

Anne M. Boylan. *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988. Pp. xii, 225. Cloth, \$26.50.

Teaching ancient history to high school freshmen over twenty years ago was one of my first teaching assignments and one I began with some uncertainty. Making the subject interesting and "relevant"—a popular pedagogical term of the 1960s—challenged my beginning teaching skills, but I was pleasantly surprised to find some knowledgeable students who were also advocates for the study of ancient history. Where had they learned the names of ancient cities? Where had they become familiar with the rivers and geography of Biblical times? Sunday School.

Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880 is neither a history of the Sunday School movement nor a detailed study of any one denomination's school. It is a social study of an important American institution that taught more than hymns, prayers, and piety to nineteenth-century youth. In the words of the author, her study is about a "neglected piece of American history." It details "another example of how nineteenth-century Americans devised institutional solutions to the complex task of socializing the young."

The author chronicles the development of American Sunday Schools during one hundred years from 1790 when they first appeared as inspirations from the work of Robert Raikes and other British evangelicals. Each chapter is thoroughly documented with numerous references to correspondence and diaries of the period and to relatively rare secondary sources such as the minute books and papers of the American School Union that are deposited in Philadelphia. Included in the work are reproductions of advertising cards, admission certificates, teaching guides, student workbooks, and catalogs—all of which add to the reader's understanding of the popularity and success of Sunday School. Such references to colorful contemporary material should make this book enjoyable reading for anyone interested in education past and present. Consider the following example.

An ad from a Sunday School in Saint Louis suggests why parents can't afford to have their children out of Sabbath School. From a list of ten items, the following four illustrate the variety of attractions for parents and their children: religious study, moral instruction, creating incentives to study, and social activities. Referring to the Sunday School the ad states:

"It gives fifty lessons a year in that best of books—the Bible."

"It trains the children in the practice of benevolence, love, obedience to parents, truthfulness, kindness to one another, and purity of language."

"It offers prizes in the shape of Bibles, Testaments, books, medals, or picture cards for Scripture recitations, attendance and good conduct."

"It gives, once a year, a delightful picnic excursion or celebration to the Sunday School scholars."

An admission certificate from Philadelphia reminds us of the proselytizing mission of the Sunday School. Included in the list of duties of a Sabbath Scholar: "I must try and persuade my parents and friends to accompany me to Church and to the Sabbath Evening Meetings."

A section on Sunday School teachers analyzes briefly how a "nineteenth-century gender ideology" encouraged women to enter the field. Readers in the history of curriculum development will appreciate the discussion of how Sunday-school curriculum shifted as a result of changing school goals and the influence of contemporary educational reforms from preparing students for conversion to the study of Scriptures. We learn that Sunday School teachers were not isolated and alone but that they were influenced by the common-school movement and its interest in various educational reformers of the time, especially Pestalozzi.

There is much to recommend this book to educators who want to understand the influence of religion in the lives of children today. The Sunday School experience is still a powerful force even though it is far less influential than it was one hundred years ago. The book can also help explain the renewed interest on the part of social studies teachers for teaching about religion in history.

It must be noted that in the copy this reviewer received there were eighteen missing pages of text, blank pages. One would hope that this is an isolated case from the Yale University Press.

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