

THE "PLAN OF STUDY."

Topic for Week Beginning June 17th.

How We Got Our English Bible.

Literature.

"How We Got Our Bible," by J. Patterson Smyth; 35 cents.

"Our Bible: Where Did We Get It," by Rev. Charles Leach, D.D., in Colportage Library; 15 cents.

All our young people should read the fascinating and comprehensive story of the Bible, from the time of the Apostles to that of our Authorized English Version, written by Rev. A. S. Morton, B. D., of Fairville, St. John. Mr. Morton has made a special study of the Reformation period of Church history, and this contribution will place the young people of the Church under a debt of gratitude to him. Mr. Morton's article gives the best division of the subject, and suggests topics for papers that may be read at the meeting.

HOW WE GOT OUR ENGLISH BIBLE.

By Rev. A. S. Morton, B.D.

I. How We Came to Get the Bible.

When a ship is out under leaden skies, on the pathless stretch of the ocean, no landmark on its horizon, it must steer by its compass, but if there is to be safety before the ship puts to sea, that compass itself must be tested, must be set by a true compass. So man, travelling often under leaden skies over life's pathless stretch, no landmark on his dark horizon, is driven to steer his course by his conscience, but if there is to be safety the conscience itself must be tested, must be set by a true, an ideal conscience.

This the first Christian found in the living personage of flesh and blood whom they knew as Jesus the Master. His word and example were the test of their life. His "Verily I say unto you," fixed the truth for them. He was the Light of their light, the Conscience of their consciences.

When Jesus was ascended who became the visible test of men's consciences? None other than those disciples whom Jesus had by special choice and careful teaching brought to a true insight into the meaning and purpose of his life. These men became the Court of Appeal to the early church—as for example when the church at Antioch sent to them concerning circumcision—and inasmuch as they were acknowledgedly endowed with the Lord's spirit and could say what He would say, they became the conscience of men's consciences. But

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away."

And soon through persecution and death the early apostles and such as could speak

authoritatively concerning Jesus were being lost to the Church. There was need—lest the story of Jesus' love should become a myth, wrapped in uncertainties—to put all that men knew or felt it necessary to know of it in black and white on the parchment page that would never die. So Mark wrote what Peter could tell him; Matthew gathered together the sayings of Jesus. Luke interviewed the eye-witnesses. And John told in loving accents the scenes and words he remembered so well.

Their writings—the four Gospels—along with sundry letters and papers written by the apostles on the practical problems of the church of the day, added to the Old Testament, which Christians have always revered as preparing the way of the Lord, became, under the name of the Scriptures, the court of appeal in all perplexities; the conscience of consciences to the early church. They were not the jealously guarded treasure of the learned few, but were translated from the original Hebrew or Greek into the living tongues of the day—Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Armenian and Gothic. Thus from the borders of the East to the gateways of the West every Christian could find the character and the ideals of Christ and the story of his love told in the lines that he could read and by the tongue that was music to his ears.

II. How the Church Lost the Scriptures.

The beginning of the loss of the Scriptures may be said to be the great split of the Catholic Church into the Greek Catholic in the East, and the Roman Catholic in the West. On the one side all the churches with the different translations stood together. On the other, all those churches in the older provinces of the Roman Empire which spoke the one Latin tongue were grouped together in what became one compact system, under the name of the Roman Catholic Church. In this church men knew but one Bible—the Vulgate—in the Latin tongue: they had but one style of worship or ritual, also in the Latin tongue, and but one system of canon or church law, and that again in the Latin tongue.

The policy of the leaders of this church included a grand missionary labor among the heathen peoples of Great Britain and Germany—but they did not go to them as we do to the heathen of India and China, with a translation of Scripture into a language that these people can understand. They went to convert the heathen with their Latin Bible, Latin Ritual, and Latin Church Law. The inevitable result was that the people remained, not so much ignorant of God's word, for the priests did teach them, but ignorant of God's word as the standard of their life—the conscience of their consciences. The rule of their life now was