

skirts and watched the preparation of the Sabbath meal, the kindling of the Sabbath lamp, and the setting apart of a portion of the dough from the bread for the household, he became accustomed to that which ere long aroused his attention and involved explanation. He saw that everyone who came into or went out of the house reverently touched the little folded parchment hung upon the door-post, on which was inscribed the name Jehovah, and then kissed the fingers which had come into contact with so sacred a thing. Long before he could go to school or to the synagogue, he became familiar with the private and united prayers, the festive seasons and the weekly Sabbath of his people and family. In mid-winter there was the joyous illumination in each home, commemorative of the dedication of the Temple; in the earliest spring, the merry feast of Purim, the memorial of Esther's and Israel's deliverance; then the Passover, with its solemn and impressive rites; then the Feast of Weeks—the glad thanksgiving for summer's golden harvest and rich fruit, with its duty of presenting of the first and best to the Lord; then, as autumn seared the leaves, the Feast of the New Year spoke of casting up of man's accounts in the great Book of Judgment; and later on came the feast of the Day of Atonement, the memory of which could not fade away; and, last of all, the feast of Tabernacles, when all the fruits of field and garden were gathered in and men prayed and longed for the harvest of a renewed world. As soon as the child could speak it was taught short passages of the sacred Scriptures, especially what we might call a birthday text, some verses beginning or ending with the same letters as his Hebrew name. He was told the simple stories of the past, learned prayers and psalms, were exercised in the laws of God and imbued with the spirit of devotion. When five or six years old he was sent to school, where, sitting with other pupils on the ground, and in latter times on benches in a circle, he helped to form the "crown of rabbi." The unwearied patience, intense earnestness and kind strictness exercised towards the youth in these schools call for our warmest admiration. The Bible, for the first six or ten years, was the exclusive text-book; then, if capable, the child passed on to the school of commentators, and, in another three years, to the theological academies of the highest rabbis. His religious instruction was compulsory and thorough. Every child in Israel was obliged to go through this training. He was expected, when he reached maturity, to be qualified to understand and discuss the most profound theological subjects, subjects that are now considered the exclusive property of the clergy, and of only a few of them; and he was expected, on the Sabbath day, to be ready to tell his faith and to give instruction in the synagogue. Every Jew was a preacher, and had the right of public expression.

When he pass on into Christian times there is evidence enough to show that the early Church sought to perpetuate the same thorough, extensive and compulsory system of religious education. Historians tell us that the children were encouraged and trained up from their infancy to the reading of Holy Scripture; they were taught its simple passages before they began to study secular subjects; they were gathered into schools and classes for the express purpose of instruction

in the Christian faith and in the Word of God; and every effort was made to qualify them, not only spiritually, but also intellectually, for the inevitable struggle with heathen thought and custom. The schools were distinct from the schools for catechumens or converts preparing for baptism, and also from the schools of catechists in which men were made ready for ordination; they were planted, as in Armenia and Egypt—most remote provinces of Christendom—in the towns and villages, beside the churches and under the immediate supervision of the clergy. There was no hesitation then in placing the Bible in the hands of the children; in fact, it was the chief text-book, and the memorizing of large portions was carefully insisted upon. It is true that this may have been in part occasioned by the cost and scarcity of copies of Holy Writ; but not entirely so, for in the days of Christ, owing to the hundreds of slaves employed at Rome and elsewhere in copying manuscript, portions of the sacred Scriptures in Greek, containing as much matter as would cover sixteen pages of small print, could be bought for about ten or fifteen cents of our money. Nor was the art of reading then less extended than it is now; therefore we think, the fathers of the early Church gave so much attention to memorizing Scripture largely because of its inherent value, because it is, after all, the best and truest way of teaching the Word of God. We read of children who could repeat word for word whole books of the Bible, and of boys who from their knowledge of the sacred volume we admitted as readers in the Church.

Moreover, the gatherings of Christians in the first two centuries at least, apart from the purpose of actual worship, were for instruction. The sermon, as we now understand that rhetorical exercise, had not come into being; exposition, very much as in our modern Bible-class, took its place. In these expository discourses the young were not forgotten; simplicity and actual teaching brought the truth home to their hearts and minds. The aim was to make every Christian an Evangelist, teacher and worker for the Lord. In the primitive congregation, as well as in the earlier synagogue, he who had aught to say, said it; the clergy were the rulers, guides and guardians of the general society, the administrators of sacraments and the dispensers of discipline, but by no means the exclusive, not always the regular, teachers. Even later, laymen were allowed to preach in the churches.

The apostolical constitutions, dating somewhere between the first and sixth centuries, expressly state: "Even if a teacher be a layman, still if he be skilled in the word and reverent in habit, let him teach; for the Scripture says, 'They shall be all taught of God;' and, later on, in the middle ages, when the lines between clerical and lay functions were distinctly drawn, the monks and friars, many of whom were not ordained, were permitted and licensed to preach.

And one of the most remarkable facts in Church history, outside of the New Testament, is, in the latter part of the fourth and the earlier part of the fifth centuries, the large number of holy and devout women who assisted in the Church's work, and doubtless in this of instructing the lambs of the flock. And though the Church lapsed rapidly into what some are pleased to call "darkness"—though the darkness

was light itself to that which surrounded it—there was still much care taken of the young. The old Jewish thoroughness was indeed lost—lost, never as yet to have been regained—but the necessity of instruction was the same as ever and its practice still to some extent enforced. The monasteries had their schools for the boys and girls of the neighborhood, and none can deny the fact that the knowledge of the people had of the general outline of Scripture history and religious doctrine, even in the later middle ages, was creditable. That they did not learn the doctrine of justification by faith, is to say no more than that our people in this day have not, as yet, grasped the doctrine of the ministry and mission of the Holy Ghost. They were behind and we are behind the truth; but they did know much of what we think them ignorant. The old monks taught by symbols what we teach by words. Rites and ceremonies were supposed to contain mystic lessons; the churches themselves were the expression of deep religious thought. The walls of the religious edifices were covered with pictures of sacred or legendary traditions, just as our Sunday-school walls are covered with illustrations of Scripture events and persons; which pictures the Reformers carefully obliterated and painted texts in their stead. The constant round of services, the ever-present evidences of a Christian faith and a Christian nation, and the all-powerful and all-pervading influence of the Church, accustomed the people from childhood to the thought and reality of religion. The dawn of the Reformation brought in a fuller and more extensive attempt at juvenile religious education, and prepared the way for efforts of ambitious magnitude.

The English Reformers took an especial interest in, and made, as they supposed, ample provision for, this work. Their writings are full of instructions as to the duty and how it should be done. Bishop Jewel strikes the true note of all Sunday-school work when he says: "The whole standeth in knowledge and fear of God; that they may know God, and walk before Him in reverence and fear, and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life." He regrets that in this respect of youthful religious education, the Christians come far short of the Jews; and he traces out a scheme of teaching in which he insists upon doctrinal instruction as the foundation and essence of the whole. Other divines lay stress upon the same point, evidently holding that the soul was trained, drawn out and strengthened by clear and positive dogmatic teaching rather than by expositions of the mere history, topography, botany, biology and so forth of the Scriptures. Parents were enjoined to read to them chapters from the Bible at dinner and supper; to provide them with good books; to correct their morals; to examine them in religious attainments and experiences; and by every means in their power to train them up in the true way. In every parish Church on every Sunday afternoon, immediately at the second lesson at Evening Prayer, the minister of the place was to examine and instruct the youth of both sexes, Archbishop Grindal says, "For an hour at the least." Injunctions were issued compelling parents and guardians to send to these exercises their children who were above six years of age and