

ADULT
CLASS
STUDY

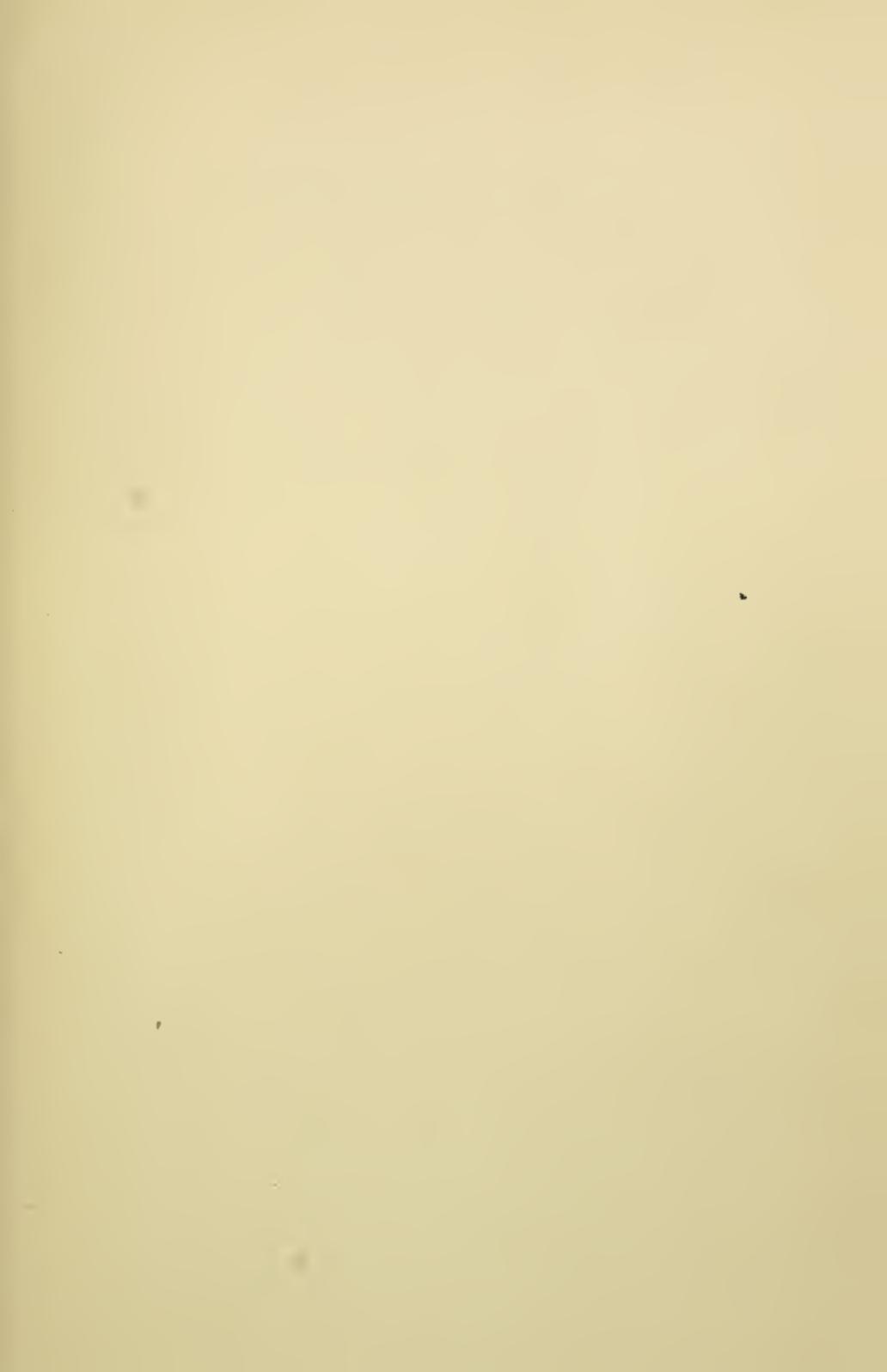
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IRVING F. WOOD



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Adult class study



ADULT CLASS STUDY

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ADULT CLASS STUDY

BY ✓
IRVING F. WOOD



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P R E F A C E

THE adult class is a distinct division of the Sunday-school. Neither in purpose nor in method should it be dominated by the rest of the school. It is as distinct as a debating club or a Chautauqua circle is from a grade school. It is essential, therefore, that in the present series of Manuals the problems of the adult class should have separate treatment.

Questions regarding the organization and management of the class are considered in another volume. This book deals simply with the subject of adult class study. It attempts to suggest what can be done in various types of classes with various types of subjects. Variety in the adult class is the key to the highest usefulness. Classes differ as much as individuals, and no two ought to be treated alike. For the leaders and members of classes, then, a consideration of what lines of study are available and how they may be used so as to obtain the best results is a matter of fundamental importance.

That this little book may be helpful in aiding adult classes to become more useful factors in

building up the kingdom of God is the hope of the writer and the editor. Rev. Newton M. Hall, D.D., of Springfield, Mass., has read much of the manuscript of this book. I wish to acknowledge my debt for this kindness, as well as for much help in the past from Dr. Hall's experience and publications in the field of adult class teaching.

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PART ONE
ADULT CLASS STUDY

ADULT CLASS STUDY

I

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ADULT CLASS

A COLLEGE professor of much experience said, "In my earlier years of teaching I thought most of my subject. Now I think most of my pupils." This change is to be expected. The efficient teacher will try to gain a reasonable mastery of his subject, but he will never forget his class, and as his experience grows, his class will become far more interesting than his subject. This is as true of Sunday-school as of any other teaching. There has been a great demand of late years for better lessons. The demand came because the need existed. But the Sunday-school teacher above all teachers should think most of his pupils. He ought to have some clear knowledge of the Bible. He ought also to have some clear knowledge of the peculiar needs and limitations of the persons who make up his class. For the teacher of adults, this is a task of greater difficulty, with less outside aid, than for other teachers.

The difficulty lies in the greater differentiation and individuality of adults. Children, considered one by one, are very unlike, but averages of groups are startlingly alike. An educator arranged to have the same story told to groups of children in an English city, an inland American town, and an East-side school in New York. The story told how a little boy, Johnny, was abused by a big boy, Billy. Later Johnny had a chance to avenge himself on Billy. What ought he to have done? The percentage of children who thought Johnny ought to have taken vengeance varied with the ages, but for the same age it was the same in all the groups. Child psychology taken on the whole is uniform, that of adults less so. High school classes differ more than classes in the grades, college classes more than those in high school, adult classes more than those in college. It is on this account that teachers and classes must be more closely fitted to each other in the adult section than in any other part of the Sunday-school. Unless a teacher is unusually adaptable, the very fact that he has succeeded with one adult class creates a presumption that he will not succeed so well with another adult class of a different type. "Why did Dr. A make such an absolute failure as a college president?" asked one educator of another. "He had been

The Problem with an Adult Class

a very successful pastor and thought he could run a college like a church," was the reply. It will seldom be possible for a teacher to run class B like class A, in spite of the fact that all adult classes have certain qualities in common.

There is less help for the understanding of these common qualities than for those of any other kind of students. The recent literature of education is abundant. Child psychology and the problems of adolescence have been most carefully studied.

Every teacher dealing with pupils to the close of the adolescent period may be supplied with the richest fruits of modern educational study, but there is almost nothing for the teacher of adults. At the same time, it is recognized as never before that education does not cease with adolescence. It continues to the end of life. The attitude of educators is expressed by President Eliot. "It has been too much the custom to think of education as an affair of youth, and even of the earlier youth; but it really should be the work of the whole life. . . . The prolongation of the period of formal education for a considerable minority of American children, and the provisions of summer schools, evening schools, trade schools, correspondence schools, business colleges, and reading circles of many sorts, with public libraries and book clubs, illustrate the increasing prevalence

Lack of Literature on Adult Psychology

of the new idea that education is to be prolonged through adult life, and may be carried on in a systematic and active way long after the individual has begun to earn his livelihood in whole or in part.”¹ Why, then, have we no study of the psychology of adult education? Mainly because the literature of education is based on the secular schools, not on the Sunday-schools. When the work of the church in education becomes as scientific as the work of the school is today, we shall have as careful studies of adult education as we now have of the education of the child. This will come in time.

The common qualities of adult classes grow out of the common relations of men and women to life. Their peculiarities depend on differences of education, occupation, habits of thought, and religious and cultural development. The common qualities are fundamental. They are deeply seated in the emotional nature. They have to do with those relations to life which, as the years go on, all men and women enter. Life presents its lessons in a thousand ways, but the great facts of feeling and will which make life worth living do not greatly differ. The adult class of the fashionable church on the avenue and of the little country school at the Four Corners are much

Common
Character-
istics of
Adults

¹ *Education for Efficiency*, p. 2.

more alike, in their feeling toward life, than they seem to be. It is with these common qualities that the psychology of the adult class deals.

Much educational psychology is concerned with what is called mental processes; that is, the way the mind works. Adult life modifies mental processes. The mind is the same machine, its general method of working is the same, but it has numberless slight variations from its own working at an earlier age. As in all complicated machines, use has produced a variety of effects.

The power of attention has grown. The child can give attention to an object for only a short period of time. The mind rests upon a point; then, like a butterfly, it flits elsewhere. Education is in part an attempt to train the power of attention. The men who accomplish great things are in general those who have the power of attention best under control; but in all ordinary persons it still keeps much of its butterfly quality. With most, its training results in the power to make only short flights and often come back to its former position, rather than in the power to rest long on any one point. Test it for yourself. Look steadily at any word on this page—like “test,” “training,” “butterfly”—for five minutes and note the result. “In the first minute we see the word and understand its meaning, but

soon our attention cannot persist, the meaning fades away; our eyes still see those dead letters, but there is no longer a word.”¹ Our attention takes a series of short vacations by flitting to other realms and coming back again. In this way it meets the natural strain of fatigue. Such an experiment shows us that it will not do to assume that because people are grown up we can expect any prolonged strain upon attention. Test this in another way. Recall your own feeling after listening to some address or sermon filled with close reasoning and relieved by no humor or anecdote. Did you not find the effort to follow it growing greater, and at the end, if your interest or your will power had held your attention through it, were you not tired? “Were ye tired after that sermon?” was asked of a Scotch minister. “No, but it would a’ done ye good to see how tired the congregation was,” he said. If that sermon had been so good as to compel their attention, they would not have been in the least tired.

The wise teacher of adults will remember that he, no less than the teacher of children, must allow for the fatigue of attention. Even with adults, attention cannot be strained too much. The method of relief will be different from that of the teacher of children, but relief

¹ Münsterberg, *Psychology of the Teacher*, p. 164.

must be studied none the less. Here lies the function of the illustration, of humor, of the "aside," of the suggestive phrase which calls up a picture for the mind to dwell upon for a moment in the midst of abstract reasoning. A large part of the value of discussion in the adult class lies in the perpetual variety which furnishes a relief to the attention. The eager teacher is often prone to demand too much concentration. Remember that the mind is like a horse, which cannot live on oats alone, but must have some hay. This also furnishes one reason for lessons with considerable variety and fulness of content. The old International lessons often erred in presenting too small a surface of subject matter for the average class. After the attention was exhausted, simply a rambling discussion followed.

Another universal quality important for the adult class is association. The psychologists tell us that intelligent children make concrete associations — "cat" recalls some particular cat — and that adults are more apt to make abstract associations. This is particularly true in religious realms, where adults have had training in abstract concepts. Again, test it with yourself. Give attention to the ideas which come into your mind as you read the words "church," "love," "prayer," or "worship." Was it the church in general, or some particular edi-

fice; love as the Christian virtue, or some loving person of which you thought? Now while the adult is more inclined to think abstractly than the child, two things remain true: concrete associations still retain a certain picturesque attractiveness which makes it wise to encourage them in teaching; and there are always some adults, often those who profit most by the class, who retain all their life a tendency to concrete associations. The teacher of an adult class ought to make a study of the associations of the class, both individually and in common. Think, for example, of your last Sunday's lesson. If there was, as there always should be, freedom of discussion, what was the final subject which the class considered? What led to it? What were the steps by which the discussion developed, and what subject in the lesson furnished the point of departure for the discussion? Write out the chain of association, if you can. If you cannot, give attention to it next Sunday and write it out after you come home, putting down merely catchwords of what led from point to point. Do this for several weeks. Note how the different members of the class associate subjects. Note what points which might have been expected to lead to discussion were not followed up by the class. You will find in such a study a marvelous revelation of the mental habits and the real

interests of your class. When your class discusses religion, do they show most interest in the personal or the social aspect of it? When they start with a Bible story, do they see its bearing on any special elements of modern life? Many a class failure could be turned into a success if the teacher would study the free, unrestricted association of ideas in its discussions.

Another difference is the shorter time needed for association in adults. The adult mind usually passes from one idea to another more rapidly than the child. This also has its effect in teaching. There may be more "touch and go" in adult class teaching. The teacher may safely pack more into a given time. Explanation and elaboration may be curtailed. Discussions may wander wider and move more rapidly from point to point than would be profitable with a younger class. Perhaps in no part of the teaching is a successful teacher of children more likely to fail with an adult class than here.

A third point is that association moves over a wider range in an adult than in a child, because of broader experience. "Sweet" no longer suggests only "candy" or "sugar," or some other object in the realm of taste, but may suggest a bird-song, a little child, the face of Jesus ("Celestial sweetness sits

Time Re-
quired for
Association
of Ideas

Wider
Range

enthroned”), Matthew Arnold’s “sweetness and light,” Jonathan Edwards’ characteristic word “sweetness,” or many other things in many fields. This breadth of association also bears on adult teaching. It makes a wide range of subjects natural to the adult class. It leads us to beware of criticising a class discussion because it seems to go far afield; perhaps it only follows the natural course of association in the minds of the class. This suggests the wisdom of considerable freedom in the development of discussion, and the recognition that a close following of the logical order of a subject may not be the most profitable method of class discussion.

Another element of common psychology is the rhythm of work and fatigue. We are familiar with it in physical labor. Anyone can test it in mental labor. Read ten unrelated words, as, for example, the words under each other at one margin of this page; then try to repeat them from memory. The first effort will not be so successful as the fifth or tenth. But continue it for fifteen minutes, and success will begin to wane. This is the principle of acceleration and fatigue. It holds as well of adult class effort as of all other labor. A teacher will not expect thought to move rapidly at the beginning of the hour. If he wishes to start a discussion, his suggestions must be more explicit than they

need to be a little later. The mind will not take the bait quite so eagerly. Then the teaching should be adapted to the growing mental alertness of the class. Notice for yourself if the discussion in your class is not very different in character at the beginning and fifteen minutes later. Has it not increased in alertness and suggestiveness? Later still comes mental fatigue. That is the time for review or for illustration. It is better yet if the class closes before the least hint of mental fatigue is visible, with all the senses alert for the next lesson. The time will vary with different classes, and with different lessons in the same class. This matter is worthy of careful study, for the conditions differ in each class.

No difference between the youth and the adult is so great or has such far-reaching effects as the difference made by the relations in life. Self-support; the relation to necessary labor, whether in the home or outside; the obligations to varying groups of friends and to the social community; the recognition of social, civic, and church duties all make radical differences in the adult point of view. Obligations to husband or wife and children are of the same nature, but more intimate and more pressing, and so more weighty in their consequences. All these affect the attitude toward life so deeply that adult teaching must take

**Adult
Relations
in Life**

them into careful account. The first thing is to find, so far as may be, what is the attitude of the class in these matters. The class stands in the following relations: employment, home, relatives, friends and acquaintances, civic and political, church. Make it your business as teacher to learn in a general way how the members of your class stand in these relations. To watch the course of discussions in the class for half a dozen Sundays will usually reveal the trend of interest. Do they respond with more alacrity to suggestions of church duties than of home duties, or the opposite? Are they interested in matters of civic betterment? Do they care to discuss the relation of religion to the problems of their industrial life? A wise teacher need seldom seek personal information to learn how most of the class view their relation to the various obligations of life. As he learns, he can strengthen that which is weak, lead from one interest to another, help each member of the class to emphasize the sacredness of his own special interest, and make every hour of the class work throb with the good red blood of actual life. The adult class cannot afford to remain in realms remote from daily living. Children can properly be interested with fairy stories, but any abiding interest in the adult class must come from a bearing of the lesson in some way on actual life.

Certain rules in teaching grow out of this fundamental fact of adult psychology.

The chief aim of education is efficiency. That is the keynote of all modern education. The adult teacher must keep very close to it. The interest of the adult mind in the relations of life is so great that you cannot long command its attention with things wholly apart from these relations. These relations can all be viewed from the religious standpoint. All adult Sunday-school teaching must increase religious efficiency in the actual relations of life.

The group interest is worthy of special attention in adult teaching. The child, impulsively loving and generous though he may often be, is naturally self-centered, but the adult is so placed in life that he can seldom miss some perception of the value of the social group. Even the most selfish adult, whether sheltered in a self-centered home or fighting alone a hard battle with the world, recognizes group obligations. It is the work of religious teaching to seize upon this group interest, strengthen its obligation, broaden its range, uplift its motive. Here lies psychologically the strongest basis of appeal for the home, the church, the town, the native land, and the mission enterprise. Carried to its highest development, the social group is the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God cannot be made to reveal its full meaning to a child, but the group interest of the adult mind leads directly to it.

Adult experience often results in certain attitudes toward life which differ radically from those of an earlier age. One is the attitude of disillusion. No one reaches adult life without seeing some hopes fail, some promises lack fulfilment. An attitude of caution, with a tendency toward general skepticism, is a frequent result. Youth also has a period of skepticism and distrust. Most thinking young people pass through such a period, as a part of normal growth; but the skepticism and distrust of adult life is different. That of youth belongs to the period of storm and stress. It is hasty, passionate, indiscriminating. That of adult life is cautious, deliberate, willing to make many exceptions. It grows out of the hard experiences of life, and so I have called it disillusion. It has sundry manifestations. Sometimes it issues in a general pessimistic attitude, the contrast of the natural optimism of youth. This varies from the sneering, bitter kind, which does not often find its way into the adult class, to a good-natured doubt as to whether anything will turn out quite as well as people expect. The attitude is often uncomfortable for the adult teacher, especially

Psychological
Effects
of Adult
Experience:
Disillusion-
ment

if that teacher has anything new to propose to the class, for it is apt to be fond of spreading wet blankets; however, it is seldom vicious and is often an attitude not in the least blameworthy. We must recognize it as a perfectly natural reaction of certain types of mind in contact with certain facts of experience. This pessimism never yields to a deliberate attack. The wise teacher will let it alone, but will try to build up by the side of it a recognition of all the good things in the world: high motives, unselfish deeds, generous judgments. No field supplies these as does the Christian religion. If the adult class can only bring the goodness of God and the love of Christ to bear on daily life, pessimism will soon disappear. Here is one power of the study of missions. Often the story of mission devotion and its result has touched persons in this attitude, and given them such a faith in God and man as not even the story of the life of Christ could produce. It is the old tale of how the wind and the sunshine contended to make the traveler throw off his cloak. If the class can be filled with the sense of the real nobility and heroism which is in the world, the pessimistic attitude, even if it persists, will be carried like a cloak on the arm.

Akin to this is the frequent adult tendency to the distrust of emotion. It is natural that in

youth emotion, with other experiences of life, should be taken at its face value. A few people, **Distrust of Emotion** not always the strongest, never lose that youthful attitude. Most adults learn to be a little suspicious of emotion. Nowhere is this suspicion so strong as in religion. The emotional side of religion has appealed to many young people. They have been swept away by it, and when they found it unstable and evanescent, have settled down to an abiding distrust of anything emotional in religion, and often to a distrust of religion itself, supposing it to be nothing but emotion.¹ Now religious emotion, sadly overworked as it has been, has its place. Happily for this kind of people, its place is not in the adult class. Here is the very place where those with this attitude of distrust should find their best religious help. Here they may learn that religion is not emotion, but life. Here the intellectual and the ethical may receive large emphasis. Here the pleasant interchange of thought, the calm discussion, the humorous turn, will often result in placing religion on a new basis. In time, religious emotion may be again trusted, but put in its proper place as a by-product of the religious life, not as its main content.

¹ For many cases in point, see Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, Chaps. XVIII-XIX. The experience is more common than is usually supposed.

The class ought to welcome, then, people who are pessimistic or distrustful of emotion. Of all our Christian institutions, a good adult class is the best and most helpful place for them. Very often, too, they can bring to it a clear-sighted view of life which no other type of person can offer. On the whole, I am not sure but the best teachers need them quite as much as they need the teachers; for the best teachers are idealists, and an idealist is always most useful when someone stands by and insists that he keep his feet on solid earth.

Another result of experience is the ready response which the adult mind gives to appeals The Place of the Will to the will. A large part of the skill of a teacher of children lies in knowing how to move the will by motives which suit varying types of pupils. Life has still more ways of teaching the lesson, so that most of the adult class have learned the value of the will in life. This fact makes the teaching in some ways easier. It transfers much of the emphasis of teaching. The teacher can assume that if a thing is shown to be worth knowing or worth doing, a large part of the class will without urging put forth the effort which will result in the knowledge or the deed. The successful teacher of youth uses all sorts of means to urge them to do the thing that is worth while. Merely to show that it is

worth while is not enough. The successful adult teacher tries to show that the thing is worth while, and is willing to trust largely to the experience of life to teach that what is worth while ought to be done. If, for example, it can be shown that missions really have good results, it is not necessary to spend time on the proposition that missions ought to be supported.

Another result of experience is the recognition of the value of habit. A large part of the education of children consists in inciting them to form useful habits. The habits may be bodily, like the movements of sewing or piano playing, or mental, like the habit of reading or of logical thinking, or moral, like the habit of truth-telling or of prayer. The education of adults is directed not so much to form new habits as to adapt those already formed to more useful purposes. The habit of sewing is already formed, and the woman takes a course in dressmaking. The habit of manual labor is formed, and the man takes a course in wood-carving. Now the object of the Sunday-school adult class, defined in terms of habit, is to turn habits of the religious life to more useful purposes. It is a great help to adult education that life has taught the value of habits. Think of the things in religious life which ought to become habits: Bible study, prayer, public worship, truth-telling, trustworthi-

ness, cheerfulness, kindly judgment of others, sympathy, helpfulness — a long list could be made. You might try an experiment in your class. Make a list, during perhaps three months, of qualities and actions, as they arise in class discussions, which ought to be habitual for the religious person. Such a list would be a more powerful sermon than any minister could preach, because for long years life itself has been preaching daily of the power of habits. You need not say much. Anything you can say will be weak beside the insistent voice of experience.

Lastly, the adult class benefits by the past development of religious experience. Religious Religious Experience experience is of various kinds. It can not all be gauged by one standard. Even the member of the class who seems most indifferent to religion has really had a great deal of religious experience. What else were the large hopes of youth, the half-unconscious trust in a guiding Providence, the inarticulate prayers when sorrow and disappointment came? The whole fundamental structure of most lives is religious, whether the persons themselves realize it or not.

In the ordinary sense of the word, the adult class usually has a rich body of religious experiences to build upon. The teacher ought always to keep this in mind. The class is both to acquire

new experiences, and to enrich, broaden, and reinterpret experiences already precious. The teacher should study those experiences. Where have they departed from conventional lines? — for you may be sure that they have been unconventional in some persons. Has the experience been fairly uniform, or does the class present various types? Has it been developed in the church or not; under emphasis on ritual or creed or emotion or on none of these? How would the religious life differ if it had been developed under other circumstances? Is it unbalanced in any direction? How can its strength be emphasized and its weakness overcome? No teacher has so rich a past to work upon as the Sunday-school adult teacher, and no one has so fine an ideal to work toward. His ideal is “the development of the Christ-life” in himself and in the class.

Books bearing on adult class psychology:

JAMES, “Talks to Teachers on Psychology.” *Holt*, 1900.

MÜNSTERBERG, “Psychology and the Teacher.” *Appletons*, 1909.

STARBUCK, “The Psychology of Religion.” *Scribners*, 1899.

COE, “The Spiritual Life; Studies in the Science of Religion.” *Eaton and Mains*, 1900.

“The Religion of a Mature Mind.” *Revell*, 1902.

II

THE PURPOSE OF ADULT CLASS STUDY

EVERY adult class should have its distinct purpose. This does not mean that every class, even in the same Sunday-school, should have the same purpose. Rather, it means the exact opposite. Each class should study to individualize itself and to see exactly what its proper object is as distinct from that of every other class. The adult adherents of any church are of various tastes and spiritual needs. Often they are of very different intellectual training. The pastor in the pulpit must deal with them more or less in the mass. He is often conscious that what is strong meat for one will be rather watery milk for another. There are reasons why a church should cut through all classes and conditions in a community. The church represents the comprehensive kingdom of God. But the adult class, which is not the church, but only a means of most effectively accomplishing certain results in the church, may

Importance
of a Defi-
nite Pur-
pose

well adjust itself more specifically to the particular needs of certain groups.

Should the adult class, then, aim to be as large as possible, to comprehend all the adults in the church? Should it be *the* adult class of the Sunday-school? I answer without hesitation, No. It is true that there is a glamour about mere numbers which makes a large class, like a rolling snowball, increase in proportion to its size. There are certain cases where the strong personality of a teacher gathers a large class who would not otherwise be drawn together. Such cases are neither common nor ideal. In recent adult class movements, with machinery largely designed to multiply numbers and with much emphasis on attractive features, classes of a hundred and a hundred and fifty are not unknown. The need of adult classes is so great that one hesitates to criticise them because they seem to succeed too well, but we must look upon such overgrown classes as a means to something better in the future. The experience of colleges and universities is of value for the Sunday-school. These institutions, with trained teachers and all the aids which professional education can give, regard forty as about the largest size for a properly conducted class. Of course mere lecture classes may increase indefinitely. True, the adult class is not a college class, and

Numbers
and Pur-
pose

has no "recitation," but it has, if it is an ideal class, discussion, which limits the convenient size in much the same way. The rule is this: The ideal class will not be too large for free, individual discussion. This will limit the convenient membership to forty or fifty. Above that number it is not a class, but an audience. Better six classes of twenty-five than one class of one hundred and fifty.

The ideal for adult classes is found in graded groups of people, each group pursuing its own purpose, even though all may be studying the same lessons. It is not essential that the group be large. Half a dozen people may make a class which is quite as successful and quite as useful as the class of fifty. It depends (1) upon grading, (2) upon the adaptation of the teacher to the class, and (3) upon its purpose. To be successful it must have a purpose.

What purpose, then, may the adult class have? Its main purpose may lie entirely outside its field of study. Its purpose may be to stimulate interest in church work among its members and others who may be drawn into the class. This is a perfectly legitimate purpose, and, for young people, married or unmarried, is often of great use. It may be a pastor's class, where he tries to place himself in personal relations with a group of people. It may exist to

provide a Christian social center for its members. In these cases the class is an arm of pastoral work. But all classes must have a course of study, and if they are to hold their membership, the study must have its definite and valued purpose. The purpose of the study of all classes falls under one of two general heads: (I) information, or (II) inspiration.

I. The class may very properly desire to know some particular group of facts. There are a large number of things about which Christian people ought to be informed. In some cases practical action would be very different if people only knew the facts involved. In other cases knowledge is a part of intelligent Christianity. Some of these things are not appropriate subjects for pulpit consideration. Where they are, it is often much better to present them under the conditions of free discussion in an adult class. Where can you find a better place to obtain and discuss the facts about the modern study of the Bible, or the teaching of Jesus concerning wealth, or the real meaning of the book of Revelation, or the actual relationship of socialism and Christianity, or the enforcement of liquor laws in your own town? These subjects, and a hundred others, need discussion. The average man has questions about them which books and lectures do not answer. If he is to

be an intelligent member of a Christian community, he needs a chance to consider them from all sides. We have hardly yet begun to use the adult class as we might as a means of Christian education. |

Here is a partial list of subjects on which a class may seek information:

A. *Biblical Subjects*. 1. The geography of Palestine. 2. The history of Israel, or some part of it. 3. The religion of Israel, in some of the periods of its growth. 4. The characteristics of some group of biblical books; history, prophecy, wisdom, apocalypse, gospels, or epistles. 5. The origin, meaning, and contents of some one of the greater books of the Bible, like Samuel, Isaiah, Job, Proverbs, Mark, Romans, or Hebrews. 6. The life and times of a biblical character; as, for example, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Christ, or Paul. 7. The teaching of Jesus, in general or on special subjects. 8. Paul's system of thought, or that of the Johannine writings. 9. The early church (with an attempt to realize its life and thought, its limitations and triumphs). 10. The modern way of looking at the Bible: what it is and how it compares with the older way.

These subjects need not call for special courses of study. The class which is pursuing, for example, the International Uniform Lessons may well

consider at the beginning what it will try to get out of the lessons for the coming quarter. The purpose may be very simple. The class may decide that at the end of the course of lessons the members will know at least how the towns mentioned are situated on the map of Palestine, the order of the places visited in Paul's missionary journeys, the elementary outlines of Hebrew history, or the great divisions of the life of Christ. A simple purpose is not necessarily a silly purpose. Every portion of the Bible will open up its own possibilities, and each class will have its own needs, but some definite purpose the class ought consciously to have.

B. *Historical Subjects.* 1. The history of the Church. 2. The history of some particular period of the Church, as the Reformation. **Historical Subjects** 3. The lives and characters of great men, as Augustine, Luther, or John Knox. 4. The history of a special denomination. 5. The growth of doctrines and ideas in the Church. 6. An outline of missionary history. 7. The history of religious reforms.

History is a great balance-wheel. Half the religious fads would disappear and most of the fretting alarms about the decay of religion would lose their power if people knew the history of religion.

C. *Subjects Concerned with Present Day Re-*

ligion. 1. The present attitude toward religion. 2. The churches in America. 3. Social, municipal, or national problems studied in the light of Christianity. 4. The doctrines and church life of particular denominations. 5. Reforms: temperance, philanthropy, and other movements. 6. The individual Christian life in relation to present social and business conditions. 7. Mission work, home and foreign.

Present Day Religion

Biblical and historical knowledge is not an end in itself. It exists for the sake of life. The complex life of the present day has many problems on which intelligent Christians need information. To take a very simple illustration, how many of your own class know what missions your denomination is supporting, or what is the present status of temperance legislation in this country?

Some of these subjects would call for special courses of study, others would not. The International and other systems often present material which leads directly to the treatment of some of these subjects. The temperance lessons of the International system are often — and not without reason — regarded as a bore. The time allowed for them might well be used, for a year, in gathering information about the local conditions concerning temperance legislation and education and the best ways of dealing with the great evil.

II. *Inspiration.* After all, the thirst for information is neither profound nor universal.

Inspiration Adult classes usually consist of busy people. They often come to the class tired, with no time to contribute to its information, and little inclination to assimilate what others may contribute. Inspiration and not information is what they want, and, whatever may be the case elsewhere, the adult class should have what it wants. Its wants usually measure its needs as well as its capacity. The members come worn with the week's work. They want to get into a different atmosphere from that of their labor. They want to be brought into touch, in a more informal way than by the church service, with the things of the spirit. They want to be lifted a little in their religious life. The adult class may be made a very valuable means of grace. This the class of information ought to be, and the class of inspiration must be. The leader is a minister of the Word as much as if he stood in the pulpit to preach. He ought to look on his task as holy work. Inspiration ought always to be his ultimate purpose. Sometimes it must be his only purpose.

It is impossible to classify or subdivide this purpose, as one may the purpose of information. The forms it will take will be determined not by subjects, but by persons; and they will not be

arranged beforehand with the class. The wise teacher, however, will look ahead over the lessons and see that no member of the class misses his own needed inspiration. Patient Mrs. Smith, whose only wealth is her houseful of children, and whose clothes look just a little shabby — will not some lesson have a helpful message for her? Mr. Jones, whose business is in danger of absorbing him, body and soul — what lesson will water the withering plant of his spiritual life? The local election comes soon, perhaps, with its vital moral issue. Does any lesson lead naturally to its full and frank discussion?

Some teachers may have the satisfaction of saying, "My class knows this and this which it did not know six months ago." The teacher whose purpose is only inspiration will think, though he may not say, "I believe that A and B and C have been helped in their lives by being members of my class for the last six months."

May the two purposes be combined? Certainly. That is the ideal way. Then the class will have before it the object of gaining information, and the teacher, when he sits alone with his lessons, will think most of inspiration.

III

THE PRINCIPLES OF ADULT CLASS STUDY

MODERN educational literature lays down few principles which will apply unchanged to the adult class. This is partly due to the fact that the literature deals almost exclusively with childhood and adolescence, and partly to the fact that the majority of adult classes are not classes in any proper sense. Their aim is not educational, in the strict meaning of the term. They are more properly clubs, whose object is the mutual benefit of their members by the discussion together of religious subjects growing out of the lessons. Most of the classes whose purpose was described in the last chapter as inspirational would fall in this group. The adult class needs a set of principles all its own. These principles are in the main obvious enough when once stated, though some of them are very easily violated in practise.

New Prin-
ciples
Needed for
Adult Class
Study

Some of the principles are the following:

1. *The adult class must choose its subjects of study with reference to its own needs.*

This does not necessarily mean that the adult class must have a different course from the rest of the school. That may or may not be. It means that what is done with the course must be what is appropriate to the class. The school may all be studying the life of David. It will profit the adult class little to repeat for the fiftieth time that David reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty and three years in Jerusalem; but the ideals which guided his public and private life, the Nemesis of sin and suffering, the likeness of his character and statecraft to the life of today—these are adult subjects. In the life of Jesus younger classes will study the picture which the incidents present. The adult class will press behind the picture to the meaning of his life and teachings. The doom of thousands of adult classes has been fixed when their teachers forgot that they must study adult subjects and proceeded to feed them with milk and not with meat. Nothing is more pitiful than to see grown men and women, to whom the stories of the Bible have been familiar for decades, sitting down wearily once again in the outer court of biblical incident.

2. *The adult class methods of study are radically different from those of the rest of the Sunday-school.*

Certainly, you say. This fact is too plain to

need statement. To which I reply, It ought to be, but it is not. We are the heirs of practise formed in the early days of the International Lessons, when all the school used the same lesson papers and gray haired men and women patiently asked and answered the printed questions set before them — “What did Jesus say?” “What did the disciples reply?” “What did Jesus then say?” It is to be hoped that such inanities are now things of the past, but their influence still remains in too little differentiation of the methods employed by the adult class. The principles which follow aim to suggest proper adult class methods.

3. *The adult class should be a forum for the discussion of subjects of real social, moral, and religious importance.*

There is a place for the lecture and address in adult class teaching, but the normal method is that of discussion. These classes are not little pitchers to be filled up; no class of any age is, for that matter. The members of an adult class may have as much knowledge as their teacher. Even if not, they usually do not wish to listen to a lecture. They want to talk things over fully and frankly. Only the class which discusses vital themes in a sane and constructive way has a permanent lease of life. Such a class will survive a change of teachers or any other shock. But what is discussed must be of real value. How

determine what is of value? There is an objective test: Does the subject make life better? There is a subjective test: Is the class capable and desirous of discussing the subject? Many a valuable subject is profitless for a particular class, but no teacher ought to be satisfied until his class has formed the habit of talking things over. The habit may not be attained this week or next or for several months, but that is an important goal to be reached. For this reason a class must not be too large; it must be congenial; it must have a teacher skilful enough to introduce subjects of value and self-restrained enough not to say himself everything that can be said about them.

More important still is another principle:

4. *The discussion in an adult class must be absolutely free.*

Every member must be free to express his own ideas. These ideas may be totally different from those of anyone else. Never mind. Others may think them "heretical" or "dangerous" or whatever other choice epithet they choose to apply to opinions they do not hold. That makes no difference. He has a right to the expression of his opinion. If everyone else thinks differently, still his expression does others no harm and does him a vast amount of good. The adult class is the last place in the world in which to say "Hush."

Still further, if some member holds an unpopular opinion the teacher must see that it is fully and fairly presented. He must help to bring out its strong points. He ought to aid everyone in the class to do this, even though the teacher may not himself hold those views. The teacher can, at the same time, protect the class from the talkative man who consumes time without profit. Having made an opinion clear, the class will pass on to other matters. All must understand that extensive argument is not in place in the class.

From this principle comes directly the next:

5. *The adult class is not the place for the settlement of questions.*

When a subject has been thoroughly discussed, and the teacher has seen that all sides have been justly presented, drop it. It is not necessary that the class should come to an agreement. If there is a difference of opinion in the class, there certainly must be no pressure to secure absolute agreement. You are, for example, studying the story of Christ's infancy. To some the virgin birth seems necessary to Christian faith; to others it seems only a beautiful legend. Give each side expression and leave it. In this way a class may be harmonious and yet contain most radical differences on even "vital" subjects. Let toleration begin with the house of God; for if it does not, be sure that judgment will.

6. *The adult class may often profitably pursue independent subjects of study.*

I have pleaded for freedom of discussion; I would plead for equal freedom in the choice of subjects of study. An adult class cannot afford to be bound to any inflexible procedure, unless for very good reasons. No matter what course it is studying, subjects will come up which are worth looking at more closely. A class has often just got well into the consideration of a subject when the time is up. "Let us continue it next Sunday," someone proposes. The regular lesson may be postponed, omitted, or disposed of briefly, as desired. Short courses of lessons up to a dozen in number may often be arranged with great profit. Some special field of Bible study, or the study of a social problem, or of the forces of good and evil in the local community, may often be most profitably treated in such courses. Aside from these, which might be called parenthetical courses, every adult class ought to consider whether or not it should pursue permanent independent courses. I do not say that all classes ought to pursue such courses. There may be very good reasons against it. But the subject ought to be considered; and the greater the capacity of the class for study, the more the presumption in favor of the independent course.

7. *The class may exist without study.*

Many classes exist for other purposes than study. Many other classes are made up of members who have no taste or even capacity for study. Others are made up of people who, in our rushing modern life, are utterly exhausted with their daily work and, with the best will in the world, would find adequate study impossible. What can such classes do? Why, come together on Sunday and talk things over. Will it not be profitless? No, not if their teacher is willing to work faithfully in their behalf and so arrange the lessons that they will lead into profitable fields. Let no teacher think that if his class does not study he need not. Quite the contrary. In that case the teacher must be a "business committee" and so arrange beforehand the treatment of the lesson that it will lead naturally and easily into subjects possible and profitable for class discussion.

8. *Some members of the class may study and others not.*

Most classes, especially if large, are very mixed bodies. Some members are able to give time to study and delight to do it. Others are not able. And yet the last usually need what the class can give more than the first. In such a class the natural tendency is often to exalt study unduly, until those who do not study are made to feel uncomfortable and out of place.

That will never do. It is neither kind nor wise. Often those who do not study cannot or ought not to do so. Even if that is not the case, they are adults and have a right to do as they please. The demand that everyone in a class shall study is on a par with the request one sometimes hears in a meeting, "Everybody sing; and if you can't sing, read the words." Impertinence! Suppose I want to worship and not to sing? Not less is it impertinence to demand that no one shall be in your class who does not study. If you can win them to study, well; but they must be made to feel at home, even if they do not study. Often the class is most helpful to those whose lives are so busy or so limited that study is impossible. The class may be their one window into a brighter and more intellectual life. They have a right there. The teacher of children should not be satisfied unless the whole class studies. The teacher of adults must welcome members who never intend to study a lesson.

9. *The study must be planned as a course, not as a series of detached lessons.*

This involves looking ahead. Mere "reviews" are not enough. "What was our last lesson about?" may or may not be a useful question, but the teacher must already have asked himself, "What are the rest of the lessons of this course about?" Then he must plan this day's teaching

with reference to what he wants to do the next and succeeding weeks. The class must avoid the fragmentary study which has done so much to degrade Sunday-school work for the past thirty years.

10. *The course or group of lessons should issue in practical results.*

This cannot always be the case with single lessons. Sometimes a section of a book or the whole book must be studied before its real religious value can be seen. It is not necessary to "find the lesson" in every portion of Scripture, but when the whole story or book has been carefully studied, a great truth will be revealed. The class can then see the purpose of the writer, although no single lesson has disclosed it. That is Bible study worthy the name, and no adult class ought to be satisfied with less. But it can seldom be well done in the fragmentary way that the last generation of Sunday-school study has inculcated.

11. *Every lesson should have its individual purpose.*

A course of lessons may be a mosaic, the plan only evident when it is completed, but the mosaic is made of jewels. You are studying, for example, the history of Israel told in the books of Samuel and Kings. As a whole, it is a great sermon on the relation of religion to national life. The lesson is, perhaps, on Ahaz — a rather profitless

character, but his reign is an excellent example of what happens when a weak man is placed in a responsible position. Find in each lesson the one thing of most value. Make it as strong as possible. Make every minute of your time count. Never put over a lesson. It is not seemly to ask grown people to come to a class and waste time over what is not worth while.

12. *A teacher must often subordinate subjects to persons.*

The greatest educational temptation is to teach subjects and neglect persons. In the adult class it is fatal to the class. One sometimes wishes that with younger pupils it were fatal to the teacher. You think you are to teach the life of Christ. No. You are to teach Mrs. A and Mr. B and Miss C. The life of Christ is only the means by which you teach them; or, more properly, they are teaching themselves with more or less guidance and inspiration from their teacher. If the members and not the subjects are emphasized, the teacher becomes of less importance.

13. *A teacher is not a necessity for all adult classes.*

A teacher has three functions: to plan the work, to present subjects, and to lead the discussions. He is not always needed for the first; a committee might often plan the work with profit. Whether he is needed to present a subject

depends upon the subject. If the class is studying something with which the members are not familiar, then someone is needed to present it, but in most cases at least half the class is as familiar with the subject as the teacher himself. He is not essential to guide the discussions. Other members are usually competent. If a class cannot find a teacher, it can do very well without. It can call itself a club, appoint a committee of arrangements, and elect a chairman. "We can't find a teacher" is never a valid excuse for a group of educated adults who really want to study the Bible.

14. *The adult class study must be intellectually dignified.*

It must be worthy of an adult mind. The name "class" implies intellectual means. It must have religious values, but they are obtained through intellectual means. The keenest, sharpest, most discriminating intellectual work in the whole church ought to be done in the adult class, for it need not be toned down nor diluted to suit less mature minds, as more public services often must. In this way it can best be made contributory to spiritual growth. Remember that the ideal relation between the intellectual and the spiritual is never one of contrast, but one of means and end.

15. *Individuals may often be made responsible for particular parts of the lesson.*

Here lies the use of topics and papers. They may be more or less elaborate, according as those who prepare them have more or less opportunity for study. These papers serve two purposes: they set the members of the class at some definite task; they contribute definite results to the class. The task need not be very large nor the result very scholarly to make it of great value. The topic or paper may often be impromptu. A class is discussing some subject. A question of fact arises which the members of the class either do not know or about which they disagree. Let some person who is able to get the information present it next week. The topic may, on the contrary, be planned far ahead. Often a subject assigned months beforehand is, especially to young people, the open door to fresh intellectual interests and a new life. Persons are often narrow because no one ever suggested to them any broadening influences. Many a Bible class has an intellectual mission to fulfil. But the topic may also be of rich spiritual value. How the religious life could be enriched by the study and presentation of such a topic as the prayers of Jesus, or the temptations of the early church, or the outline of the thought of Philippians, or the teaching of Paul about food offered to idols as bearing on the present day! Other topics may come much closer to practical daily life than any of these. Topics

must not be made a burden. They must be helpful, stimulating, welcomed by those who take them; then the results will be helpful and stimulating to the class.

The same results may be accomplished by simpler means. Members may be asked beforehand to contribute to discussions which will arise; or to prepare a question on some portion of the lesson. There are only two limitations: the task asked must be large enough to be worthwhile for an adult mind, and it must not be beyond the capacity of the person to do or the class to appreciate.

IV

THE USE OF THE BIBLE BY THE ADULT CLASS

THE ordinary engine uses only a small proportion of the power produced by the burning of its coal. The ordinary adult class is like the engine. Its use of its source of power is wasteful. It does not get all the help and inspiration it might from the Bible.

The Dy-
namic Force
of the Adult
Class

The adult class may use the Bible in two ways: reading and study. Reading is like walking through a garden; one may go leisurely and even stop to see the flowers that grow, but not bend his back to labor. Study is like cultivating the garden; one needs to toil in some measure, to dig beneath the surface, perhaps to uproot some plants, and, if he will work effectively, to use a few simple tools. It is curious that, while there is much more careful study of the Bible done by scholars than ever was done before, there is less reading of it than there was a few generations ago. This neglect is not natural

and will be changed in time. The adult class may well perform a great service in introducing new and more fruitful habits of Bible reading.

But ought not the class always to study the Bible? By no means. Many classes will find Bible Reading Classes their greatest use in only trying to read the Bible, not to study it. To be sure, such classes will not be satisfied with reading ten or a dozen verses. If systems which set only such lessons are taken, the class will enlarge the Bible sections used. A few classes have done what many classes might do with profit — they have met simply for Bible reading. Why not? Clubs meet to read Milton and Browning and Emerson and Longfellow; why not meet to read the Bible? It is worth it. Classes have met, with no limits of assignment, sometimes with no teacher, to read and discuss informally a biblical book. The reading may be much or little, depending on the amount of discussion to which the reading gives rise. The plan lends itself to the most informal of classes. It has been successful in literary clubs and in such Bible classes as have tried it. It can be used without elaborate preparation or machinery of any kind. It is specially adapted for classes with little or no time to study, but with a desire to know the content of the Bible. Few classes would not be better for such a reading of some of the more

important books. Will you stop and think for a moment: how many of the members of your class do you suppose have ever read through, in such a way as to gain any sense of their unity and general content, such important books as Job or Proverbs or Romans or Hebrews? Some of them can tell the story of the last novel they read. How many of them can tell the story contained in the books of Samuel or of Luke or of Acts?

The reading may be not only of single books, but of groups of smaller books, with some Connected Reading comparison between them: Paul's shorter epistles; the Minor Prophets; Mark and Matthew or Luke. Short introductory talks telling of the author, the purpose and the occasion of their writing, are helpful, but even without these the reading is valuable. One of the gravest charges against the International Uniform Lesson system is that its fragmentary character has tended to destroy the habit and to some extent the desire for consecutive Bible reading. The Sunday-school has done the damage; it must lead in providing the remedy. Nowhere can this be done so well as in the adult class.

One may ask, Why should not the reading be done at home? Why take up the time of Reading in the Class the class with it? If the purpose of the class is to become familiar with the Bible, reading is not "taking up the time of the

class." It is using the time properly. Why does not a literary club read Browning at home, and only come together to discuss it? Sometimes it does, but often it wisely recognizes that there is a stimulation to discussion in reading together. An additional reason holds in a Sunday-school class. Its occasional attendants, and even some of its regular members, may have had no time for home reading.

Occasionally a class may rely on home reading and keep the class hour for discussion. This is **Home Reading** only in cases where all the class have some leisure and are thoroughly united in their purpose, and where no obligation is felt to the visitor or occasional attendant. Usually, reading in the class is better. The discussion must be free, spontaneous, with interruptions of the reading at any point, as informal as among a group of neighbors reading a novel on a summer veranda.

One of the advantages of the reading class lies in the possibility of the use of various ver- **Use of Vari- ous Ver- sions** sions and the discussion of important differences between them. It is well to have among the members of the class the Authorized Version and the English and American revisions. The translation in the Twentieth Century New Testament is put into present day English, and is often very striking.

The Douay version (Catholic) is much like the Authorized Version, and is well worth comparison. The translation in scholarly books like Kent's "Students' Old Testament" may be used with great profit. "The New Testament in Braid Scotts" is often very attractive to a person of Scottish antecedents. The most important version is the American Revision. It best represents the agreement of modern scholarship as to the text and interpretation of the Bible.

The ordinary adult class is in effect a reading class. Its use of the Bible can hardly be called *Points to be* study. How may this reading be made *Considered* of more value? By attention to three things: 1. The purpose of the book from which the lessons are taken. This purpose ought to become so familiar to the class that a mere allusion to it will be sufficient. 2. The context. No story, and very few sections in any books from which Sunday-school lessons are usually taken, stands by itself. The best commentary on a passage is often its surrounding sections. 3. The meaning of the passage itself. Not "the teaching of a lesson," nor "its spiritual significance," nor any other inference, legitimate or illegitimate, but the answer to the simple question, "What point did the writer mean to make in this section?" Often this, which ought to be the easiest, is really the

hardest thing for the Bible reader to see. We have been so accustomed to "draw lessons" from the Bible that it has become rather difficult for the average Bible reader to hold himself down to the plain and simple meaning of the Bible writer. Often that meaning does not contain "lessons" and does not even seem religious. It does not require study to see the meaning of a passage, it only requires a reasonable amount of attention in reading. Our very familiarity with the Bible makes us careless of its meaning. The Bible is the most thoughtlessly read book in the world. To acknowledge that a class does not study the Bible, but reads it, is no disgrace. A class which reads carefully gets far more from its work than one which studies carelessly.

The ordinary adult class reads the Bible. The exceptional class studies it. The study of a great piece of literature may take many different forms, but it always means work. The class may study by proxy; the teacher may do all the studying and impart his results to the class. This is not always to be condemned. Where the teacher has leisure and facilities for study and the class has not, it may be a most fruitful method. The members often learn, as they could not otherwise do, what biblical study is. The teacher must know the limitations of his class and summarize where the details would

be barren and unprofitable to them. Rightly used, this method may induce much personal Bible study in a class.

Part of the class may study and part not, as suggested on page 38, and yet the class need not lose its sense of unity. A loves to study and has some time for it. B does not love it and has no time for it if he did. Yet B may comment most shrewdly and sensibly on the results of A's study, and both may be equally valuable members of the class. A composite class must not be conducted wholly for the benefit of its studying members, but a few such may be of great assistance. They can look up matters arising in the course of discussion which need further study, can present subjects which throw light upon the lessons, and can bring to the class both results and methods of genuine study. Happy is the teacher who hath a few of them. But there is one condition. They must remember that they exist for the class, not the class for them, else they are intolerable bores.

In a few classes everyone can study. Such a class has certain advantages. It can attack any Bible study it chooses; Greek or Hebrew, if it likes. Some have. It can lay out work far ahead. It can study thoroughly. It can work for results which

The Unity
of the Class
of which
only a Part
Studies

The Class
that
Studies

are intellectually worthy of adult minds. It can be independent of the personal leadership of a teacher, or it can use the services of a teacher most profitably. To the lovers of study such a class is a great delight.

It has its limitations, however. When there is only one adult class in a school, it ought not to do such special study that an occasional attendant would feel out of place. It must never overload its more busy members. It must not pursue lines of study of little interest to some members. It must not fall into the fallacy of two volunteer Bible classes in a certain college, one of which called itself "religious" and the other "intellectual." Its most intellectual study must always have an ultimate religious purpose. Under these limitations a large Sunday-school might well form a group of congenial and studious people into a class that really studies. They need not be professional students or highly educated people. A taste for study is not limited to the educated. The question is not, how much they already know, but how much they are willing to learn. The Sunday-schools need such classes to provide for the legitimate intellectual tastes of some of their choicest members. The knowledge that there are classes which study in the Sunday-school adds inspiration and dignity to the school and tends to take away the stigma of superficiality which —

not always justly — rests at present on the term “Sunday-school study.”

But this is the very exceptional class. A class which cannot command much time from its members, nor aspire to courses which demand close attention on the part of all the members, may still hope to do genuine Bible study. Many a class at present only reading the Bible may well turn to its study. It requires no elaborate paraphernalia, no profound intellectuality to become a class which studies. The class may begin very simply, with the resolve to know the things of importance which lie beneath the surface of the lessons. Some of these things can be briefly stated. A class that studies ought to know the characteristics of the kind of literature in which its lessons lie: Gospels, Prophets, Epistles, wisdom or legal literature; the origin, purpose, main contents and literary peculiarities of the book studied; the relation of the particular lesson to the book as a whole; the elements of the explanation of any special difficulties in the lesson. These things are introductory. For the rest, each course and each lesson will present its own topics of study. The Bible bristles with them. What does the ordinary class really know about such common subjects as the Pharisees, or Paul’s expectation of the second coming, or the social teaching of the prophets, or Jesus’ teaching

about wealth? The fact is, exact knowledge on any subject is rather rare. We do not expect everybody to know the details of the tariff or of irrigation in the West or of the history of the Hohenstaufens. It is not fair to expect even adults in Sunday-school to know the details of biblical subjects. It is no disgrace if they do not. But Christian people should aspire to exact knowledge about the Bible. Every adult class may well be urged to strive for it. The mere verbal knowledge of the Bible which reading gives is not sufficient.

Do not be misled by any distinction between studying about the Bible and studying the Bible. The distinction has a little truth, but is largely fallacious. Studying the Bible is such a study of the text as will make the Bible better understood. Studying about the Bible is such a study of facts pertaining to the Bible as will make it better understood. The two are one in purpose. All study which will make the Bible better known and better appreciated belongs of right to the Bible class.

To the Bible class, too, belong the results of modern Bible study. New light has been thrown upon a score of biblical subjects. We know better than did the earlier generations how the gospels are related to each other, what was the origin and value of the apocalyptic literature, how the wis-

Modern
Bible Study
and the
Adult Class

dom literature came into being, how the books of history grew up, what the time after Malachi contributed to the New Testament period. The adult class is the most fitting place for the church to familiarize itself with all the fruits of present day biblical study. These fruits are the proper heritage of all Bible students, and they make the Bible richer and more valuable. An adult class which is intelligent cares about the truth. Fortunately for poor humanity, the truth is not necessary for spiritual values. The negro preacher who took for his text, "He maketh my feet like hens' feet" (Ps. see 18:33), and preached of the faith which clings to God as the hen clings to the roost, had a great spiritual lesson; but a true understanding of the Bible would have furnished him other texts with the same lesson. In the long run, the soul never loses by learning the truth. Our spiritual life will be the richer for finding out all we can about the Bible.

We can express the sum of this chapter in one statement: not all classes will use the Bible in the same way, but all should use it so as to gain from it the largest possible spiritual power.

Résumé

V

THE ADULT CLASS AND EXTRA- BIBLICAL SUBJECTS

MAY the adult class study extra-biblical subjects? The answer to this is involved in the answer to another question: What is the object of the class? The object is the same as that of the general church service: the advancement of Christian life in intelligence and efficiency. The Christian life takes its start from the principles of the Bible, but it is lived in the world of today. To many adult classes the Bible and its principles are fairly familiar. Such classes might well try to apply the principles of the Bible to the life of today, or to study the working of God's providence in history outside the Bible. The limitation of extra-biblical study is clear. It must be such study as will advance the efficiency of the Christian life. To study the politics of the town in order to learn how to win votes for a favorite candidate is not legitimate Sunday-school work. To study the same subject in order to learn how

The Question of
Extra-biblical Subjects

political corruption may be suppressed is often very proper. Our study of the Bible is too often either merely academic, and touches life at no point, or is only brought to bear upon the personal religious life. The social and civic life has as yet been brought far too little in touch with biblical principles. This is one result of the false division of life into what is called religious and secular.

Two extreme positions have sometimes been taken on this subject. One is that the Sunday-school should study only the Bible. The other is that the Sunday-school should study religion and morals from any sources, using biblical material only when it will illustrate the subject in hand better than will anything else. Both these positions seem extreme. Christian life can find most excellent lessons outside the Bible, but after all, the Bible is the body of literature upon which it is built. The Sunday-school is the only institution whose special function it is to teach the Bible. It should not lightly reject this task. All its pupils should receive a broad and, so far as it goes, a thorough biblical training. But God has wrought elsewhere than in Palestine and among the Hebrew people. All history is his, and the study of the lives of many men outside the Bible may lead to him. Nor is it only the past which belongs to God.

The Reasonable Position

The present is his also. Christian life must be lived amid the complex problems of today. Social and civic life calls for the application of the principles of the prophets and of Jesus. Where can all these things be studied more profitably than in the adult class, with its freedom of discussion and its religious atmosphere? This class presents a field for such study which as yet the Church has only begun to utilize. Of all the subjects of moral and religious application, only one has up to the present time received any general recognition, and that is temperance. Even this is always based, sometimes with very doubtful exegesis, upon a biblical passage. The adult class at least may well make the field of study much wider. There are many subjects of practical reform which are equally if not more pertinent to most adult classes than temperance.

Extra-biblical subjects may often be treated in short courses. Three months on the condition of the city, sanitary, moral, religious; four weeks on the mission field in which the individual church is interested; two months on the public schools; a month on the history of its own denomination — such courses are often most useful to the class. Temporary classes for those not usually attending the Sunday-school may often be formed for such study. Every regular class may well keep a short list of such

topics which it proposes to take up at some convenient time between longer courses, as a man often keeps a list of books which he intends to read as he has time.

Sometimes study is based in a merely formal way upon the Bible. It is possible, for example,

to study the social problems of today and to link each subject with some biblical utterance. Somewhere in the Bible can be found the principle of every needed social reform. It is more

profitable, however, to assume our basis in general Christian morals and devote the attention of the class to the actual social problems. The social teaching of the Bible is a topic large enough for a course of its own. Pulpit traditions may demand a biblical text of the preacher, but nothing demands it of the adult class. The class should never cut loose from the principles of the Bible, but there is no reason why it should always study its text. On the other hand, it is not well to make extra-biblical courses the habitual study of a class. There is in these days little danger that our life will be too biblical. Unless in exceptional circumstances, a class will probably fulfil its mission best by devoting not more than half its time in any term of years to extra-biblical courses.

What subjects are appropriate for study? One

Should
Such Study
always be
Based on
Biblical
Passages?

answers broadly: No subject is inappropriate which makes the Christian life better and more efficient. Certain groups of subjects, however, are specially fitted for adult class use.

Appropri-
ate Sub-
jects

1. *Church History.* The divine guidance of the Church did not cease with New Testament times. Martyrs and reformers have lessons of inspiration for today. It is of great value to study how doctrines arose, how customs of worship took shape, how movements rose and fell. A certain pessimism often arises regarding religion. A study of the past shows that religion has weathered worse gales than those of the present. Good people sometimes become alarmed at the changes in Christian thought and practise now going on. It is worth much for them to realize that the Church has always been changing, and that the very things for which they fear are themselves often only the products of past changes; that religion itself is more stable than its special forms, and that their fears are largely needless. A class may study the history of its own denomination, not that its members may be more rigid denominationalists, but more tolerant Christians. The great periods of church history are always fruitful — the early Church, the Reformation, the time of the Puritans. The great characters of the Church are inspiring: Augustine, St. Francis,

St. Bernard, Luther, Loyola, George Fox, Wesley. The church to which he belonged makes little difference; the man is the important thing. Few studies are more enlightening, more inspiring, more calming to troubled fears for the religious future than the study of the course of religion in the past.

2. *The Church in the Present Age.* This is really only a form of church history, for the doings of yesterday have already entered into the record of the past. No period of the history of the Church is so full of great things as the present. Do not let the class think that our own age is commonplace. Far from it. The Church in our own land, facing its problems in city and country, ought to be an inspiration to every church member. The whole subject of missions lies here. It is the most glorious work in which any branch of the Church in any age has ever engaged. It ought to be a shame for a Christian not to know two things about missions: the general facts of the history, and the specific missions in which his own denomination is engaged. There is no need to organize special mission study classes for this subject in the church. The senior and adult classes, if properly managed, should attend to it. In this busy day there is danger of the church being fettered or becoming a nuisance by reason of the multiplication of organizations. Between

the regular missionary societies and occasional courses in all grades of the Sunday-school, the members of our churches ought to be well informed on the subject of missions. The lives and work of men in our own day, like Livingstone, Moody, Paton, Grenfell, may be as inspiring as the lives of Luther and Wesley. It is a great thing for people to feel themselves part of a mighty movement. This the humblest Christian of the present day may do. The Spirit of God is in the Church today as much as in New Testament times.

3. *Social and Civic Problems.* We study these problems in Israel whenever we study the work of prophets like Amos or Isaiah. Why should we not study them in America as well? Before these problems can be settled rightly, Christian men and women must know the facts regarding them and Christian principles must be applied to them. Labor and capital, trusts and monopolies, municipal politics, water and light supply are all capable of treatment from the standpoint of the Christian principle of brotherly love. The Church cannot shift its responsibility. The welfare of homes, of women and of helpless children, lies at its door. We must know the facts, not as they may be luridly painted by unscrupulous agitators, but as they may be discovered by a group of calm and kindly Christian men and women, eager only for truth. Ten years ago this could

not be done so easily. Facts about many things in social life were not available. Today they are. Any class may, according to its measure of interest and ability, study social problems in the light of Christian principles.

These subjects are the most difficult of all extra-biblical subjects to handle, and require most skill in the teacher and most good judgment in the class. They are so full of explosive material, have been made so much the shuttlecock of politics and passion, that they require for Christian treatment especial calmness and fair-mindedness. The class must never be made the field of a tirade or propaganda. Perhaps for that very reason these are good subjects for an adult class to consider frequently. Calmness and fair-mindedness are excellent pagan virtues for Christians to adopt. Here is, on the whole, the best place also to study the remedies proposed for our social ills. Do you ask, Shall we study single tax and socialism and labor unions and prohibition in the Sunday-school? Yes, in the adult class; provided always that the class can do it with fairness; otherwise not. These things must ultimately be tested by Christian principles. Where can it be done better than in the adult class? The entire range of social and civic life has large moral issues. It all belongs to Christ our Master.

4. *Biography and Literature outside of Specific*

Church Circles. This opens the whole field of history and of books. Moral teaching is not limited to the lives of churchmen. The life of Lincoln has its lessons as well as that of Luther. The life and poetry of the gentle Whittier is worthy the study of any class. Would you turn the class into Shakespeare and Browning and Tennyson? There are classes which have profited by occasional courses in such studies. God speaks through men outside the Bible, and we may listen and hear his voice amid much that is often called secular. A class may properly even take advantage of passing popular interest in a subject. Put together "The Servant in the House" and Ibsen's "Pillars of Society" and see what a tremendous sermon they make on Christian sincerity, how they cut under all the smug hypocrisy and half-unconscious Phariseeism of our common Christian life. Given a class with the education and literary tastes which make it appropriate, so that the work is a pleasure and not a bore, and such subjects will occasionally be most fruitful. They should be studied, however, only after insuring the interest of the class. Some subjects are adapted to certain people and not to others. A popular pastor, in his early ministry among working people, took Omar Khayyam into a week-night meeting and read the little audience all to sleep. The adult class must not parallel this ineptness.

One limitation must always be kept in mind. It is this: these subjects are to be studied with relation to their moral and religious bearing. They are to be held up to the light of religious life, to be put to the test of Jesus' teaching of love. A class is out of its realm if it studies Browning as a type of English style. Browning as a religious teacher is a fitting subject. This applies with special force to social subjects. Socialism as a purely social theory is not the concern of the class; as bearing on the moral problems of life it is. What fulfils the law of love and makes for righteousness is a question the Sunday-school class may always ask. The class should always listen for two things: the voice of God out of the past; the call of God to present duty.

VI

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE STUDY

THE Sunday-school is a religious institution. It is also an educational agency. The primary mission of the Sunday-school is so to impart knowledge of the Bible as to inspire its pupils to live a truly religious life. The adult class also is a religious institution. It differs from the rest of the Sunday-school in that it need not always be educational, in the sense of imparting information; but it ought to be as much a religious force as the preaching service of the church. Nothing should be used in the class which does not have a definite religious value.

What is religious value? There is a narrow way of answering this question which would limit it to what we sometimes call the devotional. It would only regard as of religious value that which rouses the emotions, makes one feel the presence of God. This is only a small part of religion. The ethical sense is also religious.

This is emphasized strongly in the Sermon on the Mount. Religion is concerned with producing sincere righteousness in life. If the adult class can promote this righteousness, it is fulfilling its religious mission. This definition of religious value passes, too, beyond the range of personal life and has a large social significance. Anything which tends to advance social righteousness has religious value. The religious value of the adult class, then, lies in aiding its members better to serve God, and better to serve their fellowmen for Christ's sake.

It is well for a class to keep Bible study uppermost, else the temptation will be great to become a picker-up of scraps. The predominance of the Bible will hold the class to the religious point of view; then it may profitably look at a wide range of subjects of vital significance in modern life. The class may consider any subject with which the Christian duty of its members, as parts of modern society, is concerned. Often the Bible study itself leads into such subjects. If not, the class may always properly consider them apart from any Bible lesson, but in the light of biblical principles. We are not yet using the adult classes as we should to answer the question, What does God say about the problems of our modern life? The discussion of such problems

Importance
of making
the Bible
Central

does not lead to "waves of heavenly bliss." If it raises emotions, they are not usually of the kind we call religious; but the success or failure of Christianity in the world depends primarily upon whether Christian people can deal with these problems. Then there are the homely problems of practical life: what attitude men and women shall take to their daily work, to their recreation and their reading; how their children can best be trained; how common honesty and the love of God and man can be kept in the midst of the heavy pressure of daily life. If the adult class does not help solve these questions it is not fulfilling its religious duty. As a religious agency it must discuss many things besides prayer and faith and the four gospels. Its field is as wide as the life of its members. Many things which may not be wise subjects for the Christian pulpit can and should be discussed in the free semi-privacy of the class. The class, above all other agencies of the church, furnishes the modern equivalent of the Old Testament wisdom literature, the application of religious principles to all departments of life.

One sees now that both information and inspiration play a part in religious value. Each furnishes what is essential to religious life. If you would correctly interpret the Bible you must know it correctly. It is proper

for the class to study what the best scholarship of the day has to say about the origin and meaning of the Bible. If you would judge rightly of churches and missions, you must know something of their history and present status. If you would apply Christian principles to the solution of social or industrial problems, you must know the facts which underlie those problems. The adult class ought to emphasize the Christian duty of knowing the real facts about the important problems of life.

But religion needs inspiration as well as knowledge. Inspiration touches the will and spurs it on to action. Some classes, as suggested in Chapter II, may make their chief aim inspiration rather than information. Neither group of classes is more religious or less religious than the other. Nor can either meet the religious needs of their members by being only informational or only inspirational. The two factors are always mingled in life. No teacher should be satisfied to deal with either alone.

How can an informational class find inspiration? The study of any proper subject will yield it. The class may for weeks study hard, dry facts, as cold and clear as mathematics. Then at last, when the bearing of them on life is seen, the class stands in the

presence of God and the facts become truths, pulsing and throbbing with life. Let the class wait patiently. Do not try to force a "lesson" in every day's study. If you really have a truth that is related to life, the "lesson" will come in good time, and come with all the more inspiration because it has a rich store of information behind it.

How can an inspirational class gain information? By making sure that its premises and statements, **To Gain Information** however superficial they may be, are correct so far as they go. If the class discusses prayer in the light of Jesus' example, it will take pains first to find what Jesus' example is. Facts may be correct, even if the study is not very profound. It is much too easy to make a general statement, without regard to its correctness, if it is only thought to be edifying. An adult class should stand like a rock against this practise. The habit of correctness is essentially connected with the virtue of truth-telling and is itself a religious element. First true, then inspiring, should be the order for an adult class. As to the rest, the subject matter with which the class is dealing always presents something new and inspiring. Information, like heaven, lies about us in our infancy, but it also continues to our old age.

May a class profitably use devotional forms?

If the class is meeting in a separate room a brief prayer said or sung is most fitting. Use of Devotional Forms It strikes the religious key to which the class should always keep. If meeting in a room with other classes, the common devotional exercises of the school—usually too long and elaborate—ought to do this. Sometimes when the class has been brought face to face with some great truth or duty which has clearly struck home, the common feeling may fittingly voice itself in a closing prayer. There is, however, one use of devotional forms which is unfitted for the class: that is their use to arouse, rather than to express, religious feeling. The proper function of music at the opening of a church service, for example, is to arouse a religious feeling, and so place the worshiper in a receptive mood for the worship which is to follow. In the class this should be done by the class study itself. The primary object of the class is not to induce a devotional mood, but to think clearly upon certain subjects. This may or may not produce devotional feeling. The religious value of the class is to be measured, not in terms of feeling, but of efficiency. The Church has no other agency so well fitted to produce this efficiency in religion. The real test of religious value is this: Does the class make its members more efficient Christians?

PART TWO

COURSES FOR ADULT CLASS STUDY

VII

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM¹

THE International Uniform Lesson System originated in 1872. It followed a period of
Its Growth "Question Books" and various plans of lesson study. It expressed the sense of Sunday-school unity and of growing need for better lessons than had yet been offered. Its rapid adoption shows that it met that need. Its use by a multitude of schools made possible the very cheap publication of efficient helps, and also tempted the publishers to issue helps which were popular but not efficient. For twenty years, in most of the denominations, the International Uniform System completely held the field, following always the same plan. Meantime the sciences of pedagogy and biblical study had advanced. Criticism of the International System arose. It was said to be unpedagogical in its principles. Its uniformity and its fragmentary character were attacked. New systems of study were produced, and occupied its field to

¹ On this subject see also another book in this series, Meyer, *The Graded Sunday School in Principle and Practice*, Chap. X.

some extent. The criticism of it became sharp, especially among educators. Finally a separate primary course was put forward, and still later an adult course, with a recognition of the principle of Sunday-school grading, is to be placed by the side of the uniform course. As yet, however, the great majority of schools hold to the uniform course. This does not signify so much as it would if the great majority of schools were not small or unprogressive, or both. It does, however, indicate that the days of the usefulness of the uniform system are not yet wholly past.

The principles of the International Uniform System are (1) uniformity; (2) the covering of the Bible in a six years' course; (3) the selection of a small but significant portion of Scripture for the lesson. Uniformity undoubtedly has great advantages. It makes possible the study of the lesson together by the family. It unites the adult class with the school in a greater sense of unity. It makes the adult class more useful as the source of supply for substitute teachers. An adult class in a Sunday-school which uses the International Uniform Lessons should take these advantages into consideration before adopting another system. It may be a part of Christian duty to use a system not in itself ideal for the sake of the school as a whole. For certain classes, too, the system

itself has advantages. Abundant and very cheap helps are available. On the whole, the helps are good. Publishers have sometimes toned down their work to the lower half of their constituency, rather than tried to lift that lower half up a little higher, as newspapers have sometimes catered to the populace and actors played to the galleries, but even this indicates skill in supplying what people want. Sometimes the lesson helps are most excellent from every point of view. The system has been in operation so long and is so familiar that it may be used without much effort on the part of the teacher. Most other systems require work on the part of the teacher. It is well adapted to classes without much time or ability for study, or without ambition and progressiveness. Shall we deliberately plan to make room for such classes? Yes. We must meet facts as they are, and many adult classes are of this kind. Change the kind by all means, if that is possible, but it is not always possible. Many such classes must go on indefinitely under these conditions. But do not despise them. They may be accomplishing about the only work which can be done for their members. Adults are not children. Their days of training are often over, they cannot always be lifted to new methods, and they must have what they want. So it happens that the old International System

really meets the needs of a large number of classes which are doing a work not to be despised.

Classes with time and ability for study, or even with little time and much intellectual acuteness, ought not to rest permanently content with the old International System. Its Limitations Most of its courses of lessons are too fragmentary. It does not in itself suggest consideration of books and sections of the Bible as literary units, and so it tends to lose sight of both the literary qualities and the religious purposes of the biblical writers. Narrow views and even misinterpretations are made easy by its fragmentariness. It is a great tribute to the Bible that interest in it has survived this kind of study. No system of teaching ever dared to subject any other literature to this test. Fancy studying Shakespeare by half-page extracts, with no lessons on any one play as a whole! No teacher of literature would subject himself for a day to such limitations. The Bible is the worst printed, the worst read, and the worst taught literature in the world, and yet how it lives! The uniformity of the International System makes impossible any close adjustment of the lessons to the specific needs of adult classes, or to the local conditions of a particular class; and yet of all parts of the Sunday-school the adult class ought to be most closely adjusted to special needs. It varies most

widely in intelligence, in taste, in needs of personal religious life, and in the problems which present themselves to the members. Adopting a uniform lesson system is like cutting all coats from the same pattern; the coats can be worn, but they do not fit. No one need hesitate to arouse in an adult class a spirit of discontent with the International Uniform Lessons. At the same time, there may be abundant reasons why it is best to use them. In such cases discontented grumbling is out of place. The class must give itself to the task of finding out how to use the lessons to the best advantage.

It is, the advocates of the system often say, possible to use the lessons as the basis for any kind of study a class may wish. In a measure this is true. A teacher and a class may so adapt the lessons as to fit them to a fairly wide range of class conditions.

Very good soup can be made out of pebbles, if you put in enough else besides — a comparison unfair to the lessons, because the Scripture portions are by no means pebbles. The following suggestions may be helpful:

1. A class with the International Lessons should have definitely determined its purpose. This preliminary step, always necessary, is here doubly urgent. Some other systems provide a purpose with each course of lessons.

How the
System
may best
be Used

Purpose

This system only provides that the course of lessons shall be taken from some section of Scripture. Two elements will enter into the choice of purpose. One is the needs of the class; and no portion of the Sunday-school presents so various needs as the adult class. The other is the course of lessons. This leads to the second suggestion.

2. A course should be examined before study with reference to what particular subjects it will best furnish. A six months' course
Subjects from the Gospel of Matthew will furnish study centering about the character of Jesus, or the teaching of Jesus about duties to God and man, or the order of events in Jesus' life, or the attitude of other men to Jesus, or a comparison of the Gospel records, or Christian life today in the light of Jesus' teaching. A course in the Hebrew historical books may become a study of historical events, or of the characters of Old Testament men, or of the ways in which God led Israel, or of the religion in the books, or of Hebrew history as literature, or of present life in the light of Old Testament teaching. A course ought to circle about one set of ideas, so that directly or indirectly a class will have some definite result or some deep impression as the fruit of its study. It is not wholly a disadvantage that the lessons leave the choice of that to the class. Most courses will supply some subject which fits the

needs of the class; only the teacher, and usually the class, should know definitely what that subject is. That this is true for the classes which study, all will admit. Some may question whether a purpose is so much needed for the classes called in a previous chapter reading classes, where the aim is more indefinite and the work less thorough. On the contrary, they need a purpose more than the others, and a purpose which is more carefully related to the course of lessons. The greatest temptation of such a class is to ramble, waste time, and get nothing out of the class which is worth carrying away. Having some purpose definitely in mind removes this danger. If the class is not to study, this purpose must lie very obviously on the surface. With a purpose adapted to the class and the lesson course, a superficial class can get much profit.

3. Some book study should always accompany a series of lessons. It may come at the beginning, the middle, or the end of the course, **Book Study** but the facts known about the author, origin, divisions, and main purpose of the book, if not already familiar to them, should be put before the class. The review, often tedious to an adult class, may be so used. The class may look ahead and decide to drop the lesson which seems least valuable and substitute the study of the book from which the lessons are taken. It

may be done incidentally, as the lessons proceed. Merely to understand the purpose of a book often throws the lessons taken from it into an entirely new relief. On no account should book study in some form be omitted.

4. If the lesson sections are not continuous, the connecting matter should be familiar to the class. In all cases the surrounding contents should be a part of the lesson. This is not always necessary for younger classes, but the adult class should, and usually will, deal with the larger relations of the lesson. It ought to consider as its lesson the entire section to which the prescribed lesson belongs. The short lesson portions were never chosen with adult study in view, but to fit the needs of younger pupils. Adult classes ought to modify them. It is often profitable to prepare a sheet for each member of the class as follows:

THE WIDER LESSON

In our class we will study the prescribed lesson in the light of the section in which it stands.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Section</i>
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5. Methods adapted to younger classes should be avoided. This system has been used so long and lesson papers, questions, and other helps have been so generally prepared with children in mind that the special temptation

Adult
Methods

of the system for adult classes is to slip back into childish things. Recent years have seen a great increase of helps adapted to adult classes. The class, and especially the teacher, should study these helps, the methods suggested, the kind of points made, and the subjects emphasized. It will pay the teacher to make a study of adult helps published by various houses, for suggestions as to his own methods of teaching. On the whole, the methods of adult class teaching in schools using the International Uniform Lessons have been poorer than those of any other department in the Sunday-school. Both teachers and publishers of lesson helps are beginning to see this, and a needed reform is already well on the way.

6. The system should be unhesitatingly bent, and if necessary, broken, to meet the needs of **Adjustment** the class. Systems were made for men, not men for systems. If a class becomes interested in the discussion of a subject and wants to continue it next week, why not do so, and let next week's lesson come in as it can? If one or more lessons ahead are relatively unprofitable, why not drop them and put something else in their place? A brief course on some related subject will often send a class back to the lessons with renewed vigor and better appreciation of the general course. Most adult classes, after studying the International Uniform Lessons all

their lives, are very ignorant of general biblical subjects. Short courses on such subjects as the formation of the canon, the history of the English Bible, the Apocrypha, the development of prophecy, the relation of the synoptic gospels to each other, prophetic, wisdom, or apocalyptic writing, will often be as fresh as though the class were newly converted pagans. There is an amazing amount of ignorance about the Bible among excellent Bible students. Short courses on private, civic, and social Christian duties are specially fruitful for adult life. The International System provides lessons on temperance. Why not occasionally put in their place or by the side of them a lesson on political or business honesty, trying to find what it demands and what it forbids in modern life? In many ways the system may well be bent to class needs, provided always arrangements are so made beforehand that all the members know what to expect.

No Sunday-school worker wishes to abolish the International Uniform System, though many think that recent improvements might be carried still further, as they doubtless will be. For many classes it is, and perhaps long will be, the best system available. Excellent work is sometimes done under its guidance. Any class using it may find it profitable if thought and care are freely given to the task of getting the most possible

out of it. All progressive classes will welcome, however, the new graded International courses as a great forward step in the development of the Sunday-school curriculum.

VIII

THE BIBLE STUDY UNION LESSONS

THE "Blakeslee" system of lessons originated in the attempt of a pastor in Spencer, Massachusetts, to provide his Sunday-school with improved lessons. Pupils had come to rely upon quarterlies. He wished to promote a use of the Bible itself. He felt the need of larger portions of Scripture than the fragmentary International Lessons, of a more definite connection between lessons, and of a certain amount of grading. The courses he prepared were desired by other schools. The demand was so great that Mr. Blakeslee in time gave himself entirely to the work of preparing and publishing lessons. The courses were continually improved. In 1908 Mr. Blakeslee died, but the work has continued under the guidance of men who had been associated with him, and who have enlisted others to cooperate with them in realizing their aims. The courses long ago outgrew their personal origin, and now stand for an attempt to offer

the best and most practical courses which scholarship and an intimate knowledge of Sunday-school needs and conditions can devise.

The system offers to the adult classes, in common with the rest of the school, two distinct types of courses. One type of courses was the product of the first period of development. These courses deal with approximately the same biblical matter as the corresponding courses for the younger grades, but from a different point of view. The younger pupils are directed to the biography and history, the stories and the elemental religious truths of the Bible. The Senior and Adult grades "presuppose a good knowledge of the content of the Scripture narrative, and are devoted exclusively to a consideration of the doctrinal and practical truths suggested by it." Adults ought not to be called on to go continually over things already familiar to them. "Biblical truth is exhaustless, and a way should be provided by which classes of every grade can go steadily forward to an ever-widening acquaintance with it."

The method of all these courses is much the same. They are based on portions of the Scripture, usually more extended than the lessons of the International System. From the Scripture are drawn topics for discussion, with explanatory and suggestive notes, and

questions for class discussion. In many of the courses each lesson opens with a note, "The Object of this Lesson." A Manual for the use of teachers, and, if they choose, of the class, is furnished with further explanatory and illustrative material, including copious "literary extracts." These courses are excellent for classes under ordinary conditions of adult study. They are not reading courses. They demand some study, but not so great an amount as some other courses. Few classes are so situated that they could not, if they wish, give the time necessary for it. The courses have been prepared by practical Sunday-school men, with the limitations of the average class in mind. For classes desirous of doing more thorough work the other type of courses is better, but for many classes this type meets present needs most admirably. Some schools find an advantage in their use in the fact that the entire school may study the same general subject in four grades, thus keeping, what some think is a desirable element, essentially uniform lessons for the whole school. The courses include the following subjects:

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHINGS (*Patriarchs, Kings, and Prophets Series*).

FOUNDATION TRUTHS (*Gospel Series*).

THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST (*Gospel Series*).

GOSPEL TEACHINGS (*Life of Christ Series*).

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND DUTIES (*Apostolic Church History Series*).

The second type of courses is "The Completely Graded Series." It is specially designed for schools which are fully graded. It comprises six grades, of which the Senior and Adult grades present work appropriate for adult classes. The Senior grade offers a choice of two groups, each occupying four years. One group begins with the history of religion in the Old Testament, as a preparation for the New Testament period, and follows with the Life of Christ and the history of the Church. These occupy the first two years. The third and fourth years are a study of the religions of the world and the missionary activities of the Church, and of the function, purpose, and work of the modern Church. The other group is a course in biblical history, making a careful and systematic study of the history of Israel to the birth of Christ. A variety of adult courses, including some short courses on special subjects, will be offered. The lessons are presented with full notes, references for reading, questions, and topics for discussion. Special manuals containing fuller information and illustrative material with directions for the conduct of the work are prepared for teachers.

The New
Completely
Graded
Courses

The aim of the Senior grade is to “confirm spiritual relation with God the Father and Christ the Brother and Guide; to lay the historic foundation for a strong, practical faith; to inspire a genuine love for religion and worship, and to ally the individual with modern religious and social movements.” The purpose is to give more than mere information; it is to induce participation in the great movements of our own time which are bringing in the kingdom of God.

The aim of the Adult course is “to adapt the teaching of the great religious teachers of the race to practical needs of life; to develop normal, intelligent, faithful, and efficient Christian character; to produce conscientious parents, loyal citizens, effective teachers.” In this aim, it will be noted, information is entirely subordinated to the practical ends of life. Another characteristic is the fact that some of the courses, in all the grades, use material from modern life as well as from the Bible. There is a frank recognition that, while the historic origin of our religion is in the Bible, and nothing can be made a substitute for the revelation of God which the Bible offers to men, yet God is still in his world working in the might of his Spirit. These courses attempt to show how we may hear his voice and be workers with him, finding instruction and inspiration in the life of the present. They are adapted to

the various needs of the better equipped classes. They will require for their best use somewhat more work than the first type of courses, but no more than literary clubs are usually willing to put upon their studies. They are well adapted to the best classes of the more advanced schools. Classes and teachers who are willing to give the time that the subject is worth need not turn from them because of lack of education or of habits of study. Adult classes contemplating the "Blakeslee" system should not take the first course that offers, but should choose with care the courses best adapted for their own special needs. Each course has been worked out with great care to accomplish a particular purpose, and the class and teacher owe it to the dignity of their work to find the course which best suits their own needs.

IX

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION COURSES

THE Young Men's Christian Association courses are designed for the Bible study classes in the city and college associations. They cover a wide variety of subjects, but are presented with some uniformity of method and grade of work. The general plan is a course of from twelve to twenty-five lessons. Each lesson is divided into seven parts, one for each day of the week, consisting of Scripture portions and a page or so of comment and suggestion, inciting to reflection and some study. The object is, in connection with the weekly class, to provide daily connected reading and so to keep young men in touch with the Bible, prayer, and religious thought. The courses are in the main admirable for their purpose. They are practical and devotional. They are all distinctly orthodox. Some of them are prepared by scholars fully alive to the present views of the Bible, but biblical criticism is seldom intruded. They are as well fitted

Purpose
and
Method

for classes of young people in the Sunday-schools as in the Associations. Classes whose members are too busy for daily study would usually find some other courses better. While not demanding more than average ability for study, they do demand thought and daily attention. When used, the class hour should be spent in gathering up and discussing the important things in the week's study; so much is contained in the lessons that a choice must be made and things of lesser importance omitted. The emphasis in most of the courses on the personal Christian life will naturally lead to the same emphasis in the class. Many Sunday-schools might well organize classes among young men and women for the study of these courses, but for such classes teachers should be chosen with special care. With most of these lessons only those teachers will succeed who combine a genuinely devotional religion with a character which young people respect and find attractive. A class of young people taking up a course where emphasis is laid on devotional study of the Bible demands a more careful selection of teacher than does any other phase of Sunday-school work. This is not because young people of today are less devotional than formerly, but because they are skilful in detecting cant. Now cant is the avowed or tacit assumption of a religious experience more or less unreal. Even

well-meaning persons fall easily into its use. Young people do not need teachers who have sounded all the depths of religious life, but they do need those who are perfectly honest in the expression of their religious experience, whatever it may be, and who are able to translate the experience of biblical characters and the biblical statements of religion into terms of twentieth century every-day life. The teacher must also have sympathy with this present life. The teacher of young people must be optimistic. The Christian to whom "the world is growing evil" is not fitted to teach the Bible to young people. If he is to inspire them for the winning of the Kingdom, he must have eyes to see its progress in the movements of thought and action throughout the world of scholarship and politics and business. He must belong, by instinct and training, to the progressives.

I. LESS ADVANCED COURSES.

The following courses are somewhat elementary and are well adapted to young people and to the less advanced adult classes. Most of them contain a large element of information as well as of devotion.

MEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. 18 studies. *L. K. Willman.*

LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL. *F. S. Goodman.*

OUTLINE STUDIES IN BIBLICAL FACTS AND HISTORY. 26 lessons. *I. N. Depuy and J. B. Travis.*

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL STUDY. Authorship, Contents, Geography, Institutions, and Fundamental Teachings of the Bible. *J. W. Cook.*

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST. 40 lessons which may be covered in 25 weeks. *James McConaughy.*

THE GREAT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST. 25 studies. *James McConaughy.*

LEADERS OF ISRAEL. 25 lessons. *G. L. Robinson.*

MESSAGES OF THE TWELVE PROPHETS. 28 studies. *W. D. Murray.*

LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF JESUS. *Augustus Nash.*

MAIN LINES IN THE BIBLE. Short studies for busy men. 14 lessons. *F. S. Goodman.*

II. MORE ADVANCED COURSES.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST. 25 lessons. *W. H. Salmon.*

STUDIES IN THE MIRACLES. 20 lessons based on Matthew. *W. H. Salmon.*

STUDIES IN THE PARABLES. 15 lessons based on Matthew. *W. H. Salmon.*

THE SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS. 12 lessons. *Jeremiah W. Jenks.*

STUDIES IN JEREMIAH. 30 studies. *W. W. White.*

STUDIES IN OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS. 30 studies. *W. W. White.*

NEW STUDIES IN ACTS. 19 studies. *E. I. Bosworth.*

THE LIFE OF PAUL. 24 lessons. *W. H. Salmon.*

STUDIES IN LUKE. 15 lessons. *Robert E. Speer.*

STUDIES IN ACTS. 31 lessons. *Robert E. Speer.*

TEN STUDIES IN PSALMS. 10 representative Psalms.
J. E. McFadyen.

LIFE PROBLEMS. 24 lessons, especially for young
men. *Daggett, Burr, Ball, and Cooper.*

INDUCTIVE STUDIES IN JOHN. 12 lessons. *W. W. White.*

PRAYER, PRINCIPLES AND EXAMPLES. 25 lessons.
F. S. Goodman.

III. SPECIAL COURSES OF A MORE ADVANCED CHARACTER THAN THOSE NOTED IN II.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. 30 studies.
E. I. Bosworth.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST. 30 studies based
upon the Harmony of the Gospels by Stevens and
Burton. *H. L. Sharman.* This course has been
extensively used in college Bible classes.

TEACHING OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES. 30 lessons.
E. I. Bosworth.

TRUTH OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL. 30 studies.
R. A. Falconer.

WISDOM LITERATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Job,
Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. *H. T. Fowler.*

THE WILL OF GOD. Self-surrender to the Will of
God as interpreted by Christ and the Apostles.
25 lessons. *H. B. Wright.*

X

THE CONSTRUCTIVE BIBLE STUDIES

THE University of Chicago has published a graded series of lessons, called "The Constructive Bible Studies." Adult classes will find ^{Purpose} and ^{Method} lessons specially fitted for use in the courses of the Adult Division, the Advanced and Supplementary Series, and in some of the courses for the Secondary Division. The studies are carefully graded and aim to meet the needs of the various departments of the school by lessons prepared by educational experts. The particular needs of the adult classes have received careful attention in the system. The courses arranged for adults keep two kinds of classes in mind: those who are preparing for the position of teachers, and those studying for their own personal profit. For the first kind, courses emphasizing a knowledge of the Bible and courses of religious pedagogy are provided; for the latter, a variety of elective courses, to suit various tastes and differing needs. All the adult courses are embodied in books of considerable size, in most cases cost-

ing one dollar each. The biblical courses provide very thorough study and are adapted to really advanced classes, able to do concentrated and careful work.

Churches with membership among intelligent and educated people ought to have classes in the Sunday-school willing to do work of the seriousness demanded by such courses. It is not to the credit of Christian intelligence that, while classes for the study of languages, philosophies, and literatures flourish, it is difficult to inspire a Sunday-school class to study the Bible seriously. It is encouraging that courses demanding considerable study are offered. Adult classes ought to be ambitious to do the best possible work. For some classes the work here outlined is too advanced. For others, it takes up too much time, if well done; but a large number of classes might do such work. There are also a large number of people, not in classes, who have grown tired of the lessons which Sunday-schools have usually offered, but who would welcome a chance to do some thorough Bible work.

The following courses are now prepared:

THE PROPHETIC ELEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.
President William R. Harper. 142 pages. The principles of prophecy, with a study of its development through the history of Israel down to Amos

and Hosea. Full literary references, careful study of the prophetic elements in the historical books from Genesis to Kings. The course is closely packed with suggestions for work. It can be used to best advantage under a teacher who is familiar with the terms and the principles of modern biblical criticism. The chapters should be divided into convenient lessons, summing up the main points after the study of each chapter. Most classes will find it profitable to divide the suggested work among the members. Only a few members would have time to do all the work individually, but by reports of work done the entire class may get the benefit of each other's study.

THE PRIESTLY ELEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. *President William R. Harper.* 292 pages. The history of worship in the Old Testament; the laws; the priestly element in the Hexateuch, Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, the Psalms; the significance of this element. Of the same general character as the volume mentioned above, but covering more biblical material, and even more completely and comprehensively presented. An admirable study of a section of the Old Testament not often studied. Classes would do well, unless accustomed to advanced work, to precede this book by that on the Prophetic Element.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST. *Burton and Mathews.* The Gospel material is printed with each lesson. Full notes follow, furnishing needed information.

Abundant literary reference is made and opportunity given for written work. This course is perhaps more elementary than some others of the series.

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE. *George Holley Gilbert*. Maps and illustrations. 239 pages. A study of the life of the early Church and of the New Testament, except the Gospels. So arranged as to encourage the study of the Bible text. Questions, supplementary topics for study, and literary references. This course is less condensed than those of President Harper in the Old Testament, and adapted for less advanced classes, but most adult classes will find it as thorough as their time will allow. Some of the twenty-five chapters may be divided into two or more lessons; if so, the questions at the end of the chapter should be divided correspondingly. The topics may be reported on by individuals, or omitted if desired, without affecting the unity of the work. This course is adapted to a class which is willing to work, with some time for study, though not necessarily familiar with modern Bible study.

A series of supplemental and extra-biblical courses is provided, especially adapted to classes which wish to give thorough study to special subjects. The books are clearly written, usually with suggestions for further study.

Special Courses

The following courses are offered:

CHRISTIANITY AND ITS BIBLE. *H. F. Waring*. Twenty-three chapters. "The origin of Old Testament religion and of Christianity, the history of the Christian Church, summary of present day Christianity," with suggestions for further study.

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS. *Ernest D. Burton*. A study of the separate gospels and the synoptic problems. This is a subject with which anyone who undertakes to teach the New Testament should be familiar.

A HANDBOOK ON THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL. *Ernest D. Burton*. An outline of the facts of the life and letters of Paul, adapted to mature students.

SOCIAL DUTIES. *Charles Richmond Henderson*. A careful study of present social problems from a Christian point of view. Country and city problems, labor and capital, family, corporation, civic, and church rights and obligations are discussed. It is not too difficult for classes of ordinary education. This subject, so much discussed at the present time, is here very skilfully and wisely presented.

GREAT MEN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. *Williston Walker*. 378 pages. Twenty brief biographies of the leaders of the Church, including Justin Martyr, Athanasius, Augustine, Hildebrand, Francis, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Loyola, Edwards, Bushnell. Questions and references for additional reading. The biographies are com-

pact and interesting, so chosen as to give a connected view of the great movements of the Church, providing an interesting course for a class wishing a glimpse of Church history. Any class of fairly educated people might take the study with profit. A chapter covers less space than an ordinary magazine article. Supplementary reading might profitably be done by some. The discussion in the class should concern itself with the period, the character, the work of the man, and his relation to the Church and the problems of the present day.

THE OUTLINE COURSES OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

These are designed primarily for correspondence work, but may easily be adapted to class work. The text-books consist largely of directions for the study of biblical passages, with topics for discussion, investigation, and reading. In the hands of a skilful teacher who desires to do somewhat independent work, and yet to have a guide for the study of the class, they are admirable. The courses are as follows:

THE FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHRIST. *William R. Harper.*

THE LIFE OF THE CHRIST. *Ernest D. Burton.*

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. *Ernest D. Burton.*

- THE WORK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SAGES. *William R. Harper.*
- THE WORK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS. *William R. Harper.*
- THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS. *Shailer Mathews.*
- THE UNIVERSAL ELEMENT IN THE PSALTER. *John M. P. Smith.*
- THE BOOK OF JOB, OR THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING. *William R. Harper.*
- FOUR LETTERS OF PAUL. *Ernest D. Burton.*
- THE ORIGIN AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS. *Georgia Louise Chamberlin.*

XI

ADDITIONAL BIBLE STUDY COURSES

IN addition to the courses of study mentioned in the previous chapters, a constantly increasing number of adult biblical courses are being prepared and published. This activity in production is largely the result of the increased interest in the adult class during the years since about 1905.

The Move-
ment for
Special
Adult
Courses

Before that time few adult class courses were published except by certain denominations which have never widely used the International Lesson System. Even before 1900 a few adult classes had tried to obtain independent lessons, but in the main they had been obliged to make their own outlines of study. This could only be done where the class included some members more familiar with biblical study than were most Sunday-school students. The English Bible Courses of the American Institute of Sacred Literature were used by some classes. Certain Diocesan Commissions in the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Friends' First Day School Association, several

of the Lutheran Synods into which the Lutheran Church in America is divided, and the Unitarian Sunday School Association were all working out senior or adult courses of much excellence in connection with general graded courses. Since 1905 other denominations, whose publishing houses were in former years exclusively interested in lesson helps for the International System, have begun to recognize the need of independent courses for the adult section of the Sunday-school.

The increase of independent courses has not been at the expense of the older International System. On the contrary the same period has seen the rise, largely within the field of this system itself, of a very remarkable "adult class movement" and the preparation of adult class helps of much greater abundance and excellence than ever before. Many of the denominational and other publishing houses which supply helps for the International Lessons now publish magazines devoted exclusively to the needs of the adult class. It is doubtful if the field ever becomes so thoroughly covered that the various adult courses will intrude upon each other. At present any course of study which can command the attention of an adult class helps all other courses.

The International Graded Courses, the Constructive Bible Study Courses, and the Young Men's Christian Association Courses offer a wide variety

of subject and method of study for adult classes. In addition the following courses are published:

I. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL COURSES.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS' BIBLE (National Teacher Training Institute Text-books). Griffith and Rowland Press: Philadelphia. Paper, 30 cents; boards, 50 cents. Part I is a general introduction to the Bible; Part II, the great vital doctrines of the Bible. Twenty studies, with topics for discussion and papers. The positions taken are the traditional. Designed for teachers, and somewhat too compact for most classes.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WITH RELATION TO THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY. *Hazard and Fowler*. Pilgrim Press: Boston. 50 cents. A book for advanced classes, presenting a study of the books of the Bible from a modern point of view. The study is prepared for class work, with references, questions, and topics for discussion. Adapted for a class which desires a compact presentation of the Bible as seen by modern scholars.

THE MAKING OF THE BIBLE. *Rev. William Walter Smith*. Sunday School Commission, Diocese of New York. 12 cents. Fifteen lessons on origin, manuscripts, versions of the Bible, with special attention to the English versions. Bibliography and questions condensed but valuable.

GREAT PASSAGES FROM THE BIBLE. *W. Hanson Pulsford*. Unitarian Sunday School Society: Boston. 25 cents. A study of the historical mean-

ing and religious significance of great passages in the Old and New Testament. Prepared from a modern point of view.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR ADULT CLASSES. *Philip A. Nordell.* American Baptist Publication Society: Philadelphia. Three numbers, 20 cents each. No. 1. Old Testament History; No. 2. The Life of Christ; No. 3. The Apostolic Age. Scripture lessons, daily readings, questions for study and for written answers.

THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE; ITS AUTHORSHIP, HISTORY, AND DEVELOPMENT. (Friends' Graded Series.) Walter H. Jenkins: Philadelphia. Four quarterlies, 5 cents each. A simple study of the facts regarding the Bible, which may be used as an introductory course to other biblical study.

BIBLE HISTORY SERIES. (Friends' Graded Series.) Walter H. Jenkins: Philadelphia. Eight quarterlies, 5 cents each. The history of the Hebrews and of the early Church simply and clearly told, with questions and suggestions for study. Can be used by classes of limited time and facilities.

II. BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY.

HOME TRAVEL THROUGH BIBLE LANDS. *J. T. Sunderland.* Unitarian Sunday School Society: Boston. 15 cents. Thirty-eight lessons, making a journey through Palestine, Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, with abundant references to descriptive literature

and a bibliography. An interesting course for a class with some leisure for reading.

BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY. *Charles F. Kent.* Scribners. \$1.50. Twenty-six chapters, with an appendix containing general questions and subjects for special research in connection with each chapter. Part I deals concisely with the physical geography of biblical lands. Part II presents the successive periods of biblical history, beginning with "Early Palestine" and concluding with "The Expansion of Christianity," in the light of the geographical background. Adapted for use by classes desiring to make a thorough study of the historical geography of the Bible.

BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY. *I. F. Wood.* Pilgrim Press: Boston. 5 cents. An outline study comprising twelve lessons, many of which may profitably occupy more than one Sunday. The geography of the different historical periods, giving subjects and bibliography. Adapted to classes which can provide any one of the hand-books suggested.

III. OLD TESTAMENT.

HISTORICAL BIBLE. *Charles F. Kent.* Scribners. 6 vols. \$1.00 per volume. Contains text in a fresh translation, historical and critical notes, and questions for further study and class discussion, prepared from a modern point of view. Adapted to either reading or study classes which wish to get the text of the Bible in its historical setting and chronological order. One or more volumes

may be used, as desired. Classes not specially advanced could use them profitably, but advanced classes would obtain more benefit from them.

- THE EARLY DAYS OF ISRAEL.** *Wood and Hall.* Pilgrim Press: Boston. 60 cents. Forty lessons in three parts, covering the period to the Judges, with a special study of Hebrew law. Directions for study, references and topics for further study, class questions. Adapted for advanced classes who wish to study the biblical books as literature and history and to note the legitimate connections which may be made with modern life.
- THE DAYS OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.** *Wood and Hall.* Pilgrim Press: Boston. 75 cents. Continues the "Early Days of Israel." Covers history and prophecy to the Exile.
- THE MINOR PROPHETS.** *Frederick Carl Eiselen.* Eaton & Mains, New York. \$2.00 net. A sympathetic and scholarly, yet readable commentary on the Minor Prophets, considered by many the best single volume commentary on the subject in the English language. Well suited for use by adult classes desiring to consider seriously the problems involved in Old Testament prophecy.
- PROPHECY AND THE PROPHETS.** *Frederick Carl Eiselen.* Eaton & Mains, New York. \$1.50 net. A book intended to be an aid toward a better appreciation of the prophetic books and prophetic teaching in general. In the publication of this volume the author has had in mind especially adult Bible classes in the Sunday-school.

SAMUEL, SAUL, AND DAVID. *W. J. Mutch.* Ripon, Wis. Privately published. 50 cents. Arranged for the addition of notes, maps, or pictures.

THE PROPHETS AS STATESMEN AND TEACHERS. *Henry T. Fowler.* Pilgrim Press: Boston. 30 cents. A study of the prophets in their historical setting, with references and questions for further study. Adapted for thoughtful classes who desire to gain a knowledge of the prophets from the point of view of modern study.

A STUDY OF THE PROPHETS. (Friends' Graded Series.) *Walter H. Jenkins:* Philadelphia. Four quarterlies, 5 cents each. The prophets from Amos to the Exile, with information about their work and a fresh translation of important passages from their writings. Modern in point of view. The course might be used with equal profit by classes of various grades of advancement.

GREAT THOUGHTS OF ISRAEL. *W. Hanson Pulsford.* Twenty lessons for advanced classes. Unitarian Sunday School Society: Boston. 12 cents. This course studies the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Chronicles, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, and some apocryphal books, dealing with their authorship, meaning, and usefulness, in the light of modern study. Adapted for advanced classes with some knowledge of modern views of the Bible.

FROM THE EXILE TO THE ADVENT. *Rev. William Walter Smith.* The Young Churchman Co., Milwaukee. 20 cents. 15 lessons, many of which may be profitably divided to make a longer course. Con-

densed chapters in history, with references to literature and to biblical and apocryphal books, and questions. An excellent presentation of a subject too little known. May be used without previous advanced study.

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS. *C. M. Grant.* Revell: New York. 75 cents. Deals with a period which adult classes will always find profit in studying. The book may be used in connection with the reading of the later Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, and the apocryphal books.

IV. NEW TESTAMENT.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS CONTENTS. *J. A. McClymont.* Revell: New York. (Guild Text-book.) Paper, 25 cents; boards, 40 cents. A simple outline study of New Testament literature.

NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS. *Richard Morse Hodge.* A. G. Seiler: New York. Covers New Testament Introduction, with recognition of the modern point of view. Adapted for advanced classes.

STUDY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS. *George B. Stewart.* Pilgrim Press: Boston. 40 cents. A year's course prepared for class use, with suggestions for study, questions, and references. A scholarly course adapted for classes of average leisure.

A REASONABLE WAY TO STUDY THE BIBLE. The Acts of the Apostles and Epistles. *Isabella T. Redfield,* Pittsfield, Mass. Privately published. 50 cents. A book composed entirely of suggestions for study

and questions. It has the advantage of being based almost solely upon the biblical text, making it possible to use it with classes where reference facilities are meager.

THE LIFE AND WORK OF PAUL. *Augustus T. Murray.* (Friends' Graded Series.) Walter H. Jenkins: Philadelphia. The story of Paul and his letters, clearly written, with questions and topics for class use. An excellent course for a general survey of Paul's work.

EPISTLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. The Young Churchman Co. of Milwaukee. Two parts, 10 cents each. Teachers' Notes, two parts, 25 cents each. Summaries of origin, purpose, and content of the Epistles, with questions and maps. A clear and simple presentation.

XII

BIBLE READING COURSES

THE chapters in the first part of this book have mentioned Bible reading classes. By that term is meant classes which do not try to study, in any formal way, but to read the Bible. It was said that a large proportion of our adult classes are really reading classes, although they nominally rank as classes for study. Many Sunday-schools would find it profitable to organize reading classes, which should not pretend to engage in any study, but should purpose to read the Bible and to discuss in the class what they had read. Such classes have a distinct place in the Sunday-school economy. Many who do not care for study might be attracted by the proposition to read the Bible.

There is danger that, amid the multiplicity of other reading, Bible reading will become almost a lost art. The danger is the greater because there is a widespread idea, current even among Christian people, that the Bible is not interesting. Few people

**The Inter-
est of Bible
Reading**

state it so frankly as that, but the idea is there nevertheless. There is a certain amount of truth in it. It is quite true that the Bible is hardly interesting reading matter to those whose tastes are formed by the "best sellers" and the Sunday papers. It is also true that, for many Christian people, a general, even if somewhat superficial, familiarity has taken the edge of novelty off the interest of Bible reading. The same thing is true of Dickens or Scott or Tennyson, but the same interest which sends one to reread *Oliver Twist* or *Ivanhoe* or *The Idylls of the King* might well be appealed to in favor of rereading Genesis or Samuel or Job. The Bible is interesting reading to thoughtful readers. It is not uniform in its interest. Some parts are much more interesting than others. There are good reasons why they should be. The Bible is a literature, not a single book, and it differs within itself as widely as any other literature. People have distinct tastes in literature. Some care nothing for poetry, and others find no pleasure in biography. To most people, however, almost any literature has a certain measure of attraction, dependent not so much upon its kind as upon the interest in its content. The content of all kinds of literature in the Bible is religious. For the religious person, interest in Bible reading is largely measured, not so much by the question of whether

it is poetry or biography, narration or oration, as by the question of how close the religious experience which it narrates comes to his own life.

This gives us the key to the work of the reading class. Its chief purpose is to interpret the religious experience which is expressed in the book read. That does not mean that the literary or historical values are to be ignored, but it means that these, while having their own interest, are secondary and subordinate to the religious values. In fact, the literary values can be realized only through the religious values, as the intellectual significance of a great picture can only be seen through its artistic significance.

Sunday-school publishers have never recognized the reading class. Nearly all the helps published have in mind classes which are designed for study, albeit the amount of study required has sometimes been very small.

But merely to avoid study is not to read. Reading and study are two quite different things. Reading courses should be as carefully planned as study courses. They do not need as much in the way of helps, but they imperatively need certain aids. Often the wise pastor, if he has a well-furnished library, can give all the assistance necessary. Sometimes the purchase of one or two books by the class or the teacher will be all

Prerequi-
sites of a
Reading
Course

that is needed to put the reading class in possession of the desired knowledge. In any case, however, the class should lay out a definite course of Bible reading. It may be very simple and may adjust itself to change as the course proceeds, but it should have some objective point, clearly seen and well considered, some definite, recognized purpose, toward which it proceeds in an orderly way. In all cases, as suggested on page 53, some knowledge of the biblical books read should be gained by the class. Such knowledge should include the date, purpose, and, when known, the historical background of the books, with some consideration of the literary qualities, divisions of the books, and any special subjects which are of interest. One may sum up this requirement of knowledge thus: those things must be known which will make it possible to understand what the author meant by the book. In most cases this requirement is neither complex nor abstruse.

A great variety of reading courses may be arranged. The whole field of biblical literature lies open to such a class. There is no need of great scholarship or even much education to plan a profitable course of Bible reading. Since, however, such courses are not familiar to most classes, a few courses may be outlined. These courses may be

Courses for
Bible
Reading

regarded as examples suggesting what may be done in other parts of the Bible.

I. OLD TESTAMENT COURSES.

1. STORIES OF THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD IN ISRAEL; JUDGES AND SAMUEL. Strong, vigorous pictures of an early civilization and the struggle from a tribal into a national life, with strongly drawn character sketches. Judges 17-21 and II Sam. 22-24 may be omitted, being appendices to the books. Notice how the purpose of Judges is shown in the preface (2: 10-21); the author wishes to show how the nation suffered when it forsook Jehovah, and was prosperous when it followed him. Samuel is a study in a kindred subject: sin brings suffering. Observe how the author brings out that lesson in his stories of Saul and of David and how he applies his lesson both to the nation and to individuals. Do not, however, in seeking the religious values, miss the splendid story-telling of these books.
2. THE HISTORY OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS IN KINGS, with Chronicles used only for comparison. Notice the formulas continually recurring in beginning and closing the accounts of the kings, the rapidly varying fortunes of the kingdoms, the little vignettes of character and national life which often occur, the author's purpose through it all, as in Judges, to measure prosperity and adversity by obedience to the laws of God. Note the different kind of literature in the stories of Elijah

and Elisha, which read like popular tales in the midst of history.

3. **THE TRADITIONS OF THE NATION. GENESIS, EXODUS I-XX.** These books also contain much splendid story-telling. Read them as the stories that came down to the Hebrew race out of the olden time, not puzzling over the problems of history which they present. Read them rather as you would stories from Homer, if Homer were retold with a strongly religious purpose. Notice how all these stories of old time have been made to teach a lesson, and how often that lesson is: sin brings suffering. Do not fail to appreciate the fine character drawing in the tales of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses. Did the author mean to hold them up as models to his readers?
4. **THE WISDOM BOOKS; PROVERBS, JOB, ECCLESIASTES.** These may all be read in one course, comparing the purpose and the style of the different books. More valuable for many classes would be the reading of each book separately, in a short course. The keen observation of life and human nature, the clear statement of a common-sense ethics, often the sharp wit of these books, makes them particularly attractive to the modern age. Job and Ecclesiastes especially need some accompanying information as to the purpose and problems of the books, and all will be read with keener enjoyment if the class can bring to them some literary appreciation. Few biblical

books offer richer rewards for intelligent reading than do these books.

5. **THE PROPHETS.** These present a great variety of profitable courses. Classes with patience for a long course may well read them all, arranged in a chronological order. Their variety is so great that such a course would not suffer from monotony. Most classes will wish to take groups or single books. The following are natural group-divisions: (A) The early prophets: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah (Chs. 1-30 only), Micah. (B) The prophets of the later kingdom: Jeremiah, with Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk. (C) The prophets of the Exile: Ezekiel, Isaiah 40-66. (D) The prophets after the Exile: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel. In all cases the reading should be accompanied by some information as to the historical situation of the prophet, his main purpose, and the peculiarities of the book. Most prophetic books are rather collections of fragments than logically arranged literature. The interest lies in their great vigor and power of expression, and in their uncompromising statement of religious and moral principles. The books must not be read or judged as polished literature, but as stray leaves of the words of earnest reformers, often wonderfully eloquent, strong hammer-strokes at great evils. Read in this way they are very fascinating.
6. **THE BIBLICAL SHORT STORIES; RUTH, ESTHER, AND JONAH.** A group of tales, each excellent of its kind, and each different from the others. To

read them as a group and note comparisons and contrasts is most interesting. The class should be encouraged to discuss them with perfect freedom as pieces of literature.

7. **THE APOCRYPHA.** Most Protestant Christians would find the Apocrypha new ground. Much of it is very valuable both as literature and as religious teaching. The best material for class reading falls into two groups: (1) Wisdom: Ecclesiasticus and The Wisdom of Solomon, (2) History: Esdras, I and II Maccabees. The Maccabees present the most heroic age of Hebrew history, an age which possesses an interest and value equal to any whose story is told in the biblical books.

II. NEW TESTAMENT COURSES.

1. **THE LIFE OF CHRIST,** as outlined in a Harmony, such as Stevens and Burton's.
2. **Any of the SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.** The Gospel may be read alone, but it will be found more profitable to compare the parallel material in other Synoptics. In any case the study should be preceded by some knowledge of the relation of the Synoptic Gospels to each other. The following minimum of knowledge should be familiar: Mark is one of the sources of Matthew and Luke. The last two also had other sources in common besides Mark (compare, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, which is not in Mark), as well as separate sources. Even so little knowledge as this will often throw

great light on the Gospel narratives, but an intelligent reading class will seek in Bible dictionaries and elsewhere for further knowledge.

3. **THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.** This stands so independent of the Synoptics that only at certain points, as in Chs. 6, 13, 18-20, is it necessary to read them in connection with the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel of John may be read, not so much for a knowledge of the life of Jesus, as for the interpretation of the mission and character of Jesus which it gives. Notice the growth of the disciples' faith; of the Jews' enmity; the relation of Christ to God; the purpose of his mission in the world; his love for his disciples. Read the Gospel in the light of the author's statement of his purpose (20:31). After the Gospel read I John, as another expression of the author's idea of the mission of Christ and the duties and privileges of the Christian life.
4. **THE BOOK OF ACTS,** as an expression of two things: (1) The geographical expansion of Christianity (see 1:8), (2) The growth of the Church as planned by God and not by man (note how often in the book man's plans are supplemented or changed by providential guidance). Raise the question of whether God still guides the Church in its parish and mission work, and the Christian in his personal service of God and man.
5. **ACTS AND THE PAULINE EPISTLES.** This may be done with only the Bible, or with the help of some Life of Paul. A good aid is Burton's *Records and Letters of the Apostolic Age*, which covers all

the New Testament except the Gospels. Such a reading might aim to give a general knowledge of Paul's life and of the characteristics and difficulties of the early churches. The point of practical comparison will be between Paul's religious life and ours, and between the religious life of the churches to which his letters were written and that of today. Of course no close study of the system of Paul's theology will be made in such a general course.

6. **SPECIAL LETTERS OF PAUL.** A short course of reading may be taken with any one of the Pauline letters, prefaced with brief statements of the place of the letter in Paul's life, its occasion and general content, and the characteristics of the church addressed. A better plan would be to group the letters: as Galatians and Romans; the Corinthian letters; the letters of the imprisonment (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philipians). Classes using such courses may well try to gain a more full knowledge of Paul's thought than in course 5; but here also the chief aim should be the interpretation of the religious experience and life of Paul and of the churches to which he wrote. Paul may have been great as a theologian, but he was greater as a religious man. No class can come under the spell of this spirit without breathing in a desire for a more fully devoted religious life.

OUTLINE BIBLE CLASS COURSES. 5 cents each. Pilgrim Press: Boston. These consist of

small pamphlets with bibliography and suggestions for reading. The biblical material is divided into convenient sections, with brief notes and questions to bring out the most important points of the section.

NEW TESTAMENT COURSES:

- "The Life of Christ in the Four Gospels." *Wood.*
- "The Book of Acts." *Wriston.*
- "The Life of Paul." *Hall.*
- "The Epistles of Paul." *Wood.*

OLD TESTAMENT COURSES:

- "Joshua and Judges." *Wood.*
- "The Book of First Samuel." *Wriston.*
- "The Prophets of Israel." *Noyes.*
- "Hebrew Laws." *Wood.*
- "The Wisdom Literature." *Wood.*
- "The Old Testament Apocrypha." *Wood.*
- "The Apocalyptic Literature" (Daniel and Revelation, with Mark 13 and II Thes. 2: 1-12). *Wood.*

The following editions of the Bible are of interest to the reading class:

- "The Modern Readers' Bible." *Moulton.* Text of the English Revised Version, arranged in paragraphs to show literary structure.
- "The Historical Bible." *Kent.* Small volumes giving the text in a fresh translation, with notes, introductions, and historical explanations. Specially

valuable for its chronological arrangement of the biblical books.

“The Students’ Old Testament.” *Kent*. Larger volumes than the “Historical Bible,” with more scholastic and critical notes. For those able to do thorough biblical study.

XIII

EXTRA-BIBLICAL COURSES

IN one respect extra-biblical courses of religious instruction are older than the Sunday-school itself. The teaching of catechisms far antedates the founding of Sunday-schools, or even the use of the Bible in formal religious teaching. Sunday-schools in the Episcopal, Catholic, and Lutheran churches, and to a less extent in Presbyterian, Methodist, and some other churches, have always kept a certain amount of extra-biblical teaching. It has, however, usually been confined to memorizing catechetical questions and answers with some explanation of their meaning, and has been arranged for the early adolescent age and designed as part of the preparation for confirmation in churches which use that ceremony.

The courses noted in this chapter are intended for a totally different purpose than that of teaching in condensed form the doctrines of the church. During the last few years various courses of extra-biblical study for adult classes have appeared. More are likely to follow, as the demand for

greater variety of adult class work grows. No energetic class, however, needs to wait the pleasure of editors and publishers. A class may make its own course. All that is needed is the guidance of someone measurably familiar with the field chosen for study, or even the possession of a book, not necessarily designed for class use, which will form the basis for further class reading and discussion. The class can often form a course better adapted to its particular needs than any which would be prepared for general use. In this time of transition in Sunday-school subjects and methods, adult classes should be encouraged to choose their own subjects of study and plan their own courses. The pastor may well regard it as a most profitable part of his labor to assist in such plans. Often, however, the subject which a class of thoughtful men or women wish to study will be most familiar, not to the pastor, but to some business or professional man in the town. This is particularly true of those civic and social subjects which adult classes ought to study much more than they do at present, in order that their members may be efficient Christians, politically and socially.

I. COURSES IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY.

RELIGIONS BEFORE CHRISTIANITY. *C. C. Everett.*
Unitarian Sunday School Society: Boston.

Paper, 15 cents; boards, 20 cents. A brief description of Comparative Religion by a master, prepared for class use, with questions and bibliography. Treats briefly of the earliest religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, the religions of the Parsees, the Chinese, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and Romans, and the comparison of these religions with each other and with Christianity. A good course.

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. *G. M. Grant.* (Guild Textbooks.) Revell: New York. 40 cents. Deals with only four of the great religions — Moham-medanism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Bud-dhism — and compares each with Christianity.

THE EARLY CHURCH, ITS HISTORY AND LITERATURE. *James Orr.* (Christian Study Manuals.) Arm-strong: New York. 60 cents. A brief book, with topics and references.

CHURCH HISTORY HANDBOOKS. *Henry C. Vedder.* Baptist Publication Society: Philadelphia. 40 cents per volume. Vol. I. The Early Period. Vol. II. The Period of the Reformation. Vol. III. Baptist History. Compact manuals with bibliog-raphy and questions on each chapter. Volumes I and II may profitably be used by classes in any denomination. Their clearness makes them specially adapted for classes desiring a simple presentation of church history.

LANDMARKS OF CHURCH HISTORY. *Henry Cowan.* (Guild Textbooks.) Revell: New York. Paper, 25 cents; boards, 40 cents. The book covers

the history of the Church to the Reformation. Adapted for advanced classes.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. *Rev. George R. Van de Water*. Young Churchman Co., New York. Two parts, 15 cents each. Part I, General History; Part II, The Church in England. Very brief chapters, with questions. Prepared from the Episcopal point of view.

OUTLINE BIBLE-CLASS COURSES. Pilgrim Press: Boston. 5 cents each.

"Church History." *I. F. Wood*. "The Church in the Reformation." *N. M. Hall*. "The History of Missions." *I. F. Wood*. "The History of the Bible Versions." *I. F. Wood*.

A set of pamphlets, with bibliographies and brief suggestions for their use. Each lesson suggests a series of the most important topics to be considered. The courses are designed for classes so situated that they have access to a small amount of literature and can use these pamphlets to outline their reading and class discussion. The course on the History of Missions is general and designed to be introductory to the study of the missions in which the class itself is interested.

II. MISSION COURSES.

The various denominational Mission Boards can supply any class with programs and textbooks for the study of the missions in which the church is interested. The following are from interdenominational series of mission study:

The Student Volunteer Movement (125 E. 27th St., New York) publish a long list of TEXT-BOOKS OF MISSION STUDY, covering the general subject, methods and needs, and India, China, Japan, Islam, South America, missionary biographies, religions of mission fields. The books are designed for college student classes, but might often be used with profit by adult Sunday-school classes. The detailed list, which is enlarged yearly, may be had from the Student Volunteer Movement. 25 cents or 30 cents each.

THE FORWARD MISSION STUDY COURSES. Prepared for the Young Peoples' Missionary Movement and published by various denominational publishing houses. Books designed for young peoples' study, attractively written, with questions, suggestions for further reading, and illustrations. The books would be of special value to classes desiring a somewhat popular treatment of the subject. The course offers books of mission biography, general history, and missions in Japan, Africa, and Home Missions. 35 cents and 50 cents.

HANDBOOKS FOR THE UNITED STUDY OF MISSIONS. Prepared by the Central Committee on the United Study of Missions. Macmillan: New York. Used largely by Women's Missionary Societies, but not less useful to Sunday-school classes. Adapted to classes who wish something more advanced than the Forward Mission Study Courses. Carefully prepared text-books, with topics for further study,

and illustrations, but without questions on the chapters. Series one includes books on the Beginnings of Missions, India, China, Japan, Africa, The Island World of the Pacific, Missions and Social Progress. Series two has at present THE NEARER AND FARTHER EAST (Moslem lands, Siam, Burma, and Korea), THE GOSPEL IN LATIN LANDS. Others will be added. Paper, 30 cents; cloth, 50 cents.

III. DENOMINATIONAL COURSES.

A study which every adult class of long standing ought to take up at some time in its career is the history of its own denomination.

Importance
of the
Study of
Denomina-
tional His-
tory

This should not be done in the spirit of denominational boastfulness, nor of "apology" or "defense." It should be a calm study of facts, with frank acknowledgments of any mistakes and defects in the past. Few denominations exist which have not some dark pages in their history. Usually the reasons for former mistakes are now perfectly obvious, and the subject may be studied not in the spirit of captious criticism, but as a warning for the future. The same feeling which leads people at present to take a larger interest in the history of their families may well be invoked in behalf of the religious family to which they belong. A frank, candid study of the history of their own denomination can hardly fail

to make them more generous and sympathetic toward other denominations. So interlocked is all the history of the modern Church that any influence which has affected one has affected others. Denominations differ very much in material adapted for their use. Congregationalists, for example, have little. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians have somewhat more.

Generally the pastor can help a class to whatever literature is available, but, as that literature

A General Outline is seldom designed for class use, a plan must be worked out. The following

outline can usually be adapted to special needs:

- (1) The beginning of the denomination; early great characters; occasion for separation from other churches; points of contact with earlier churches;
- (2) periods of growth, characteristics of each;
- (3) what the denomination has stood for;
- (4) its contributions to American life and religion;
- (5) its organization;
- (6) the history of its missions, educational movements, relation to civic and social reform movements;
- (7) its theology and theological growth;
- (8) its present size compared with other Christian bodies;
- (9) its recent growth, the elements which develop or retard its growth; strength and weakness of its present position in the country;
- (10) present trend in its theology and organization; relation to other denominations; prospects of unity with

any; (11) present extent, places, prospects, and home support of missions; (12) the duty of the individual to the denomination; (13) what can reasonably be expected of the denomination in the future; what changes are needed for its improvement and what historic elements ought to be strengthened to fit it for the best service in the advancing kingdom of God. The course might well close with one or two lessons on the history and present needs and problems of the individual church with which the class is connected.

IV. COURSES ON DOCTRINE.

There is a deep interest among the most intelligent people in the history and present condition of Christian thought. Theology is not popular, but we are, in fact, more interested in theology than we think we are. One great reason for this interest is the widespread idea, which is quite correct, that theological thought is at present undergoing profound changes. In this age of progress anything which is changing commands interest. It is recognized as being not dead, but living and dynamic. Christian people do not quite know what the trend of change in theology is. They are sometimes suspicious of theological changes; more often they would welcome them, if they felt sure they knew what the changes were;

but usually they are at least interested in the subject. There is no place in the church or out of it more fitting and profitable for a study of the past and present religious thinking than the adult class. The subject divides into two parts:

1. THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE.

It ought always to be remembered that on many subjects the Bible teaching is not a unity. On the great subjects, like the power and love of God, man's need of divine help, the revelation of God through prophets and finally through Christ — "those things needful for salvation" — the Bible speaks with a single voice, but on many subjects about which the Christian Church has wrangled, the writers of the Bible are either not clear or not in seeming harmony. On these subjects one speaks not of the teaching of the Bible, but of the teaching of Paul, of John, of the synoptic writers.

A simple series of great value, with emphasis on the ethical side of biblical teaching, is the Bible Study Union Courses on Old Testament Teachings, Foundation Truths, Gospel Teachings, and Christian Doctrines and Duties (see page 88).

THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. *James Iverach.* (Bible Class Primers.) T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh. 20 cents. The rise of Christianity and its distinguishing features.

PROTESTANT PRINCIPLES. *J. Munro Gibson.* (Chris-

tian Study Manuals.) Armstrong: New York. 60 cents. A manual of Protestant beliefs arranged for class use.

2. HISTORIC BELIEFS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

A good study of the growth of belief may be made by classes of the more advanced sort through the great creeds of the Church, taken in chronological order; the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Augsburg Confession, the Creed of the Council of Trent, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Catechism and Confession, the Arminian Creed, and any other creeds belonging to the denomination which the class represents. Copies of these creeds may be obtained from the various denominational publishing houses. The class should aim to find out what the creeds meant when they were written; what were the controversies out of which they arose; what views they were intended to emphasize; how they have been used by the churches, and how strictly they are to be construed at present. This last brings up the interesting question of the relation of historic creeds to living Christianity; whether a creed is a report of progress in Christian thought or the permanent statement of an abiding truth. Some classes would be interested to read with their study selections from Athanasius, Augustine,

Anselm (*Cur Deus Homo*), Luther, Calvin, Edwards, and some books of the present day. Most literary clubs could easily find time for an equivalent amount of reading. We ought to expect as much of the adult class as we do of the ordinary literary club.

IV. COURSES ON CIVIC AND SOCIAL CHRISTIAN DUTIES.

This subject ought to be the crown of all adult class work. How to apply religion to practical life is, for the adult class, vocational teaching. It is our business to be efficient in the kingdom of God; and there is no better place to discuss the subjects which pertain to this efficiency than in the adult class. The present interest in social religion will without doubt produce many more courses than can at present be listed.

A field of social study just beginning to attract attention is "The Parents' Department." The church has done little to help parents meet the problems of moral and religious training. The best place to provide such help is in parents' classes in the Sunday-schools. Courses may be arranged on the basis of some of the best books of child-study, or of informal and practical discussion of the phases of religious and moral training in the modern home. Plans for such courses are outlined in a small pamphlet, *The*

Home and the Sunday School, by Edward P. St. John (Pilgrim Press: Boston). An excellent course prepared by Professor St. John appears in the Sunday-school magazines of the Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, and Southern Methodist denominations for 1911, and will probably be published later in permanent form.

SOCIAL SERVICE SERIES. American Baptist Publication Society: Philadelphia. 10 cents and 15 cents. The topics to be treated include The Church and the Family; The Church and the Community; The Church and Wealth and Industry; The Church and Politics; The Church and Social Waste. A series of pamphlets by authorities in social study, 30 to 50 pages, each complete in itself and dealing with a special phase of the social question, but without questions or other devices for class use. The series is edited by Prof. Shailer Mathews. These pamphlets are admirable presentations of the present social situation. They may be used in any order, and as much time given to each publication as the subject demands. It will be most profitable if the class studies the various subjects in the light of local conditions, using their own church and town as a touchstone for the facts and ideas put forward in the pamphlets. There have been published:

JESUS CHRIST AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION. *Francis G.*

Peabody. Macmillan: New York. \$1.50. A careful and comprehensive study of social problems in the light of Jesus' teaching. One of the best books on the subject.

THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF JESUS. *Shailer Mathews*. Macmillan: New York. \$1.50. A clear, simple, and scholarly study of the social elements of Jesus' teaching in the light of the modern situation. An excellent book.

A REASONABLE SOCIAL POLICY FOR CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. *Charles R. Henderson*.

ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE. *James Quayle Dealey*.

A WORKING TEMPERANCE PROGRAM. *Samuel Zane Batten*.

THE CHURCH AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT. *Charles Stelzle*.

THE CITY: AS IT IS AND AS IT IS TO BE. *Clinton Rogers Woodruff*.

THE CHURCHES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. *George W. Coleman*.

THE HOME AS THE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL LIVING. *H. F. Cope*.

Other numbers are in preparation.

I. CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. II. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT. *T. B. Kilpatrick*. (Bible Class Primers.) T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh. 20 cents each. Two small books showing how Christian ethics grew out of the teachings of Jesus, how it applied in the early Church and how it applies today.

THE GOSPEL AT WORK IN MODERN LIFE. *Robert*

Whitaker. The Griffith and Rowland Press: Philadelphia. 50 cents. A book of twelve lessons prepared for the Sacred Literature Course in Baptist Young Peoples' Societies. It discusses the modern Christian's problems, the relation of the Gospel to the home, the church, social betterment, business, and recreations. Each chapter is followed by questions and topics for further study. The book is interestingly written in an easy style, and could be well used in classes desiring a course not too advanced.

THE CITIZEN AND THE NEIGHBOR. *Rev. Charles F. Dole.* Unitarian Sunday School Society: Boston. Paper, 20 cents; boards, 25 cents. The topics considered are Government: its Purpose and its Abuses, the Good Citizen, Wealth, Crime, War, Arbitration, etc. Questions for class use are appended. A good presentation of general civic rights and duties. A class might well use it as a basis for a study of the meaning and obligations of citizenship.

STUDIES IN LOCAL PHILANTHROPY. THE RACE PROBLEM. LESSONS ON PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS — THE LAND, TRANSPORTATION, GOVERNMENT QUESTIONS. (Friends' Graded Series.) Walter H. Jenkins: Philadelphia. 5 cents each. Outlines prepared for adult classes, with questions and suggested readings. Clear statements of fact in social and economic conditions.

OUTLINE BIBLE CLASS COURSES. Pilgrim Press: Boston. 5 cents each.

THE PROBLEMS OF A TWENTIETH CENTURY CITY.

Outlines of a course in Philanthropy. *H. M. Burr.*
 A STUDY OF THE CITY. *N. M. Hall.* Small pamphlets with outlines of lessons, suggestions for study, and unusually extensive and valuable bibliographies. The outline of study will apply to any city or large town. Most excellent for any town class, whether advanced or elementary, which wishes to make a good study of its own social environment. A class composed largely of men ought to be formed once in every five years in every progressive church to study this subject.

UNITARIAN SOCIAL SERIES. American Unitarian Association: Boston. A set of pamphlets and text-books (the text-books 25 cents each), covering such subjects as child labor, immigration, the negro problem, the labor problem, the liquor problem, poverty, concentrated wealth. A series of compact studies by specialists.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM. Edited by Josiah Strong. The American Institute of Social Service Bible House, Astor Place, New York. 5 cents a number, 50 cents a year. "A course of study for men and women on living social problems in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Each number is devoted to a distinct topic and contains four or five lessons which include a Scripture basis, facts, subjects for study and discussion. The subjects include child labor, women in industry, wealth, organization of labor, civic corruption, public utilities, socialism, immigration, prison re-

form, intemperance, the race question, and other subjects. Compact and judicious statements of the actual conditions are given. The class may choose from the list of subjects those in which it is specially interested, and so arrange a course of such content and length as may seem best. The "biblical basis" makes the study suitable for classes which wish to keep their work connected with the Bible. A good course with which to begin social study.

V. BIOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE OUTSIDE OF SPECIFIC CHURCH CIRCLES.

This broad field is properly open to the class under certain restrictions (see chapter V). Very few such courses for Sunday-schools have been published, but Chautauqua and reading club courses may be adapted, provided only that the religious values of the subjects chosen be kept in the foreground. The following unpublished course by Rev. Newton M. Hall, D.D., is an excellent example of how literature may be used to serve a religious purpose:

THE RELIGIOUS POETRY OF WHITTIER

1. EARLY TRAINING. Quaker parentage. Country environment. Early religious influences. Hardships and self-denial. Limited school privilege. Few books, mostly of a religious nature. Influence of visitors at homestead. Early attempts at literature. Brief time

spent at Haverhill Academy. (See "Snow Bound," "The Barefoot Boy," for biographical details.)

2. DEVELOPMENT OF MANHOOD. Editorial and literary work. Patriotism. Desire for political life. Early absorption in anti-slavery movement. The active campaign against slavery. High moral motive. Literary activity of middle life. Serene and gracious old age.

3. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS. Retiring disposition yet genial nature. Love of intimate friends. Love of books. Love of nature. Strong religious nature. Liberal views. Intense moral indignation against wrong. Well-balanced nature. Devout and blameless private life.

RELIGIOUS POEMS. The religious spirit breathes through all Whittier's poetry. Even in his treatment of the most secular themes it appears. The close of "Snow Bound" with the beautiful thoughts upon immortality is an illustration. We may, however, group the distinctly religious and moral poems as follows:

1. *Poems upon Slavery.* This division may profitably be prefaced by a discussion of the moral intensity of the anti-slavery movement. The utterances of the great leaders had a prophetic quality. The following are the most significant poems of the group: "The Slave Ships"; "Expostulation"; "Stanzas for the Times"; "A Summons"; "Pennsylvania Hall"; "The New Year"; "The World's Convention"; "Massachusetts to Virginia"; "New Hampshire"; "Song of Slaves in the Desert"; "Moloch in State Street"; "The Panorama"; "The Watchers."

2. *Poems of Labor.* While not definitely enlisted in any sociological movement, Whittier after the war became deeply interested in the development of democracy toward the betterment of social conditions. The poems along this line are "Democracy"; "The Gallows"; "Songs of Labor"; "The Prisoner for Debt"; "The Poor Voter on Election Day"; "The Eve of Election"; "After Election"; "Disarmament."

3. *Distinctly Religious Poems.*

(1) Poems descriptive of the Holy Land: "The Star of Bethlehem"; "The Cities of the Plain"; "The Call of the Christian"; "The Crucifixion"; "Palestine"; "Ezekiel"; "The Wife of Manoah to her Husband"; "The Holy Land."

(2) Poems of the Spiritual Life: "My Soul and I"; "Questions of Life"; "First Day Thoughts"; "Trinitas"; "The Over Heart"; "The Shadow and the Light"; "Andrew Rykman's Prayer"; "The Eternal Goodness"; "Our Master"; "The Meeting"; "The Prayer Seeker"; "The Prayer of Agassiz"; "In Quest"; "The Friend's Burial"; "The Healer"; "The Vision of Echard"; "At Last"; "The Mystic's Christmas"; "The Light that is Felt"; "Adjustment."

4. *Characteristics of Religious Poetry.* Simplicity of faith; devout spirit; the present Christ; breadth of thought; freedom from conventionality; appeal to the common religious consciousness; the religion of the heart; absolute reliance upon God; lack of definite theological system; strong belief in immortality.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPIC STUDY. "Whittier and the Quakers." "Whittier and the Anti-Slavery Move-

ment." The Effect of Whittier's Environment upon his Development." "The Place of Moral Ideas in Poetry." "Whittier's Theology." "Whittier's Idea of Christ." "Whittier's Service to Humanity."

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Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



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