Address

to the

Association of Churches at

Alamedas Pal

deliverd Oct 11th 1888

Subject

Churches & Bible School

No 11
Address to the Association by Rev. Geo. Church at Alberna
By J. H. Brown delivered Oct. 21, 1854.

Your Committee have assigned me
three pregnant words—Church, Bible, School.

If we connect the latter by juxtaposition the School
referred to, is doubtless one composed mainly of church
members, who are grouped into a class or classes
for the study of the Bible. Your Committee
probably will cause me to be reminded of some questions, for example:

1. Is it necessary or wise to attempt to form a
   church into a school for the study of the Scriptures?

2. Having done, how best to organize—how best to
   awaken and sustain the interest?

3. What would be the probable fruits of the study?

As I take it, the layman is a man who is not
expected to sermonize or attempt too much rhetoric or logic;
but like the blind man, who was healed by the Master,
touch tell what he knows, what he himself has found
out in the line of experience. And further on the layman
in some respects, comes up to this Conference. He is expected to be
like a Washington representative; he is to remember his
constituency. He can tell what they do and
sometimes what they want. This much I think
the delegates of the first Cong. Church in San Francisco
are prepared to do and
When I came to my first field, for I am often moved to write, it has been my habit to join three things: first, the Church; second, my habit to join three things: first, the Church; second, the prayer meeting; third, the Sabbath School. And thus the prayer meeting. Third, the Sabbath School. And this, if you will forgive the repetition, even if we could recommend them to every brother and sister, on entering the Church. If this had always been done, the first question would not have been asked: because all the numbers would be in the Sabbath School. Some as many as officers, some as teachers and the remainder as scholars. In our last lesson I saw this brief commentary: the Bible which contains God’s wise and perfect will should be our constant study. It is wiser for the traveler to throw away his guide, and the sailor, his chart. Than for the Christian to neglect his Bible. Permit me to add that the Holy Spirit seems to do his chief work thus. The use of Scripture texts. The divine Word is necessary to awaken, to convert, to convince, to regenerate, to make growth, to give feeling, to blossom, to fructify, to renew, to strengthen, for conflicts within and without, and above all to touch the soul in him for work with other souls. To give it power.

This is common knowledge, and admitted by all sincere followers of Christ. Then it is certainly wise to attempt to bring every Church member, by all lawful influences, to the Bible study. When I visitedispensers’ church, I was to the Bible study. When I visited dispensers’ church, I was astonished to behold the vast number of Believers in the hands of the leaders. They opened and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude. They opened 4 and read the Holy Word of the listening multitude.
interest. For the time being, it was a grand church-Bible School. When John Wesley's class-meetings were first formed and for a long time thereafter, I understood they were mainly given to Bible reading and Bible Study. It was through the Word of God that he expected to reach men and keep them in the fold. In later years, the essential feature of the class-meeting was almost disappeared. I hope it may be revived, and would like to promote it in a similar manner to God that we might organize into classes with chosen leaders besides the classes in the School proper.

In our church we have two Bible classes. Mrs. Cooper with her gifted intelligence, great winning heart, conducts one in the auditorium, and I lead another in the Pastor's study. They take place just after the morning service. They form a basis of church members, but others are constantly invited to come in. Mrs. Cooper gives great deal of study, thought and preparation to each lesson. She draws out the thought of the class upon matters of great doctrine, proxem, and beauty. This leads to scholarship, communion, and loving kindness of our Heavenly Father. If gifted women only knew how their voices thrilled the souls of listening men, reminding them of their mother-teaching in childhood, and drawing them with cords strong in love, men of them would do like this beloved teacher.

My class usually fills the Pastor's study. It has become very social. We call for subjects of prayer, for requests, and for social gatherings. We read the Golden Text together, get the topic of the lesson before us, and then endeavor to call upon God in Jesus' name, with all our hearts for an answer to our specific requests. We entrust a special refreshment of the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand His Word, and to know the substance of it.
incorporated with our very being. Men who read a verse one or more in concert; dwell upon its literal significance till it is clearly understood; then, following with the plainest spiritual application, if objections arise, somebody can give a satisfactory answer. Incidents in illustration, drawn from experience, are always encouraged. Men and women with troublesome hobbies are of course a bother to the class; but usually, frank and fearless answers in Scripture prove
subsequent the purpose and prevent too much and too long distraction. We close at the hour after a session of an hour and a half. Some lessons are more absorbing than others; but I have never known the interest in ongoing or to flag or the time seem long. The more the class participate in the discussion, the better their satisfaction. I always have them read collateral and illustrative passages. Our Bible classes taught by laymen are a puzzle to the clergyman on the continent of Europe. How we attain the secret of success and interest lies in the fact that we all study the Bible together. The so-called teacher is only a guiding person to give directions in order to the proceeding. The doctrine is in the divine Word. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher of each soul, and the best interpreter of His own Word. Thus we answer the first inquiry: "Is it necessary or wise to attempt to form a church as a whole into a school for the study of the Scriptures?". It doubtless is not absolutely necessary, but is certainly wise
so to do. The experience of our church leads to the conviction
that the Bible classes are very profitable. But that the
profit would increase tenfold if we could have
twenty such classes instead of two. I would never leave one
of them any well-beloved person whether a believer in Christ or
not, for with several strong Christians present there is hardly to be
found the more favorable conditions for winning souls to
The Lord.

Our experience answers the second complex question: How
best to organize, how best to awaken and sustain The
interest? (a) Organize into classes of convenient size. I would
not expect fifty for effective work. You will need a
leader in whom the class have confidence, and one who
is an undoubted follower of Christ. Generally the
class elect their own, or if he or the teacher desires, his or
her class which is tantamount to an election.

(b) awaken interest by prayer, by having objects of prayer,
by having always specific and important requests for
prayer on the teacher's or leader's table, by faithful private prayer
by claiming Christ's promise in united prayer. Mrs. Coopin
has several Kinder Garden, we have one, to work for,
to hear about and to contribute to the support of. This
leads a tender Christian interest. But the means which is
awakened by God's Holy Word itself. With it comes the Holy
Spirit. No soul can be long cold or indifferent, when
a few Christians present an all of the fire of love
and zeal always springing from this natural study. A
present savour makes their heart burn within them
and the long past becomes as a matter of today.

Sustain the interest by the same process as that by
which it is awakened: soldiers in church or in garrison
subject to a daily routine, often become tired and disgusted
with their life. It is near the case in an active campaign.
So a class which goes to work with
a will in helping others. The saving seeds has always
the campaign enthusiasm. This God according to his
promise is with them — with them always.

Give us a moment in the third question:

“What will be the fruits of the study?”

We have answered this inquiry already: we could not
take five minutes about Bible study without
answering this fruit! Why grow in grace and
knowledge for every individual soul? Illumination
for every one who has relapsed into idleness, who
can be brought into the warm atmosphere of the
Christian love of the class, and the blessing of one after
another, both of the present the absent, out of
darkness into the light. Fruits! They are the birth,
the life, the hope, the comfort, the working power,
The dying grace and the everlasting inheritance!
Everything that can come from heavenly father love.
The serious presence and the Spirit’s restless
force; it may all be wrought out and made plain
practicable by the study of the Book which holy
men of old wrote as they were moved by the
Holy Ghost. Out of darkness, out of sorrow, out of
dispair all causes by divine would receive men known
and children. The Church-Bible class method is in my
judgment a great help to other methods to bring about these results.