

temptation. To the same Book He appealed when asked which was the greatest commandment in the law; whilst the second, which is like unto it, is taken from the Book of Leviticus. These are the two Books which Professor Smith has sought to eliminate from the Law of Moses. Whether he has succeeded or not, readers may now decide for themselves. The least they can conclude is that his charges against the Pentateuch are *not proven*; but when they carefully consider the defects in his Hebrew scholarship and critical acumen which have been pointed out—not to speak of graver matters—they will not wonder that he should be deemed unfit for the Professorial Chair at Aberdeen.

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ART. VI.—BIBLE CLASSES FOR THE EDUCATED.

IT has been said, with some truth, that the worst instructed people in matters of religion are those which are commonly called “the educated classes.” This fact is sometimes painfully forced upon the mind of the Pastor, when he finds persons of good position more ignorant of facts and doctrines of Scripture than many a child in the first class in his Sunday School.

The reason of this is not far to seek, for if we look at the present system of upper class education we see that there is scarcely any place left in it for Scriptural Teaching. An hour or two on Sunday, and first school on Monday, is a very ordinary public school allowance of “Divinity;” and at the University, unless a man seeks it for himself, the opportunity is even less frequent.

Our young ladies are somewhat better off than their brothers, for, from having less pressure for examinations, there is apt to be more time given in ladies’ schools to the study of the Word of God, and not infrequently a visit from the clergyman gives a little impetus to the study. Often, however, the teaching of this most important subject is placed in the hands of some well-meaning governess, who has herself had but few opportunities, and who sees, indeed, that the morning chapter is read, but makes no effort to render it either interesting or instructive.

But the time which immediately succeeds school or college life, the time which is peculiarly beset with temptations both to faith and practice, is, as a rule, singularly devoid of helps to Bible study; and the result is, that the mind, uninstructed in

truth, falls an easy prey to error, either on the side of Scepticism or Superstition.

Nor is this all: in the absence of any incentive to Bible reading, a very great number of the children of even religious parents give up the reading of the Scriptures altogether. Those who are in the habit of questioning their Confirmation candidates on the subject, will be able to bear witness in how many cases it transpires that the only time the Bible is read is on Sundays, and then, very often, only "*in church!*"

And yet there is unfortunately no lack of readiness to argue on the most solemn and weighty doctrines on the part of these very young people who know so little about them; and the argument is apt to be bitter in proportion to the weakness of its premises. Many will remember the story of Dr. Marsh at a clerical meeting, where he listened to a most vigorous dispute as to the meaning of a passage, and after some time he requested the disputants to refer to the passage itself, and when this was done it transpired that the words which were the *casus belli* did not even exist!

It may then surely be established that there is a great need of enabling the young people of both sexes to obtain help and encouragement in the intelligent study of the Word of God.

And how is this need to be met? Surely one great means of meeting it is the establishment of Bible classes for young men or young ladies, as the case may be, in which they may really be not only taught the truths of God's Word, but also (which is even more important) be led to study that Word for themselves.

But, it may be said, considering the vast amount of parochial work which a clergyman has to carry on, how is it possible for him to undertake this kind of thing? To which the answer may be made, that it is by no means necessary that such classes be taken by the clergy; indeed, here seems to be a field most particularly open for the efforts of Christian laymen and Christian women.

A class of young ladies is, as a rule, far better in a lady's hands. She will know better how to awaken the interest and meet the needs of her class, than it is possible for a clergyman to do; and, moreover, there are points of great practical interest and importance, which can only be rightly and usefully treated if the teacher and the members are of the same sex. Then, too, where it is practicable, an educated, consistent layman has often more weight with young men than a clergyman, for there is nothing professional about the work, and the class is apt to be both more social and more sociable.

Whoever undertakes such a work, and it cannot be but that there are many admirably fitted for it, if only they would come

forward, must bear in mind that there are certain requisites for the undertaking; without which it will utterly fail.

They must be learners at the feet of Jesus. Such work is not done without earnest and prayerful study, and those only will really *teach* who are content to be constant *learners*; and their learning must be a prayerful learning, for the work that is not watered by prayer will not produce fruit for praise.

They must make up their minds to teach. This, it may be said, is self-evident; but it is not so. Many persons can get through an hour, and even interest their hearers for an hour, without having really taught anything. The point to be aimed at is the giving some new light, some fresh help on the subject before the class, and no one has really taught, who has simply made some nice remarks, or given some helpful thoughts on a passage of Scripture. The persons of whom we are speaking are "educated," and they need the same kind of mental food in spiritual things as they get in things secular.

Teachers must endeavour to draw out their class, and encourage every individual member to work. If a Bible Class is to be a successful one it will call out the energies of all who belong to it; it will not be a mere lecture given, but will in some way or other demand mental effort from each. Of course, it is much easier to give a consecutive address or explanation than it is to elicit response and work; but on the other hand the object of promoting and helping Scripture—study is not gained without this being obtained.

Another very important point is to endeavour to treat all the members of such a class as friends; much more is done by mutual confidence than we suppose at first sight; and what an immense help it is to young people of either sex to have some friend to whom they can go for advice, and with whom they are so fully at home that they can speak out plainly! When the temptations and hindrances are considered, is it not almost worth anything to secure the friendship of those who, from the mere fact of attending the class, feel a certain amount of reverence and trust towards the person who takes it?

This friendship is a point which cannot be too strongly insisted upon, for very often many a life might have been saved from terrible fall if there had been anyone to go to for a word of advice, or possibly a chance of help. A clergyman is not always available; and if he were, there is something in his professional position that would probably keep some from consulting him; but the man or woman, who, from being known at the Bible Class, has become, unconsciously perhaps, a friend, may be sought without difficulty and may be trusted without fear. And even when beset by difficulties of a less grave nature, when some little perplexity arises of faith or practice, a word in time

may prevent the incoming of error which may cause the perplexity of years, and possibly the sorrow of a lifetime.

It need perhaps scarcely be remarked that the teacher must be always in advance of the class. Whatever careful thought and prayerful study will do must be done in order to keep up the supply for the demand which such work will create, and it should ever be remembered that what is required is a knowledge of the Word of God: nothing else can take the place of that, for a Bible Class is intended to bring the whole Bible nearer to each of its members, and this involves a great deal of collateral study, a thoughtful selection and careful use of references, and, above all, a power of shewing how every part of the Book testifies of Christ.

Moreover, it is of great benefit to show how the leading doctrines of the Bible are expressed in the utterances of our Church; and therefore quotations from the Articles and other formularies are of great service; for the tendency of the age is decidedly towards a lack of distinctiveness, and thus it is the more necessary to show what our Church really teaches, and how that teaching is founded on Holy Scripture.

Our subject is Bible Classes for the *Educated*; but it is well to remember that there is great danger of taking too much for granted, even with those who answer to this description. Instances are constantly presenting themselves of the very slight grounding which people of good position have had in the study of Scripture, and therefore it is absolutely essential to make every step sure as we go on, lest a structure be reared on an insufficient foundation, and so be always insecure.

There is a very wide field for such work, as is here roughly indicated; and it may be that these words may arouse some to think if they cannot do a little in this way *among their own class*. It may be "the day of small things" for some time, but if there is earnest, thoughtful preparation, and a loving patient spirit in teaching, there is sure to be a blessing on the work, and it seems to be just the kind of work about which we are told that "The Lord hearkened and heard." Nor must we lose sight of the great benefit which is experienced by those who undertake such a work in such a spirit; nothing else is so likely to strengthen their own knowledge, to clear their own ideas, and to fix their own principles. That which we may be contented to leave inaccurately or partly apprehended in our own minds must be made clear and thoroughly grasped before we can attempt to teach it to another; and so there is an immediate reward well worth the grasping; besides which we can take and apply to this work the promise in the end of Daniel, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

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