

sult our own wishes and fancies. Scripture is full and explicit, and there is no excuse for forcing a meaning upon any portion of it which it does not fairly bear, as we may readily go to the part in which the lesson we desire to teach is directly stated. The obvious lessons in the present instance are:

1. That we should frankly confess our faults one to another. You notice how promptly Paul did so when he discovered his mistake with respect to Ananias, the High Priest.

2. That we should openly avow our hope of the eternal glorification of soul and body. "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

3. That we should guard against sectarian blindness and strife. This can be enforced from the conduct of these Pharisees and Sadducees.

4. That we should be true to Christ even when this costs us hardship and suffering. Paul's heroic example before the Council, and his whole career can be appealed to for the enforcement of this lesson.

Now, gathering up the results of this four-fold analysis of the passage, bringing the light shed upon it to a focus, it is not difficult to discover its scope, to determine what it is all about, which is the last thing we propose to do. It is an account of Paul before the Council in Jerusalem. He is the great central figure in the whole scene, around whom everything else moves.

Here let me explain that the foregoing must not be taken as a specimen of full or complete teaching. Were I teaching a class, instead of indicating in outline the method to be followed, I should enter into details which are intentionally omitted, and should, in the case of the doctrines formulated, proceed inductively, as will be presently shown, carefully gathering from all parts of Scripture the evidence in support of them. I should also employ suitable illustrations, both in connection with the doctrines and the practical lessons, so as to make the truth plain, convincing, and memorable, which are the three great purposes to be served by illustrations. But, when analysis and the statement of doctrines and practical lessons are concerned, I wish it to be distinctly understood that pupils should, as far as possible, be thrown upon their own resources, and that the teacher should only aid and correct them as found to be absolutely necessary.

But is this not expecting too much from pupils? Certainly not. It is to be remembered that they are not little children, but senior pupils, who have been promoted to this distinction through a preparatory course and by proper tests. But even when this is not the case, when I am obliged to deal with the sort of conglomerate usually called the Bible Class, I have no fear of failure on their part in carrying out this method, because I have tested it by practical experiments. I have taken average children from thirteen to fifteen years old, who were in no way specially prepared, and have had them read a lesson for the first time and at once proceed to name the persons, the actions, the doctrines, and the special lessons to which it referred with surprising accuracy and success; and the courage, independence of thought and enthusiasm developed in the process was perfectly delightful. The fact is that the more we expect from pupils and the more we get from them the better. One of the most deadening and fatal errors into which teachers fall is to deprive pupils of the fullest exercise of their own mental powers. They often talk their classes to death instead of stimulating and guiding their mental activity, and causing them as much as possible to rely upon their own resources. What is needed is not to do everything for the pupil, but to show him the right method of doing things for himself, that he may cultivate his faculties thereby and learn to rejoice in the exercise of his own powers. It is not enough for the pupil to sit and listen and look wise and be pleased. He must exert himself if he is to grow mentally and spiritually. A person who is not a swimmer may view with pleasure and amazement the grace and ease of the movements of an expert in the art, like the late unfortunate Captain Webb, but he will never learn to swim by looking on and being pleased and amazed, neither can he do so by listening to long lectures about the art, or committing to memory learned rules about it. He must plunge into the water and by his own efforts learn to swim. He will, of course, flounder about at first and sink. Not because the water is incapable of supporting him, or because he does not sufficiently exert himself. On the contrary, he struggles hard, and, panting for breath, makes desperate efforts, but he has not learned the art, the right method. His

is unskilled labour—hence the failure. What he needs is not more theory, more abstract knowledge, more of the literature of the subject, but more personal self-reliant practice in gaining the art of swimming.

And so in Bible reading. I am persuaded that the young and old flounder about and fail just because they have not acquired the true art of reading. They often follow no order, but have a vague wish to discover they know not what, and in their sort of unmethodical search for hidden things, miss what lies upon the very surface of the Word.

As a remedy for this state of things I would teach method, and exercise the members of the Bible class for several years in analysis until they could perform it with ease and accuracy, and while being thus drilled I would deal faithfully with their hearts and consciences, applying with all the power I could wield the practical lessons discovered, and imparting necessary information to stimulate them to become acquainted with a wide range of Bible truth. They would thus be prepared to pass on to the second and still higher course of study which I propose.

This should consist of Introduction and Synoptical Reading of the books of the Bible. I use the term, Introduction, not in the technical sense familiar to theologians, but with a far more restricted meaning, excluding very many of the critical details which they make it cover. It would be manifest folly to attempt to cram a Bible class, however advanced and intelligent, with the contents of the works of Home, or Davidson, or Scrivener, or any of the great writers on Introduction, and I know of no single work which could be used as a text-book for the purpose in view. A small manual, containing accurate information brought down to date, not burdened with unnecessary learning, and written in a clear and popular style would be a great boon to teachers and many Christian readers. Meanwhile, in the absence of such a work in entering upon the study of any of the books of the Sacred Canon, the teacher should, from such reliable sources of information as are at his command, make his class generally acquainted with such introductory matters as the following: The authorship of the book; the time and place of writing; the readers to whom it was first addressed; its character and style; its special object and general contents. In doing this he should carefully avoid all displays of learning, borrowed from dictionaries, commentaries, and encyclopædias, and shun boring his pupils and perverting their minds with disputed points which they are not yet competent to settle. Let him give them direct and definite information and not vexed and tangled theories and conjectures. I would even omit from this course the discussion of the genuineness, authenticity, and canonicity of the books of Scripture. This may, in the meantime, be taken for granted while the student is made conversant with what is thoroughly ascertained and generally accepted upon the other points just mentioned, and thus becomes qualified to enter intelligently upon the Synoptical Reading of the books. But what does this mean, and how is it to be pursued?

Instead of confining our analysis, as in the former course, to a short passage or lesson of Scripture, we now extend our view over a whole book, make a much more comprehensive analysis and break the whole composition into its natural sections or divisions regardless of chapters and verses. This is manifestly a higher and more difficult work than any thing yet undertaken; and, when successfully performed, proves most invigorating to the heart and intellect and promotive of Christian devotion.

The first thing to be done is to read the entire book at once, or consecutively. Indeed, this may require to be done several times in order to catch its spirit and scope and cannot, of course, be overtaken in the class, but must be left to the conscientious private effort of each student. I venture to think that, in the case of many people, the Bible is not as regularly and earnestly read as the newspapers—a sad feature of our times—and that the simple reading again and again of the Sacred Oracles with a definite purpose in view would have a most beneficial effect upon multitudes. In beginning this course, and perhaps for a few months, in order to give definiteness to the reading and researches of pupils, the teacher should, in a few words, indicate beforehand, the scope of the book to be studied.

Take for example the Gospel by John. The author states distinctly its general purport, intimates that its great design is to establish beyond doubt the divinity of our Saviour. Immediately after the record of the

manner in which the doubts of Thomas on this point were removed and he had exclaimed, addressing Jesus: "My Lord and my God," it is added, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His Disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name."

(To be continued.)

### MISSIONARY SUPPLY IN THE NORTH-WEST.

MR. EDITOR,—In THE PRESBYTERIAN of March 18, "Missionary" undertakes to show that there is no very pressing need for more missionaries in the North-West. He should acquaint himself with the facts before making statements such as he does in his letter. You express the conviction of all who know the actual condition of affairs and are interested in the welfare of our Church, when you say, in the same paper: "The one thing painfully clear is, that something *must* be done and that *soon*."

From the last Annual Report of the Superintendent of Missions, I gather (pp. 6, 7, 8) the following: There were twenty-four groups of stations reporting, containing 1,037 families. "Missionary" says there are a few families left unsupplied—"vacant"; thirteen of these groups promise towards a minister's salary an average of \$463. On page four of this report Mr. Robertson says: "Neglected settlers sink into spiritual lethargy very quickly. The evidence of *early neglect* is painfully evident in many a locality. If young men are to be prevented from throwing overboard religion, morals, and all that is held dear, Christian work must begin with settlement. . . . The pressing work of our Church is to give them the Gospel. . . . If we neglect this work, and the people lapse, we are guilty. . . ." And yet we are coolly told that this alternative is preferable to the employment of good men who have not had a college training.

A word now as to the elders employed last winter who, "Missionary" says, "did not prove satisfactory." If this statement is correct, it proves only that the ministers who recommended these elders were not qualified to select men for such work (though these same ministers pronounce upon the fitness for the work of the ministry of our college-trained young men), or that they were very badly deceived in their men. But the fact is that, at least, half of these elders proved so satisfactory that the people (intelligent above the average, mark you) among whom they laboured were loath to part with them.

But this is not the only experience the Church has had in the employment of this kind of labour. Men, not college-trained, nor even elders, have been and are now being employed by the Church in its mission work, and with most gratifying results.

What will "Missionary" say of the ordination of Mr. Lawrence, now of Stonewall? I heard Mr. Lawrence's trial discourses before the Presbytery, and have no hesitation in saying that they were *above* the average sermon.

There are two or three young men of the class that I contend should be taken hold of by the Church, now labouring in important fields in this Province, who are doing as good work and are as acceptable to the people as ordained men. I will go further: are doing better and are more acceptable than some college-trained, regularly-ordained men.

I am very far from belittling the advantages of a thorough college training, nor do I think that, ordinarily, young men should enter the ministry without it.

But all non-college-bred men are not illiterate, nor unable to "define and defend" their position, while many have this advantage—a knowledge of men and business. Further, is it not a fact that *some* (perhaps few) who have "gone through" college have very meagre ability or literary attainments, whose highest qualification is that they have put in the prescribed time, and who could not begin to cope with the average layman, even in preaching?

Your readers are aware that there is at present an outbreak in the North-West which necessitates a resort to arms. Imagine the Dominion Government refusing to send any men to the front who had not spent five years in some military school. In a question of life and death the most available material is the best. Are men's bodies and property of more value than their souls? If we cannot have the best, let us have the next best.

PRESBYTER.  
Winnipeg, April 2, 1885.