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thing; and, in a large and statesmanlike way, plan for and press through not one system, but many systems, of religious education, yes, and spiritual culture, without apparent system, that will reach and upbuild all sorts and conditions of children in Christian faith and character.

Look where you will, there is no other course practical and consistent. It is along the natural habits of life; it is spiritual; it is free; it creates strength as it goes; it knits youth and maturity together in a consistent development; it creates such toughness of moral and spiritual fibre as may stand the strain of later years. And, what is often the test of truth, it makes the heaviest demand upon the whole church, every member of it, for thought, enterprise and devotion.

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

A PROPOSED NEW COURSE IN RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

WILLIAM I. LAWRANCE.

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The attention of the Department of Religious Education of the American Unitarian Association has been centered, for more than a year, upon a proposed new course of religious instruction. It is intended that this course shall be set forth in a series of books covering the needs of pupils between the ages of four and twenty-one, providing books for classes, for teachers, and for home work. A preliminary announcement is given herewith.

Why does it seem to us necessary to provide a new series of textbooks in religious education? Because knowledge grows, and nowhere faster than in the realm of educational method. Striking as this advance is in all educational science, it is, perhaps, most pronounced in the field of education in religion and morals. For here we have not only progress in the science of teaching, based upon growing knowledge of how to deal with developing mental powers, we have, in peculiar fulness, the gain that has been made in knowledge of developing traits, tastes, moral capacities and propensities, in what is known, that is, as child psychology. The special problem in religious education is that of meeting the developing characters of young people at each stage with such moral or spiritual stimuli as shall help them to take the next step forward.

The history of our denominational effort to provide adequate lessons in religion for young people has been creditable, even prophetic. So long ago as 1852 books were issued by the Unitarians in carefully graded series as well as in fullest accord with all that was then known of the powers and needs of developing minds. The *One-Topic, Three-Grade* lessons, and the *Beacon Series*, subsequently issued, have carried the same plan to fuller elaboration. The wisdom and foresight thus already shown have set for us of to-day a standard below which we must not fall. Our churches, our schools, our teachers, demand, and our young people need, such a series of lessons as shall include, with the acknowledged excellence of past efforts, the newer knowledge and the more highly perfected method.

What, then, are to be the main features of the proposed new course of study? For one thing, it is to be inclusive in its range, beginning with the age of four and ending with the age of twenty-one. It is thus to be longer than the *Beacon Series* and more highly articulated than the *Three-Grade Series*.

In the next place the new course is to be, so far as possible, thoroughly unified. Every author is to be made acquainted with the principles underlying the entire course, and will be expected to write his part with reference to the whole, presuming upon the use of material used in books for younger pupils and preparing the way for later books in the series. All manuscripts will become the property of the Department, and will be studied and unified by our editorial committee. To secure a fuller understanding, the authors are to be brought together for conference with each other and with the editorial committee. It is hoped in this way the authors' initiative may be preserved in a carefully unified and co-operative system.

Once more, it is intended that all manuals to be placed in the pupils' hands shall be attractive in form and substance, divided into chapters rather than into "lessons," and without questions, references, or other textbook appliances. To accompany such books there will be provided teachers' manuals, in which questions, references, teaching outlines, and suggestions will be given as fully as possible. In addition to these, leaflets for school and home work will be provided for pupils of such ages as can profitably use them.

Perhaps the most important single purpose to be carried out in this course is that the work for each age shall be chosen and presented solely with reference to the known needs of that age. Instead, that is, of surveying the whole field of religious knowledge

and then apportioning this vast material among the grades with the purpose of getting it learned, we propose to set the child in the midst, learn, as nearly as specialists can teach us, precisely what the child needs at each stage of his development, and provide for his use such material as will meet those needs and help forward his development to the next stage of growing character.

It is the purpose of those having the matter in hand to secure the best authors available, having in mind intellectual equipment and, even more, spiritual sympathy with young people of the various ages for which they write. The authors' names will be announced as soon as possible. The work of these authors is to be edited, revised and adapted by an editorial committee, every member of which is a specialist in religious education, having had experience, in most cases extended, in the actual work of our Sunday schools. These persons, with the co-operation of a number of specialists in religious education and of practical workers in Sunday schools, all animated by the single purpose of supplying our young people with the best aids to religious development that consecrated effort can produce, are entering with enthusiasm upon this large and important task.

THE NEW SERIES OF SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUALS

The following gives briefly a description of the proposed books of the new series now being prepared by the Department of Religious Education of The American Unitarian Association. All the titles suggested are to be regarded as provisional only while the nomenclature of the departments and grades is not yet fully determined.

I

The first four manuals are adapted to the need of children of from four to seven years of age.

1. *Love and Kindness.*

The little children are made to feel at home in the world as in their Father's house. No didactic methods are used. Animal, fairy and child stories from the Bible and other literatures are used, together with fitting songs, poems, pictures, dramatic representations and manual occupations, in so far as these will help impress the lessons.

2. *Ways of Helpfulness.*

The same methods are employed as in the earlier course; but good-will begins to take definite form in kindly deeds.

3. *God's Loving Care.*

The children are led to a warmer appreciation of Mother Nature and of the Good-will that rules the world. Stories, poems, and pictures are used which disclose qualities of protection and loving care. Passages from the Scripture and other literatures are given which tend to fix the idea of a Good Providence and the sentiments of trust, gratitude, reverence and love.

4. *Living Happily Together.*

The lesson materials are carefully selected to stimulate the sentiment of comradeship and the feelings of kindness and helpfulness. The happy life in animal and human homes is pictured, leading visibly to an appreciation of the community life of all the Father's children.

II

The next seven manuals are intended for the Sunday School classes where the pupils are from eight to fourteen years of age inclusive. Where possible, the books should be used successively during these years.

1. *Younger Children of the Father.*

A sympathetic narrative of the children of ancient and later history and of fiction that are most worth knowing. An account, too, of the lovers of childhood. Not only are the child characters worth knowing as a part of human culture, but each stands for a type. In this way it is possible without undue "moralizing" to implant moral convictions and arouse moral idealism.

2. *God's Wonder World.*

This is the age (9) when the Nature-loving impulse may do its part in awakening awe, reverence, and a sense of law and rectitude. Some of the best passages from the Vedas, the Psalms, the Stoics, St. Francis of Assissi, Wordsworth, etc., will be read or committed. The purpose is to cultivate a knowledge of Nature's beauty, majesty and orderliness, and to show that her laws are inviolable and if followed bring happiness and well-being.

3. *The Clean, Strong Life.*

A study of the marvels of the human frame and of how body and mind can become good servants, agreeable companions, and

temples of beauty in which Righteousness may dwell. The course will be interspersed with stories of the characters that illustrate the tempered and chivalric life. Such a course is not only profitable but is essential for those who hold the conviction that religion is concerned with the reverent living of the whole life.

4. *The Heroic Life.*

A utilization of the hero-worshipping impulse which is natural at this age (11). An appreciative study of a few carefully selected personalities of different times and countries, rather than a meagre biographical account of many lives. A few Old Testament characters will be studied, several lessons devoted to the travels and to the work and teaching of Paul, and other chapters to the lives of modern heroes.

5. *An Heroic Nation.*

A connected account of the Hebrew people, including the chief personalities, the central currents of thought and life and the great crises of their history. The pupils will study the Old Testament literature itself and, incidentally, will be made familiar with the geography and history of Palestine.

6. *The Story of Jesus.*

A life of Jesus, introducing him at once as a full-grown, virile man and making him a hero fit to challenge the utmost loyalty of youthful hearts. All exegetical and critical material here, as in all other courses up to the eighteenth year, will be put in a separate manual for the teacher.

7. *Our Religious Heritage.*

A brief review of Christian history, with story of how the teaching of Jesus was caught up and transformed by Paul (a study of one or two of the Epistles), was blended with the ritualism of the Hebrews (a study of the Acts of the Apostles), became fused with Greek, Egyptian and Roman elements, and how it has come on toward our own time. The great crises in Christian history will be discussed, together with the personalities involved in them.

III

From this point on, the courses are to be elective in order to allow for the varying tastes and abilities of students and teachers. For each age, therefore, at least two manuals are proposed.

1. The purpose in this year (age 15) is to awaken a consciousness in boys and girls of the currents of life about them, to quicken the civic and social feelings, and to insure the birth of a sense of moral responsibility.

(a) *Our Part in Our World.*

A course which will lead to an understanding of what institutions, societies and governments mean, how they grow, the conditions in terms of personal responsibility for their healthy development, and the privilege of each individual to have a useful and noble part in them.

(b) *The Religious Spirit in American History.*

The American spirit is, at bottom, one of religious idealism. The young people are led to feel that their country has a sacred history of its own with power to inspire and uplift.

2. This year's work (age 16) leads naturally to church membership and to Christian consecration. It is intended to help each boy or girl to find himself or herself spiritually, and in this way to harvest the results of the earlier years by bringing about at least a tacit affirmation of the higher life.

(a) *The Call of the Higher Life.*

This volume is edited out of the great literatures that make a vigorous, personal appeal, like the Sermon on the Mount, selections from Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Thomas à Kempis, Emerson's "Self Reliance" and "The Over-soul," and the sermons of Channing, Brooks, and Martineau.

(b) *"Choosing and Having."*

This will do a similar service, by using the "Case Method," how persons or groups have met crises and have, on one hand, chosen wisely and found life, or have made wrong decisions and reaped defeat and death.

3. The purpose in this year (age 17) is to familiarize pupils with the methods and spirit of Unitarianism, with the hope that they will become loyal to its ideals and institutions.

(a) *The Unitarian Movement, Its Progress and Purpose.*

The history of the Unitarian movement will be set forth in a way which presents both its animating ideals and its actual achievement. The lives of leading personalities and the stories of characteristic institutions will be studied and the vital spirit of Unitarianism interpreted and illustrated.

(b) *Milestones of Religious Progress.*

Some of the great biographies of the religious leaders of the world and the best expositions of the Unitarian habit of mind will

be edited so as to make them easily available for class use and for general reading. The progress of the ideas of religious liberty will be traced through the centuries.

4. The courses here divide into two groups, one for those who wish to make further and more thorough study of the Bible, the other for those who prefer sociological discussions and the study of the application of religious principles in modern life.

(a) *The Evolution of a People and a Book.*

A constructive rather than a critical or dogmatic study of the growth of Hebrew thought and ideals. The results of Biblical criticism are so far accepted by all that they can be assumed and used. The young people are led to enjoy a great literature and to follow the story of how a devout people worked its way out from crude conceptions of God and duty to a profounder spiritual faith.

(b) *The Modern Man in a Modern World.*

A study of existing social conditions; the causes of society's abuses and ills, and the methods of social reorganization, with a view to gaining an insight into the meaning of society and stimulating the ideals of intelligent service of the public welfare.

5. (a) *The Building of the New Testament.*

A course tracing the evolution of the New Testament literature in the spirit of the Higher Criticism and with frank acceptance of its conclusions.

(b) *The Meaning of Citizenship.*

A study of the problems of family life, social and political organization, the administration of charity, the care of the defective and delinquent, the organization of schools and churches and of the various public activities in which good citizens are expected to participate.

6. (a) *The Sympathy of Religions.*

A study, not objectively 10° several religions, but appreciatively 10° two or three of the great religious systems, to see how other people have been led into spiritual satisfaction and ethical living by the same divine Providence which we have enjoyed, at the same time emphasizing the spiritual brotherhood of man.

(b) *The Meaning of Religion.*

A study of the function of religion and of its inner meaning in personal and group life, leading toward a rational insight and righteous impulse.