

involves much unnecessary repetition and much omission. It presents the Bible as a series of detached fragments, and so, not only makes the teacher's task more difficult, but prevents the scholar from grasping the great unity of the Book. Not only is the continuity of interest destroyed, but there is no progress in the scholar's knowledge from the simpler to the more difficult of the teachings of the scriptures. Consequently, the scholar does not look forward to a higher grade of Biblical study, and therefore leaves school early.

The graded lesson plan attempts to present the whole Bible in a series of lessons graded to suit the growing intelligence of the child as he passes to maturity. It is the only system that is practicable both in the graded and ungraded public schools, and therefore should be practicable in the Sunday School. The

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of its introduction are largely due to the devices and methods that have been adopted to make the ungraded lessons practicable. There seems to be no inherent or insuperable difficulty. But because of the difficulties due to custom and present organization, the introduction of graded lessons must be gradual. Each school should be free to follow the course best suited to its capacities.

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THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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The Book of Proverbs is one of the most interesting and least familiar books of the Bible; and yet it is strange that it should be so unfamiliar, for no Biblical book has fewer Jewish marks upon it. The experience upon which it rests and the wisdom which it inculcates are an experience and wisdom not distinctively Jewish or even Oriental: they are as broad as humanity. There is no reference, for example, to the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion, nor to the Kingdom of God, nor to the faith in a Messiah: the spirit of the book is that of a broad and generous humanity. As the Book of Psalms gathers up many centuries of Israel's prayers and praises, so the Book of Proverbs

represents six or seven centuries of the wisdom of Israel. Part of the book is as old as Solomon, and part of it may be as late as the third or fourth century before Christ.

Roughly speaking, it may be divided into three parts:

(A) Chs. 1 to 9—A section which it would be hardly proper to designate as "proverbs," but which is rather a connected piece in praise of wisdom, a wisdom which we may define as the art of life, and which finds its ultimate source in the bosom of God.

(B) Chs. 10:1 to 22:16—A collection of the proverbs of "Solomon" not marked by any very close coherence. The disconnected nature of this group—some proverbs are even repeated, at least in different forms, twice—makes it somewhat hard to study profitably, and a very useful exercise is to gather together the various proverbs that deal with the same theme. As a rule, each verse in this group consists of two contrasted thoughts. For example:

"A wise son maketh a glad father:

But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," ch. 10:1.

This large group is supplemented by two smaller ones (ch. 22:17 to 24:22 and 24:23-34) which do not claim to be by Solomon, but which are known as the words of "the wise"—referring apparently to a school or at least a class known as "the wise men."

(C) The third important section consists of another group of "Solomon's" proverbs (chs. 25 to 29) and to this there are three supplements; (a) the words of Agur (ch. 30) consisting of riddles and numerical proverbs, (b) words addressed to Lemuel (ch. 31:1-9), and (c) a beautiful section in praise of the true woman (ch. 31:10-31). In the last large group (chs. 25 to 29) the two clauses of the verse usually take the form of a comparison. For example,

"As clouds and wind without rain,

So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts falsely," ch. 25:14 (Rev. Ver.).

So much for the structure of the book. A word about its contents. Its theme is wisdom, not theoretical, but practical—wisdom for the practical guidance of life. In swift and cutting epigram it lays bare the secret of