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INTERNATIONAL S.S. LESSONS.

"Thank God for the great improvement in Bible study which has followed the introduction of the uniform lesson system! Seven millions of youth of North America looking into the same passage of scripture each week! What a volume of study! How majestically strong is God's truth, to stand such investigation and not disappoint, not fail, a single soul."

The above is from an exchange. We wish it were true. But, alas! like many other of Satan's delusions by which he deceives, it is false – a gilded bubble – outwardly bright and good, but really a form full of emptiness. The spread of intelligence and thought has led to the necessity of presenting more than sectarian creeds; some authority higher than man's words must be offered. There is nothing to offer but the Bible, and neither Papacy, Protestantism, nor Satan could expect to hold control of man without recognizing to some extent this demand.

To meet this demand, yet to keep people from independent study of the Scriptures, seems to be the object of all parties. They well know that their systems would soon fall to pieces if the people would study the Bible independently. To meet this popular demand for authority on religious subjects, each prominent sect prints "Lessons Leaves" with questions and answers to suit its own creed, and at the same time, by mutual agreement, the same verses constitute the lesson among all denominations, thus giving the impression to many, and especially to the children, that Christian union is very strong and that all denominations are agreed as to the import of the lesson taught.

The writer has served in the capacity both of teacher and superintendent in the Sunday-school and long since became

convinced that all the good there is to this system is on the surface. Who that has ever been connected with the Sunday-school in recent years, does not know that it is a grand system of exercises and not of Bible study? Singing, calling the roll, giving reward tickets, returning and selecting library books and Sunday-school papers, taking up collections and talking about the Christmas treat; or the next picnic, or a summer vacation, takes up almost all the session until the bell rings for closing exercises and putting on wraps. Now, what a fraud to call this "a great improvement in Bible study!" What a delusion for that unconverted young woman who has taught (entertained) such a class, to suppose that she has been serving Christ and teaching his religion by such exercise! I tell you, nay; she is hardening her own heart by the deception, and convincing herself and her pupils that religion is an empty sham. Instead of seven millions of youth in North America being Bible students, they are – especially the boys – taking first lessons in religious shams, which beget in them doubts concerning the Bible as well as of Christianity. This is the great evil; and our experience leads us to believe that fully one-half the boys in the Sunday-schools are young infidels, largely made so by the shams of sectarianism and its false representation of the Bible; while to the girls, the Sunday-school has become the nursery of pride, love of display in dress, and an increasing desire for amusement.

But this system of uniform lessons serves Satan and the sects still better in another way. There was a time when thoughtful Bible class teachers met their adult classes every Lord's day to study the Bible and to learn of its teachings. The teacher and class selected the subjects of interest for study, and even though bound by denominational yokes and prejudices, there was some opportunity for the Word of God to be heard, and for truth to shine forth: and sometimes considerable truth was thus fed to a thinking class. But this would never do, it would soon break up the Babylon systems if

such Bible study were permitted; those who studied would soon be far beyond those who relied on creeds of the fifteenth century, and would leap the sectarian fences for the green pastures of God's Word and the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Hence the necessity you see of uniform lessons, to hold back such classes and teachers, giving them such questions about the geography of Palestine, the manners, customs, dress, etc., of the people, mixed with a few simple questions on morality, such as could open up no general discussion, could lead to no appreciation of truth or error, but merely keep in the beaten path of the traditions of the elders, especially of the elders of their church.

What a delusion and a snare is thrown about these adult classes, which leads them to believe that the twenty minutes thus spent each Lord's day is a compliance with the Great Teacher's Word: "Search the Scriptures." They are able to make thee wise, but the traditions of men will blind thee. "Come out of her, my people," partake not of her sins and receive not of her plagues.

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LET us guard against the negative form of evil-speaking, generally the most thoughtless. Absalom was an example of this. Who could quote any actual evil-speaking against his royal father? Who could charge him with speaking evil of dignities? And yet by insinuations, by his way of putting things, by his very manner, he wrought a thousand-fold more cruel harm than any amount of evil-speaking out could have possibly done. Oh to be watchful as to such omissions to speak well, as amount to speaking evil? Watchful as to the eloquence of even a hesitation, watchful as to the forcible language of feature and eye.
