

**AN ETHICAL SUNDAY
SCHOOL: A SCHEME FOR
THE MORAL INSTRUCTION
OF THE YOUNG, PP. 1-203**

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An Ethical Sunday School: A Scheme for the Moral Instruction of the Young, pp. 1-203 by
Walter L. Sheldon

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AN
ETHICAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

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BY
WALTER L. SHELDON

LECTURER OF THE ETHICAL SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS; AUTHOR OF
"AN ETHICAL MOVEMENT"



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TO MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

S. BURNS WESTON

(OF PHILADELPHIA)

THROUGH WHOM I WAS LED TO ENTER

THIS ETHICAL MOVEMENT

AND WITH WHOM I HAVE WORKED

AS WITH A BROTHER FOR THESE MANY YEARS

THIS VOLUME IS

Affectionately Dedicated

PREFACE.

IN accepting the invitation to publish in the *Ethical Library* this sketch of a new type of Sunday school, I am only too well aware how crude and unsatisfactory it must appear—from the very fact that it is a *sketch*, and nothing more. As has been stated elsewhere in this volume, the sample lessons are chosen from two or three thousand pages of manuscript. It may be that some of these series of lessons may find their way into print in complete form later on, if there should be a demand for them. At the present, however, this bare outline must suffice. It is equally plain how meagre my work will appear, in comparison with the schemes for such course of instruction which will be developed by other minds in the course of the next two or three decades. No one can anticipate what magnificent fruits may come in the next generation in this direction, after the ground has been thoroughly broken and the field well worked. Undoubtedly most of what is offered here will be superseded ere many years by something far better and more satisfactory. But a little will be accomplished by means of this outline, if it helps to arouse further interest in the subject, and succeeds in awakening greater attention to the importance of developing Sunday school work along ethical lines. I should be sorry if anything in the title of this volume necessarily implied that the proposed course

of instruction was in direct antagonism to the teachings of the orthodox Sunday school. As a matter of fact, three-quarters of the material outlined in this book could be used in the ordinary Church school, without being in open conflict with the doctrinal teachings there given. The chief contrast would lie in the novelty of the *method*. I shall continue to hope, therefore, that orthodox minds, as well as reformers, may be disposed at least to examine into the system before pronouncing against it. As yet of course it is but an experiment which is being worked out in a single school, and it may seem as one only of many plans being put forward. But there is a positive clamour rising among those who are seriously concerned with Sunday school work, for more practical material in the religious education of the young. Each new scheme, therefore, if it has been planned or developed with long and painstaking care, may be worthy of consideration.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Muirhead, the Editor of the *Ethical Library*, for reading my manuscript, and making a number of valuable suggestions. I shall always be glad to enter into communication with those who may wish to obtain any further information about the work outlined in this volume.

WALTER L. SHELDON.

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CHAPTER I.

A "RELIGIOUS SERVICE" FOR THE YOUNG.

IN venturing to give this outline of a scheme of ethical instruction, I shall simply undertake to describe the system we have been working out in one ethical Sunday school in a large American city.

It was our intention to reverse the process customary in the average Sunday school, letting the teaching concerning what is commonly known as "religious conceptions" come in at the end of the course, about the time when the young people are passing on into young manhood and young womanhood; on the other hand, *beginning* the course of instruction with the elements of morality. It has not been our purpose in any way definitely to antagonise religious beliefs. But instead of beginning our teaching with talks about "God," this latter feature comes in as the last step, with which we close our course of instruction for the young, just before they leave our charge to enter the larger School of Life.