ROBERT RAIKES: A Comparison with Earlier Claims to Sunday School Origins

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AS the two hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the modern Sunday School movement approaches, Dr. Towns, Associate Professor of Christian Education in Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, considers the usual representation of Robert Raikes as the pioneer in this work, along with some rival claims.

THE average history volume on religious education states that Robert Raikes (1735-1811) began the modern Sunday school movement in Gloucester, England, in 1780. C. B. Eavey, in his text, *History of Christian Education,* made the following statement:

> Accordingly, in 1780, Raikes started his first Sunday school in Mrs. Merideth's kitchen in Sooty Alley, so named because chimney sweeps lived there. His pupils were from the lowest levels of society and from places of the worst reputation. Some were so unwilling to attend his school that he marched them there with wood tied to their feet so they could not get away. He paid Mrs. Merideth to instruct these wretched children. The boys were bad, and the girls were worse, so he gave up the work after several months. Raikes then transferred the children to the kitchen of Mrs. King, with Mrs. Mary Critchley as the teacher. She seemed to be better able to handle them and, for more than two years, carried on the work before Raikes made public what he was doing.[1]

Two of the above statements attributed to Raikes are open to question: (1) Marching children to school with wood tied to their feet (see p. 75, n. 26). (2) The statement that he began the first Sunday school (see n. 2).

I. OTHER CLAIMS FOR BEGINNING OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

There are other claims to earlier Sunday schools.[2] A widespread claim is the one in Christ Church Parish, Savannah, Georgia, begun

[1] C. B. Eavey, *An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 224. This quotation is cited to reflect the accepted attitude toward the founding of the Sunday school.

[2] The following list of five claims for the first Sunday school are reflective in number and not complete in listing. Clay Trumbull lists 20 other such claims in a footnote in *Yale Lectures on the Sunday School: Its Origin, Mission, Methods and Auxiliaries* (Philadelphia: John D. Wattles Publisher, 1888), p. 112.

by John Wesley in 1737. John Wesley described the work with children as:

> Our general method is this: a young gentleman, who came with me, teaches between thirty and forty children to read, write and cost accounts. Before school in the morning and after school in the afternoon, he catechizes the lowest class, and endeavours to fix something of what was said in their understanding as well as in their memories. In the evening he instructs the larger children on Saturday, in the afternoon he catechizes them all. The same I do Sunday before the evening service. And in the church, immediately after the Second Lesson, a select number of them having repeated the Catechism and been examined in some part of it, I endeavour to explain at large, and enforce that part, both on them and the congregation.[3]

This school was connected with daily teaching of the colony's children. This might not have been a Sunday school. First, instruction was given on Saturday and Sunday. Also, Wesley seemed surprised and pleased when he first encountered a Sunday school in 1783: "Who knows but that some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians."[4]

Hannah Bell of High Wycombe, England, began religious instruction of children on Sunday in 1769. She wrote to John Wesley the following year: "The children meet twice a week, every Sunday and Monday. They are a wild company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labor among them, especially desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ."[5] There seems to be no other mention of this school in the works dealing with the origins of the Sunday school.

Dr. Joseph Bellamy is credited with beginning a Sunday school in Bethlehem, Connecticut, in 1740. This is described by Joel Hauser in *Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut*:

[3] Wesley, *Works*, Vol. III, p. 322. All references in the footnotes to Wesley's *Works* are from *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* (New York, 1831), edited by John Emory and published in seven volumes. Although this edition contains Wesley's journal, this study has used the standard edition of the *Journal of the Reverend John Wesley*, A.M., (London, 1909-1916), edited by Rev. Nehemiah Curnock. This is the most scholarly edition and contains notes and documents not easily accessible elsewhere.

[4] Letter to Richard Roda, cited by L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of The Rev. John Wesley*, M.A. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1872), p. 506.

[5] Wesley, *Journal, op. cit.*, V, p. 104.

> Dr. Bellamy, pastor of the church in Bethlehem in this state from 1740 until the time of his death, was accustomed to meet the youth of his congregation on the Sabbath, not merely for a catechetical exercise, but for a recitation from the Bible, accompanied with familiar instructions suited to the capacities of the young.[6]

This seems to be a description of a Sunday school, lacking only the general education begun by Raikes. However, Bellamy apparently did not continue his school and therefore had little credit for starting the movement.

Another Sunday school was started by the wife of a pastor in First Moravian Church in Philadelphia in 1744. Quoting from church records, John Farris gave the following proof: "Mrs. James Greeming organized a Sunday school of thirty-three children, who were gathered from the neighborhood, to keep them from running the streets, and to receive religious instruction."[7] Nothing more is said in the book about the Sunday school.

A school was begun on Saturday (the day of rest for the Pennsylvania Dutch) in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, in 1739. This school was under the direction of the German community, having separated from the Dunkards or German Baptists in 1728. Brother Obed was the teacher of the school "to give instruction to the indigent children who were kept from regular school by employment which their necessities obliged them to be engaged at during the week, as well as to give religious instruction."[8]

II CRITERIA FOR BEGINNING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The above-mentioned five schools which met on Sunday might qualify as Sunday schools which were organized earlier than the one begun by Robert Raikes. However, five criteria evident in Raikes' school were missing in the earlier schools. (1) General education. The earlier schools were used primarily for religious indoctrination, whereas Raikes included general education as a cornerstone of the Sunday school movement. Even though direct instruction in general education was dropped early in the development of Sunday school in favor of Christian teaching, many common people continued to attend Sunday school for the broadening

[6] Joel Hauser, *Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut* as cited by Edwin Rice, *The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday School Union* (Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1917), p. 426.

[7] John T. Farris, *Old Churches and Meeting Houses in and around Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1926), p. 115.

[8] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 427. Rice is quoting here from records, concerning which he cites: "The ancient records were freely and fully shown to us."

effect it had on their lives. (2) Popular acceptance. Perhaps the Sunday school of Raikes received popular acceptance because it met a desperate need—education. But its popular acceptance, in light of little acceptance by other Christian educators, gives credit to Raikes for being the founder of the movement. (3) Continuity. The other schools went out of existence, but the movement begun by Raikes continues today. (4) Direct study of the Bible. The Sunday school of Robert Raikes did not use the catechetical method of teaching, rather employed the direct study of the scriptures. (5) Evangelistic. Almost immediately the Sunday school was known for its impact on the moral life of children in the surrounding neighborhoods. There is no evidence that classes were conducted as our contemporary "child evangelism" movement, nor do we read that "decisions or professions of faith" were recorded in Sunday school as in Wesley's and Whitefield's preaching services. But there is abundant evidence of transformed lives, which points out the evangelistic results of Sunday schools. Because these five criteria are found in the Sunday school started by Raikes and continue into the present Sunday school movement, Raikes can be said to have begun the Sunday school movement.

III THE SUNDAY SCHOOL OF RAIKES

(*a*) *The man—Robert Raikes.* George L. Merrill, writing in the book, *The Development of the Sunday School,* 1780-1905, gave a personal description of Robert Raikes, who was born in 1736, the son of a Gloucester printer and editor. His father seemed to be the crusading journalist and editor of *The Gloucester Journal,* which was was a county Tory newspaper. The newspaper was the first journal that attempted to give a report of parliamentary proceedings, which at that time was considered so great a breach of privilege that Raikes Senior was reprimanded at the bar of the House of Lords in the days of King George I. *The Gloucester Journal* was the only newspaper in several counties. According to Merrill, Raikes had a liberal education, received from his parents.[9]

[9] *The Development of the Sunday-School,* 1708-1905, the official report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention, Toronto, Canada, June 23-27, 1905, "Robert Raikes and the Eighteenth Century" by George R. Merrill, p. 1. This chapter has many apparent quotations of Robert Raikes; however, the quotations are not linked to actual letters but the chapter is filled with phrases and sentences in quotation marks. The following footnote appears: "Biographical notes collected by Joseph Harris, unpublished letters by Robert Raikes, letters from the Raikes family." Therefore, the author accepts the material quoted by Merrill with reservation.

Merrill described Raikes as a "fair, well-looking man, about medium height and comfortable stout, buckish and stylish in appearance with his dark blue coat and white fancy waist coat, with silver-gilt buttons, cambric frills and ruffs, nankeen breeches, white stockings, and buckles on his shoes."[10] Merrill went on to describe how Raikes carried a stick in his hand when not occupied with his gold snuff box. In addition to this he wore a brown wig with a double row of curls and a three-cornered hat.[11]

Raikes was a man of "gay and joyous temperament," an affectionate husband and father, a very transparent character of social instincts. Merrill continued, "in his religious view, he [Raikes] is reported as evangelical with a leaning toward mysticism . . . he was a good businessman, steady, methodical and very tenacious of purpose, kindly and benevolent, and not without a touch of the vanity that often marks self made men."[12]

McClintock described Raikes as "a truly devout man, and carried his Christianity into every day life. He was not only scrupulous about his church attendance on the Sabbath, but also made it the rule to frequent early morning prayers on weekdays at the Gloucester cathedral."[13]

(*b*) *Motivations for beginning the Sunday school.* Raikes was particularly interested in the lowly and degraded. He visited prisons and went through the streets seeking to do good wherever there was a need. The improvement in prison discipline at the close of the century in England was due largely to Robert Raikes and his newspaper, which he used as an instrument to affect public opinion in favor of the suffering lower class.[14]

This humanitarian concern turned his attention to the children of the poor. Raikes wrote in his famous letter to Colonel Townley of Lancaster in the *Gentleman's Magazine* the following:

> The beginning of the scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning to the suburbs of the city. where the lowest of the people (who are principally employed in the pin factory) chiefly reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children wretchedly ragged, at play in the streets. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of town, and admitted

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1891), VIII v:1, p. 883.
[14] *Ibid.*

> their misery and idleness. "Ah, sir", said the woman to whom I was speaking, "Could you take the view of this part of town on Sunday, you would be shocked indeed; for then the street is filled with multitudes of those wretches who come on release of the day of employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at 'chuck' and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious minded, an idea of hell rather than any other place."[15]

Apparently this one incident moved Raikes to begin the Sunday school. In his first article in *The Gloucester Journal*, he wrote that the following conditions of the country led him to begin the Sunday school.

> Farmers and other inhabitants of the towns and villages, complained that they received more injury to their property on the Sabbath than on all of the week besides; this, in a great measure, received from the lawless state of the younger class, who are allowed to run wild on that day, free from every restraint.[16]

The Reverend Thomas Stork, Rector of St. John the Baptist, Gloucester, in his journal gave the following account of the beginning of the Sunday school:

> Mr. Raikes meeting me one day by accident at my door, and in the course of conversation lamenting the deplorable state of the lower classes of mankind, took particular notice of the situation of the poorer children. I had made, I replied, the same observation, and told him if he would accompany me into my parish we would attempt to remedy the evil. We immediately proceeded to the business, and procuring the names of about ninety children, placed them under the care of four persons for a stated number of hours on Sunday. As minister of the parish I took upon me the superintendence of the schools and one-third of the expense. The progress of this institution is justly to be attributed to the constant representation which Mr. Raikes made in his own paper, *The Gloucester Journal*, if the benefits which he perceived would probably arise from it.[17]

Edwin Rice, in his book, *The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday School Union*, indicated that one of the motivations for Raikes was the reformation of the country, beginning with

[15] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, ed. by Silvanus Urban, gentleman, Vol. 303, June, 1784.

[16] *The Gloucester Journal*, November 3, 1783, entire article reprinted in appendix (Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 421).

[17] *The Journal*, Rev. Thomas Stork, as cited by W. R. Stephens, *A History of the English Church* (New York; Macmillan and Company, 1906), Vol. VII, pp. 300-301.

children. Rice asked the question as though he were Raikes: "is vice preventable? If so, it is better to prevent crime than punish it. Can these ignorant masses be lifted out of this wretched, vicious state?"[18] Also, Rice appears to have quoted from Raikes when he used the phrase: "Planting seed plots to grow something worthy and respectable out of the seething slum and moral filth."[19]

Rice had access to quotations from letters of Raikes to which he gave no footnotes. Later, he put words in Raikes' mouth without the use of quotation marks: "It was useless to appeal to the parents," then Rice continued, "so he began directly with the children, in the belief that ignorance is the first cause of idleness and vice."[20]

(*c*) *The pupils of the Sunday school.* Merrill indicated that Raikes' first experiment only involved boys who were in Sooty Alley.[21] However, in his letter to Mrs. Harris in 1787, Raikes indicated, "Twenty is the number allotted to each teacher; the sexes kept separate."[22] Later Raikes said of these children, "I give some little token of my regard, as a pair of shoes, if they are barefooted, and some who are very bare of apparel, I clothe."[23] Later in the same letter to Mrs. Harris, he further described them as "evil-smelling outcasts".[24]

The popular works treating Robert Raikes all seem to carry the story, as does Rice: "some were so unwilling to come that he marched them to the school with clogs and logs of wood tied to their feet and legs, just as cattle were hobbled when grazing from the town commons in that day."[25] A careful examination of the available documents does not reveal this incident. Mr. William Brick, a product of the first Sunday school, who attended the funeral of Raikes, indicated: "Some turrible bad chaps went to school when I first went. They were always bad 'uns, coming in. I know the parents of one or two of them used to walk them to school with 14 pound weights tied to their legs . . . sometimes boys would be sent to school with logs of wood tied to their ankles, just as though they were wild jackasses, which I suppose they were, only

[18] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Rice has access to a great wealth of original sources, but the author cannot tell when he is quoting from Raikes, or is using a paraphrase. The source is accepted with reservation.

[19] *Ibid.* [20] *Ibid.* [21] Merrill, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[22] Letter to Mrs. Harris from Robert Raikes on organization of a Sunday school, cited in Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 422. Letter quoted in the appendix.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*; see fuller quotation below, p. 78, lines 34ff.

[25] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 14-15.

worse."[26] The available original document seems to indicate parents sent these boys to school with the wooden logs tied to their legs. Raikes does not seem to be responsible for the action.

Brick went on to describe the attitude of discipline Raikes took toward students.

> When a boy was very bad, he would take him out of the school, and march him home and get his parents to "wallop" him. He'd stop and see it done and then bring the urchin back, rubbing his eyes and other places. Mr. Raikes was a terror to all evil doers and a praise to them that did well. Everyone in the city loved and feared him.[27]

The experiment of Sunday school was begun in 1780 but Raikes did not publicize the movement for three years. Merrill quoted an unpublished letter giving reasons why Raikes did not publicize the Sunday school: "To see whether these degraded children, when disciplined and instructed would show the same evidence of human feelings and instincts as those more favorably situated."[28]

(*d*) *The curriculum of the Sunday school.* The early Sunday school was basically aimed at teaching reading and writing with the Bible as the textbook, Raikes stated that the purpose of the Sunday school was "to furnish opportunities of instruction to the children of the poorer part of the parish without interfering with any industry of the weekdays."[29] Rice, in his appendix, examined several Sunday schools that claim to have begun prior to Raikes' school in Gloucester. The Sunday schools claim to be the originator of the movement; however, Rice dismissed them all, using the following criteria: "The so-called Sunday schools that existed many years before the movement of Raikes, had a school system in several respects, similar to that planned by Raikes. The main point was whether they were schools teaching the catechism or teaching direct from the Bible."[30] Those teaching catechism were not accepted as Sunday schools, but if pupils were taught to read and write through a direct use of Scripture, Rice accepted these as Sunday schools. W. H. Groser, in his book, *An Humble Attempt to Make the Path of the Sunday School Teacher Straight and Plain,* quoted an undocumented source from Raikes stating that the object of the

[26] Testimony by William Brick, an original Sunday school scholar, at the funeral of Robert Raikes, quoted in J. Henry Harris, *Robert Raikes, The Man and His Work,* p. 37, 38, cited in Rice, *op. cit.,* p. 423.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Merrill, *op. cit.,* p. 3.

[29] Letter to Mrs. Harris.

[30] Rice, *op. cit.,* p. 426.

Sunday school is "to teach children and others to read, to instruct them in the knowledge of their duty as rational and accountable beings."[31]

One of the textbooks used in the early Sunday schools referred to by Merrill is entitled, *Redinmadesy* (Reading Made Easy). He indicated that the contents (teaching children to read) were in harmony with the purpose of the Sunday school.[32] Rice listed an entirely different set of books prepared by Raikes that was used in the Sunday school. According to him the earliest book was the *Sunday Scholars Companion*. It was in use in 1783, although the only edition that is now available is dated 1794. This book passed through many editions and was issued until 1824.[33] *A Copious School Book* and *A Comprehensive Sentimental Book* were also used in the early Sunday school: "The last, containing the alphabet, spelling, moral and religious lessons, and stories and prayers adapted to the growing powers of children."[34] Rice commented on the curriculum of that day: "Parochial schools used catechisms, creeds, and confessions, but Raikes and his followers used them only as secondary works, their chief textbook of instruction being the Bible."[35]

The 1794 edition of *The Scholars Companion* had 120 pages divided into four parts. Part one had the alphabet and 25 simple lessons. The sentences were Biblical, thus:

God is one.	The Lord is good to all.
God is love.	The Lord of Hosts is His name. The God of the whole earth, etc.[36]

The other three parts of the book consisted chiefly of passages from the Old and New Testaments stating man's duty to God and to his neighbors. There was a history (religious) section of the book which included the creation, the fall, the redemption, and the observance of the Sabbath.

Sunday school was held from 10.00 in the morning until 12.00 noon. On Sunday the scholars returned at 1.00 and, after a lesson, were taken to church. After church service they were taught the

[31] W. H. Groser, *An Humble Attempt to Make the Path of the Sunday School Teacher Straight and Plain* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1861), p.24. The author does not give citations, but lists the author in parenthesis after a quotation.

[32] Merrill, *op .cit.*, p. 4.

[33] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 19. Quoted in Rice.

catechism, sent home about 5.00, and charged not to play in the streets.[37]

The first Sunday school was in Sooty Alley in 1780. Raikes rented a kitchen from Mrs. Meredith and paid her for it and for acting as mistress to those wretched children. Because she found the boys to be bad and the girls worse, she gave up her job in despair. The school was transferred to Mrs. Critchley's house in Southgate Street under Mrs. Brandon. This house faced St. Mary de Crypt Church and Raikes' house. The woman was paid a shilling a day to supervise the school, which included the renting of the kitchen.[38]

Within four years the paid teacher was beginning to pass from the scene and the voluntary teacher generally accepted. However, from the very beginning monitors over classes and voluntary workers were unpaid.[39] The paid mistress or master of Raikes' school was a superintendent over the school. According to Rice, "Experience soon proved that even the paid mistress and master made the system expensive and tended to limit its usefulness."[40] According to Raikes, "the paid teacher, at first, was made responsible for the good behavior, cleanliness and ability of children to read and repeat their lessons; then the work of the Sunday school as a religious agency passed into other hands whose work was purely voluntary."[41] Rice gave the following commentary: "if monitors, visitors and others could be found to give their time, why might not persons competent for oversight as well and thus the instruction be secured without pay?"[42]

Teaching was not all done by the mistress (superintendent). In the boy's classes (usually five to a class) the advanced pupils acted as "monitors" or teachers to the younger students. Thus the monitorial system was applied by Raikes early in the modern history of education.[43]

Raikes believed that he invented the illustrative method of teaching. He gave this insight into using an illustration.

> I was, he says, showing my scholars, a little time ago, how possible it is for one invisible power to exist in bodies which will act upon other bodies without our being able to perceive in what manner they act. This I proved to them by the power of the magnet. They see the magnet

[37] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[41] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.
[42] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[43] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.

> draw the needle without touching it. Thus, I tell them, I wish to draw them to the paths of duty and thus lead them to heaven and happiness; and as they saw one needle, when it touched the magnet, then capable of drawing another needle, thus, when they became good they would be made instruments in the hand of God, very probably, of making other boys good.[44]

Raikes told of the method of dividing the children in his letter to Mrs. Harris: "the children who show any superiority in attainment are placed as leaders of the several classes and are employed in teaching the others their letters, or in hearing them read in a low whisper, which may be done without interrupting the master or mistress in their business."[45]

As the Sunday school movement began to grow, Raikes placed the Sunday school under a "board"[46] or committee. The purpose of this board was to supervise the school and manage it according to the rules prepared by Raikes. He stated:

> The master or mistress was only the tenant in whose kitchen the school was held, and was paid partly for services rendered and partly for rent; when the school grew and assistants were needed, they were also paid. This was the rule. Behind the master, mistress and assistants, there was the patron or committee, . . . to give directions to the master or mistress and personally superintend the religious instruction given to children.[47]

Raikes went on to say that the beginning Sunday school of paid teachers is a misconception: "The employment of paid teachers and gradual supervision by voluntary teachers has, not unnaturally, given rise to popular misconception. The most important, indeed vital working principle of the Sunday school, was from the first voluntaryism."[48] Raikes indicated that the reason for the transition from paid to voluntary workers seems to have occurred when the school passed from a secular to a religious agency.[49] Later in the same letter Raikes made a further distinction between the paid and voluntary teacher:

> We can, however, hardly appreciate the great services rendered to humanity by those who received into their kitchens and instructed the evil-smelling outcasts sent to them, but to be accurate, we must

[44] Rice, *op. cit.*, undocumented source, quoted by Rice but attributed to Raikes.
[45] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.
[46] Merrill, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[47] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*; see quotation above, p. 77, lines 17ff.

> separate them from an institution founded in voluntary effort as something foreign to its spirit, otherwise, we may regard the general presence of the voluntary teacher as a later development instead of part of the original design.[50]

Rice with his vast access to the original sources gave the following five principles summarizing the educational philosophy of Raikes. He introduced these principles by stating, "Raikes evolved out of his studies and experiments these maxims":[51]

1. Vice in the child is an imitation of familiar sights and sounds.
2. There is a time in the child's life when he is innocent. Then the faculties are active and receptive.
3. Good seeds cannot be planted too early.
4. The child takes pleasure in being good when goodness is made attractive.
5. The Sunday school may be the instrument under God of awakening spiritual life in the children and, supplemented by day classes, can form the basis of national education.

Raikes' plan seems too simple to us now, but some may wonder why it was not instigated long before his time. However, until 1779 English law did not permit a person to keep public or private schools or to act as a tutor if he did not subscribe and conform to the Church of England. The "Enabling Act" of 1779 permitted dissenters to teach without subscription; from then on, those who were not members of the Church of England could conduct a school. Hence, this made the Sunday school available to the Methodists, Baptists, and other dissenters for use as an instrument for religious instruction.[52]

(*e*) *The results of the Sunday school movement.* Raikes used his newspaper as an instrument to publicize the Sunday school. His first article in *The Gloucester Journal,* November 3, 1783, was followed by a letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine,* November 25, 1783.

John Wesley read of this account and was much impressed by its possibilities. On July 18 of the following year, he was to preach at Bingley Church. He wrote in his journal:

> Before service, I stepped into the Sunday school which contains 240 children, taught every Sunday by several masters, and superintended by the curate. So many children, in one parish, are restrained from open sin, and taught a little good manners, at least, as well as to read the Bible. I find these schools springing up wherever I go.[53]

[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Rice, *op. cit.,* p. 16.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Wesley, *Journal,* op. cit., VIII, pp. 552-53.

Wesley wrote of the Sunday schools in *The Arminian Magazine*, of which he was editor, in January, 1785, with the title, "An Account of the Christian Charity Schools, Lately Begun in Various Parts of England." Later that year Wesley was to preach in Leeds. When he arrived, the town was already divided into seven divisions and had 26 schools containing above 2,000 scholars, taught by 45 masters. At 3 p.m. they were taken to their respective churches; then conducted back to school where a portion of some useful book was read, a psalm sung, and the whole concluded with a formal prayer, composed and printed for that purpose.[54]

Wesley commented that there four "inquisitors," persons whose office it was to spend Sunday afternoon visiting the 20 schools to ascertain who were absent and then seeking the absentees in their homes or in the public streets. Each had a written list of the scholars' names, which he was to use for the roll call every Sunday at half past one and half past five.[55]

According to Robert Raikes, "In four years time, it has extended so rapidly as now to include 250,000 children; it is increasing more and more."[56]

On September 7, 1785, *The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools in the Different Counties of England* was established. Later the same was changed to *The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools throughout the British Dominions* but was known simply as "The Sunday School Society." This society was one of the main reasons for the rapid growth of the Sunday school movement. Rice summarized its aims thus:

> The method of the society was to lease rooms in buildings in villages or localities where the poor needed instruction, hire teachers, and maintain schools under rules adopted by the Society, provide Bibles, testaments and other needed books gratuitously for the pupils, and have each school inspected by competent visitors; making all proceedings subject to the approval of a general committee composed of 24 persons, one half of whom were of the church of England and one half from dissenting denominations.[57]

[54] Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 415. *The Gentleman's Magazine* IV, 377, states that 2,000 pupils were enrolled in Leeds as early as 1883. As quoted by John Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1881), p. 433.

[55] Tyerman, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

[56] Raikes' letter to Mrs. Harris.

[57] Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

The Sunday school movement expanded so rapidly that by 1831, when Lord Shaftesbury unveiled a statue to Raikes, it was claimed that at that time in Great Britain approximately 1,250,000 children were attending Sunday school.

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