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On: 16 November 2014, At: 01:12

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

COURSES OF STUDY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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Published online: 11 Aug 2006.

To cite this article: Rev. William E. McLennan D. D. (1909) COURSES OF STUDY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 4:3, 267-271, DOI: [10.1080/0034408090040306](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040306)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040306>

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new lease of life, and give us abundant reason for being organized as we are.

After all, what is a program for a young people's society? Is it not a program for the whole church to enter upon and seek to realize? If we emphasize the spiritual life; if we seek the restoration of the freedom of the spirit, a normal Christian life, without the insistent demands of so much technicality that frequently throttles the very life it is intended to develop; I say, it seems to me we shall charge the whole church with an ideal of Christian service and living as to gather the whole institution under one great banner, charged with one great spirit.

COURSES OF STUDY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

REV. WILLIAM E. MCLENNAN, D. D.,
Pastor The Belden Avenue Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill.

The duty of speaking on this theme involves for me peculiar difficulty and peculiar embarrassment. The difficulty lies in the necessity, as I regard it, of naming, or rather suggesting, an ideal course of study for church young people, the embarrassment in the obligation of criticizing existing courses and showing how near to (and how far from) that ideal they come.

Of a few things I feel measurably sure, and one of these is that the large majority of our young people do not now receive anything like an adequate religious training in the home, the school, the church, including the Sunday school, or by their miscellaneous reading. What the young person does receive may do him positive harm, for the reason that it is apt to be desultory, fragmentary, out of proportion, uninteresting, and, in the main, serving but to emphasize the contrast with so-called secular teaching, which is more or less critical, logical, progressive, interesting, practical. Will not this fact partly explain the drift of our young people away from the church and Sunday school, or, if that is too strong a term, their indifference? The instruction which they receive, particularly in the Sunday school, tends to make them sceptical of all religious claims and ideals.

Now, if we could have for our youth an adequate course of study and reading prepared, both with respect to matter and form, by experts in their respective lines, and following in general the plan of similar text-books in use in the public schools, and if these books could be taught by persons measurably proficient, the present situation would be not only greatly changed, something like a revolution would be wrought. Let it not be thought that I am advocating a course of study that is either

elaborate or scholarly in the sense of being critical. What I mean is that the studies should be reasonably comprehensive, interesting enough to hold the attention and sufficiently logical to command the respect of thoughtful young minds.

The first place amongst text-books will, of course, be given the Bible. Whatever text-book is used as a guide to Bible study, it should at least *accomplish three results*: (1) *it should reveal what the Bible is*; (2) *it should show how the Bible has come down to us in its present form*; (3) *it should bring out what the Bible contains*, with special emphasis on its great doctrines, showing what is the main purpose of the Book to reveal the goodness and mercy of God, particularly in the gift of his Son through whom we have redemption.

The second text-book should bear directly upon the *life of Christ*. It should make as plain as possible the conditions under which Christ lived his early life, with special reference to the habits of thought of the people of the time, their customs, etc., in order that the sayings of Jesus may be understood as they were understood by the people to whom they were addressed.

The third book should deal with *the Church*—particularly with the church of the apostles—the simplicity of its organization, the simple tests for membership, together with the manifest power which characterized its life and work. This should be followed with a fair statement of the growth of the church into the ecclesiastical organization of the fourth and succeeding centuries, and its inevitable divisions of reformation and post-reformation times. Such a work would not be complete without a clear showing of the relation of the church to the kingdom of God, which represents the thing for which the church exists.

I would name as a *fourth book*, in the ideal course of study for young people, a simple but clear and comprehensive discussion of *duties*—what might be called practical ethics.

And for *the fifth book* there should be an up-to-date presentation of sociology, with special reference to the questions of the hour, such as socialism, the labor movement, the foreigner, etc. A large place should be given to the city as the chief element in our modern life.

A *sixth book* would take up the subject of missions, the point of view being not so much the best method of raising money as a clear showing of the intimate relation existing between every portion of the inhabited world, and the logical necessity on each part of the world to care for the other parts—the missionary enterprise being thus the logical outgrowth of a serious belief in the brotherhood of man.

Other books could be added to this list. There might be a book on denominational history, though it is possible that such

a history will, in its glorification of denominational peculiarities, really interfere with the growth of the kingdom within that particular church. What we most need to-day is the development of loyalty for Christ and His teachings rather than for any particular denomination.

Now let us look at the courses of study as outlined by the various denominations. Taking them in alphabetical order we have first *the Baptist Course*. The plan of the Christian Culture Courses of the B. Y. P. U. is to have the members take up one book of the course a year until the entire course is read and mastered. Following the order I have already noted, I mention first "*The Young Christian and His Bible*," by W. H. Geistweit. He makes use of his experience with young persons and the plan and method he adopts are quite admirable. The book is at once a story of how we got the Bible and an exposition of Bible doctrines. Following each chapter is a summary and quiz, which are good memory devices.

There is a life of Christ entitled "*The Disciple and His Lord*," by Rev. J. S. Kirtley, D. D., arranged in the form of twenty-six days with Jesus. This book is in line with modern methods of presenting Christ's life.

"*The Young Christian and the Early Church*," by J. W. Conley, D. D., is an exposition for the most part of the Book of Acts. It is well arranged and the material well presented, though the necessity, as the author evidently regards it, of discussing mooted questions somewhat mars the otherwise excellent discussion.

"*The Young Christian and His Work*," by Z. Greuell, is a book on ethics, based on Scripture, and touching all or nearly all possible questions which a young person would be called upon to answer. It is the only work of the kind, so far as I am informed, prescribed by any denomination for young people's reading.

The course arranged for the young people of the *Christian Church* is known as the Bethany Course, and is intended principally for members of the Christian Endeavor Societies connected with the local churches. There is no specific book on the history of the Bible or one interpreting it as a whole. The only book bearing on the subject is "*Bible Doctrine for Young Disciples*," by Frederick D. Power, which is designed to instruct converts with respect to the views held by the denomination touching the tenets of Christianity.

A wholly admirable little book is the "*Life and Teachings of Jesus*," by Herbert L. Willett, Ph. D., a book that could well be used by every denomination of Christians.

A history of the denomination is a book called "*Sketches of*

Our Pioneers," by F. D. Power, which gives a brief account of the men who are counted the founders of the denomination.

Then follow three excellent books on different phases of missions—"A Hand-Book of Missions," a brief history of missionary enterprise; a book on "*Heroes of Modern Missions*," and an account of the work of the denomination in missionary lands called "*Missionary Fields and Forces*."

The *Methodist Episcopal Church* plans to reach its young people almost wholly through its Epworth Leagues, which are supposed to be organized in every local church. This organization, through its corps of officers, appears to have both time and means to develop a really elaborate educational plan for its young people. The first book of its reading course contains twenty-five lessons on the Old Testament and bears the title of "*Studies in the Old Testament*," by C. H. Morgan and T. E. Taylor. It is a comprehensive and able work. No young person can be in doubt of the contents and spirit of the Old Testament after its study.

The same authors, with S. Earl Taylor, have brought out a similar book to the one on the Old Testament on the "*Life of Christ*" in twenty-five lessons. Both of these books are wholly admirable both in content and method. The map studies, the "Personal Thought," and the brief suggestions interspersed are helpful.

The same authors are responsible, together with Professor Marcus D. Buell of the Boston University, for "*Studies in the Early Church*," which is uniform with the two books already mentioned, and equally helpful.

The same management has brought out a series of studies for the Juniors, which are the best of the kind of any with which I am acquainted. These are "*Short Studies of Old Testament Heroes*," by Emma A. Robinson and Charles H. Morgan; "*Stories of Bible Victories*," and "*Short Studies of Heroes of the Early Church*," both of them by Miss Robinson.

The "Christian Study Course" of the *Presbyterian Church* is designed for the training of young people over sixteen years of age. The books may be read and studies by individuals or classes, but they are intended chiefly for individuals. The Biblical books in this course are by such masters as Dr. James Robertson and Dr. Dodds. The first-named writes on "*The Old Testament and Its Contents*," the second gives an "*Exposition of the Apostles' Creed*." The mechanical part of these books is not attractive, the type being too small for one thing and the arrangement not being the best that could be devised. Moreover, excellent as they are, they are not prepared specifically for young people but for persons more or less mature. The third book is

"*The Presbyterian Churches*," by J. N. Ogilvie, with an introduction by Dr. A. C. Zenos. The book has a forbidding appearance. The type is small and the text looks "hard," being much taken up with certain controversies and doctrines hard to be understood. Besides it needs revision to bring it down to the present decade.

There are two books on missions—"Heroes of the Cross in America," by Don. O. Shelton, and "*Daybreak in the Dark Continent*," by Wilson S. Naylor, both of which are illuminative and interesting.

I have not been able to discover other denominations which have prescribed courses of study for their young people, though a number have separate books suitable for such study. The Lutherans, for example, through the Luther League, have a long and good list dealing chiefly with Luther and Lutheran doctrines. Something has been done, to the same end, by the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association. Outlines of reading have been prepared in some instances.

THE NORMAL RELIGION OF A BOY.

FREDERIC TOWER GALPIN,
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The physical period of adolescence includes three experiences (1) the acquisition of personal freedom, the normal break with external authority; (2) the discovery of selfhood; (3) the surrender to the social-will. As the young robin pushes out of its nest, finds its wings and begins an independent bird-life, the normal boy becomes dissatisfied with the parental world which has been foisted upon him. He must stand apart, observe and enter into the business of making his own world. This he begins by ruthlessly throwing aside home and friends; together with their precept and example, everything that was part and parcel of the child-life. Temporarily, he finds himself an alien and courts the friendship of solitude.

The second experience is one of discovery. He finds new strength in which he exults and takes new risks that are certain to interpret to him success and failure. A poorly furnished, awkward selfhood is enthroned. This seems to be a necessary step in the appropriation of a world-order and in the learning of the moral order. The new paths include not only the discovery of limitations and dire disappointments, but resources and joys as well. Wild enthusiasms are his and a "storm and stress"