

Methods of Working Up a Teacher-training Class

~Other Speakers A-F: Adam K. Adcock:

Oakland M. E. Church, Monday Afternoon, October 18.

It is necessary, first of all, to understand what teacher-training is designed to do. It meets the present need for Bible study. A generation ago the Disciples of Christ were driven by misrepresentation and persecution to examine the foundation of their hope and the object of their faith, in order to be able to defend their position; but as we are now recognized in most places as one of the leading religious bodies of the world, this stimulus to the study of the word of God has passed away. And with multitudes of young people in the church and thousands coming in every year, a definite outline study of the Bible was necessary; and teacher-training, timely enough both to discover and supply this want, has swept the brotherhood like wildfire.

A keen knowledge of the relation of the training-class to the Bible school

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will also help much. The Bible school, being the foundation of all other organizations, is the most important function of the church to-day; and whatever makes, it more effective will have a telling influence in the future. The International lessons, though, all things considered, the best method in the Bible school now, skip here and there, and study the Scriptures by piecemeal; and it is absolutely necessary to supplement them by a general study, enabling the student to grasp the Bible as a whole, appreciate its parts and understand their relation to one another. The training-class will do this.

"Training for Service" makes the Bible intelligible to the people. To those who have no general knowledge of the Sacred Writings, they are obscure and uninteresting; but in the training-class the Bible becomes a new, open Book, with history the most ancient, antedating man and going back to the beginning; written in language whose diction is the grandest, whose style is the most sublime, surpassing Shakespeare or Milton, and the greatest of all classics; severely true to life, giving the bad as well as the good in its heroes; the basis of all law, touching fundamentally or incidentally every department of human learning; a mirror in which we see ourselves; a picture of the world, which, as we look upon it, makes us contemporary with our fellows in all time, and in which we behold Jesus, the great Teacher, and hear the voice of God.

Moreover, a large training-class will help much in doing the work of the church, for it trains for service. None "who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come," unless they fall away, making their repentance impossible, can fail to respond to the call of the King, "Go work in my vineyard."

Now, the point, as to methods, in all that I have said is to tell it to those whom you seek to interest. The men and women of our churches are, as they should be, slow to organize a new class, unless they know what it is for. Therefore, having learned what a training-class can do, and being familiar with the needs of your community, agitate the matter constantly till you arouse a desire for the class. And the most necessary thing in this agitation is enthusiasm. Read our church and Bible-school papers every week to find out what others are doing, and go to all the conventions to hear addresses and reports along this line, till you become so thoroughly inoculated with the germ that you feel like you would die and your church would fail of its mission in training-class. Mark the enthusiasm of this world, unless you can work up a [544] the Son of man as, coming into the full power of his manhood, he bade his friends and neighbors good-by, and turned his steps toward the Jordan where John was baptizing; hear him call from the blue lake by the mountains in Galilee humble men to be his messengers; follow him through his strenuous life, and see with what energy and devotion he did his work. He was enthusiastic, and he worked up a training-class. He taught his class both by what he said and by what he did before them. His instituting the Lord's Supper lingered with them, and it abides with the church forever as a never-to-be-forgotten object-lesson; and surely his disciples remembered to their dying day his prayer with crying and tears and sweat of blood in Gethsemane, and his poor, helpless, mangled body on the cross. But he did not have to die, for the angels would have protected him; but he was moved by his enthusiastic love to be the great sacrifice for sin. He would rather die than that the Scripture should not be fulfilled. He gave up his life to succeed and inspire his training-class to do their work. Enthusiasm like that will work up a training-class anywhere.

Do not be afraid to give much time in thought and work to this task. Advise often with your leaders, and see that they have literature on the subject to learn what is going on all over the country. Ask them to help you organize a training-class, and begin with those that are interested. Give the class all the publicity you can, and try to get everybody into it. Do not be afraid to advertise. The Lord advertised. John the Baptist was his great agent, and later on he sent his disciples before him to announce his coming. The people are busy with the

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affairs of this world, and we must use every legitimate means to get their attention to the work of the King.

The way to manifest your interest is to talk about it and work at it. Talk it on the street, talk it in the store, talk it in the shop, talk it in the office, talk it in the study, talk it at home, talk it at church, talk it by day and by night, talk it everywhere and everywhen and write it in the papers! Offer all the inducements you can think of, and make every proper appeal. Show them how the training-class will be a key to unlock the rich treasure of the word of God. Tell them that others have done it, and so can they.

Now, of course, in all this agitation, it is necessary to have system and wisdom. One can not do all the work, and a committee should be appointed to help by personal visitation and solicitation. And, when the time, the "psychological moment," comes, call the people together in as large numbers as possible, and organize the class, with the best officers available. Continue to work it up, by enthusiastic endeavor, and many others will come into it later. Aspire to have a big class, not merely for the sake of size, but to reach all the members of the church and others. You can get more help to do large things than you can to do small things.

But in this, as in every good thing, there is no excellence without labor, there is no royal road to success. Everything has to begin in somebody's heart. The redemption of the world, which has been worked out through the ages, was in the heart of God, as Adam and Eve, with bowed forms and crushed spirits, were banished from the Garden of Delights; the perpetuity of the worship of the true God, the great nation through whom the Son of God came into the world and the day of Christ were in the heart of Abraham, as he journeyed to the land of Canaan; the glory of the Messiah's kingdom was in the heart of John as he thundered against sin, in the Jordan valley; his final triumph, filling the world with life, light and glory, was in the heart of Jesus raised from the dead, as he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation; the restoration of primitive Christianity was in the heart of Alexander Campbell as he wrote in his study, taught at Bethany and traveled over this country; and the training-class must be in your heart, as you seek to organize it. If it is in your heart, persist till it gets into the hearts of the people. Talk about it privately, preach about it publicly, pray about it secretly, and it will surely come to pass! Talk it up, work it up, pray it up, and keep on keeping on! [545]