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## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL OF DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

BY BISHOP JOHN H. VINCENT, D. D., INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

1. The School of yesterday is the old-time Sunday School for children with its earnest teachers and limited facilities. And it did a good work.

2. The School of to-day is an advance upon that of yesterday.

3. The School of to-morrow will perhaps be as great an advance upon our present system as we imagine ours to be in advance of that which our good old grandfathers developed.

4. But I plead for such an emphasis upon "certain fundamentals" that we may begin to look and plan for the Sunday School of Day After To-morrow—something better than the next few years is likely to realize—the church school at its best—better than our best—a school built upon certain fundamentals, evangelical, psychological, social, educational and spiritual; a school that will embrace all the educating, evangelizing, and edifying factors of Home, Pulpit, Pastorate, School, Press, Civilization—in a noble unity. There may be some formal organization by which we shall secure the benefits of cooperation and economy.

5. Too few of us appreciate the unity of this wonderful Book of God; the emphasis it puts on teaching, the profound pedagogic wisdom, that fills its pages from Genesis to Revelation. And teachers—professional teachers—the teachers of teachers, have gone to it to find the profoundest philosophy and the wisest and most concrete illustrations of a perfect teaching system the world and the ages have ever known. The School of day after to-morrow will follow its guidance. And if you will not be tangled up by my play on words—the yesterdays and to-morrows

of which I have spoken (perhaps an apparently trifling mnemonic device) I will say first of all that "the school of day after to-morrow" must be a reproduction of "the school of day before yesterday."

6. In a word our ideals of the church, the school and the family, must be drawn, not from the theories, policies and ideals of the present, nor of the immediate past, but from the principles and precedents laid down in God's Word.

7. The school of day before yesterday is set forth in the Bible—its roots and trunk in the Old Testament and its branches and fruit in the New. Our best school of the future is to be found in the Bible. Let us go in quest of it there. When I want a forecast of the best that God can do for man and the best that man can do in his work for God and humanity I go to the Bible. And as far as I can understand the subject I sympathize heartily with reverent modern criticism.

8. If a philanthropist in New York desiring to educate a waif picked up from the streets of that city were to ask foremost educators of the present age what steps he should take in order effectively to accomplish his work they would suggest substantially as follows: Separate the lad from his present unfavorable conditions; arrest his attention; give him new ideas so that he may be ensphered in a new world; use, as you will be compelled to do, the object method of instruction; whatever else you do win his confidence, his affections and his will; and be patient and persevering in your efforts in his behalf.

9. Now, as I review this hurried and superficial, yet on the whole, comprehensive Counsel, I recall the divine processes in the same direction when God took in hand a waif, thousands of years ago, on the banks of the Nile, and through divine processes led Israel out of an old land and its slavery into another land and through long century processes created a new civilization, not as yet quite completed, and the end of it all—of all the centuries of effort, of beginnings, of failures, of renewed endeav-

ors, of divine and supernatural interpolations—national, racial, personal, spiritual—will be the noble school of a Christian civilization a little later on—the school of day after to-morrow.

10. The Christ study of the old Jewish Tabernacle, that great kindergarten of religion and of theology, was a complicated object lesson, a mold for a new language to express new and divine ideas.

11. Stand with me for a moment on a rock near the base of Sinai and watch the splendor of that object lesson. The hidden priest is in the holy of holies. All at once behold the mysterious transformation. Everything vanishes—curtains, altars, sacrifices, candlestick, sacred ark, mercy-seat, cherubim, all gone! The robes of the high priest, his crown and all his official glory—gone! The shekinah fades. The cloud itself disappears. What is left? All that is worth while—a man in plain Israelitish costume bowing reverently under the cloudless heaven in personal communion with God!

12. This is the ripe fruit of the whole ceremonial system—of all the doctrines and precepts and institutes of Judaism—man the individual alone a worshipper before the unseen God—himself the temple of God. “Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem” is God to be sought. “God is a spirit.” All men as men, all women, all children, anywhere, everywhere, may through Jesus, whom all these things foreshadowed, have immediate access to God. Altars and incense, candles and sacrifices, splendors of ritual, all the kindergarten apparatus of the infantile period of the race have been superseded—abolished as belonging to an initial period in an educational process. Lessons in the alphabet are no longer needed by the student in the university. Judaism was only the preparation for Christ. And Christ having come and the Spirit having been given every individual believer has all this within his personality and the invisible spiritual environment in which he lives, including the fellowship of other

believers; all that the Jewish theology kindergarten contained and foreshadowed.

13. And really a few centuries later when the plain Christ appeared among men the world saw that whole Jewish system free from all its externals and cumbersome and complicated ritual. They saw the plain man in everyday costume living among men, talking in simple and natural fashion to men, teaching, demonstrating by the deeds of grace and help that he wrought what the teaching work of the church was to be. And later on, before He passed again into the heavens He gave His commission to His followers. The Church is to preach His gospel, to make disciples and then to teach these disciples and the church becomes the aggressive teaching power in the world with simple symbolic and commemorative observances—Baptism and The Lord's Supper—freed as far as possible from ritualistic rites, having as its motto and keynote: "We look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen." And to aid this we have the Sabbath Day retained as the Lord's day and a great Book that records God's way with the race and the assurance that "all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, completely furnished unto all good works."

14. And we have the church that is a school of personal character under the leading of the personal Christ through the Holy Spirit. The church is to set forth the Word of Life, to preach, to teach, to lead, to train, to comfort, to defend the truth and become the center of a splendid school of eternal life using all agencies in this work and so controlling civilization that our national, political, social and educational life may all contribute to the building up of Christ's kingdom. "All things are yours." In every realm where you have an ounce of influence you are responsible for the use of it.

15. The Jewish system was incomplete without Christ.

He came to fulfill its foreshadowings as the great teacher and sacrifice and He abolished all mere incidents and artificialities of religion, provided the simplest possible external service and commissioned his disciples to go abroad and teach. His commission has molded a new civilization and put this civilization at work as a school of truth and righteousness. Jesus suggested no robes of office, provided no ritual, ignored all mere externals beyond the simple appointment of baptism, the Lord's Supper and the setting apart of certain believers to the work of the ministry. The Christianity of the New Testament is at the last remove from the ceremonialism of Judaism. That was kindergarten. It served its purpose and has passed away.

16. But the work of teaching did not pass away. The ministry was pre-eminently a ministry of teaching—of simple everyday, straightforward teaching with no regulations about costumes, programs, symbols, ceremonies. The complicated paraphernalia of ritualism now played with by Roman, Greek and high Anglican ecclesiastics has no place in New Testament Christianity. See the plain peasant of Nazareth as he sat on the well of Shechem under the shadow of Gerizim. The woman of Samaria found opportunity to put what was to her the question of questions between Jews and Samaritans—the place of worship! “Is it this mountain? Is it Jerusalem?” See the face of the Master as he replies, “Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father. God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” In this scene we have a representative of the teaching process that was to supplement Judaism—the emphasis of Christ's own words and an example of the highest of Christian pedagogic methods.

1. It was an individual process, the emphasis on the unit, “To every creature.”

2. It was by conversation—not oratory, but simple talk—saying, suggesting, starting questions, answering one

question by asking another, stimulating the curiosity of the individual, one at a time or two or three in conversation; no oration, no studied eloquence, no elocution, no display, but simply telling and talking in neighborly conversation.

3. The teaching process of the New Testament found its stimulus not only in conversation with units and groups, but its highest inspiration in private prayer. It was in personal communion with the Father that Jesus found (and all his true successors will find) the secret force that made conversation effective.

4. The conversation, teaching, preaching method of Christ was radiant with parables, incidents, figures of speech, metaphors, and especially biographical and personal applications, "Without a parable spoke He not unto them." What use he would make to-day of science, of electricity, of the telegraph and the telephone and the latest mystery of wireless fellowship through unmeasured distances!

5. Let me emphasize the individual process which is indispensable to success in church life and work. The mass must be served, the class cared for, but mass and class are made up of units. It is not enough to preach to a congregation. Some do that. The value of a congregation is in the individuals that compose it and in the knowledge of the units which preacher, teacher or lecturer has; and the aim of his service must be the improvement of the individual.

17. The Sunday School of day-after-to-morrow will be:

1. A school of supernatural ministry.
2. It must begin with and embrace home.
3. It will be a school taught by plain every-day men—men who pray, men who teach by what they are, men who teach chiefly in conversation.

4. It will be a school whose largest power will be in action. The noblest oratory is action. Do you know how God speaks? He acts! "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the Children of Israel." So it was

with the whole history of Israel. So it was with Jesus. He did not write, He wrought.

5. Again in the school of day-after-to-morrow we shall return to the divine way of emphasizing biographical study. History is biography. Politics is biography. The Bible is biography. Christianity is the making of biography—"the living epistle read and known of all men."

18. Thus the school of day-after-to-morrow should embrace all the factors of life as set forth in God's Word—living, thinking, praying, demonstrating, conversing, doing, writing, printing, persevering in preaching and persuading men to accept the truth.

19. Let us turn the whole world, including the over-arching heavens into our school room—our university. Let us turn the whole of life into our school term. Let us dedicate to God the universe that our eyes behold and all the facilities that our place in the world and life embrace and let us each one of us be in God's home our school now and always.