

## THE BIBLE CLASS.

It is not unusual in this age of precocity to find a laxity and outgrowth of interest in the Sabbath-school and especially the Bible-class, among scholars during or soon after their teens. In reviewing the "cause and cure" it is customary to do so from the one stand point of the teacher; and on the principle that a physician is greatly aided in diagnosis by the statement of his patient, I beg leave to submit a *scholar's* view of Reform.

I deferentially submit the propositions that Bible classes make their schemes of study, or their methods of study, so entirely evangelical, as to be a mere repetition of the Sabbath School; that their system is too formal and mechanical, and not adapted to develop reciprocal interest between teacher and taught; and that doctrinal difficulties which arise from misconception of Scripture and the prominent theological questions of the day, and upon which many young men seek instruction, are either superficially examined or altogether ignored.

We suppose the origin of the Bible class was the want felt by those of mature years for a higher and different standard of study than that usually offered in the Sabbath School, where the curriculum is necessarily adapted to the young mind. In the latter we learn the first and paramount principles of faith and religion; in the Bible class we more literally study the Bible.

The Bible class differs from the church as more conveniently a place for study than worship. We cannot ask questions, nor argue with the preacher in the pulpit; he very properly has it all his own way. In the class, however, we question and analyze, and there is more active mental reciprocity, because the individual study beforehand, brought together, develops in the aggregate, clear conceptions of any difficulty.

We respectfully suggest an alternate scheme for the Bible class, of topics embracing difficulties and errors in religion; by which may be explained and disproved those doctrines opposed to the fundamental principles of the Bible as we understand it: a scheme also embracing the highest intellectual study of such subjects as the Creation, and the history, authenticity and inspiration of the Bible, &c. Take the prominent forms of Infidelity, and prove them untenable; Unitarianism, and prove the Divinity of Christ; Universalism, and prove eternal punishment; the entire Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, and prove Moses right and Colenso wrong—all from direct testimony of the Bible. Neither ridicule nor denounce; calmly prove and establish truth *by analytical discussion*. It would be well, too, to show that there are subjects, such as eternal duration, infinite space, &c., beyond human comprehension; why they are so, and why we should be satisfied to let them remain so.

The object of such studies should be identical with their objects in theological colleges;—not so much to make arguers, as to strengthen faith and supply material for self-defence in time of need. If they are proper in one place they cannot be irrelevant to the other: food for future shepherds cannot be poison for present flock. All Atheists, for instance, are not too obstinate to be convinced *if you can* convince them. Is it right to remain ignorant of the means to do this, and, as it were, make them justify their principles by our inability to prove them wrong? It seems inconsistent that a knowledge of the difficulties and errors emanating from a false view of Scripture should not be considered as a necessary and liberal part of religious study in a Bible class, as the primitive and present errors of Science are in secular schools, in the study of astronomy, geology, medicine, &c. If certain doctrines have proved stumbling-blocks to some, why refuse others,—who are