

## WITH OUR CONTRIBUTORS

### The Teacher's Study of the Bible

By Dean H. T. J. Coleman, Ph.D.

In one sense the teacher's study of the Bible does not differ from that of other Bible students. He, like they, desires the bread and the water of life for his own nourishment and refreshment. He realizes that the most important qualification for worthy achievement of any sort is the manhood or womanhood, which, under the guidance of the Spirit, grows through contact with the living word. And yet, as a teacher, he is required to study the Bible from a particular standpoint and to use it in an especial way.

Manifestly, the teacher's study of the Bible is controlled in a great measure by the demands of the particular set of lessons which have been chosen for him and his class. In most cases he is not a professional student, with the large amount of leisure which such students are supposed to have at their disposal. Consequently, he often feels himself compelled to confine his attention week by week to the next Sunday's lesson, and thus both he and his class lead a sort of hand to mouth existence. This is an evil, although with our present haphazard methods of selecting and preparing teachers, it may appear to be an unavoidable evil.

The Jesuit teachers of the 16th and 17th centuries, who, in spite of certain radical defects in their theories of human nature, excelled all contemporaries in the practical mastery of the teaching art, placed unusual emphasis upon review. Each day the lesson of the preceding day, each week the lessons of the preceding week, were to be reviewed, and so with the lessons of the month and of the year. Such extreme emphasis upon review might not be either practicable or desirable with a Sunday School class; but it

would be highly profitable from the standpoint of the teacher's private preparation for his work. His capital of usable knowledge would increase at an astonishing rate, and he would have repeated occasion for surprise at the way in which portions of scripture,

originally separated from each other by the exigencies of his weekly task, tended to unite in the illustration and elucidation of some great religious truth.

This method of study might be called the comprehensive or, if one prefers the term, the telescopic method. One is tempted to illustrate it still further. Every Sunday School lesson is taken from some particular book of the Bible. Now each book of the Bible has its own particular subject matter, and often its own particular message. No single chapter in the epistles of Paul can be adequately understood without some inkling of the purpose which prompted the writing of the epistle in which it is found. There are few

chapters in the prophets or in the Gospels, whose spiritual value is not greatly enhanced by a clear understanding of the meaning and the message of the book as a whole. The Sunday School teacher who works through one of the books of the Bible, with the aid of some good book on Biblical Introduction finds himself so helped in the task of getting his bearings that his study is an orderly progress rather than a series of haphazard excursions leading nowhere in particular.

There is also a need of careful attention to individual verses, phrases, and words, so that even the smallest portion of the lesson is made to yield its own proper contribution to the meaning of the whole. This form of study might be called by contrast the microscopic method of study. The commentaries in our various Lesson Helps serve a useful purpose in this connection, but they never fully antici-

### A CHILD'S MORALS

The principal thing that a child has to do morally before he is twelve is to grow a conscience. The principal thing after that is to get power to use his will.

I would be very glad, if I were sure it were a good one, to be able to button my own moral code around my child, knowing that it would probably protect him until he was big enough to outgrow it; but I would much rather be sure that he had learned to speak the truth in his heart.

If a boy can always do that, it is about all one ought to expect of him before he is twelve. If he obeys me, that is discipline; but if he learns to obey himself, that is character.