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RELATING CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH TO THE CHURCH

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Human beings are incurably religious. They are never more religious than in the dreaming days of storm and stress, immediately after the opening of the adolescent period—at the eighth grade of Grammar school, or the first year of High school. It is at that particular junction of the youthful life that the pastor has his chance to tie up his young people to the church. For twenty years I have followed the method of organizing a Pastor's Training Class of the boys and girls of this age in the Sunday school. I have found the superintendent more than ready to co-operate. The class begins on the first Sunday of the year. It closes on Easter Day, when the whole class with a white carnation in the buttonhole or dress is presented to the whole church, at the largest service of the year, and repeats the Confession of Faith. From this class those who wish, join the church at the following Communion. A large number always so wish. The class is held at the Sunday school hour, and is made up of several smaller classes, who come with their teachers. This method insures the presence of every child of the appropriate age. It is not voluntary, but a part of the order of grading and has a distinct advantage over the voluntary Pastor's Training Class, in that it secures the attendance, sooner or later, of every child in the Sunday school.

The subject of the Training Class is "The Essentials of Christianity"; I propose to answer the question, "What is Christianity?" The whole question is simplified and definite. I do not undertake to begin from the foundation of the world, and teach Judaism leading to Christianity, but I do undertake to lay a simple foundation of the philosophy of life. Time, space, cause and effect, law, matter, mind, and the necessity of a Master-mind are briefly touched upon. The Master-mind, as interpreted by Jesus Christ as Father and personal spiritual friend of every soul, is reverently explained. Then follows the specific teaching of Jesus in the Beatitudes, the Golden Rule, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the life that is endless. My effort is to relate Christianity to the things the boys and girls learn in High school, showing that all things are a unity, a moral unity, under the wise guidance of a God as interpreted

by Jesus Christ. I leave out the devil and hell, and emphasize the spiritual results of doing good, or failing to follow justice and love.

We study the simple Confession of Faith. Then the offer of church membership, its duty and privilege as the greatest in the world, is vigorously put. The symbolism of the church, its sacraments, its obligation to tell all men the good news of a good God and an attainable happy life, all these are strongly urged. The class begins with prayer. We learn several prayers, and such passages as 1st Corinthians, XIII. From this class in ten years have come no less than 400 of the brightest boys and girls of our section of the city, and they are to-day some of the sturdiest Christian workers we have.

GRADED LESSONS IN THE SMALL SCHOOL*

When the Graded Lessons were first projected the statement was frequently made that while closely graded lessons are desirable in any school it would not be possible to use them in schools of one hundred or less. When the lessons appeared, however, it was found that small as well as large schools were sending in orders, and experience has shown that some of the smaller schools have used them ever since the first lessons were issued, and are most enthusiastic over them and the results they have obtained from them.

Question, "Is it possible for a small school to have genuine graded teaching, and if so, how can this be brought about?" A plan has been worked out by Professor Robertson of Canada, who saw the great value of the closely graded course and determined that the numerous small schools of his country should have the benefit of the Graded Lessons, if in any way it could be accomplished.

For a school having only six teachers, he has so arranged the work of those teachers and the grading as to make it possible for every pupil in the school from five years on to have all the lessons in the graded course, *in the order in which they were intended to be taught*. His plan provides that all pupils five years of age shall be placed in one class, known as Group A; 6, 7, and 8 in another, called Group B; 9, 10, and 11 in a third, called Group C; 12, 13, and 14 in a fourth, called Group D; 15, 16, and 17 in a fifth, Group E; and 18, 19, and 20 in the sixth, Group F. For the five-year-old

*We are indebted to Prof. J. C. Robertson, B.D. of Toronto, for the plan, and to the Methodist Sunday School Board for the use of the plates of schedules.