

senior which involves the study of some volume in addition to the International Sabbath School Lessons.

The Doctrinal Department—the study of the Shorter Catechism—opens another most valuable course of study. Why should not Young People's Societies take up such a course and under a good leader learn to give reasons for the hope they entertain and the belief they profess?

The Historical Department takes up this year and extends its course over four years in the study of Dr. W. G. Blaikie's Manual of Bible History, a most readable and instructive volume.

Then there is the Essay Department, requiring perhaps less constant study, but suggesting a careful perusal of some biography of a prominent Bible character during the year, and the preparation of an essay thereon at its close.

We have a Training Department, the value of which to Sabbath School workers could hardly be over estimated. Were Young People's Societies to take up this department with enthusiasm they would find it highly valuable for their own development and power in Christian service; and our Sabbath School would soon be replenished with workers better able to apply the principles of teaching and guiding the young.

These five departments present wide scope and opportunity for self-improvement and practical training; but should some other be deemed necessary why not amalgamate that with what the Church already has? Would not that be better than organizing a new department? In connection with the Higher Religious Instruction scheme we have all the machinery, examinations, certificates, diplomas, medals. There is no competition. Every student is judged on his own merit, and all who reach any standard receive the recognition due to that attainment.

If the interests of the Young People's Societies require special oversight and guard, let men be appointed to see to these, but let there be no additional department added to those of the Church now in operation, unless the machinery already in existence cannot be adjusted to do the work required.

"SKEPTICISM ASSAILED."

BY REV. W. S. M'TAVISH, B.D.

This volume is not so profound but that a reader of ordinary intelligence may follow its arguments without difficulty. In the main, we think that Christian readers will be disposed to agree with the author, and even unbelievers who pursue this work must admit that he has made out a good case on behalf of Christianity. Many, and perhaps most, readers will be inclined to dissent from his finding when concluding his examination of the character and conduct of Judas Iscariot. His opinion, which is by no means new, is the same as that which has been elaborated lately with great vigor and incisiveness by Marie Corelli in her work "Barabbas." It is difficult to whitewash the character of a man like Judas. People are slow to believe that he was the only one of the disciples who had the courage to act according to his convictions, and that he was honest in his purpose, but unfortunate in the execution of it.

And yet the book possesses some special features, which make it worthy of careful perusal. In the first place, the author is a lawyer—a member of the New York bar; as such he knows how to present his case clearly and cogently. He claims to have devoted nine months' special study to the subject treated in this volume. Having satisfied himself, he feels that he can convince others that the Bible is authentic and that Jesus is divine. He pursues a wise course, as it seems to us, in keeping his discussion closely around the person of Jesus Christ. It would seem more and more the trend of apologetics to keep close to the per-

son and work of the Redeemer, the best apologetic works being Christo-centric. Further, this work contains as a supplement, Lord Lyttleton's Famous Treatise on the Conversion of Paul, and this, in our judgement, is really the most closely-reasoned and trenchant section of the whole book.

In a prefatory note Dr. Parkhurst commends the book thus: "This volume is one more valuable illustration of the fact that, the Bible is its own truest expositor and ablest advocate, and that the most thorough way of confronting the question of the Bible's trustworthiness as a divine revelation, is not to appeal to tradition, nor to rely upon the verdict of contemporary experts, but to come into intelligent and personal touch with the Scriptures themselves, and to allow them to work upon heart and intellect their own original and native effects."

Deseronto, Ont.

HOME MISSION WORK IN PARRY SOUND DISTRICT.

BY JAMES LOCHORE.

Thinking that items from the Home Mission field would be interesting to your readers, I now give you a short account of the work at Orrville, Parry Sound District. In October last when I came on the field, as there had been no services on the two previous Sabbaths, things looked rather gloomy, and attendance at services was poor. The church (which by the way had been built in September, 1894) was a mile and a quarter out of the village, and was not conveniently placed for the majority of the people. I was asked if I could not give services in the village, and having been instructed by my Superintendent, Rev. A. Findlay, to do so, they were commenced there on Sabbath, Nov. 10th. We had the use of a private house for the first two Sabbaths, and then the owner of it whose wife had offered me the house told me that he wanted no more of it; that he did not want religion around him, and not to come back again. In this predicament, no where to hold services, the proprietors of the Palmer House offered their dining-room, and an average of fifty met there every Sabbath evening. Having spoken to the people as to the desirability of moving the church building into the village, they were nearly unanimous on the subject. At a meeting at which the Rev. A. Findlay presided, a committee was formed to move the building. At the request of the members the Presbytery kindly granted leave to do so. The site chosen could not be got for less than \$50. And so little was done. The ice on the lake over which it had to come not being strong, it could not be moved. And apparently the committee were afraid to touch it. So on the third of March I obtained a site for \$10, got the deed drawn out, and went to work to move the building. On the 9th two carpenters were hired and proceeded to take the building apart. By the 14th at noon it was all cut into sections and laid on the ground ready for the teams to come and haul it to its new site. On Monday morning the teams were on hand, and the main parts of the building were loaded on ten sleighs, although altogether about twenty-five sleigh loads were taken, and by Tuesday noon of the 17th the walls were up ready for the roof, and on Saturday all was ready for the re-opening. On Sabbath 22nd March, Rev. W. K. McCulloch conducted services at 10.30 a.m. and 7 p.m. They were well attended. On Monday evening a tea meeting was held, when the church was crowded, a large number having to stand. Mr. McClelland, Mayor of Parry Sound was called to the chair, and the evening was enlivened by addresses and vocal and instrumental music. A pleasant evening was spent by all, and many thanks are due to the friends of Parry Sound for their assistance with the programme. The cost was as follows: Paid for work at building, \$38.25; new materials, \$21.60; expenses connected with re-opening and tea-meeting, \$21.55; total, \$81.40, which has all been met by proceeds and subscription list. A

small debt which was contracted when first built, the congregation hopes soon to be able to clear off. The work is encouraging at this station, which we hope in time will become strong.

Orrville.

THE LITURGY QUESTION.

[The following vigorous treatment of the Liturgy question, which has been under discussion in our columns we gladly publish and all the more that it has been sent us by one who does not sympathize with the views expressed, but is yet anxious that they should be known.—Editor.]

"Presbyterian Liturgies" was, some time ago, the theme of a strong discourse by Rev. Dr. Bayne, of Pembroke in Knox Church, Ottawa. His utterances on a subject which has lately been given considerable attention will be read with interest. His text was, John iv, 14: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." He said a more profound and far-reaching principle than this had never been spoken; it was the basal principle of all true worship, the touch-stone to which all modes and elements of worship must come. The three divine utterances, God is spirit, God is a light, and God is love were the most sublime ever formed to express the essence of God's being.

The preacher then applied these principles to the subject of his discourse. The agitation for a liturgy for the Presbyterian Church assumed, he said, different forms and aimed at apparently different things, but all writers on the subject pleaded for the beauty and advantages of uniformity.

Rev. Dr. Bayne stated he objected to prescribed forms and liturgies. It would, he said, be a backward step. All the history of the new dispensation had been a progress from forms to realities, from the outward to the inward, from the earthly to the heavenly. The progress of the church had been on these lines and a return to the beggarly element would be a step backward. Liturgies and homilies had their origin in ignorance and darkness when the ministry were too ignorant and inefficient to compose sermons or offer extempore prayers.

The introduction of liturgies would be an invasion of the liberties of the people. Liturgies deprived them of edification. By reading prayers worship would become mechanical, and those taking part become untrue to self and to God. No liturgy can be made sufficiently comprehensive. There is none in existence which met the great varieties of human experiences and needs. No man, no body of men, king, convocation or parliament had a right to frame the petitions, confessions and thanksgiving of the people. There is no authority in the Bible for it, and the church was never vested with the authority to do it. People were suspicious of anything savoring even remotely of tyranny.

Another reason why he objected to a liturgy was that it would lead to indifference and inefficiency in the ministry by discounting individual ability, and by furnishing a temptation to neglect pastoral work. The people feel that formalism is out of sympathy with men's real needs. The minister gained influence, and justly so, who studied the needs of his people and prayed accordingly. Possibly one of the aims of the scheme was to crowd the sermon into a small corner and reduce teaching to a minimum. The greatest function of the ministry would thus be shorn of its strength. No doubt this would suit some dishonest men and corrupt politicians. Public thieves might attend church with their religious wives when the whole goes off in harmless hallelujahs, in intonations faultily faultless, in stinging little moral homilies of fifteen minutes duration.

A fourth objection was that liturgies had never been associated in the past with great works of grace. Revivals were never helped, but hindered by liturgical aids. It was also, he said, unsuited to people of Presbyterian traditions. The origin of the movement was not such as to commend it to the Church. It was not sanctioned by the Bible.—Ottawa Journal.

Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

May 18th, } LESSONS ON PRAYER. { Luke xviii. 1896. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—Luke xviii. 13.

MEMORY VERSES.—1-17.

CATECHISM.—Q. 58.

HOME READINGS.—M. Luke xviii. 1-17. T. Luke xviii. 18-43. W. Mat. xix. 13-30. Th. Dan. ix. 1-19. F. Dan. ix. 20-27. S. Isa. lviii. 1-14. Sab. Jas. iv. 1-17.

A few weeks ago we had a lesson on prayer, and now again we are to study further "lessons" on that subject. No topic is of greater importance. It is in answer to prayer that God's blessings are sent upon His people. How important therefore that we should study carefully everything our Lord has said upon the matter. Here Luke has grouped a number of the lessons given by Jesus to His disciples upon the subject of prayer, and from the group, our lesson committee has selected two for our study this week. At first sight it seems impossible to discover any unity in the passage; but perhaps if we take the parable as illustrating the spirit in which men should approach God, and the incident of the children as showing that none are of such small importance that God is not willing to bless them, we will have unified the lesson to some extent at least. Let us then consider the *spirit of prevailing prayer*, and the *special persons whom God delights to bless*.

I. The Spirit of Prevailing Prayer.—This is brought out very strongly by setting side by side two prayers one of which is filled with this spirit, and the other wholly lacking this spirit. The parable was directed toward "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others"; and it is the spirit of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, which gave its character to the Pharisee's prayer. His standard of righteousness was a most peculiar one—one of his own erection—and this it was which led him to be satisfied with himself and to despise others. Instead of finding the standard in God, he found it in his own imagination, and was careful to adjust that standard so that he always attained to the full measure, while every person else fell far short. The publican had come to see that the righteousness which God required was a righteousness far beyond his attainment by his own unaided effort. God himself had become his standard for he had read "Be ye holy as I am holy," and each man's prayer sprang from his conception of himself. The Pharisee's self-laudation was merely to inform the Lord of the worth of the man who laid the Almighty under deep obligation by condescending to approach Him at all. The publican on the contrary could only think of one thing—his own worthlessness in the light of God's mercy and therefore he prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner." The man who trusted only in the mercy of God was the one who went down to his home accepted with God. Thus we learn that God hears our prayers only when from the heart we acknowledge our undeserving character, and rest our case wholly upon His mercy.

II. Those Whom God Delights to Bless.—Shortly after this parable apparently, the disciples fell into another form of self-exaltation and incurred from the Master well merited rebuke. Some of those who had themselves been blessed of Jesus brought their infants to Him that He might "touch them." Then arose some of the future apostles in their burning zeal, and forbade the mothers to press their babes upon the Master's attention, when He had men to deal with and when he was so busily engaged in setting before His adult hearers matters of so much importance. What could these *infants* know of Jesus? Not a word of His discourse could they understand, to them He could be no more than any other man. There are Christians in our own day who argue thus—who take the indefensible position that Jesus Christ can bless only those of mature judgment. Therefore they forbid parents to bring their children to Jesus. Now there never yet was a parent whom Jesus has blessed, who does not most earnestly desire His blessing for his children. Shall we heed the words of the self-esteeming disciples or the words of the Master Himself? He rebuked the disciples and said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." These and their like are all the ones whom the Lord delights to bless. Not for their sinlessness, for even little babes are not sinless, but for their trusting helplessness, which leads them to cling only to their protector and friend. There is great encouragement here for parents and for Sabbath School teachers when they recognize that the Lord's blessing is more likely to come upon the young and tiny folk in answer to earnest prayer, than upon any others.

* "Skepticism Assailed; or The Stronghold of Infidelity Overturned." By Hon. Britton H. Labor. Toronto: J. L. Nichols & Co.