

**CENTENARY VOLUME.
THE ORGANISATION OF
OUR SABBATH-SCHOOLS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649355136

Centenary volume. The organisation of our sabbath-schools by David Miller

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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DAVID MILLER

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OUR SABBATH-SCHOOLS**

Centenary Volume

THE ORGANISATION
OF
OUR SABBATH-SCHOOLS

BY THE

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EAST PARISH, BRECHIN



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCLXXX

260. g. 462.

P R E F A C E.

THIS unpretending little Volume is an attempt to put before those who are engaged in Sabbath-school work a remedy for several of the defects of our Sabbath-school system. The plan suggested is simple in the extreme, is easily worked in schools of any size, and costs less than any other plan we know. It was only at the request of a number of friends, who know how the system works, that it has been put in print.

We have to acknowledge our obligations to those who so kindly assisted in procuring information for this work.

D. M.

C O N T E N T S.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Principle on which Sabbath-schools are founded—Development of this principle and rise of Sabbath-schools—Rise of Sabbath-schools in Scotland—Rev. David Blair, Brechin : his times ; first Sabbath-school ; sketch of his life ; digest of sermon—Rise of Sabbath-schools in England : Robert Raikes—Sabbath-schools in America—Statistics of Sabbath-schools,	5
CHAPTER II.	
Present Sabbath-school system—Its defects—Arrangement of classes—Lessons—Annual treats, prizes, &c.,	37
CHAPTER III.	
New scheme—Its advantages in furnishing a remedy for defects of present system—How to make the Sabbath-school self-supporting—Sabbath-school accommodation,	49
CHAPTER IV.	
Congregations—Sabbath-schools—Scholars—Teachers,	56

THE ORGANISATION OF OUR SABBATH - SCHOOLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH SABBATH-SCHOOLS ARE FOUNDED.

THE principle on which Sabbath-schools are founded is a very ancient and fundamental principle of our religion. It is contained in the words of our Lord Himself, when welcoming the children whom His disciples would have sent away, in these words—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But it reaches still further back; for is it not also found in the command of Moses to the Israelites, when he enjoined them to instruct their children in regard to the rites used at the feast of the Passover? "And it shall come to pass, *when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?* that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped" (Exod. xii. 26, 27).

So likewise, in giving the commandments and enjoining obedience to the law, it is written, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*"

It is abundantly clear from these and other parts of Scripture that our heavenly Father meant the children to be the special care of the faithful ; and though this fact and this principle were ignored for ages among other nations, and only but indifferently attended to among the Jews—except in regard to the ritual of religion—yet it was *there* in all its beauty and all its heavenly loveliness, given to men from God on high to show how much He cared that they who should in due time become the men and women, having the care and direction of affairs in the world, should be early imbued with the spirit of this most holy law. This principle, like many other sublime truths in Scripture, was ignored before Christ came, and before He sent us His Holy Spirit to guide us to all truth : it was there all the while, like a diamond in a field ; but it was only after the lapse of many centuries that this precious stone was observed and brought forth into the light, when it became a recognised principle in Christian Churches that the young should be specially instructed in schools on Sabbath in the great truths of the Bible. The nations had begun to learn by experience that the children were worthy of consideration for the sake of the State ; and they had begun to take care to have them trained so as to bring out their powers, as well mental as bodily, many centuries before this principle of educating the higher part of their being was duly recognised. There was a growing reverence for the life and wellbeing of the child

even in early monastic times ; and many a young life has been saved to the world, and for the world's benefit, by the humanity shown by the monasteries to those unfortunates that from time to time had been laid at their doors, evidently in the hope and belief that there they would be cared for and properly reared. The erection of foundling hospitals at Trèves, Angers, Milan, and elsewhere, as time advanced, shows very clearly that men's minds were moving in this direction. That the Council of Rouen should have decreed that a child laid at the door of a church was to be taken care of by the Church, shows a remarkable advance in the respect in which the life and wellbeing of the young were held.

The general principle of caring for the welfare of children, and the duty of seeing them properly trained in religious knowledge, were gradually developing on all sides ; and as men began to be more enlightened, the idea gained ground the faster, that public bodies were bound to see to this being done. But though instances are not wanting of some of them recording their sense of the propriety of such a step, yet it was generally left to the individual effort of some energetic individuals to carry out in their own way, and almost invariably at their own expense, whatever plans or purposes they might conceive for the religious instruction of the young. It would appear that Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, established Sabbath-schools in the sixteenth century, in which the children were taught the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith, and the ordinary branches of secular education ; while Abbé Jean Baptiste de la Salle opened a Sabbath-school for the *gamins* of Paris in 1669 in connection with the Romish Church. Though this school existed for six years only, yet it is an evidence of the growing anxiety on the part of pious men, and those who had

the good of children at heart, that they should be instructed in religious knowledge.

RISE OF SABBATH-SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND.

Throughout this country, from an early period of last century, there are instances of individuals who in their own way had endeavoured to form classes for the instruction of children in religious knowledge on Sundays; and though they may be unknown to fame, yet they have contributed some part, however small, that has gone to help to bring about the grand result of our Sabbath-school system that now so triumphantly flourishes in our land. They may have been no more than as drops of water in the river, their contributions may have been only as the "mite" of the poor widow, yet they have done what they could, and have set agoing a mighty engine for the religious wellbeing of the young of future generations; and it is a duty to them to acknowledge their help, and to rescue from oblivion any of their names that have been preserved to us.

As early as 1710 we read of a Sunday-school having been found in Berwick, while in 1756 there is mention made of another kept by a Presbyterian minister in his own house for fifty years. The "Rabbi Robertson," famous for Hebrew scholarship, who flourished in Kilmarnock as minister of the Antiburgher Kirk, Clerk's Lane, was in the habit of assembling the youth of his congregation between sermons on Sundays for the purpose of catechising them. This he did from the beginning of his ministry in 1775. In the same town John Russell originated a missionary Sabbath-school in 1798; while an evening class was instituted for teaching those strangers lately settled at Kilmarnock, "who laboured under such great disadvantage in the