

THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE'S "PLAN OF STUDY."

The special "Topic Card" for the Presbyterian C. E. Societies embraces the "Uniform" Topics, the Monthly Topics of the Plan of Study, and the Questions on the Shorter Catechism for each meeting throughout the year. Price \$1.00 per 100. "Booklet" containing the same matter and also Daily Readings for the whole year, price \$1.50 per 100.

**Topic for the week beginning
March 18.
How The Old Testament Grew.**

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LITERATURE.

"The old Testament and its Contents," by Prof. Robertson, in Guild text-books, 20 cts. The opening Chapter in Driver's "Introduction to the Old Testament." Any modern book on the Canon of the Old Testament.

We regret very much that circumstances have prevented Prof. McFadyen from contributing the article expected from him on this subject.

The following article taken very largely from Prof. Robertson's Guild text-book, will supply the needed information to young people who have not time or opportunity to study the book.

HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT GREW.

The word "Testament" is the translation of a word more frequently rendered "Covenant," and is applied to the one part or the other of Scripture with reference to the Old or the New Covenant relation into which God has entered with man.

The Old Testament Scriptures, and especially the Law, are the documents wherein are contained in detail the promises and the requirements of the Solemn League and Covenant into which Israel entered with Jehovah and which they subscribed with an oath Ex 24 : 3-8, Neh. 8 : 38 and 10 : 1-29.

Our word "Bible" is the translation of a Greek word meaning book. We use the word as a singular name to denote the completed collection of books forming the Old and New Testament.

What the whole Bible is to the Christian Church the Old Testament was to the Jewish Church of Christ's time ; and they used a similar expression when speaking of their Bible, viz : "The Writings" vs "The Sacred Writings."

The Old Testament is not a book that was completed at one time and given down to men from Heaven ready-made ; but holy men in different ages spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and a record of what they spake and the time in which they spake and of the people to whom they spake, was kept ; and towards the close of the Old Dispensation all arranged together in one Book and given permanent form.

Hence is it that we can speak of the growth of the Old Testament. God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the Fathers through the prophets. Heb. 1: 1.

The Bible is not one book but a library of books. It shows how men variously gifted by the spirit of God cast the truth which they received into many different literary forms as genius permitted or occasion demanded,—into poetry of various kinds, sometimes national, sometimes individual, sometimes even developing a truth in a form approaching that of the drama ; into prophetic discourses, suggested mostly by some incident of the national life ; into proverbs prompted by the observation of life and manners ; into laws, prescribing rules for the civil and religious government of the nation ; into narratives sometimes relating to a distant or a nearer past, sometimes autobiographical. It is probable that every form of literary composition known to the ancient Hebrews was utilized as a vehicle of Divine truth, and is represented in the Old Testament.

THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

In our English Bible they are thirty nine in number, and the order in which they are arranged may be thus classified :—

- I *Law*, Genesis to Deuteronomy 5 books.
- II *History*, Joshua to Esther 12 books.
- III *Poetry*, Job to Song of Solomon 5 books.
- IV *Prophecy*, Isaiah to Malachi 17 books.

They were all originally written in Hebrew, with the exception of some portions in a few of the later books, which are in a kindred dialect, Aramaic.

The Hebrew Bible contains all the books enumerated above, and no more ; but there is a difference in the arrangement and in the manner of enumerating the books.

The Hebrew Bible consists of twenty-four books ; and the whole is arranged in three divisions, thus :—

- I. *Law*, i. e. the Pentateuch or the five books ; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy 5 books
- II. *Prophets*, viz :—
 - 1. Former prophets: (a) Joshua, (b) Judges, (c) Samuel, (d) Kings 4 "
 - 2. Latter prophets : (a) Isaiah, (b) Jeremiah, (c) Ezekiel, (d) the twelve (minor prophets) 4 "
- III. *Writings*, which we usually designate *Hagiographa*, i. e. Sacred Writings. They are classed thus :
 - 1. Three books (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Job 3 "
 - 2. Five rolls (a) Song of Songs,