

Address  
to the  
Association of Churches at  
Alameda Cal  
delivered Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 1888

Subject -  
Church, Bible School  
and and and

No 11

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

Address

President of Board of  
Education, N.Y.

Dec 11 1888

Encl.

Robert B. Johnson

No 11



Address to the Association of Cong. Churches at Alameda  
by Geo. Howard, delivered Oct 11 1884.

Your Committee have assigned me  
three pregnant words Church, Bible, School.  
If we connect <sup>these words</sup> ~~these~~ by hyphens the school  
referred to, is doubtless one <sup>to be</sup> composed mainly of church  
members, who are grouped into a class or classes  
for the study of the Bible.

Probably there arose in <sup>flexible</sup> the minds of <sup>your</sup> the Committee  
on topics some questions: for example:

1. Is it necessary or wise to attempt to form a  
church <sup>as a whole</sup> into a school for the study of the Scriptures?
2. Were it done, how best to organize - how best to  
awaken & sustain the interest?
3. What <sup>with</sup> ~~may be~~ 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 <sup>he is to</sup> tell what he knows, what he himself has found  
out in the line of experience. And further as the layman  
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 <sup>can</sup> delegates of the first Cong. Church of San Francisco  
are prepared to do and



Address to the Association of the Church of Christ

These fragments have been compiled from  
the fragments of the Church of Christ

of our country, and of the Church of Christ  
in the study of the Church of Christ

for the study of the Church of Christ  
in the study of the Church of Christ

for the study of the Church of Christ  
in the study of the Church of Christ

for the study of the Church of Christ  
in the study of the Church of Christ

for the study of the Church of Christ  
in the study of the Church of Christ



may attempt.

2.

When I come to a new field, for I am often moved  
hither & thither in my lay-ministry, it has been  
my habit to join <sup>myself to</sup> three things: first the Church, second  
the prayer-meeting, third the Sabbath School. And this  
even <sup>if you will forgive the egotism</sup> I would recommend 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 members would be in the Sabbath School, some  
as officers, <sup>many</sup> ~~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 traveller to throw away his guide, and the sailor his  
charts, than for <sup>the Christian</sup> to neglect his Bible."  
Permit me to add <sup>to this true statement</sup> that the Holy Spirit seems to do  
His chief work thro. the use of Scripture texts. The Divine  
Word is necessary to awaken, to convict, to convince, to  
convert, to regenerate, to make growth, to give foliage  
& blossom & fruitage, to renew, to strengthen for  
conflicts within & without, and above all to put the  
soul in trim 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 inducements,  
to the Bible study. When I visited Spurgeon's Church, I was  
astonished to behold the vast number of Bibles in the hands  
of the listening multitude. They opened & read the Holy Word  
following him as he read with a marked absorption &







interest. For the time being, it was a grand church-  
Bible-School. When John Wesley's class-meetings were  
first formed & for a long time thereafter, I understand  
they were mainly given to Bible reading & Bible study.  
It was through the Word of God that he expected to  
reach men & keep them in the fold. In later years  
this essential feature of the class-meeting has, almost  
disappeared. I hope it may be revived; and would  
to God that we <sup>might</sup> ~~could~~ <sup>organize</sup> ~~so~~ <sup>in a similar manner</sup> into classes with  
chosen leaders.

Besides the classes in the S. School proper.  
In our church we have two Bible Classes. Mrs Cooper  
with her gifted intelligence & great loving heart, conducts  
one in the <sup>main</sup> auditorium - and I lead another in the Pastors  
study. They take place just after the morning service. They  
have a basis of church members, but others are constantly  
invited. <sup>more, they are</sup> urged to come in. Mrs Cooper gives a great deal  
of study, thought & preparation to each lesson. She  
draws out the thoughts of the class upon matters of fact &  
doctrine, pro & con, & gently leads to beholding <sup>something of</sup> ~~her great~~ <sup>Christ</sup>  
loving kindness of our Heavenly Father. If gifted women  
only knew how their voices thrilled the souls of listening  
men, reminding them of <sup>the</sup> sweet mother-teaching of <sup>the</sup> ~~table of~~  
childhood, ~~and~~ drawing them with cords stronger than  
hemps, ~~more~~ of them would do like this beloved teacher.  
My class usually fills the Pastors study. It has become very  
social. We call for subjects of prayer, for requests, - we read  
the golden texts 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  
entreat a special refreshment of the Holy Spirit to enable us  
to understand His Word, and to know the substance of it







4  
incorporated with our very being. Next we read a verse  
one or more, in concert; dwell upon its literal significance  
till it is clearly understood; then follow with the plainest  
spiritual application. If objections arise, somebody  
can give a satisfactory answer. Incidents in  
illustration, drawn from experience, are always  
encouraged. Men & women with troublesome hobbies  
are <sup>sometimes</sup> of course a bother to the class; but usually  
frank & fearless answers in Scripture phrase  
<sup>subserve</sup> ~~answer~~ the purpose and prevent too much & too long  
distractions. We close at the <sup>appointed</sup> hour after a session of  
an hour & a half. Some lessons are more absorbing  
than others; but I have never known the interest  
to flag or the time seem long. The more <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ class  
participate in the discussions & remarks the better their  
satisfaction. I always have <sup>and not myself</sup> ~~them~~ read collateral & illustrative  
passages. Our Bible classes, <sup>in general</sup> taught by laymen are a  
puzzle to clergymen on the continent of Europe.  
The secret of the success & interest <sup>that we attain</sup> lies in the fact  
that we all study the Bible together. The so-called teacher  
is only a presiding person to give direction & order  
to the proceedings. The doctrines are in the divine  
Word. The Holy Spirit is the real <sup>and safe</sup> 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







5  
so to do. The experience at 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 out  
of them any well behaved person whether a believer in Christ or  
not; for with several strong Christians present there is hardly to be  
found <sup>elsewhere</sup> more favorable conditions for winning souls to  
the Lord.

Our experience answers <sup>also</sup> 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 exceed fifty for effective work. You will need a  
leader in whom the class have confidence, certainly one who  
is an undoubted follower of Christ. Generally <sup>adult</sup> the  
class elect their own, or if he or she teaches they seek 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. Casper  
has several Kinder Gartens, we have one, to work for,  
to hear about & to contribute to the support of. This  
kind a tender Christian interest. But the main interest 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 are full of the fire of love &  
zeal always springing from this mutual study. A  
present saviour makes their hearts 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. Seldin, in camp, or in garrison  
subject to a daily routine, often become tired & disgusted  
with their life. It is never the case on an active  
campaign. So a class which goes to work with  
a will in helping others the saving souls has always  
the campaign enthusiasm. The Lord according to his  
promise is with them - with them always.

Give us a moment on the third question:

"What will be the fruits of the study?"

We have answered this inquiry already: we could not  
talk two minutes about Bible study without  
answering this. Fruits! Why growth in grace &  
in knowledge for every individual <sup>believing</sup> soul; redema-  
tion for every one who has relapsed into idolatry, who  
can be brought into the warm atmosphere of the  
christian love of the class; and the bringing 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 <sup>the</sup> heavenly father love,  
the Saviour's presence and the Spirit's resistless  
force; it may all be wrought out and made plain  
& practicable by the study of that 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 caused by sin we would rescue men & women  
and children. The church Bible class method is in my  
judgment a great help to other methods to bring about these results.



