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IMPORTANT NOTICE!

With next month's, November issue of The Journal we will carry the treatment of
the Sunday School Lesson written by Rev. J. Kenton Parker.

Mustakh Masih

By Wm. C. Robinson, D.D.

He was a bright-faced little Indian boy. His handsome countenance bespoke his high caste. His Christian mother called him Mustakh Masih which means longing for Christ. His Mohammedan father called him Mustakh Ahmed, longing for Mohammed. So he went by the name Mustakh (Mooshtakh). When the father found out he could not force the mother to become a Mohammedan he thrust her and little Mustakh out of the home. Under the laws of India the mother will rear Mustakh until his seventh birthday. Then he must return to the home and to the Mohammedan training of his father. This anxious Christian mother and her missionary adviser, Mrs. Dale White, are trying to seize every opportunity to teach Mustakh more and more of the things of Christ. They ask us to unite with them in praying that he may indeed always be "longing for Christ." As the mother teaches the things of Jesus may the loving Saviour manifest Himself to the child so that Christ may be formed in him! This true story represents a challenging situation which has many a counterpart in old India.

All over the world loving parents are bringing their little children to Jesus that He may again take them up in the crook of His arms, and put His hands upon them and bless them. For the intuitive love of the mother realizes that the little ones are safe in the tender Shepherd's care. They bring their children and present them to Christ, first in their glistening white christening robes. Then, seriously seeking to keep the solemn vows they have made, these faithful parents bring their little children to Jesus by telling them the stories of the Gospel. Children two and three years old love the precious stories of the healing of the sick, the feeding of the hungry, and the stilling of the tempest. At Christmas comes God's great love story. At Good Friday there is the Saviour who suffered that we might be forgiven. Mrs. Alexander told this story so simply and so truly in her children's hymn:

There is a green hill, far away,
Without a city wall.

Then the children rejoice with the angels in the gladness of Easter morn. The lilies tell of our dear Saviour risen from the dead and alive forever.

Millions of parents in Europe, Asia and Oceania are glad that they kept their baptismal vows and told their children the things of Jesus when they were young children without waiting until they became old in the ways of the world. Sometimes becoming older means becoming harder to reach for the Saviour. Many of these precious little ones are no longer in the arms of their parents to be taught the things of the Saviour. In some cases the parents have been killed by war, in others the families have been scattered by approaching armies. Thousands of children have been killed by bombs and bullets, by famine and disease. If these parents had waited to bring their young children to Jesus until they were "old enough," they could never have done so. They would have missed the most precious opportunity God ever gives a pa-

rent: the privilege of telling the story of Jesus and His love to one's own child. They would have disobeyed the Word of their Lord: Suffer the little children to come unto me . . . for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps, the recent polio epidemic had as one of its lessons a gentle admonition to American parents not to delay in bringing the little ones to Jesus.

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The disciples, however, rebuked those who were bringing their little children unto Jesus. So through the ages there have been well-meaning disciples seeking to deter the little ones from their Saviour. The Reformation was a return to Christ as the foundation of knowledge. Luther, Tyndale and Calvin protested against starting with nature and Aristotle and insisted on starting with the Bible and Christ. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the Protestant leaders wrote careful catechisms to teach the little children the things of Jesus. It was the custom in the Kentucky home in which Benjamin B. and Ethelbert D. Warfield were reared to memorize the Shorter Catechism in the sixth year. In other homes the plan of salvation and the work of Christ as prophet, priest and king were taught at this early age by the use of the child's catechism. Our Church directs that the Bible, together with the catechisms, shall be the chief text-books of the Church School, the center of every course of instruction.

Some disciples push the teaching of sin, grace and Christ into later years under the influence of their conception of "the age of accountability." Now the age of accountability is not a direct teaching of Scripture, but an inference. There may be something in the inference, but it is never right to use an inference to set aside the plain teachings of the Word.

The recent volume, **Can Religious Education Be Christian?** both by its title and by its content suggests drawing out from the child's experience a religion that may or may not be Christian. If the kind of religious education envisaged in this book were given to little Mustakh he would scarcely be a Christian by his seventh birthday. He might have a vague theism on which the father could easily build the Mohammedan doctrine. And the serious thing about this book is that it professes to embody the aims and methods of the International Council of Religious Education. This International Council draws up the lesson plans for our different denominations and suggests goals and aims to the denominations. Indeed, in examining a set of goals based on those of the Council, I failed to find for the little children the aim to set forth the revelation of God in Christ, or to present Him as the Saviour of sinners, or to teach that God is our Father in and through Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ used the story of the sheep to teach the Good Shepherd who seeks His sheep and who lays down His life for His sheep. He used birth to teach the need for the new birth. He used human parenthood to teach how willing

the Father is to give the Holy Spirit. He used the flowers and the birds to teach the children of God to trust their heavenly Father. On the other hand there is a use of nature studies that fails to tell us that the seed the farmer sows represents the Word of truth which Jesus sows in the heart as the teacher tells the little child the things of Jesus. There is a use of rain and birds and butterflies and trees and lakes that only takes one to nature and vaguely to nature's God. There are good stories of children of other lands which go no further than the same stories taught in the kindergarten.

Let us look to our aims and to our stories in religious education and ask ourselves before the Searcher of all hearts, can the education we are projecting be expected to form Christ in the hearts of the little children by their seventh birthday?

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In the Holy Mount the Voice came from Heaven saying: This is my Beloved Son, hear ye Him. Jesus Christ, the beloved Son, says: Suffer the little children to come unto Me. These dear little hearts need Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour, the Teacher, the Lord, the Friend that the Father made for them and gives to them as we tell them about Him. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, but there is no gift which can take the place of Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of His love.

Our little children need Jesus because they are sinners and He is the Saviour of sinners. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In Adam all sinned. The Psalmist tells us that we sin as soon as we are born and that we go astray from the womb. Now God has promised to be our God and our children's God. On the basis of the covenant promise of God we present our children to Him in baptism. But a promise is not necessarily fulfilled at once and the grace of baptism is not tied to the moment of the application of the water. Thus, a baptised child may be an unregenerated child and it may well be God's purpose to fulfill His promise to save that child in Christ as the parent and the Church School teacher tell him the

things of Jesus. And even a regenerated child of the covenant is not a deified saint. He is like his parent righteous only by imputation, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. So little children need to be lovingly taught the law of God that they may know they are sinners and that the law may be a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. And they need most of all to be taught tenderly the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ indicated this need when He told the story of the lost sheep a second time with special reference to the little ones. And Jesus concluded the Matthean form of this parable thus: Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Our little children need Jesus that in Him they may become children of God. As a result of the Fall, "we were by nature the children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3). But our Lord Jesus Christ who was by nature the Eternal Son of the Father was made under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons in Him. (Gen. 4:4-7). "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26). "As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name." "No one knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him." "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Let us bring our little children, then, to Christ that they may be born again of His Spirit, adopted into the family of God by grace through faith, and for the sake of the Redeemer clasped in the arms of the Father in forgiveness and love!

Regardless of the clamor of voices or the pressure of human "authorities," may our parents, our Sunday School writers and teachers heed the Word of the Lord: Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not! So shall our little ones be able ever more intelligently to sing:

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.

Compulsory Retirement Of Ministers

By Rev. D. S. Gage, D.D.*

In the proposed amendments to the Book of Church Order, it is suggested that the rule requiring the retirement at the age of seventy shall apply to "all ministers serving the Church, its agencies, or its courts in any other capacity." If adopted, all ministers must at the age of seventy automatically cease all services to the Church of any kind whatsoever. A minister could not serve on any committee of Presbytery or Synod, could not be a commissioner to the General Assembly, act as stated or temporary clerk of any court—in fact, if interpreted literally, it would be doubtful whether he could speak in any church court, for certainly taking part in discussions is serving the Church, sometimes in a very valuable manner.

But if there is to be such an automatic re-

tirement from service as is now required from ministers serving as pastors, it is hard to see why it should not apply to all ministers in any capacity. This amendment to the Book of Church Order would seem fair if all pastors must automatically retire. Why not all secretaries, or editors or seminary professors, missionaries, etc., be put under the same rule? In the case of some colleges and seminaries there is such a rule, but it only applies to service in that institution. A minister whose work has stopped in this manner can still serve the Church in some other capacity if he should be called to do so. But the proposed amendment would forbid all service of any kind whatsoever in any agency or court. It seems fair to make it apply to all, and not to pastors only, if there is to be such a compulsory retirement rule.