

# **Should Infidels Send Their Children to Sunday School?**

**By Robert G. Ingersoll**

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SHOULD parents, who are Infidels, unbelievers or Atheists, send their children to Sunday schools and churches to give them the benefit of Christian education?

Parents who do not believe the Bible to be an inspired book should not teach their children that it is. They should be absolutely honest. Hypocrisy is not a virtue, and, as a rule, lies are less valuable than facts.

An unbeliever should not allow the mind of his child to be deformed, stunted and shriveled by superstition. He should not allow the child's imagination to be polluted. Nothing is more outrageous than to take advantage of the helplessness of childhood to sow in the brain the seeds of falsehoods, to imprison the soul in the dungeon of Fear, to teach dimpled infancy the infamous dogma of eternal pain -- filling life with the glow and glare of hell.

No unbeliever should allow his child to be tortured in the orthodox inquisitions. He should defend the mind from attack as he would the body. He should recognize the rights of the soul. In the orthodox Sunday schools, children are taught that it is a duty to believe -- that evidence is not essential -- that faith is independent of facts and that religion is superior to reason. They are taught not to use their natural sense -- not to tell what they really think -- not to entertain a doubt -- not to ask wicked questions, but to accept and believe what their teachers say. In this way minds of the children are invaded, corrupted and conquered. Would an educated man send his child to a school in which Newton's statement in regard to the attraction of gravitation was denied -- in which the law of falling bodies, as given by Galileo, was ridiculed -- Kepler's three laws declared to be idiotic, and the rotary motion of the earth held to be utterly absurd?

Why then should an intelligent man allow his child to be taught the geology and astronomy of the Bible? Children should be taught to seek for the truth -- to be honest kind, generous, merciful and just. They should be taught to love liberty and to live to the ideal.

Why then should an unbeliever, an Infidel, send his child to an orthodox Sunday school where he is taught that he has no right to seek for the truth -- no right to be mentally honest, and that he will be damned for an honest doubt -- where he is taught that God was ferocious, revengeful, heartless as a wild beast -- that he drowned millions of his children -- that he ordered wars of extermination and told his soldiers to kill gray-haired and

trembling age, mothers and children, and to assassinate with the sword of war the babes unborn?

Why should an unbeliever in the Bible send his child to an orthodox Sunday school where he is taught that God was in favor of slavery and told the Jews to buy of the heathen and that they should be their bondmen and bond-women forever; where he is taught that God upheld polygamy and the degradation of women?

Why should an unbeliever, who believes in the uniformity of Nature, in the unbroken and unbreakable chain of cause and effect, allow his child to be taught that miracles have been performed; that men have gone bodily to heaven; that millions have been miraculously fed with manna and quails: that fire has refused to burn clothes and flesh of men; that iron has been made to float; that the earth and moon have been stopped and that the earth has not only been stopped, but made to turn the other way; that devils inhabit the bodies of men and women; that diseases have been cured with words, and that the dead, with a touch, have been made to live again?

The thoughtful man knows that there is not the slightest evidence that these miracles ever were performed. Why should he allow his children to be stuffed with these foolish and impossible falsehoods? Why should he give his lambs to the care and keeping of the wolves and hyenas of superstition?

Children should be taught only what somebody knows. Guesses should not be palmed off on them as demonstrated facts. If a Christian lived in Constantinople he would not send his children to the mosque to be taught that Mohammed was a prophet of God and that the Koran is an inspired book. Why? Because he does not believe in Mohammed or the Koran. That is reason enough. So, an Agnostic, living in New York, should not allow his children to be taught that the Bible is an inspired book. I use the word "Agnostic" because I prefer it to the word Atheist. As a matter of fact, no one knows that God exists and no one knows that God does not exist. To my mind there is no evidence that God exists -- that this world is governed by a being of infinite goodness, wisdom and power, but I do not pretend to know. What I insist upon is that children should not be poisoned -- should not be taken advantage of -- that they should be treated fairly, honestly -- that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside -- that they should be taught to reason, not to believe -- to think, to investigate and to use their senses, their minds.

Would a Catholic send his children to a school to be taught that Catholicism is superstition and that Science is the only savior of mankind?

Why then should a free and sensible believer in Science, in the naturalness of the universe, send his child to a Catholic school?

Nothing could be more irrational, foolish and absurd.

My advice to all Agnostics is to keep their children from the orthodox Sunday schools, from the orthodox churches, from the poison of the pulpits.

Teach your children the facts you know. If you do not know, say so. Be as honest as you are ignorant. Do all you can to develop their minds, to the end that they may live useful and happy lives.

Strangle the serpent of superstition that crawls and hisses about the cradle. Keep your children from the augurs, the soothsayers, the medicine-men, the priests of the supernatural. Tell them that all religions have been made by folks and that all the "sacred books" were written by ignorant men.

Teach them that the world is natural. Teach them to be absolutely honest. Do not send them where they will contract diseases of the mind -- the leprosy of the soul. Let us do all we can to make them intelligent.

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