

The Word and the Spirit

By Rev. J. P. MacIntosh, B.A.

Any one who has observed the methods of successful evangelists, has noted that they put great confidence in the literal words of the Bible as a means of bringing about conversion. They quote texts in the pious confidence that they are winged words which fly straight to the heart and effect that mysterious change. And the results abundantly justify this confidence.

Every teacher should have a faith similar to that in the words of the Bible as a means of reaching the soul for good. Is there any secret open to all by which it may be gained?

A chief part of this secret is to remember that, when God's Word goes forth upon its great mission, God's Spirit goes forth also to accompany it and insure its success. This is the conviction of that prophet who, speaking in the name of the Lord, said: "My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Jesus sought to inspire his disciples with this thought, bidding them remember that, as they were preaching, the Spirit would be convincing the world "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." If the modern teacher would grasp this point of view and remember that while he teaches the Word, the Spirit is enlightening and quickening the consciences of those who are being taught, it would inspire him with that unique confidence possessed by prophets of old and evangelists in our own day.

Here, by way of analogy, is a teacher in the public schools instructing his class in one of the propositions of geometry. He uses every means to present the subject in such a way that the class may grasp its logic, but he knows that it would be all in vain if the light of reason had not been kindled in their minds. So he teaches with confidence because he believes the light of reason will inform the minds of this class of the logic of the proposition, while he is only an ally of this great teacher.

So the teacher of the Word of God should remember that the effectiveness of a lesson does not depend upon the brilliancy of its

presentation, but upon the working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the scholars. The teacher is only, therefore, an ally of the great teacher whose work is to take the Word and show it unto men, so that it may become "the power of God unto salvation."

At the same time, this thought must not tend to make the teacher less earnest and faithful in the preparation and presentation of the lesson, for the Spirit works not only by the Word, but also by the teacher of the Word. And indeed it is impossible that the thought should have this effect, for the teacher will feel that as the ally of the great teacher he must give the very best that heart and mind can give. For there is no inspiration to do our best like the assurance that we are co-workers with God himself in the great work of the salvation of his children.

Onslow, N.S.

The Value of Questioning

By Rev. J. M. Duncan, D.D.

The Sunday School class presents a specially favorable opportunity for the use of questions in teaching. The group of scholars round the teacher is usually small, and the atmosphere is one of freedom and confidence. In the absence of barriers between teacher and taught, the conversational method becomes comparatively easy, and the unrestrained interchange of question and answer is sure to awaken and sustain interest. The value of questioning may be seen in the purposes which it serves. Some of these are as follows:

1. *To exhibit the contents of the lesson.* Take, for example, the parable of the Prodigal Son. The points in the story may be got before the minds of the scholars, in a clear and orderly fashion, by means of a series of questions, such as: How many sons had the man mentioned in the story? Which made a request of his father? What did he ask? What did the father do? etc.

2. *To bring out the scholars' knowledge.* The true teacher will not be so concerned, in his questioning, to display his own knowledge of the lesson as to elicit what his scholars know about it. With this end in view, he will begin with simple and easy questions,