

The Bible in the Public Schools

Battle Creek, Michigan,
May 17, 1893

Dear Will:—I received a Testimony from Sister White today, and I copy the following and send to you:—

Elder A. T. Jones,

Dear Brother:

There is a subject which greatly troubles my mind: While I do not see the justice nor light in enforcing by law the bringing [of] the Bible to be read in the public schools, yet there are some things which burden my mind in regard to our people making prominent their ideas on this point.

These things, I am sure, will place us in a wrong light before the world. Cautions were given me as to this point. There were some things shown me in reference to the words of Christ "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things which are Gods"—placing the matter where the church would have no right to enforce anything of a religious character upon the world. Yet in connection with this were given words of caution. If such a law should go into effect, the Lord would overrule it for good; that an argument should be placed in the hands of those who keep the Sabbath, in their favor, to stand on the Bible foundation in reference to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; and the book which the State and Christian world have forced upon the notice of the people to be read in the schools, shall it not speak, and shall not the words be interpreted just as they read?

My brother, this objecting to the passing of a law to bring the Bible into the schools will work against us, these of our faith who are making so much of the Bible. A year ago there was something presented before me in reference to those things, and we shall have to use the Bible for our evidence to show the foundation of our faith. We should be exceedingly cautious in every particular lest we shut out a single ray of the light from those who are in darkness.

I remember particularly this point: That anything that should give the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, should not be obstructed at all. Some things I cannot present in distinct lines, but enough is clear to me that I want you to be very careful on what ground you tread; for our

enemies will make a decided argument against us, if we shall give them a semblance of a chance.

I think the law-making powers will carry their point in this particular; if not now, a short period ahead. And it is very essential that as a people in a future crisis we take the greatest care that no provocation shall be given our enemies which they will make capital of against us as a people, in the matter of opposing so good a work as the introduction of the Bible into the public schools. {9}

I wish I could lay my hand on something I wrote on this point at the last General Conference that I attended. But I cannot bring it to light. I hope that the Lord will help us not to make a wrong move; but please be cautious on this point.

(Signed) Ellen G. White

Domestic Education

Bismark, Tasmania,
April 22, 1895

Dear Brother Olsen:—

I have written largely with reference to students spending an unreasonably long time in gaining an education; but I hope I shall not be misunderstood in regard to what is essential education. I do not mean that a superficial work should be done, that may be illustrated by the way in which some portions of the land are worked in Australia. The plow was put into the soil to the depth of only a few inches, the ground was not prepared for the seed, and the harvest was meager, corresponding to the superficial preparation that was given to the land.

God has given inquiring minds to youth and children. Their reasoning powers are entrusted to them as precious talents. It is the duty of parents to keep the matter of their education before them in its true meaning: for it comprehends many lines. They should be used in the service of Christ for the uplifting of fallen humanity. Our schools are the Lord's special instrumentality to fit up the Children and the youth for missionary work. Parents should understand their responsibility, and help their children to appreciate the great blessings and privileges that God has provided for them in educational advantages.

But their domestic education should keep pace with their education in literary lines. In childhood and youth, practical and literary training should be combined, and the mind stored with knowledge. Parents should feel that they have solemn work to do, and should take hold of it earnestly. They are to train and