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### THE DEPARTMENTAL GRADED LESSONS

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multitude. At the end of every lecture, the students were directed at once to turn to ministering to the hungry, the sick, the bereaved and the sinful. The apostle of love tells us of another marvelous fact in this school of Jesus. The Jews could not understand how the Master and his students got their learning when, as their critics said, "They have never studied." Jesus explained a most essential thing for educators to remember when he said: "If any one has the will to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching is from God." Theology was being taught in the schools of Jerusalem while Jesus worked miracles of education in the streets.

We must recognize as educators that God is not so much in the detached school house but in the heart of suffering humanity. If we would hear God's voice, we must go out there in the streets among the masses and begin doing God's will through us for them and then only can we ever learn the most wonderful lessons that are ever imparted to religious leadership.

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## THE DEPARTMENTAL GRADED LESSONS

JOHN T. FARIS, D. D.

*Editor of the Presbyterian Board of Publication*

On January 1, 1915, a group of six denominations — the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., the Presbyterian Church, U. S., the United Presbyterian Church, the Canadian Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, and the Reformed Church in the United States — offered to their Sunday schools Departmental Graded Lessons, prepared on the outlines of the International Closely Graded Lessons, slightly adapted.

These lessons were offered especially to meet the needs of the little Sunday schools, with enrollment of fifty members, more or less, which recognize that the closely graded lessons are very desirable, because of their fine adaptation to the pupil, yet are prevented from adopting them by this very characteristic. The fine adaptation of the lesson material demands close grading of the pupils in the various departments and this close grading cannot be secured in a little school where the pupils and teachers are few in number and the building equipment is quite meager. The department, not the class, is the unit of division in such a school. Usually, there are five or six classes, the number depending upon the number of pupils and available teachers. In

each class there are two or three, possibly four grades of pupils. If it were possible to teach three or four different lessons in the same class at the same time, the closely graded lessons would be as successfully used in the small school as in the large school. But such a plan is ordinarily impossible, so the workers in many schools have delayed introducing the lessons. They plead the following circumstances:

1. Too few pupils and teachers, to have first and second year beginners classes; first, second and third year primary classes; and first, second, third and fourth year junior classes.

2. Even when there are enough pupils to form the various classes, and the required number of teachers for the classes, there is still the problem of securing other persons to act as substitute teachers at any time of enforced absence on the part of the regular teacher.

3. The lack of proper building equipment, making it impossible to separate so many departments and classes.

4. The failure of many teachers to understand that the closely graded courses for each grade begin the first Sunday in October and not the first Sunday in January, as do the uniform lessons. The lack of this knowledge leads to the introduction of the lessons at the wrong time of the year.

5. The greater initial expense compared with the cost of the material used in teaching the uniform lessons. Many a single worker in a small school is convinced of the need for this greater expense but he or she is unable to persuade the pastor, superintendent, or other teachers that it is necessary for the proper Christian education of the young.

6. The confusion which very often occurs at the time of promotion, after having used the present primary and junior courses in rotation as some small schools are now doing. The teacher using the lessons in rotation has had to adapt them almost as much as the former uniform lessons, so that at the end of three or four years she is not quite sure as to what has and what has not been taught. This state of affairs, in connection with the fact that no outline of a basis of promotion has been given, leads to the confusion.

In the new Departmental Lessons, prepared to meet this objection, there will be a two years' beginners course, a three years' primary course, and a three years' junior course. Each of these courses will be used in rotation, as in the beginners course of the closely graded series. This necessitates the formation of but three classes, for three grades, with three teachers and three assistant

teachers to act as substitutes during the absence of the regular teacher.

The preparation of the beginners material presents no new problem, since it was planned from the beginning to use the two years' lessons in rotation.

The writer of the Primary Lessons, who has had years of successful experience with children of this age and their teachers, has in mind the child of seven, the middle year of the period, in preparing the lessons for each year of the course. Experience has shown that it is possible to use material prepared in this way, with success.

The writer of the Junior Lessons, who has had experience as varied as the writer of the Primary Lessons, keeps in mind the child of ten in the preparation of each year's lessons in the middle year of the three year Junior period advocated by many educators. (See Report of the Committee on Sunday School Nomenclature, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, April, 1915).

The lessons are dated and are published in quarterly form, as are the helps on the International Uniform Lessons. Thus there is no confusion as to the day on which a certain lesson is to be taught. In this way it is always possible to arrange in advance the Easter lesson and the lessons before and after.

The departmental helps are to be used once only. Two years later, or three years later, as the case may be, when the lessons are to be used again, they will be revised. The advantage of this arrangement has been proved in the case of the uniform quarterlies. It will always be possible to take advantage of fresh knowledge and new developments.

Since the lessons are to be revised when used a second time, it is possible to enter them for mail distribution at second class rates. Then the expense to the school is materially reduced, for subscription prices are kept at a minimum.

Various adjustments have been or will be necessary. For instance, since the lessons were introduced for use beginning January 1, 1915, the material presented began with Lesson 14 of the first year, in each course. Thus confusion was avoided. It is now quite possible for teachers from schools using Closely Graded Lessons to mingle in Graded Unions with teachers from schools where the Departmental Lessons are used. Promotion Day may be October 1, or January 1, at the pleasure of the school; there is nothing in the quarterly to indicate that one date is preferred to the other.

Another adjustment may have to be made at the close of 1917, when the lessons for the present fourth year Junior course are due. It may be, however, that before that date the judgment of many workers, as indicated in the article to which reference has already been made, will have been justified by the transfer of the twelve-year-old child to the Intermediate Department. If not, it will be a simple matter to adjust the lessons.

During the months since the introduction of the new lessons, letters from many workers have indicated their delight with the new arrangement. In addition to the small schools which were specially in mind when the lessons were planned, many large schools are using them with satisfaction.

While it is impossible just now to state how many schools are using the Departmental Lessons, it is probably safe to say that at least fifty thousand departments in the United States and Canada, have found them helpful.