpful. It frequently gets you the co-operation of the parents with the work of the school.

When parents are invited to the service and come, teachers should make a point to speak to them, especially the parents of scholars in their classes.

Regularity

Punctuality is the soul of business—in the Lord's work as elsewhere. Punctuality on the part of the Superintendent and the teachers greatly helps toward retaining good order. If they fail, nothing else need be expected from the scholars. Teachers should be in their places ahead of time to welcome the children upon their arrival. Opening of the school and closing on time should be rigidly observed.

Some schools hang up a motto on the door at the entrance or at front having these words in bold letters:

I AM EARLY

What a pleasure!

While the opening hymn is being sung the motto is reversed and then reads,

I AM LATE

What a pity!

This has a decided influence in bringing the children to school on time.

Reverence and Order

It is important that reverence during prayer should be demanded, the children bowing their heads and closing their eyes while God is being addressed. In a certain Sunday School hangs a text at the front of the school — "Thou God seest me." The attention of the scholars is frequently directed to this verse, with good effect.

Prayers should not be too long nor rambling, but right to the point. A brother was once asked to close the school in prayer. After he was finished a boy in one of the classes said, "He prayed six minutes." Two were at fault — the boy who did not show reverence by closing his eyes during prayer, and the brother who prayed too long.

A final word of advice on this subject: A school of boys and girls is full of life, like a team of frisky horses, ready to go! You must keep a snug rein on them, so you can check them when you wish. They can frequently be controlled by the eye. When you speak, say what you mean, and mean what you say. The school must always be kept orderly. Remember, you cannot sow seed in a whirlwind. Freedom with control and liberty with order is the Lord's way everywhere, and the Sunday School is no exception.

I Come (Mar 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 3, Mar 1957.

In this the closing message of The Book of the Revelation, we have four precious words concerning the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Surely I come quickly.” Let us consider each of these carefully for they are full of meaning to every devout heart.

The word, “surely,” suggests to us the CERTAINTY of Christ’s coming. In the first chapter of The Book of the Acts, we read of the Lord, “He was taken up” (V. 9), “He went up” (V. 10), and then, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (V. 11). What a word of assurance to His gazing disciples is embraced in the language of the heavenly messengers, “Shall so come.” Thank God for the certainty of our Lord’s return!

The second word, the personal pronoun, “I”, reveals the PERSONALITY of His coming. In 1 Thess. 4:16, we read, “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven.” He will not send an angel, not even a host of heavenly ones; no one less than the Lord Jesus Himself will come to call His waiting people heavenward. What a precious promise, “I will come”! Let us, therefore, be ever looking for the realization of that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:13).

In the word, “come,” we have the REALITY of His coming. His own blessed promise is found in the opening verses of John’s Gospel chapter 14, “Let not your heart

be troubled … in My Father's house are many mansions… I go to prepare a place for you…. I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." During the last war, many bade loved ones farewell with a promise that they would come back; but, alas, their words of assurance never were fulfilled because death intervened. How comforting to know that nothing can hinder or deter our Lord's return! His unfailing words are, "I will come again," "Surely I come." Does the reality of this truth grip our hearts? May we not only hold to this important doctrine of the personal return of Christ, but may this doctrine hold us in this day of political confusion, of moral instability, of spiritual decline.

The FINALITY of His coming is intimated by the fourth word in the text, "quickly." From chapter one of the Epistle to the Phillipians, we learn that "our conversation (our manner of life, our citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body (the body of our humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (the body of His glory) (Vv. 20-21).

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, also states, "We shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." What a change! Our glorified bodies will tingle with eternal life, even to the very tips of our fingers. Then, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there by any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

"Our pain shall then be over,

We'll sin and sigh no more;

Behind us all of sorrow,

And nought but joy before.”

Dr. R. A. Torrey once wrote, “Our Lord Jesus is coming again! Yes, He is coming, perhaps this year; perhaps this month; perhaps to-morrow; perhaps today. Listen once again to His own last and sweetest promise, Surely I come quickly.” Every true believer will exclaim from his heart, “Amen, Even, so come, Lord Jesus!”

Sunday School Management (Aug 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 8, Aug 1958.

Ormer G. Sprunt

These notes, somewhat revised, are taken from an address given at a conference of Sunday School workers, and are the outcome of many years of experience in this field of Christian service. There are certain points suggested in them which may be further amplified, and covered in future articles. The subject treated in this article is not only interesting, but is very important.—Ed.

“God is not the author of tumult,” we are told in the margin of 1 Corinthians 14:33, and in the very next verse we find the exhortation, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” These words are as applicable to Sunday School work as to any other function of the Christian assembly; remember, the Sunday School is part of the assembly’s testimony.

No school can remain long in a healthy condition where there is not good order and godly management. I believe that in larger schools especially, a godly and capable brother should have the general oversight of the school, and be free from the teaching of a class. There is much work to be done by the superintendent, as he is usually called, and as a rule he has the heavy end of the burden of responsibility to carry.

A superintendent should not act in such a way as to cause the teachers to feel they are under authority, but

he should take the lead. He and the teachers should consult together regarding all matters of importance in connection with the work. Regular monthly teachers' meetings are a good thing. At such meetings, the superintendent should ask for a full expression of opinion, nothing being withheld that might benefit the work, and each person contributing. When there is not a oneness of mind over a matter, time should be given for further and fuller consideration. Superintendents must not force anything that might cause disturbance or mar the harmony among the teachers. Remember the word, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Eight or ten scholars are all, in my experience, that an ordinary teacher can handle. All in a class should be approximately of the same age, so that the teacher can speak to the intelligence and capacity of every one. Older scholars, girls especially, who are in the habit of bringing younger brothers or sisters with them into the class, ought to be discouraged in this practice, for it tends to distract and hinder the attention of the other scholars. Younger ones are better in the Tiny Tots class. Classes should not be huddled together if this can be avoided. Separate rooms, where possible, are a great convenience.

When it is necessary to re-arrange classes, let this be done with the knowledge and consent of the teachers concerned. Teachers ought to be considered, especially if they have a genuine interest in the spiritual welfare of a particular scholar. On the other hand, teachers ought to be willing to part with any scholars, no matter how much they are attached to them, if it be for the scholar's well being and the general good of the school. I think,

too, that children should not ruthlessly be transferred from one class to another against their wishes, for often they are lost to the school because of this. It requires tact and prayer.

Opening promptly and closing before the hour should be observed rigidly. Promptness on the part of the superintendent and teacher can greatly help toward good order and good discipline. If they fail in this, what can be expected of the scholars?

During the time of lessons, no talking should be permitted among the scholars, nor should the teacher talk with any one child to the neglect of the others. Loud talking, reading, and repeating the lessons can be a great annoyance to the next class, and should be better controlled than is usual.

Children are like a team of frisky horses, give them a loose rein and they will soon get beyond control; notwithstanding, if they are held with a snug rein they can be guided at pleasure. Superintendents should not scold. They should speak firmly, say what they mean and mean what they say. Many children are controlled easily by a look from the superintendent. When the classes are over, the superintendent should not keep ringing the bell for order. One good ring ought to be sufficient. A great deal of ringing encourages disregard; remember the old saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt.”

Reverence during prayer ought to be insisted upon; the children ought to bow their heads while God is being addressed. On the other hand, prayers should not be too long, nor should they be vague and rambling as they sometimes are, for this wearies the children.

No teacher should be absent from his or her class without giving due notice to the superintendent; ample time should be given in order that a substitute may be found. If a teacher habitually absents himself without satisfactory reasons, he should be respectfully told that it would be beneficial to the class for him to give it up. We have known some to be absent for no better reason than the going out with friends or the going to hear a favourite preacher. One who thus absents himself, and without notice, has hardly the right to be called a teacher and no class can exist long under such conditions; it will soon fade away or become demoralized. There are times when one, truly devoted to his class, may be called away without opportunity of giving notice, but that, of course, is another matter.

Uncalled and unfitted persons sometimes find their way into Sunday School work. It is a mercy for all when they discover their mistake and take their departure.

Visiting is an important factor in Sunday School management, and in the building up of attendance. Homes of the scholars should be visited at least once a year; by so doing, interest, sympathy, and support on the part of the parents are created. Absent scholars should be followed up at once. There may be sickness or some other trouble which would call for the teacher’s sympathetic help.

I once read of a godly teacher who visited a home from which she had missed some of her scholars. When she arrived, she learned to her sorrow that an enemy had prejudiced the minds of the parents against the gospel, and that they had forbidden their children to go to the school any more. The children were very sad for they

were attached to the teacher, as the teacher was to them, but although she pleaded with the parents they would not yield. As she reluctantly was leaving them, she looked lovingly and longingly at each of the little ones as they stood around, and with tears in her eyes, she stooped and kissed them good-bye. This caused the children to weep bitterly. It must have been a touching sight, and certainly was too much for the parents, for when they saw the true love of that teacher, their hearts melted, and they returned the children to their places in the school. O, dear brethren and sisters, there is wonderful power in love!

Teachers and superintendents should not show partiality for certain scholars, nor should they have pets in their classes. Attentive and interesting children may command special attention; nevertheless, the spiritual condition of all will draw out prayer and effort, but special attention should be controlled so as not to cause jealousy or ill-feeling in the class. Many a good class has been spoiled through this fault.

Sometimes, difficulty is made by older boys and girls who think they are too big, and want to leave the school. A capable teacher who has the respect and confidence of the scholars, and who is able to bring before them the truth intelligently and attractively should be encouraged to take the class. He should keep in touch with the scholars as closely as possible, and if one is absent, visit him at once. He should pray continually for each, and do his best to keep them from evil influence. Every teacher needs to be an example as well as an instructor in the doctrines of the Word. The influence of a godly teacher may be very great upon those who hear and see.

Order and discipline do not ensure spiritual favours, but at least they hinder the flesh from destroying the blessing that God gives; moreover, they help to prevent Satan from stealing the good seed. Remember, you cannot sow in a whirlwind.

Spiritual power is connected with our hold upon God, and success in the Sunday School is connected with our hold upon the children. Both are needed. Freedom with control and liberty with order form the Lord’s way everywhere, and the Sunday School is not an exception.

Worshippers from the Orient (Dec 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 12, Dec 1959.

O. G. C. Sprunt

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh” —Matthew 2:10-11.

Matthew graphically describes for us the attitude of the Wise Men from the East when, after their long and tedious search had ended, they found Him Who was born the King of the Jews: “They saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him.” They had followed the light of the star which had directed them to the exact place where Christ lay. So miraculous was the performance of the star, so convincing to them the factual fulfilment of prophecy, that they could do nothing but fall before the infant Lord to do Him honour and to adore Him. Their attitude was one of worship; their first impulse was to express that worship, and to express it in a tangible way.

There are many, very many, who have been led to Christ not by the light of a miracle star but by the light of the Word of God. All such should manifest, in like manner, the spirit of worship. Each one saved by divine grace should constantly remember that he has been saved, first of all, to worship and adore the Saviour and the God and Father Who sent Him into the world to redeem.

Each one also should remember that he has been saved to sacrifice and to serve. Of the Wise Men we read, "They … worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh." These men from the Orient first worshipped, and then in that attitude, presented their gifts. Their great sacrifice was made consequent to their bowing before the infant Messiah in reverent adoration.

Some have spiritualized the three component parts of this remarkable offering, and have suggested that the gold speaks of Christ's divine glory, the glory of His kingship; the frankincense, of His fragrant life; the myrrh, the balsamic juice of the Arabian myrtle used by embalmers, of His death. This One born King of the Jews was yet to lay down His life. How extraordinary that the first material sacrifice offered to Him should, in an allegorical way, set forth His origin, birth, and death!

The prophet Isaiah predicts: "They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord" (Isa. 60:6). One is attracted by the parallelism between Isaiah's statement and Matthew's account of the offering given to Christ at His birth. Nevertheless, the omission of the myrrh in Isaiah's prophecy causes us to enquire into its absence.

Even a cursory reading of Isaiah's sixtieth chapter will show that this prediction reaches farther into the future than the first advent of Christ, it reaches to His second advent, His coming, not in lowliness but in glory and great power.

Our blessed Lord came once as the King of the Jews, but was rejected and crucified; He is coming again as King

of Kings and Lord of Lords to be crowned in glory, and to be honoured and worshipped by all nations. He will come to Jerusalem, the city of the Great King and not to Bethlehem. Then shall be enacted the scenes that Isaiah saw by prophetic vision. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee … The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side…. They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord” (Isa. 60:1, 3-6).

The Lord Jesus at Bethlehem was the attraction in the past which drew the men from a far-away land to Himself; He, in the future, will be the attraction which will draw men from every nation to Jerusalem to worship Him there. May Christ, in this present time, be the great magnet to draw our hearts from the world to His blessed feet where we may worship, sacrifice, am serve Him, our glorious Sovereign.

In Remembrance of Me (Jun 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 6, Jun 1960.

Omer Sprunt

The request of Jesus made just before He went to the cross, “This do in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24), is not only the wish of our dying Lord, but it is His gracious command to all of His own. Few seem to have felt the real impact of this charge of our beloved Lord.

Should we command any person on the street to appear before us on a certain day at a certain hour, he would probably resent our attitude, and rightly so. Why? Simply because of who we are. If, however, a servant of her Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth were to summon us to attend her court, there is no doubt but that we would comply with her wishes, and that without loss of time.

Pray, tell, “Why would the Queen’s command be so readily obeyed?” “Because of who the Queen is,” you reply. It is obvious that the status of the person makes the difference.

Think how the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Creator of all things, invites us as redeemed sinners to feast with Him at His own table! What an honour and privilege He confers upon us at the Lord’s supper! There we remember Him in His own appointed way.

The verse in 1 Corinthians that immediately precedes this request says, “The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.” Let us pause here and ask why. It does not say that the night before His

crucifixion He took bread, but that the night before He was betrayed, He took bread. How dreadful, on the very night the love feast was instituted, Christ was betrayed!

Human love betrayed Him, and Judas proved himself to be false. Human love forsook Him for all the disciples fled. Human love denied Him; Peter swore that he did not know the Lord. Notwithstanding, His love gave all for us.

Oh, my soul, pause, think! See how the love of Christ shines forth! Behold Him! “He took bread;” He, the bread of life, the true bread which came down from above, knew what that symbol foreshadowed, He knew the ignominy, the shame, the bitterness of the cross; yet, “He gave thanks.”

“He break it,” the bread, “and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” In thus remembering Him, we show forth His death till He come. After the same manner He took the cup, and expressed the same desire; “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

A very solemn warning concerning the partaking of the emblems in an unworthy manner is given to us. The injunction reads, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” To partake of the Lord’s supper unworthily is to eat and to drink damnation (judgment) to oneself. The unworthy one does not discern the Lord’s body.

“Let a man examine himself,” that is, let him catechize himself. Let him question his ways before the Lord, and wherein he discovers wrongs, let him make the proper corrections in order that he may eat in a worthy manner.

Talebearers (July 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 7, July 1961.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

In the Apostle Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians we read about "busybodies," those who like to carry stories. "We hear that there are some folks which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:11).

James, the brother of our Lord, uses many illustrations relative to the tongue. Among these he employs the horse and its bridle, the ship and its helm, the fire and its fuel, the beast, the fountain, etc.

The important subject being discussed here is the dangerous use of the tongue. Of the horse we read, "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body" (Jas. 3:3). A man can hold in check a team of horses by a small bit and bridle, for each horse is under his control.

The tongue may be controlled by the Lord Jesus when the heart owns Him as Lord and Master. A tongue governed by Him can be a great blessing; but when uncontrolled, it may bring disaster. Many an unfortunate person needs a word of counsel, of cheer, and of comfort. Such words of advice and encouragement may be used by the Spirit of God to guide distressed souls out of evident difficulties into peace and joy. James does not make rash statements; his words carry with them the authority of experience. Let us, therefore, take heed to what he says. He calls the tongue "an unruly

member," and yet makes clear that it can be a source of much blessing.

Our blessed Lord Jesus asserts, "That which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (Matt. 15:18). Someone else has expressed it this way, "A deadly drug does not need to be taken in large doses, a drop or two will suffice." Consequently, the tongue does not need to give forth long speeches, a word or two mischievously spoken can do the damage. Through ruthless speeches a former peace may be marred, a reputation ruined, and a friendship broken. A child's rhyme provokes an attitude of caution:

"I lost a very little word, only the other day.

It was a very naughty word, I had meant not to say;

But, then, it was not really lost when from my lips it flew,

My little brother picked it up, and now he says it too."

Let us notice three pictures painted by the Holy Spirit of God. The first is a scene with a shady background. Two men are whispering, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Prov. 11:13). Under this picture can be written the word "Traitor."

The word talebearer actually is whisperer; it is by whispering that a talebearer does his foul work (Prov. 16:28). Another quotation from the same Book of Proverbs states, "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Prov. 17:9). That is all that is needed, repeat a matter! Has there ever been a person who could repeat a matter exactly as he had heard it? All should covet the commendation made of a certain lady,

“She never speaks ill of an absent friend.” The two statements, “Repeateth secrets” and “Revealeth secrets” are frequently mentioned in the Book of Proverbs (11:13; 20:19; 18:8) and attention should be given to them.

“The words of the whisperer are as dainty morsels, and go down into the innermost parts,” says the Revised Version. Regrettable though it is, not a few consider the betrayal of secrets palatable fare.

The second picture is very sad; two men, former friends, are parting. There is a strange light in the sky; the heavens seem to be glowing with indignation. These two, after a long and warm friendship are parting in anger. A talebearer has been at work. The only hope of restoring friendships thus broken is to get rid of the talebearer, and the only manner in which the talebearer can be cured is to close the ear to his defamatory conversation. “Take heed what ye hear” (Mark 4:24).

In our last picture there is a lonely figure, the biter at last has been bitten. ‘Wickedness boomerangs and falls back upon the evildoer. The Apostle Paul describes the gossip monger in concise and terse language, “Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13). He likewise insists upon punitive discipline, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not” (Titus 1:10-11).

Well has the evil tongue been defined as the avenue for Satan’s inroads, the index of carnality, the poison that

harms oneself and hurts one's best friends. The Christian's manner of speech should be an expression of his spirituality. Let us pay heed to the exhortation, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (Jas. 4:11).

"When Satan tempts you to speak ill

Of those reedeemed by Jesus' blood.

Remember this, and love them still,

They're dear to God."

The Heart (Dec 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 12, Dec 1962.

O.G.C. Sprunt

The frequent mention of the heart in Psalm 119 would imply that some serious consideration ought to be given to this, the very centre of our moral beings. The heart in that wonderful Psalm is mentioned some twelve times.

That the heart is the centre of the moral being, the source of character, and the seat of the will, affections, and emotions, is readily conceded. Consequently, the heart is the citadel of life, and as such it should be carefully guarded. Solomon wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Ezra, we read, prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach it. Solomon was given a wise and understanding heart, and also given wisdom and largeness of heart (1 Kings 3:12; 4:29).

It is taken for granted, of course, that each reader has accepted the Lord Jesus as his own personal Saviour.

In this beautiful Psalm the first mention of the heart is in verse 2. This reference expresses the desire of a disciple, a learner. “Blessed are they … that seek Him (the Lord) with the whole heart.” Perhaps in earlier days we were more eager to read God’s Word and to learn His ways than we are today.

In the second reference (V. 7), we read, “I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart.” God wants His people to be upright in character. The late Robert Telfer used to speak about “six o’clock Christians.” He meant that as

the hands of the clock are straight up and down at that hour, God wants His children to be straight up and down.

It is no vain repetition that in verse ten, we again read, “With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments.” The Lord does not appreciate a half-heartedness in divine things. When first saved, we delighted to sing, “All for Jesus, all my being’s ransomed powers.” Has this seeking after God, this setting of the mind on things above, increased or decreased with the passing of the years? Let us remember, an idle heart is the devil’s workshop.

The eleventh verse contains another reference to the heart, “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” God’s Word is a good thing, in my heart is a good place to hide it, that I might not sin, is a good purpose. Joseph exclaimed in a moment of severe temptation, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). The Word of God in the heart will likewise preserve us from sin and lust.

“I will run in the way of Thy commandments,” wrote the Psalmist, “when Thou shalt enlarge my heart” (V. 32). Enlargement of heart in this connection means to arouse the affections. The Lord said to His disciples, “Love one another.” There are many similar allusions to that old commandment in the writings of the Apostle John. The Apostle Peter in like manner refers to it in his First Epistle; he writes, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 2:22). He also writes, “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Pet. 3:8).

The Psalmist makes another strong assertion in verse 34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea I shall observe it with my whole heart.” The phrase, “with my whole heart” would equate the current one, “With an eye single for God’s glory.” That indeed is the manner in which we ought to observe God’s Holy Word.

The thirty-sixth verse suggests that when the heart is inclined to keep God’s Word, it will not indulge in covetousness. “Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.” Oh, the danger in this sin! David said of the judgments of the Lord, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:10).

“I intreated Thy favour (“Face,” reads the margin) with my whole heart.” The Psalmist is reviewing some heart experience in the past in this verse (58). In this connection he also states, “I thought on my way and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.” This indeed is the proper manner to correct our wandering feet, to examine our ways, and to seek God’s face in communion, with all the heart.

The reference to the heart in verse 69 seems to imply a stout heart. “The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart.” Although men opposed him, and made life difficult for him, with a stalwart heart he intended to pursue the precepts of the Lord.

The connotation of the word “statutes” suggests the permanent character of the Word of God. In verse 80 the Psalmist longs for a heart immovable in the permanent Word of God. “Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes;

that I be not ashamed." Of such a condition of heart none need be ashamed. E. M. Sager once said, "Brethren, be firm on the fundamentals; be pliable on incidentals or non-essentials." Such steadfastness in the things of the Lord is very needful today.

In reading verses 145-146 one wonders to what danger the writer was exposed: "I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O Lord: I will keep Thy statutes. I cried unto Thee; save me." One recalls with appreciation the advice of an aged Christian who had been in Christ for over sixty years: "When fear grips your heart, let God grip your hand."

How frequently throughout these many references we have God's Word in one form or another definitely influencing the heart and life of the child of God! In this, the last reference, the Word of God produces a holy awe, a reverential fear. One has the feeling that not too many, even among the Lord's own, can truthfully say, "My heart standeth in awe of Thy Word. I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil" (V. 161-162).

"Seven times a day do I praise Thee," says the writer of this Psalm (V. 164). Our meditations upon the many allusions to the heart should lead us to praise God and that many times a day. Seven is the perfect number in Scripture; if our hearts are in accord with the standards of the Word of God, perfect praise will ascend to the Lord.

May God's Holy Word be the greatest influence in our hearts and homes until the day dawn and the shadows flee away. In view of the chaotic condition of world affairs, let us often recall the words of the Master: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe

also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

Forbearance And Forgiveness (Mar 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 3, Mar 1965.

O. G. C. Sprunt

“And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matt. 18:15).

When a Christian sins grievously the world not only rejoices but, because of the hypocrisy, blasphemes the holy name by which he is called, the name of Christ.

Christians occasionally hurt a fallen brother by; first, pharisaical, self-righteous slander; second, by aloofness and suspicion. The most difficult of all these cases is the one to which the Lord alludes when He says, “If thy brother sin against thee.” Perhaps this very thing has happened to you; another has sinned against you and hurt you deeply. If so, what did you do after the offence? Could it be that you yourself sinned, that your mind was filled with evil thoughts, and that you talked evil about this brother to your personal friends? On going to your own home, there may have been compunctions of conscience, but you justified your actions by saying, “It was all true, every bit of it.” The Lord Jesus says to you that you should go to your brother, and show him his fault between “thee and him alone.”

In your quieter moments and more serious moods you think, if he comes to me and asks forgiveness, of course, I will forgive him. You argue with yourself that since it is he who has wronged you, he must come and apologize.

The Lord who knows all, nevertheless, says, “If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone.” The Lord lays the obligation upon you to go.

It is well known that some have gone, and they have scolded the offending brother until resentment was stirred up in his heart. Such an attitude can only do further damage to Christian fellowship; it will not accomplish what the Lord intended. Before you go, you must decide just how you are going to win your brother. If one prays much before going, his attitude will be mellowed by the presence of the Lord. Furthermore, at prayer you may recall some similar offence of which you have been guilty. Memory can be a real help under such circumstances.

In your approach, be sure that you have a good conscience and that your move is done in humility. “If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Remember, God came to you after you had so deeply sinned; and remember, His forgiveness is the example to follow. “Forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13).

Do not attempt to reach your erring brother until you are willing that the Lord as a third party go with you, for with His presence you have hope of success. May God bless you!

“Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). “Every one of us

shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Revival in Our Time (June-July 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 6, June-July 1965.

O. C. G. Sprunt

The quotation, “Revival in our time,” is being used frequently in certain circles, and we do well to take heed to its challenge. That the day of grace is fast drawing to a close is obvious to every sincere-minded Christian; consequently there is a need for a more aggressive evangelism.

There are three references to revival in the Scriptures to which we ought to pay attention. The first one is quite personal, “Thou wilt revive me” (Psa. 138:7). The second one is an earnest prayer, “Wilt Thou not revive us again?” (Psa. 85:5). The third one is a cry from the heart in a day of declension, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years” (Hab. 3:2).

In the first chapter of the Book of Acts the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (V. 8). In the last chapter of Luke’s Gospel they were told to tarry in Jerusalem until this experience became a reality, then in their testimony they were to reach out progressively in ever widening circles until they finally spread the good news to the ends of the earth. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts we read, “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word” (V. 4). Are we less responsible than they? Some today excuse themselves and say, “But I am

not a preacher!" Perhaps not, but each may be a witness. Each can tell what God has done for his soul. Some, we grant, are not as brave as others; nevertheless, all can live Christ, give out literature, and copies of the Gospels, and thus introduce themselves as Christians, as witnesses for the Lord Jesus.

"Speak a little word for Jesus,

Testify or sing or pray;

And like bread upon the waters,

It will return to you someday."

When we were first saved in our enthusiasm we sang, "All for Jesus, all my being's ransomed powers." Have we lost some of that early zeal? If so, let us sincerely pray, "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" Perhaps some of us have become worldly and are now enjoying in a measure the company and conversation of the unconverted. Let me here pass on a timely word, "He ordained in Joseph a testimony when he went through the land of Egypt:… where I heard a language, or speech of one that I knew not" (Psa. 81:5 R.V.). Egypt is a type of the world. Can we possibly understand its language? Can we engage in the worldly conversation of the unsaved and enjoy their jokes? If so, we might well question the genuineness of our conversion.

Paul was commissioned to be the Apostle to the Gentiles and as such he felt his responsibility and cried out, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Are we to be less concerned than he? A story recently was published about Bishop Azariah of one of the evangelical churches of India. When he was receiving candidates for membership, he always had them place their hands on

their heads and repeat, “Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel.” What a dramatic reminder that each one received was a messenger of good news, a witness for the Lord! The Lord wants us to be go-getters, do it ourselves witnesses. In the parable of the Marriage Supper the Lord uses some strong terms: “go,” “compel,” “bring them in.” We might well take these commands to ourselves. The prayer of our hearts should indeed be, “Revive us again.”

According to 1 Peter 2:1-9, we are a company of royal priests to show forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. This is a duty, a responsibility, and a privilege.

Previous to a great gospel campaign in a large Canadian city, in prayer meetings the hymn “Revive Thy work, O Lord,” became a theme song. Yes, and more than a theme song, it became a plea for revival. The Lord certainly answered this prayer for souls were saved, backsliders were restored, and the hearts of His people were filled with joy.

“It is His great delight to bless us;

Oh. how He loves.”

Habakkuk the Prophet seemed to be quite apprehensive. He was conscious of a stirring of something unusual around him. According to chapter two of his Prophecy, he had been on the watch and had been waiting for a vision which seemed to tarry. He felt that he was on the eve of some extra-ordinary manifestation of God and was afraid: he trembled; his lips quivered; he felt his unworthiness, so resorted to the mercy seat and there betook himself to prayer, “O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make

known, in wrath remember mercy" (Heb. 3:12). Someone has said, "Revival is an excitement promoted by prayer." We might add to this, quiet, determined, persistent, importunate prayer. The words of Jacob spoken long ago illustrate the attitude, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." It is pleading with God for souls, the Spirit Himself helping our infirmities and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

Revival is a stirred up interest in the things of the Lord. That there are revivals among politicians we know. How much more should there be among Christians who have matters vastly superior and much more important than anything political!

Revivals are a pulling up of nature, the imposing of restraint upon the flesh, times of heart-searching. Are we ashamed with such an unpopular movement in the eyes of our neighbours? No matter how successful our endeavours, much more could be done for the Lord in our evangelistic efforts. Another has said that revival is like a landslide crashing down the mountain, something mightier than the tumbling down of a large rock; revival is a real stirring up. If conditions are stirred up by the Spirit of God, we may be sure that the devil the enemy of souls, will also be aroused. He will stir up carnal Christians to criticize; this will influence the timid ones, and although they may know that the work is good, they will not respond. Notwithstanding, we are sure that those who put their hearts into the work of the gospel will find them filled by the very joy of Heaven. No pleasure this side of Heaven can compare with that of seeing souls saved. May we seize every possible opportunity to reach and rescue the perishing.

A preacher invited to minister in a rural congregation saw a box on the table labelled, “For the Preacher.” It was there, of course, to defray his expenses. Into it he placed his offering. That evening when he was leaving, one of the deacons opened the box and found only the amount that the preacher himself had placed there that morning. On the way home, he complained bitterly to his little grandson who had gone with him. Finally the little lad said, “Grandpa, if you had put more into it, you would have gotten more out of it.” This is so true in Christian testimony; the more we put into our witnessing for Christ, the greater will be the results.

“Revive Thy work, O Lord!

Create soul-thirst for Thee:

And hungering for the Bread of Life

O may our spirits be!”

Tithing (Feb 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 2, Feb 1966.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." — Proverbs 3:9-10.

The practice of tithing is too demanding upon the usual man of the world, too exacting for the cold formalist, and at times too imperative for the carnal Christian. To the child of God who wishes to please and honour his Lord, the laying aside of a specific amount is not only a privilege, it is a delight. To mark a percentage of our income, "This is for the Lord," is to always have a continual sweet savour offering for Him.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians stated, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2). God similarly instructed his ancient people Israel, saying: "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land… thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket… thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, …A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: … And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruit of the land, which Thou, O Lord, hast given me" (Deut. 26:1-10).

Furthermore, the Lord also states who are the beneficiaries of this tithing: “When thou hast made an end of tithing… and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled” (Deut. 26:12). If you wish to spiritualize this stranger (Eph. 2:19), as the unsaved, then we have a suggestion relative to the furtherance of the gospel. The firstfruits of Israel’s harvest was an acknowledgement of their redemption and a proof of their gratitude to God. Should we who have been redeemed from sin, death, and hell deny God His claims upon us? Could we be happy spending selfishly that with which we could honour Him? We often sing:

“‘Tis we, O Lord, whom Thou hast shown

The deadly bitterness of sin;

We, who forgiving love have known,

May fitly bring thank offerings in.”

“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.” What a promise by our God! If we give to Him what is His due, He will return to us more than our due. In this matter we must learn to honour the Lord; not to honour ourselves.

Malachi throws down the challenge of the Lord: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10).

Recently at one of our conferences a brother told me that during last year he doubled his tithe for the Lord,

and that in return the Lord had repaid him abundantly; He sent him more work than at any previous time. How true the promise, “Them that honour Me, I will honour” (1 Sam. 2:30)!

Robert Telfer used to tell of a Scotch sister who in her earlier years was very generous. She eventually inherited a large estate. After that it was sensed that she was not so generous. Some one, for her own spiritual good, ventured to ask her the reason why, and received the answer, “When I had a shilling purse, I had a guinea heart; now I have a guinea purse, I have a shilling heart.”

An elder in a medium sized assembly confided that the average weekly contribution per person in their assembly was $3.00. Such liberality is most commendable, and should speak to the conscience of many who pay little attention to this important matter. May the Lord touch every one of our hearts, and may we respond promptly and sacrificially.

“Bring the tithes into the storehouse,

Ye who say that Christ is Lord.

Yes, bring all the tithes and prove Me,

‘Tis the challenge of His word.

Bring the tithes of gold and silver,

Tithes of income and of gain,

Tithes of stall and tithes of sheepfold,

Tithes of fruit and tithes of grain.”

They That Feared God (May 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 5, May 1966.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

Solomon's wisdom made him a very keen observer of all matters under the sun. The Book of Ecclesiastes is actually a collection of his observations. Among these we find this one, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him" (Ecc. 8:12).

He speaks with certainty, and says, "Surely I know." He had watched those that feared the Lord, and had observed the evidence of divine approval and recompense. He knew by his survey that it was well for all who stood in awe and reverence before the Lord.

Abraham feared the Lord and in holy reverence obeyed God's call, and built his alter and pitched his tent; consequently, it was well with him. It was altogether otherwise with his nephew. Lot. Lot's covetous eyes looked upon the well-watered plain of Sodom and he made his choice. He pitched his tent toward the city; eventually moved into the city, and apparently became a judge there. Ultimately he lost all he thus gained. Financially he lost his position and property; socially he lost his citizenship morally he lost his character. He as a righteous man (2 Pet. 2:7) was saved though as by fire. His life was all dross, dross consumed by the flame; and he alone spared.

Was the principle observed by Solomon true in the case of Abraham? Let, us see. "The Lord said unto Abraham after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward,

and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth:… then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Gen. 13:14-17).

Was this principle still operative in the days of Joseph? Joseph was despised and ill treated by his brothers, tempted and falsely accused by a sensual woman, thrown into prison, and forgotten by those he helped. Notwithstanding, he said, "I fear God" (Gen. 42:18). How then did things go well with him? Listen to his statement to his brothers, "Now it was not you that sent me thither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt (Gen. 45:8).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego all feared God, and yet they were cast into a furnace heated "one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." In their case it seemed to go ill with them in spite of their fear of God. "These men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace" (Dan. 3:21).

Solomon's observation, "It shall be well with them that fear God," nevertheless is correct. "Lo," said Nebuchadnezar, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He then called, "Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither." "The princes, governors, and captains, and the kings counsellors being gathered together, saw these

men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them" (Dan. 3:25-27).

The old proverb says, "All is well that ends well." Their trying experience ended in final good. God is true to His word, "Them that honour Me, I will honour."

Daniel's experience was very similar to that of his three friends, "Daniel … went into his house; and his window being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). Nevertheless, we read, "They brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions… And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den" (Dan. 6:16-17). Poor Daniel! But was that the end? Solomon asserted that he was certain that it would be well with them that fear God. Was it well with Daniel? Listen to his own words, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lion's mouth, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee" (Dan. 6:21-22). Notice also the postscript to this incident, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyprus the Persian. With Solomon we are obliged to acknowledge, "It is well with them that fear God."

Said the Lord Jesus to the multitudes around Him. "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him" (Luke 12:5). Yet the Apostle Paul states, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:18). How descriptive all this is of our own generation!

Let us remember the proverbs of the same wise king who observed the principle we have been testing; he wrote, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10).

May it be true of us in this day of remnant testimony as it was of an earlier remnant: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord harkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels” (Mal. 3:16-17). It was true of that small remnant, and it is also true of us. “Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him.”

Our Bodies—A Temple (Dec 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 10, Dec 1967.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The moment we rested our all for Eternity on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, the Holy Spirit entered and we were born of God. Simultaneously our bodies became the temples of the Holy Spirit. The late Robert McCrory used to aptly say, “Not only is the Holy Spirit resident in our hearts but He should also be president in our lives.” Dr. John Heading, in his exposition of 1 Corinthians states: “The Holy Spirit has been freely given us by God. Hence, every act of the body, of seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, experiencing, tasting, must be regulated with this truth in mind. He knows all. Not only is He on high, but He dwells within us.”

Let us consider an analogy from the Old Testament: “All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve … For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them” (1 Chron. 9:21-27).

Figuratively speaking, the gates and doors to the temple of the Holy Spirit are the ears, eyes, mouth, lips and mind of the redeemed of the Lord, for He indwells them. The Apostle Paul exhorted the saints at Rome, and of course us as well: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). Our entire personalities should be wholly yielded to the influence and power of God the Holy Spirit.

Entrance

There are certain matters which ought to be readily accepted through the various gates, matters which may be used by the indwelling Spirit for either our benefit or for the benefit of others.

Through eargate: Isaiah presents the Lord Jesus as Jehovah’s perfect Servant, and of Him as such, he says, “He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isa. 50:4-5). Undoubtedly this is why the Lord Jesus claimed to speak words given to Him by God. Seven times in John’s Gospel He makes this claim (Jno. 7:16; 8:28, 46; 47; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8). No wonder that our Lord could speak words that sustained and strengthened him that is weary (Isa. 50:4, R.V.).

Through eyegate: Our present educational system places great importance upon visual aids in teaching. Of course the eyes have become the symbol of perception and understanding, and it is in that light the Psalmist uses them. He prays, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psa. 119:18). It

is in this way that we discover new glories in our adorable Lord Jesus.

The mouth: Mr. Newberry suggested long ago that Daniel may be the author of Psalm 119, if so then it was he who wrote, “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Thy commandments” (V. 131). In this manner, he pictured his soul as thirsting and hungering for the Word of God. In answer to such a prayer our heavenly Father says, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psa. 81:10).

The heart: When we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, what is true of Lydia becomes true of us. Paul writes of “a certain woman named Lydia … whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14).

The advice of George Muller is worthy of attention, “Open the Bible first thing in the day. Let God speak to you, and then on your knees speak to God.”

Expulsion

It is also recorded of the temple, “And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the Lord, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in” (2 Chron. 23:19). This illustrates a very necessary attitude on the part of the believer; he must not allow the temple of the Holy Spirit to become defiled. We read of the man who is able to abide in the presence of God, a consuming fire, that he “stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil” (Isa. 33:14-15). Our constant prayer should be: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Psa. 119:37). “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not

mine heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties" (Psa. 141:3-4).

Elders among the churches of the saints are deeply concerned over young Christians who expose themselves to temptation by reading the cheap novels and sexy stories found in the book stands everywhere. Such pulp literature perverts the mind and frequently proves detrimental to any testimony before others. Another wrote in regard to such reading: "A ship headed towards the rocks, a car with its occupants rushing towards a washed-out bridge, a person poised in the act of taking poison, is frightening; one thinks only of an untimely death." Such are the dangers of indiscriminate reading. Elders, who especially care for the young should caution them, suggest better reading habits, and encourage them to properly appraise spiritual values. They should also encourage them to take time to be holy and to commune with the Lord. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death" (Psa. 48:14).

A certain firm in advertising a well-known food product used this appeal, "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are." We know what the Psalmist spiritually was because of what he mentally assimilated. "We have thought of Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple" (Psa. 48:9). Wisdom says, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (Prov. 9:34).

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly

He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:35-37).

The Sunday School and its Work (Part 1) (June-July 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 6, June-July 1968.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

This booklet is specially written for all who are interested in Sunday School work, in the hope of leading those thus engaged to consider earnestly the three following questions—

1. What is a Sunday School Teacher?

2. What is his work?

3. What is the best way of doing it?

Not only are these questions important, but a right understanding of them is also essential for everyone engaged in teaching.

What then is a Sunday School Teacher? In the first place, he or she must be a true Christian. How can one who is not, be able to set forth TWO of the fundamental truths of the Bible, namely, that the children are lost, and that Christ came to seek and save the lost? A blind man's lecture on sight or a deaf man's on hearing would be just as useful as an unconverted man telling of Christ and His Salvation. Let every intending teacher then ask, am I saved? Can I take my place as a Christian?

Sometimes we are asked "Is there Scripture for a Sunday School? Are not the children to be instructed at home by their parents? We have no definite Scripture but we have scriptural principles for a Sunday School and for Sunday School teachers.

In Deutermomy 31, we learn that children and others were gathered together to receive instruction. In Mark 16:15 we read, “preach the gospel to every creature.”

This alone is sufficient grounds for preaching to any number of children. Though a teacher is not looked upon as an evangelist or preacher of the gospel, he could be accounted as such and a good deal more.

If all parents were able and willing to instruct their children at home in the things of God, Sunday Schools would not be needed. When parents send their children to a Sunday School they tacitly acknowledge that they are not in a position to provide for their religious training. The responsibility then falls on the teacher who steps into the position the parent has relinguished, and is therefore armed with authority to take upon himself this solemn undertaking. Looking on the teacher then in a measure as a parent, we turn to God’s Word and find he has the command to train (or literally, catechise) a child in the way he should go. Timothy may be taken as an example of what ought to be the result of such teaching, who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures. (See 2 Tim. 3:15).

Every Christian is not suited for Sunday School work. It is necessary that he have a real love for children. No one who has not love for them is fitted to teach. Other necessary points are patience and perseverance.

The answer then in brief to our question — “What is a Sunday School Teacher?” is “An instructor of children in divine things — a true Christian who has taken the parents’ place (wholly or in part) as to religious training of children.” It is one of the most blessed spheres in

which a Christian can act — to take and train up children for the Lord.

What is his Work? It is to instruct the young in God's Word. Many of the places around us are setting the BIBLE to one side. Works are introduced, more on social topics with religious tendencies. In this way the child is trained for earth and not for heaven. Methods that are not in accordance with God's ways ought to be very much avoided. Hold fast the form of sound words. Teach from God's Word. Valuable help can be obtained from others who are fundamentally sound. Seek what help you can.

The BIBLE being then, the textbook of the teacher, his work is to teach the children in a steady and systematic manner, and from every page of Scripture find opportunity to bring the gospel message to the hearts of his young hearers.

Guard against reading favorite parts here and there without order. On the other hand avoid a cold and dry exposition of chapter after chapter, giving a certain amount of useful information but without an endeavour to lead the children to Christ.

The work of the teacher is different to that of an evangelist or preacher of the Gospel. The preacher simply delivers his message from God. He appeals and proclaims salvation to them from the Bible. He does not train or catechise his listeners. The work of the teacher is to store the mind with God's Word and ways, thus forming a solid foundation.

Again we remind ourselves of young Timothy — "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation." (2 Tim. 3:15).

How important it is NOT to fill the young minds with confused ideas of God's Word!

Many in after years have had to lament the way in which they had been taught. Day-school teachers of English History would not give a fact from one part, an anecdote from another, and a few incidents from somewhere else. If they did the result would be utter confusion in the mind of the child. The Sunday School teacher should consider well the question, What is my work? It is not reading hither and thither, but carefully and prayerfully reading through the Bible, explaining as clearly and connectedly as possible the facts in the portion, laying bare the silver vein that assuredly underlies the whole, and presenting Christ to the young heart. Seek to lay a firm and solid foundation of God's own Word, trusting to Him to bless it. If the work is thoroughly done, it will spring up sooner or later. At any rate the workman will have no cause for shame.

A teacher should not speak to his class from the Bible as if they knew it. Treat them as entirely ignorant of it. He is to carefully and systematically make them acquainted with the whole of the Bible, which is no small task.

Never fail to present Christ Himself. In some cases the truth of this lies bright and sparkling on the surface of the passage so that the child is instantly attracted; in other cases deep down, so that Christ needs to be sought for, so to speak, by the teacher and shown to his young listeners. Such is the teacher's true work, and on it he can with confidence ask God's blessing.

Indolence is a great barrier to successful work and needs to be constantly fought against. I am convinced that there are hundreds of teachers who are unaware

giving way to this besetting sin. Let every teacher watch, because it can easily hide itself under another name.

It is easily seen that the teacher's work to be carried out honestly needs a large amount of labour, a great acquaintance with the Word of God, and grace to bow to its value. Without doubt the coming judgment-seat of Christ will have its reward, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21.)

What is the best way of doing it?—Remember, a willing mind is half the battle. The teacher's work is twofold in character: Teaching the letter of Scripture, and presenting Christ and His Work. In other words, Bible work and Gospel work. The ultimate object is the same.

Every teacher ought as a solemn duty before God, before he meets his class, study carefully the portion he intends to read. A teacher should always be sure of what he teaches and weigh well his words. The injunction is, search the Scriptures.

The teacher is not to come to the class expecting that when there the Spirit will guide as to what he should read. The sphere of the Holy Spirit in connection with Sunday School work is essentially individual, that is to say He operates only in the individual teacher. If the Spirit did everything FOR us we would lose in a measure our responsibility. We are not to come with, as it were, closed Bibles, not opening them till led by the Spirit. But in the quietness of our own home let us read over the lesson and look to God by His Holy Spirit to guide us into the right meaning and force of it. Without this our thoughts are worthless. The idea that the Holy Spirit is

opposed to order and system is not found in the Scripture.

Before leaving this part of our subject I would like to call attention to one or two most necessary adjuncts to successful carrying out of Sunday School teaching. In the first place, the respect of the children should be gained for the teacher and above all for the Word he teaches. Such respect is obtained by a serious deportment and absence of levity, a conscientious union of teaching and practice, a regular and faithful discharge of the duties connected with the position.

Another matter is to gain the affection of the child. It is true that if you love them, they cannot help loving you. Beware of partiality.

Above all, forget not the mighty power of prayer. Pray often, earnestly, believingly. Try to reach the hearts of the children, not for yourself but for Christ.

The Sunday School and it's Work (Part 2) (Aug-Sept 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1968.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt

The Memorizing of Scripture

Read 2 Timothy 3:15

The memorizing of the Word of God is of the greatest importance. It has been proven that people of all ages can memorize the Scriptures. Young people find it easier, of course, than those who are well on in years.

Seeking to store the minds and hearts of the boys and girls with the Scriptures is a matter of great responsibility. It means much, because it lays the foundation for the Spirit of God to work upon. Bishop Baldwin in his book, "Life in a Look," says that "the Word and the Holy Spirit are the two great agents in the salvation of men." Dr. Oscar Lowry in his book "Memorizing of Scripture for Soul-winning," says that "the Spirit of God and the Word of God are closely associated, for the Spirit makes the way of escape by applying the Word of God," and "The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict the sinner and to show the sinner his need of a Saviour."

A few years ago, a young woman from out of town and her husband were doing business in the city. In the course of conversation she told me that she had just got saved. She said that after coming to the city she met a woman who was seeking salvation through the Oxford Group. She herself was brought up in a Sunday School

where she had learned goodly portions of the Word of God, but was not saved. She tried to point this woman to God's way of salvation. While quoting the Scriptures she had learned in childhood, she herself was convicted of sin. After going home and getting alone, she was in real soul trouble and so much so, that same night, she accepted Christ as her own personal Saviour. It was through the Scriptures she had learned as a girl in the Sunday School.

Timothy, the young man to whom Paul the Apostle was writing, was no doubt saved under Paul's preaching; but he is reminded here of the interest and care of others when he was a child. We learn from the first chapter who were the responsible ones for his early training. It was his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

Notice that it was "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." It was not merely as a child, but from a child. Now that has a great deal of weight and I want you to notice too that it was "able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ."

Sometimes children are given memory verses to learn such as, "Pray without ceasing," "Honour the Lord with the firstfruits of thine increase," "If any man love Me, let him keep My commandments," "Son, give Me thine heart," which are all God's Word, but more suitable for those who are saved. Memory verses should be given that would lead one to a knowledge of Christ — "to make wise unto salvation." Verses that are difficult to understand are sometimes given, and ought not to be. One young man told me when he was a child he was given the verse to learn, "I am Alpha and Omega," and for a long time he wondered what that meant. One day

he was out in the country and he heard someone speak of a field of alfalfa and he thought that was what Alpha meant.

It is also sad when you have to pay scholars to learn their memory verses. I have had some come into the store asking what I would suggest they should buy to get the scholars to learn their memory verses. If the day-school teachers had to do a thing like that, they wouldn't get very far, would they?

I think scholars ought to go to their Sunday School prepared to repeat their memory verses. It would help greatly if the teacher was there ahead of time before the hour of commencement, not only to welcome the scholars, but also to inquire if they have learned their memory verses, and if not, to insist that they do so before the lesson begins.

It is a very responsible position for a teacher to have the care of the scholar for a brief hour once a week. All children have not the care of a godly mother and grandmother as Timothy had. Therefore, how important it is that we get the children to memorize the Scriptures!

Where I am interested, we have this plan: At the close of the session we ask each class to rise and repeat their memory verse. This works splendidly.

Spurgeon said, "Store the minds of boys and girls with the Word of God. You may not see any results. It may just lie there as stones upon the ice in winter, but when the warmth of spring comes and melts the ice, the stones sink in, and so it is with the Word of God." When that lad and girl grow up and you begin to wonder and think that it is all of no use, they are brought under the

sound of the Gospel at some special meetings and it may be that when the warm rays of Calvary shine upon those hearts, they will melt and the Word will sink in, taking effect.

I believe that the work of the teachers would be greatly strengthened if they taught the scholars to repeat portions of Scripture, remembering that a few Scriptures memorized are better than many Scriptures imperfectly learned.

The teachers of the three schools in connection with our assembly, towards the end of the year, select a chapter that is to be learned for the special prize at the end of the year. That chapter is divided into sections to suit the age of the scholars. Any that want to learn the whole chapter are encouraged to do so. We have had children as young as six years repeat the whole of the first chapter of John's Gospel of fifty-one verses correctly, without a single mistake.

In order to get that prize, we hold up the standard of perfection. It is a matter of opinion as to whether it should be said before the whole school, or whether it is just said among the teachers. We have it repeated before the whole school, and we insist upon perfection in order to get the special prize. Some may think this is hard, but we have made inquiries of the scholars themselves, and they prefer the standard of perfection. Some ex-scholars, who are now teachers, were asked, and they say it is the only way.

A little Catholic boy one time was attending a Sunday School, where he was given a Bible. The priest said that it was a bad book and tried to take it from him. He didn't want to give it up, but was forced to do so. At the

same time, he said “I thank God that you cannot take away the twenty chapters that I have in my heart.”

When we think of the responsibility that it placed upon us, how much more important it is to see that the children memorize the Word of God! When our children were small, we used to teach them to repeat a verse of Scripture on their knees before getting into bed. We don’t believe in teaching them prayers apart from, “Oh God, show me I am a lost, guilty sinner and on my way to hell.” After they were finished, we had them repeat a verse of Scripture, usually the memory verse for the coming Sunday, which had to be learned first. Then they could repeat any Scripture they wanted to before getting into bed.

When we see error abounding on every hand, and increasingly so, we should be more careful to see that the children memorize the Word of God. Get the Word in and God will see to it that it will prosper. He said, “My Word shall not return unto Me void” (Isa. 55:11).

The Sunday School And its Work (Part 4) (Nov 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 9, Nov 1968.

Ormer G. C. Sprunt (continued from last month)

Discipline In The Sunday School

Discipline is an important subject and this article is written as a result of practical experience and observation.

Order with regularity in both teachers and scholars are necessary to success in Sunday School work, and no school can exist long in a healthy condition where there is not godly management. This need not to be done on the part of the Superintendent in an overbearing manner or in such a way as to cause teachers to feel themselves in bondage. It is essential to good order and harmonious working that the superintendent should take the lead having all the teachers as his “staff.”

The Superintendent should not scold the scholars, nor should he tell them how bad they have been. They should be put on their honour, and given to understand that you expect their best behaviour. Control them with your eyes. Our children have told me that when small, whenever I spoke firmly they would look to see if there was a twinkle around my eyes. If not, they knew of a certainty I meant what I said.

At the end of the session take notice of them as they are going out, speak kindly to them, make remarks to the tiny ones about their new coats or suits. Let the older

ones know you are interested in them, and be on the look out for impressions made on the oldest scholars.

Children should be informed when they join the school that they are required to be in subjection to its rule and that obedience is the condition of their being received and retained as scholars.

Opening promptly on time and closing before the hour should be rigidly observed. At the commencement do not keep ringing the bell. One ring should be enough to command attention. Remember the old saying: “Familiarity breeds contempt,” constant ringing of the bell becomes so common that children pay no heed to it.

Loud talking, reading and repeating of lessons is a great annoyance to the next class, and might often be better controlled. Scholars have been observed talking during lessons and the teacher apparently taking no notice. During the time of lessons no talking among scholars should be permitted, nor should teachers gossip with any to the neglect of others.

Wherever you find a teacher truly devoted and in love with the work, putting wholeheartedness into it, you will invariably find a good class, and there too will real fruit be found.

No teacher should be absent from his or her class unless through sickness or some unusual happening without giving due notice to the Superintendent, so that the place may be properly filled. If a teacher habitually absents himself without satisfactory reasons, he should be respectfully told that it would be of benefit to the class to give it up.

Some teachers have been known to be absent for no better reason than going to hear some favourite preacher or going out with friends. No class can long exist under such conditions. It will either melt away or become demoralized.

There are times when one devoted teacher who keeps good order may be called away without opportunity of giving due notice. That of course is another matter.

Uncalled and unfit persons sometimes find their way into Sunday School work, and it is a mercy for all concerned when they discover their mistake, and take their departure.

Never manifest partiality for certain scholars or have “pets” in your class. Attentive and interesting children may and do have one’s special attention, and the spiritual conditions of others will draw out prayer and effort. Even then it should be studied so as not to cause jealousy or ill-feeling in the class. Many a good class has been spoiled through this.

Sometimes we have difficulty with older boys and girls when they come to the age of sixteen or thereabout, wanting to leave the school. Boys especially, often manifest a spirit of lawlessness. A suitable teacher, having their respect and confidence, should be encouraged to take such a class — one who is able to bring the truth intelligently before them. The right teacher and suitable lessons are the chief factors, and should receive first attention.

A teacher needs to be an example as well as an instructor of the Word. His influence will be very great on those who see and hear.

Order and discipline does not ensure spiritual blessing, but it at least hinders human nature from withering up what God gives, and prevents Satan from hindering the Word of God taking effect.

Spiritual power is connected with our hold on God. Success in Sunday School work is connected with our hold on the children. Both are needed, and each has its place.