

Which Is the Greatest Institution of the Church?

Thomas Holmes Timmons

Comparisons are usually “odious,” and yet we often use this method to ascertain the value of things.

No institution of the church is necessarily injured by comparative estimate.

The preaching of the Gospel is the most dignified method of bringing the truth of God to bear upon the minds of men, and by it God intends to save them that believe and none other.

There are other institutions of incalculable value. But the Sunday school system of instruction has advantages that are to be found nowhere else.

First, it brings the truth of God to bear upon the mind at the most favorable period of life. Satan is a profound metaphysician. Well does he know that his most decided advantage is to be gained by conceiving and ensnaring the youthful intellect. Such is the depravity of the human heart, such are the circumstances surrounding us in our state of trial that if earnest early culture be neglected the seeds of sin will grow up for death, habits will be formed that will become invincible, and as vines twine around the little sapling and become imbedded in its growth and become a part of the solid, massive trunk, so evil if allowed to settle about the foundations of the soul will poison its every vein and fiber and disqualify it for the sweet ministries of life and destroy all hope for usefulness in this world and for happiness in the world beyond.

The Sunday school plants the cedar of the Gospel in the virgin soil of the heart, and being thus preoccupied there is no room for the noxious wells of sin and wickedness.

Secondly, the Sunday school system of religious instruction begets a spirit of reverence for the law of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is of God and has its foundation in man’s physical, mental and spiritual necessity. This is not arbitrary ordinance, and yet such is our love of money and pleasure that we can neither see nor appreciate the provisions made for our deepest and high-most welfare. A portion of the Lord’s day is

occupied by the pupil in preparing his appointed lessons, a portion occupied in the school room under the eye of watchful teachers and there he is safe. That care and vigilance which secures the regular attendance of children upon the Sunday school ought to secure their attendance upon the services of the Sanctuary while the habits of religious thought formed by the study of God’s word and the spiritual instructions from the sacred desk will lead to a permanent reverence for the law of God and for unbounded admiration for the things which are pure and holy.

Thirdly, the Sunday school system of religious instruction leads to a love for the Bible and wholesome literature.

Fourth, from the Sunday school come nearly all the conversions which gladden the church and rejoice heaven. By these early conversions much precious time is snatched from sin and Satan and consecrated to noble and holy purposes.

There are thousands of men today who are dying of despair. “The Gods made us a fearful present when they gave us the power of becoming used to [some]thing,” was the language of an ancient philosopher. It is almost impossible to persuade an old man to repent.

Very few come to eminence who are converted late in life. We read of but one prodigal son returning to his father’s house, and we hear of him no more; he will be a mere sardine in heaven!

Look along the lines of this noble army of youthful Christians as they rally around the standard to the captain of their salvation. They march with something of the firm steps of practiced warriors, skilled as it were from their very infancy in the tactics of Immanuel’s camp.

How encouraging to the faithful men and women who work in this beautiful field as teachers.

Be faithful to your charge. Your praises will be celebrated by the saved on earth and the redeemed in heaven.