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HOW TO MASTER THE ENGLISH BIBLE

HOW TO MASTER THE ENGLISH BIBLE

AN EXPERIENCE, A METHOD

A RESULT, AN ILLUSTRATION

BY

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NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS OF THE BRITISH EDITION

The success of the author's book, *Synthetic Bible Studies*, has been such that it is a pleasure to us to introduce this little book to British Bible students.

NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS OF THE AMERICAN EDITION

The author of this book requires no introduction to the Bible-loving people of our time. A time it is of unusual quickening in the study of God's Word along spiritual and evangelical lines, toward which, as the editor of a leading newspaper has said, no one man has contributed more than Rev. James M. Gray, D.D.

"He knows what is in the Book," says the *Christian Endeavour World*, "and when he sounds the clear, strong notes of God's love, of victory over sin, of the believer's assurance, it is no wonder that thousands of young people wax as enthusiastic over the Bible as others do over athletics or art."

The interdenominational Bible classes which he has carried on, and to which his work directly and indirectly has given rise, are the largest and in other respects the most remarkable known. His work has revolutionised the method of teaching in some Sunday schools; it has put life into dead prayer-meetings; in not a few instances it has materially helped to solve the problem of the second service on the Lord's day; it has been a boon to many pastors in the labours of study and pulpit, whose gratitude is outspoken; it has contributed to the efficiency of foreign missionary workers, whose testimony has come from the uttermost parts of the earth; and it has reacted beneficially on the instruction given in the English Bible in some of our home academies, smaller colleges and seminaries. The secret of these results is given in this book.

Nor is it as a Bible teacher only, but also as a Bible preacher, that Dr. Gray holds a distinguished place in the current history of the Church. His expository sermons leave an impress not to be effaced. Presbyteries and ministerial associations are on record that they have stirred communities to their depths. Even secular editors, commonly unmoved by ordinary types of evangelism, have written: "Here is something new for the people, something fresh and suggestive for every active mind, which the business interests of the city cannot afford to neglect." The testimony of one pastor given at a meeting of the presbytery is practically that of scores of others throughout the country. He had attended a series of popular meetings conducted by Dr. Gray, and said: "I learned more during the few days I listened to Dr. Gray about the true character of preaching than I had learned in all my seminary course and my twenty years of ministry. Because of what I learned there of true expository preaching I shall hope to make the last years of my ministry the very best of all."

We are glad that this book contains a practical application of all that the author has said and taught to the results which may be gathered from it in the pulpit.

THE STORY OF THE CASE

HOW TO MASTER THE ENGLISH BIBLE

PART I

THE STORY OF THE CASE

[Sidenote: The Bible like a Farm]

How to master the English Bible! High-sounding title that, but does it mean what it says? It is not how to study it, but how to master it; for there is a sense in which the Bible must be mastered before it can be studied, and it is the failure to see this which accounts for other failures on the part of many earnest would-be Bible students. I suppose it is something like a farm; for although never a farmer myself, I have always imagined a farmer should know his farm before he attempted to work it. How much upland and how much lowland? How much wood and how much pasture? Where should the orchard be laid out? Where plant my corn, oats, and potatoes? What plot is to be seeded down to grass? When he has mastered his farm he begins to get ready for results from it.

Now there are many ways of studying the Bible, any one of which may be good enough in itself, but there is only one way to master it, as we shall see. And it is the Bible itself we are to master, not books about the Bible, nor yet "charts." I once listened to an earnest and cultivated young man delivering a lecture on Bible study, illustrated by a chart so long that when he unrolled and held one end of it above his head, as high as his arms could reach, the other curled up on the floor below the platform. As the auditor gazed upon its labyrinthian lines, circles, crosses and other things intended to illuminate it, and "gathered up the loins of his mind" to listen to the explanation following, it was with an inward sigh of gratitude that God had never put such a yoke upon us, "which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear."

[Sidenote: The Vernacular and Bible Tongues]

And it is the English Bible we are thinking about, the Bible in the vernacular, the tongue most of us best understand. One is grateful to have studied Hebrew and Greek, just to be able to tell others who have not that they do not require either to hearken to our Heavenly Father's voice. He has an advantage as a scholar who can utilise the original tongues; but the Bible was not given to scholars, but to the people, and "hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born" (Acts 2:8). It is not at all inconsistent to add that he who masters the English Bible is possessed of the strongest inducement to study it in Hebrew and Greek.

That which follows grows largely out of the writer's personal experience. For the first eight or ten years of my ministry I did not know my English Bible as I should have known it, a fact to which my own spiritual life and the character of my pulpit ministrations bore depressing witness. [Sidenote: The Bible in the Seminary] Nor was I so fortunate as to meet with more than one or two brethren in the ministry who knew their English Bible very much better than I knew mine. They all declared that the theological seminaries did not profess to teach the English Bible. They taught much about the Bible of great importance for ministers to know, such as the Hebrew and Greek tongues, the principles of exegesis and interpretation, the history of the text, and the proofs and illustrations of Christian doctrine; but, in the words of one of the ministers referred to (which have appeared in print), "while we had some special lessons in one or two of the epistles, several of the psalms, in some of the prophecies, and in a few select portions of the gospels, other and vastly important parts of the Bible were left out altogether. We had nothing on the book of Revelation, no elaborate study of the Mosaic ritual and its profound system of types, and especially were we left uninitiated into the minute and wonderful co-ordination of parts in the various books of the Old and New Testaments, which disclose a stupendous divine plan running through the whole, linking them all together as an indissoluble unit and carrying with them an amazing power of conviction."

The seminaries have assumed that students were acquainted with the great facts of the English Bible and their relation to one another before matriculation, but so competent an authority as President Harper declares that "to indicate the line of thought and chief ideas of a particular prophet, or the

argument of an epistle, or to state even the most important events in the life of our Lord, would be impossible for the average college graduate." It is such an unfortunate state of things which, to a certain extent, accounts for the rise and maintenance of those excellent institutions, the Moody Bible Institute in this country and Spurgeon's College in London, with their almost countless offspring and imitators everywhere, creating as they have a distinct atmosphere of biblical and evangelistic teaching and preaching. It is commonly supposed, it may be said in passing, that these institutions cater to or attract only men or women of very limited educational attainments, but in the case of the first-named, at least, an incidental census taken recently disclosed the fact that one-third of the male students then on the rolls or who had lately left were college-trained; one may safely hazard the opinion that in the women's department the proportion of college-trained students would have been still larger.

[Sidenote: Help from a Layman]

The first practical help I ever received in the mastery of the English Bible was from a layman. We were fellow-attendants at a certain Christian conference or convention and thrown together a good deal for several days, and I saw something in his Christian life to which I was a comparative stranger—a peace, a rest, a joy, a kind of spiritual poise I knew little about. One day I ventured to ask him how he had become possessed of the experience, when he replied, "By reading the epistle to the Ephesians." I was surprised, for I had read it without such results, and therefore asked him to explain the manner of his reading, when he related the following: He had gone into the country to spend the Sabbath with his family on one occasion, taking with him a pocket copy of Ephesians, and in the afternoon, going out into the woods and lying down under a tree, he began to read it; he read it through at a single reading, and finding his interest aroused, read it through again in the same way, and, his interest increasing, again and again. I think he added that he read it some twelve or fifteen times, "and when I arose to go into the house," said he, "I was in possession of Ephesians, or better yet, it was in possession of me, and I had been 'lifted up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus' in an experimental sense in which that had not been true in me before, and will never cease to be true in me again."

I confess that as I listened to this simple recital my heart was going up in thanksgiving to God for answered prayer, the prayer really of months, if not years, that I might come to know how to master His Word. And yet, side by side with the thanksgiving was humiliation that I had not discovered so simple a principle before, which a boy of ten or twelve might have known. And to think that an "ordained" minister must sit at the feet of a layman to learn the most important secret of his trade!

[Sidenote: Dr. Stalker's Experience]

Since that day, however, the writer has found some comfort in the thought that other ministers have had a not unlike experience. In an address before the National Bible Society of Scotland, the Rev. Dr. Stalker speaks of the first time he ever "read a whole book of the Bible straight through at a sitting." It was while as a student he was spending a winter in France, and there being no Protestant church in the town where he was passing a Sunday, he was thrown on his own resources. Leaving the hotel where he was staying, he lay down on a green knoll and began reading here and there as it chanced, till, coming to the epistle to the Romans, he read on and on through to the end. "As I proceeded," he said, "I began to catch the drift of Paul's thought; or rather, I was caught by it and drawn on. The mighty argument opened out and arose like a great work of art above me till at last it enclosed me within its perfect proportions. It was a revolutionary experience. I saw for the first time that a book of Scripture is a complete discussion of a single subject; I felt the force of the book as a whole, and I understood the different parts in the light of the whole as I had never understood them when reading them by themselves. Thus to master book after book is to fill the mind with the great thoughts of God."

[Sidenote: The Author's Plan]

Let me now speak of what I, personally, began to do after the suggestion of the layman, for the results which, in the providence of God, have grown out of it seem to warrant dwelling upon it even at the risk of prolixity on the one hand or the suspicion of egotism on the other. At first, supposing it more desirable to read the books in the original than the vernacular, I began to memorise some of the smaller epistles in Greek, but the Lord showed me "a more excellent way" in view of the purpose which the event proved Him to have had in mind in the matter. Accordingly, ignoring the Bible tongues for the time, I read Genesis through in the English at a single reading, and then repeated the process again and again until the book in its great outlines had practically become mine. Then I took up Exodus in the same way, Leviticus, Numbers, and practically all the other books of the Old and New Testaments to Revelation, with the exception of Proverbs, the Psalms and one or two others which do not lend themselves readily to that plan of reading, and indeed do not require it to their understanding and mastery. I am careful to emphasise the fact that I did not read the Bible "in course," as it is commonly understood. One might read it in that way a great many times and not master it in the sense indicated

above. The plan was to read and re-read each book by itself and in its order, as though there were no other in existence, until it had become a part of the very being.

[Sidenote: Joy and Power]

Was the task tedious and long? No more than was Jacob's when he served Laban for his daughter Rachel. There were compensations all along the way and ever-increasing delight. No romance ever held sway over the thought and imagination in comparison with this Book of books. A better investment of time were never made by any minister; and, shut me up to-day to a choice between all the ministerial lore I ever learned elsewhere and what was learned in this synthetic reading of the Bible, and it would not take me many minutes to decide in favour of the latter. Nor did I know until lately how closely my feeling in this respect harmonised with that of a great educator and theologian of an earlier day. [Sidenote: Dean Burgon and Dr. Routh] Dean Burgon tells of an interview he had in 1846 with the learned president of Magdalen College, Oxford, Dr. Martin Joseph Routh, then aged ninety-one. He had called upon him for advice as to the best way of pursuing his theological studies.

"I think, sir," said Dr. Routh, "were I you, sir—that I would—first of all—read the—the Gospel according to St. Matthew." Here he paused. "And after I had read the Gospel according to St. Matthew—I would—were I you, sir—go on to read—the Gospel according to St.—Mark."

"I looked at him," says Dean Burgon, "anxiously, to see whether he was serious. One glance was enough. He was giving me, but at a very slow rate, the outline of my future course."

"Here was a theologian of ninety-one," says the narrator of this incident, "who, after surveying the entire field of sacred science, had come back to the starting point, and had nothing better to advise me to read than—the Gospel!" And thus he kept on until he had mentioned all the books of the New Testament. Sad, however, that the story should have been spoiled by his not beginning at Genesis!

[Sidenote: Lightning Labour]

Words fail me to express the blessing that reading has been to me—strengthening my conviction as to the integrity and plenary inspiration of the whole Book, enlarging my mental vision as to the divine plan along the line of dispensational truth, purifying my life and lightening my labours in the ministry until that which before had often been a burden and weariness to the flesh, became a continual joy and delight.

To speak of this last-named matter a little further. The claims on a city pastor in these days are enough to break down the strongest men, especially when their pulpit preparation involves the production of two orations or finished theses each week for which they must "read up in systematic treatises, philosophic disquisitions, works of literature, magazine articles and what not, drawing upon their ingenuity of invention and fertility of imagination all the time in order to be original, striking, elegant and fresh." But when they come to know their Bible, and get imbued with its lore and anointed by the Spirit through whom it speaks, "sermonising" will give place to preaching—the preaching that God bids us to preach, the exposition of His own Word, which is not only much easier to do, but correspondingly more fruitful in spiritual results. And, indeed, it is the kind of preaching that people want to hear—all kinds of people, the converted and the unconverted, the rich and the poor. A wide experience convinces me of this. Here is the minister's field, his specialty, his throne. He may not be a master in other things; he may and should be a master in this. The really great preachers to-day, the MacLarens, the Torreys, the Campbell Morgans, are Bible expounders. George Whitefield, in Boston, had a congregation of two thousand people at six o'clock in the morning to hear him "expound the Bible." The people trod on Jesus to hear the Word of God, and if pastors only knew it, it is the way to get and to hold the people still.

[Sidenote: D. L. Moody and the International Bible Classes]

My experience in the premises soon began to be that of others. Some theological students under my care at the time undertook the mastery of the English Bible in the same way and with the same blessing. Then the work began to broaden, and God's further purpose to reveal itself. Such Bible institutes as those already spoken of, organised for the purpose of training Christian young men and women as evangelists, pastors' helpers, missionaries and gospel workers generally, were in need of some simple, yet practical, method of putting their students in possession of the facts of the Word of God for use among the people with whom they had to deal, and God had been making ready to supply their need. But out of these institutes again have grown those large interdenominational Bible classes which have become a feature of our church life in different parts of the country. Their origin is traceable, like that of so many other good things of the kind, to the suggestion and support of the late

D. L. Moody. One summer, while conducting a special course of Bible study in the Chicago Institute, he said to the writer: "If this synthetic method of teaching the Bible is so desirable for and popular with our day classes, why would it not take equally well with the masses of the people on a large scale? If I arrange for a mass meeting in the Chicago Avenue Church, will you speak to the people on 'How to Master the English Bible' and let us see what will come of it?" The suggestion being acted upon, as a result about four hundred persons out of some one thousand present that evening resolved themselves into a union Bible class for the synthetic study of the Bible under the leadership of Mr. William R. Newell, then assistant superintendent of the Institute. This class continued to meet regularly once a week with unabated interest throughout the whole of that fall and winter, and the next year had multiplied into five classes held in different parts of the city, on different evenings of the week, but under the same teacher, and with an aggregate membership of over four thousand. The year following, this had increased to over five thousand, two or three of the classes averaging separately an attendance of twelve hundred to fifteen hundred. Since that time several similar classes have attained a membership approaching two thousand, and one, in Toronto, to nearly four thousand. At the time of this writing, in the heat of the summer, such a class is being held weekly in Chicago. From Chicago the work spread in other cities of the East and Middle West, and under other teachers. Classes for briefer periods have been carried on in Canada and Great Britain. A religious weekly organised a class to be conducted through its columns, enrolling tens of thousands in its membership, and through its influence many pastors, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. workers have instituted classes in their own fields which have, in turn, multiplied the interest in the popular study of the English Bible in increasing ratio.

EXPLANATION OF THE METHOD

PART II

EXPLANATION OF THE METHOD

The contents of the preceding pages may be said to be preliminary to the definition or description of what the synthetic study of the Bible is; for by that name the method to be described has come to be called. The word "synthesis" suggests the opposite idea to the word "analysis." When we analyse a subject we take it apart and consider it in its various elements, but when we "synthesise" it, so to speak, we put it together and consider it as a whole. Now the synthetic study of the Bible means, as nearly as possible, the study of the Bible as a whole, and each book of the Bible as a whole, and as seen in its relation to the other books.

[Sidenote: A Coloured Critic]

A very dear Christian friend and neighbour, the late A. J. Gordon, D.D., used to tell an amusing story of a conversation with a deacon of a church for coloured people in his proximity. He asked the deacon how the people liked their new pastor, and was surprised to hear him say, "Not berry much." When pressed for an explanation he added that the pastor told "too many 'antidotes' in the pulpit." "Why," said the doctor, "I'm surprised to hear that; I thought he was a great Bible man." "Well," replied the deacon, "I'll tell yer how 'tis. He's de best man I ebber see'd to tak' de Bible apart, but he dunno how to put it togedder agin." Principal Cairns, I think it was, who heard this story, said it was the best illustration of the distinction between the constructive and destructive criticism to which he had ever listened. The synthetic study of the Bible, it may be said in a word, is an attempt to put it together rather than to take it apart.

[Sidenote: Illustrations of the Method]

To illustrate, I have always felt a sort of injury in the way I was taught geography; capes and bays, and lakes and rivers were sought to be crowded on my understanding before I ever saw a globe. Should not the globe come first, then the hemispheres, continents, nations, capitals and the rest? Does not a view of the whole materially assist in the comprehension of the parts? Is it not vital to it, indeed? And history—what is the true method of its study? Is it not first the outline history of the world, then its great divisions, ancient, mediaeval, modern, then the separate peoples or kingdoms in each, and so on?

How could you hope to interest a child in botany who had never seen a flower? How would you study a picture of a landscape? Would you cover the canvas with a cloth and study one feature of it at a time? What idea of it would you obtain under such circumstances? Would you not rather say, "Hang it in the proper light, let me get the right position with regard to it, and take it all in at a single glance, fasten the whole of it at once on the camera of my consciousness, and then I shall be able and interested afterward to study it in detail, and to go into the questions of proportion, and perspective, and shading, and colouring and all that"? Is it not the failure to adopt the corresponding plan in Bible study which accounts in large measure for the lack of enthusiastic interest in its prosecution on the part of the people?

[Sidenote: The American Bible League]

It is assuring to discover that the American Bible League, which promises to do much to quicken Bible study among the people along lines of faith in its integrity as the revealed Word of God, has reached almost precisely the same conclusion as to method. The esteemed secretary of that league, Rev. D. S. Gregory, D.D., LL.D., a man of wide experience in educational and literary lines other than those of the promulgation of Bible truth, charges the present ignorance of the Bible, "everywhere in evidence," to the failure of the old methods of its study. To quote his words in the *Bible Student and Teacher*:

"The fragmentary method was tried for a generation or two. We were kept studying the comments upon verse after verse, on the tacit assumption that no verse had any connection with any other verse, until we wearied of that, and would have no more of it.

"So the lesson systems came in, and we have had series upon series of such systems, showing that men deeply felt that there was need of system in the study of the Bible. But these systems have been artificial, all of them; the latest of all the most so of all. The men who have been engaged in preparing them deserve our gratitude. They have done the best they could, doubtless; and we will look for more light and improvement for the time to come. But you hear everywhere that the people are weary of lesson systems. They are so because the systems are artificial, and because they do not take you directly to the Bible as the Word of God, but rather by means of most useful lesson leaves and other devices take you away from it.

"And it is impossible to grasp the system, however valuable it may be. You study in seven years your three hundred and fifty lessons in a so-called system; and at the end of the seven years the best memory in Christendom has been found unable to hold that system so as to tell what has been taught in that time. When you have passed on from each lesson you have lost its connection with the Bible, and lost the lesson, too."

[Sidenote: Rationalism in the Sunday School]

It is the judgment of this same observer that these "fragmentary methods" account, in part, for the assault of the rationalistic critics upon the work of the Sunday school. "There was a call for something better, a 'vacuum' in the minds of teachers and professors in charge of instruction in the Bible, and just at the psychological moment there came all this German material—interesting, ingenious, imaginative, ready to fill that vacuum. The two needs met, and so we have had our recent development of the critical system of studying and presenting the Bible, which they are seeking now to introduce into all the schools and colleges and Sunday schools.

"That critical method has taken the Bible apart into bits and scraps and scattered it to the ends of the earth, as we have heard and have reason to know. When one comes upon its results he feels that he does not know exactly where he is."

Men hate bits and scraps, as this writer says, and as Bible teachers we should bring our methods into harmony with their natural constructive sense. Like the expert mountain climber, let us take them to the highest peak first, that they may see the whole range, and then they can intelligently and enthusiastically study the features of the lower levels in their relation to the whole. The opposite plan is confusing and a weariness to the flesh. Give people to see for themselves what the Bible is in the large, and then they will have a desire to see it in detail. Put a telescope in their hands first, and a microscope afterwards. [Sidenote: Luther and the Apple Tree] Martin Luther used to say that he studied the Bible as he gathered apples. He shook the tree first, then the limbs, then the branches, and after that he reached out under the leaves for the remaining fruit. The reverse order is monotonous in either case—studying the Bible or gathering apples.

THE PLAN AT WORK

PART III

THE PLAN AT WORK

[Sidenote: Begin at the Beginning]

There are certain simple rules to be observed in the synthetic study of the Bible if we want to master it, and the first is to begin to study it where God began to write it, *i.e.* at the book of Genesis. The newer criticism would dispute this statement about the primary authorship of Genesis, but the best answer to the objection is to try the plan. As Dr. Smith says in his *The Integrity of Scripture*: "Inherent in revelation there is a self-witness. The latest portion points to the beginning, and the beginning, with all that may be limited and provisional, contains the germ of the end. God's discovery of Himself is not an episode, but rooted in a vast breadth of the world's life, intertwined with human history, and growing from less to more, as in this divine education and discipline man became capable of receiving the full self-unveiling of God."

Dr. Ashmore, for fifty years an honoured missionary of the American Baptist Missionary Union at Shanghai, relates the following, which furnishes a practical illustration of this thought. At one time he and his brother missionaries started a Bible school for their young converts, and began to teach them the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now the Chinese are remarkable for an inquiring disposition, and questions began to descend upon the teachers to such a degree that they were compelled to forego their purpose to teach Hebrews and go back to Leviticus as explanatory of or introductory to it. But the teaching of Leviticus produced the same result, and they went back to Exodus. And from Exodus they were driven to Genesis, when the questions materially abated. The Bible is wondrously self-interpretive if we will give it an opportunity, and that opportunity is afforded if in its perusal we will wisely and submissively follow the channel marked out by its divine Author.

[Sidenote: Read the Book]

The second rule is to read the book. It is not asked that it be studied in the ordinary sense, or memorised, or even sought to be understood at first; but simply read. The purpose is to make the task as easy, as natural, and as pleasant as possible. It matters not, for the time being, how rapidly you read it, if you but read it. But is it not strange that this is one of the last things many really earnest Christians and seekers after Bible truth are willing to do? They will read books about the Bible almost without limit, but to read the books of the Bible itself is another matter. But how could one master any corresponding subject by such a method? And is it not dishonouring to God for any reason to treat His authorship thus? We are living in a time when, if only for good form, we feel an obligation to be acquainted with the best authors. But shall we say that Dante, or Shakespeare, or any other of the masters is able to interest us in what he wrote, while He who created him is unable to do so? Are we prepared to confess that God cannot write a book as capable of holding our attention as that of one of His creatures? What an indictment we are writing down against ourselves in saying that, and how it convinces us of sin!

I know a lady who once travelled a long distance on a railroad with her trunk unlocked, and when she met her husband at the terminus and reported the circumstance there was naturally some emotion in her speech. She had been unable to find the key anywhere, she said, and only discovered its loss at too late a moment to have another fitted before she started upon her journey. And the trunk with all its treasures had come that whole distance with only a strap around it. "Why," exclaimed her husband, "do you not recall that when we come home from a journey I always fasten the key of the trunk to one of its handles? There's your key," pointing to the end of the trunk. The incident is recalled by the so frequent inquiry one hears for a "key" to the Bible. Its Author has provided one, and to the average person, at least in this enlightened country, it is always at hand. Read the book.

[Sidenote: Read It Continuously]

The third rule is, read the book continuously. I think it is in his lecture on "The Lost Arts" that Wendell Phillips tells the story of the weaver who turned out so much more material from his loom than

any other workman in the mill. How was it done? In vain was the secret sought, until one day a bribe from one of his employers elicited the information, "*Chalk the bobbins.*" Each morning he had carried a piece of chalk with him to his loom, and when unobserved, applied it to that small but important part of the machinery. The result was astonishing. The application of the chalk to every bobbin of every loom of every workman made his employers rich. Who cannot supplement this story with some other where a principle just as simple wrought results as great? Try it in the case of the continuous reading of a given book of the Bible, and see what it will do.

But what is the meaning of "continuous" in this instance? The adjective may not be the most lucid, but the idea is this: It stands for two things—the reading of the book uninfluenced by its divisions into chapters and verses, and the reading of the book in this way *at a single sitting*. The divisions, it should be remembered, are of human origin and not divine, and, while effecting a good purpose in some particulars, are a hindrance to the mastery of the book in others. Sometimes a chapter or a verse will cut a truth in half, whose halves state a different fact or teach a different doctrine from that intended by the whole, and necessarily affecting the conception of the outline. As to the "single sitting," the reason for it is this. Many of the books of the Bible have a single thread running through the whole—a pivotal idea around which all the subsidiary ones resolve—and to catch this thread, to seize upon this idea, it is absolutely necessary to unravel or break up the whole in its essential parts. To read Genesis in this way, for example, will lead to the discovery that, large as the book is, it contains but five great or outline facts, viz.:

- The history of creation.
- The history of the fall.
- The history of the deluge.
- The history of the origin of the nations.
- The history of the patriarchs.

It is, then, a book of history, and the larger part of it history of the biographical sort. This last-named fact can be subdivided again into four facts, viz., the histories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and thus the whole book can be kept in mind in a very practical way in eight words. Moreover, the reading necessary to have gained the eight words will unconsciously have fastened upon the understanding the subsidiary facts associated with each word, so that a very satisfactory examination might be passed as to the contents of the whole book.

[Sidenote: Read It Repeatedly]

The fourth rule is to read the book repeatedly. The reader will understand that by the "book" in every case is meant the particular book of the Bible, Genesis, for example, which it is now being sought to master, and which is not to be laid aside for any other succeeding book of the Bible until the mastery is assured. This cannot usually be accomplished by one reading, but only by repeated readings after the manner designated. A stranger sailing along the New England coast on a foggy morning could hardly believe there was a coast. But later, when the sun rises and the fog begins to dissipate, there is, at first, a line of sandy beach discernible, then a cluster or two of rocks, then a little verdure, a house or two, a country road, the wooded hillside, until at length the whole of the beautiful landscape stands out in view. It is much the same in the synthetic reading of a given book of the Bible. The first view is not always satisfactory, and it requires a little courage to try again and again; but the effort brings a wonderful and inspiring result at last. The first reading of Genesis may not reveal what was spoken of above, but two or three readings will reveal it.

Leviticus is more difficult than Genesis or even Exodus, because it is dealing with laws and ordinances rather than historic happenings; but as soon as you discover that its theme is laws, these latter will begin to differentiate themselves before your mind and naturally suggest a simple classification such as this:

- The law of the offerings.
- The law of the consecration of the priests.
- The law of the clean and the unclean.
- The law of the day of atonement.
- The law of the feasts.
- The law of the redemption of land and slaves.
- The law of the year of jubilee.

What a great and indispensable aid such a classification is for any further study of that book or, for that matter, any other part of the Bible to which this revelation of the ceremonial law is particularly

related! Even the Old Testament prophets, which some have described as "the desert of the Scriptures," will "rejoice and blossom as the rose" under such treatment as this, the discourses readily distinguishing themselves by structure and subject. And, of course, the New Testament will possess far less difficulty than the Old.

[Sidenote: Read It Independently]

The fifth rule is to read it independently—*i.e.* independently, at first at least, of all commentaries and other outside aids. These are invaluable in their place, of course, but in the mastery of the English Bible in the present sense, that place is not before but after one has got an outline of a given book for himself. Indeed, an imperfect or erroneous outline of one's own is better than a perfect outline of another. The necessity to alter it when, by comparison, the error is discovered may prove a valuable discipline and education.

The independent reading of a book in this sense is urged because of its development of one's own intellectual powers. To be ever leaning on help from others is like walking on stilts all one's life and never attempting to place one's feet on the ground. Who can ever come to know the most direct and highest type of the teaching of the Holy Spirit in this way? Who can ever understand the most precious and thrilling experiences of spiritual illumination thus? Should you wish to teach others, how could you communicate to them that sense of your own mastery of the subject so vital to a pedagogue had you never really dealt with it at first hand? One of our millionaires is reported as carrying a cow around with him on his yacht because he dislikes condensed milk. It is a great gain to so know the Bible for yourself that, carrying it with you wherever you go, you may be measurably independent of other books in its study and use.

But there is another reason for the independent reading of the book, and that is the deliverance from intellectual confusion which it secures. The temptation is, when an interpretive difficulty is reached, to turn at once to the commentary for light, which means so very often that the reader has become side-tracked for good, or rather bad, as the situation is now viewed. The search for the solution of one little difficulty leads to searching for another, and that for another, until, to employ F. B. Meyer's figure, we have "become so occupied with the hedgerows and the copses of the landscape as to lose the conception of the whole sweep and extent of the panorama of truth." The "intensive" has been pursued to the great disadvantage of the "extensive," and usually there is nothing to be done but to begin all over again, for which every reader does not possess the required courage.

And there is an advantage in this independent reading from the teacher's point of view, too, as well as that of the learner. How many pastors through the country have spoken of the success the synthetic method has been to them in attracting their people to the house of God and awakening in them a real interest in Bible study! That is, what a success it has been up to a certain point, when they got "swamped," to use the very expressive word of more than one of them! Swamped? How? Investigation has always revealed the one cause, and brought the one confession—a failure to diligently and faithfully pursue the method in consequence of the temptation to investigate minutiae and multiply details. There is lying before me at this moment the *debris* of a collapse of this kind. A devoted pastor sends me the printed syllabus of his work with his congregation covering the Hexateuch. They were so delighted and so helped by it until now, when there has come a "hitch." He fears he is getting away from the plan, and giving and expecting too much. And his work reveals the ground of his fears. Such work belongs to the pastor in his study, but not on the platform before a popular audience in Bible teaching. And if it will "swamp" the trained and cultivated teacher, how much more the inexperienced learner! A faithful reading of the various books on an independent basis will secure a working outline, and this should be carried with one in his mind, and on his notebook, as he proceeds from book to book, until the work is done. Then he can successively begin his finer work, and analyse his outline, and study helps, and gather light, and accumulate material, without confusion of thought, without a false perspective, and with an ever-increasing sense of joy and power.

[Sidenote: Read It Prayerfully]

The most important rule is the last. Read it prayerfully. Let not the triteness of the observation belittle it, or all is lost. The point is insisted on because, since the Bible is a supernatural book, it can be studied or mastered only by supernatural aid. In the words of William Luff,

"It is the Spirit's Bible! Copyright every word!
Only His thoughts are uttered, only His voice is heard!"

Who is so well able to illuminate the pages of a given book as the author who composed it? How often when one has been reading Browning has he wished Browning were at his side to interpret Browning!

But the Holy Spirit, by whom holy men of old wrote, dwells within the believer on Jesus Christ for the very purpose of bringing things to his remembrance and guiding him into all the truth. Coleridge said, "The Bible without the Holy Spirit is a sundial by moonlight," and a greater than he said, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). That dear old Scottish saint, Andrew Bonar, discriminated between a minister's getting his text from the Bible, and getting it from God through the Bible; a fine distinction that holds good not only with reference to the selection of a text to preach upon, but with reference to the apprehension spiritually of any part of the Word of God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10). The inspired apostle does not say God has revealed them unto us by His Word, though they are in His Word; but by His Spirit through His Word. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

There is a parallel passage to the above in the first chapter of Ephesians which has always impressed the writer with great force. Paul had been unveiling the profoundest verities of holy writ to the Ephesians, and then he prays that the eyes of their heart (R.V.) might be enlightened to understand, to know what he had unveiled. He had been telling them what was the hope of their calling, and the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward them that believe; but how could they apprehend what he had told them, save as the Holy Spirit took of these things of Christ and showed them unto them? The Word of God is not enough without the Spirit of God. In the light of the foregoing, let the reader punctuate the reading of it and every part of it with prayer to its divine Author, and he will come to know "How to Master the English Bible."

RESULTS IN THE PULPIT

PART IV

RESULTS IN THE PULPIT

In the preceding pages the consideration of the lay reader has been in the foreground, though the ministry has not been out of mind. But in what follows the writer ventures to address his brethren of the ministry, especially his younger brethren, most particularly. In vain we seek to interest the people in Bible study in any permanent or general way except as they are stimulated thereto by the instruction and example of their ministers.

[Sidenote: A Vitiating Taste]

There must be even more than an example. In connection with a Bible conference in a city of the Middle West, a private gathering of pastors was held, at which one of them arose and with deep emotion said: "Brethren, I have a confession to make. I know not whether it will fit in with the experience of any others, but I have been guilty of cultivating in my people a *vitiating taste* for preaching, and henceforth, by God's help, I intend to give them His own Word." To search the Scriptures on their own account, the people of our churches must acquire a taste for their contents. They must be constantly fed with the bread of life to have an appetite for it. They will "desire the sincere milk of the word," if so be "they have tasted that the Lord is gracious." But to what extent do they "taste" it in the ordinary pulpit ministrations of the day?

[Sidenote: Secretary Shaw]

The Honourable Leslie M. Shaw, Secretary of the Treasury, gave an address recently in Washington, on the occasion of a Sunday school jubilee, which interested the writer deeply. He was pleading for the Sunday school on the ground that it was the only place at present in which the Bible was taught. "It is not now taught in the public schools," said he, "nor am I here to say that it ought to be taught there. In our busy life it is not taught in our homes. The head of the family ought to be a priest, but the Bible is seldom read, much less taught, in the home. *It is seldom taught in the pulpit.* Not that I am criticising

the ministry. But take up a paper and see what the sermons are to be about. You will learn about the plan of salvation if you listen to the sermons, but you will not know much about the Bible if you depend on getting your knowledge of it from the pulpit." He then went on to say that "the only place on this earth where the Bible is taught is in the Sunday school." When, however, we consider the character of the average Sunday school, the scraps and bits of the Bible there taught, the brief period of time devoted to the teaching, the lack of discipline in the classes, and the inadequate training and preparation of the average teacher, we begin to inquire, Where is the Bible taught? and wonder whether we have fallen on the times of the prophet:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.—Amos 8:11, 12.

[Sidenote: Professor Mathews on the Sunday School]

I am with Professor Shailer Mathews, D.D., in some of his strictures on the modern Sunday school, if only it be allowed that there are not a few blessed exceptions to the rule he lays down. I do not know how we should agree as to a remedy for present conditions, but one remedy would be, where there is a Bible expositor in the pulpit, to do away with certain features of the Sunday school altogether for the time being. The infant or primary departments might be retained as they are, and possibly the Bible classes for older adults, but the intermediate classes would do well to be gathered together under the instruction only of the pastor himself. In time, such a plan would beget enough teachers of the right quality and spirit to return to the former method if desired. The cabinet officer's warning and appeal are timely, for an awful harvest of infidelity and its attendant evils must be reaped in the next generation should the Church fail to arise to her responsibility as to the teaching of the unadulterated Word of God in the present one.

It is for this reason that the writer pleads with his brethren to make expository preaching the staple of their pulpit ministrations. Should they have read the previous chapters in a sympathetic spirit, they will begin to do this without much urging even where they have been strangers to it hitherto. But if otherwise, then a further word, before our concluding chapter, as to the history and practicality of that kind of preaching, may throw them back on what has been said before in such a way as to catch the spirit of it and be influenced by it.

[Sidenote: Expository Sermons Defined]

Expository sermons differ from the textual not so much in kind as in degree. For example, the text is usually longer, and more attention is given to the explanation of the words. The text, indeed, may cover several verses, a whole chapter, or parts of more than one chapter. And the treatment need not necessarily be confined to the definition of words, but include the adjustment of the text to the context, and the amplification and illustration of the various ideas suggested.

Dr. James W. Alexander, from whose *Thoughts on Preaching* I draw generously in what follows, says:

[Sidenote: The Notion of a Sermon]

"Suppose a volume of human science to be placed in our hands as the sole manual or textbook to elucidate to a public assembly, in what way would it be most natural to go to work? Certainly we would not take a sentence here, and another there, and upon these separate portions frame one or two discourses every week! No interpreter of Aristotle or Littleton would dream of doing that. Nor was it adopted in the Christian Church, until the sermon ceased to be regarded in its true notion, as an explanation of the Scripture, and began to be viewed as a rhetorical entertainment, which might afford occasion for the display of subtlety, research and eloquence."

[Sidenote: Inspired Sermons]

The same author recites some interesting facts that might be summed up under the general head of the history of expository preaching. For example, he reminds us that as early as the time of Ezra we find the reading of the law accompanied with some kind of interpretation. See Nehemiah 8. In the synagogues, moreover, after the reading of the law and the prophets, it was usual for the presiding officer to invite such as were learned to address the people, and it was in this way that our blessed Lord Himself—as well as His apostles, subsequently—was given the opportunity to open up the Scriptures. See our Lord's discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, reported in the fourth of Luke, and observe that it was an expository treatment of Isaiah 61. Notice, also, the discourses of Peter and Paul in the book of the Acts.

[Sidenote: The Christian Fathers]

The early Christian assemblies adopted this method in their religious services, as we may judge from allusions and examples in the writings of Justin Martyr, Origen, Augustine and Chrysostom. Their homilies, especially in the instances of the last mentioned two, were usually of the nature of "a close interpretation, or running commentary on the text, followed by a practical application." Chrysostom, quoted by Neander, says: "If anyone assiduously attend public worship, even without reading the Bible at home, but carefully hearkening here, he will find a single year sufficient to give him an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures." In how many of our churches could the same be said to-day? But ought it not to be said in all?

Dr. Alexander is further sponsor for the statement that it was about the beginning of the thirteenth century when the method of preaching from insulated texts came into vogue, and the younger clergy adopted subtle divisions of the sermon. And he says, too, that it was warmly opposed by some of the best theologians of the age, as "a childish playing upon words, destructive of true eloquence, tedious and unaffecting to the hearers, and cramping the imagination of the preachers." He is not prepared to entirely accept this criticism of the theologians, however, nor am I, believing that both the topical and the textual methods of preaching have their attractions and advantages. [Sidenote: The Reformation Period] Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to record that "when the light of divine truth began to emerge from its long eclipse, at the Reformation, there were few things more remarkable than the universal return of evangelical preachers to the expository method. Book after book of the Bible was publicly expounded by Luther, and the almost daily sermons of Calvin were, with scarcely any exceptions, founded on passages taken in regular course as he proceeded through the sacred canon. The same is true of the other reformers, particularly in England and Scotland." In the times of the Nonconformists the textual method came into practice again; but, notwithstanding, exposition was considered a necessary part of ministerial labour. Matthew Henry is a conspicuous example of this, who, although he frequently preached from single texts, yet "on every Lord's day morning expounded a part of the Old Testament, and in the evening a part of the New, in both instances proceeding in regular order."

[Sidenote: Modern Examples]

In modern times Charles H. Spurgeon has followed the example of Matthew Henry to a great extent. He preached topically, with great interest and power, but at almost every service the exposition of Scripture was made a distinctive, and always popular, feature of the exercises. The late Dr. Howard Crosby was heard to say that, in the course of his pastorate in New York, he had thus given instruction to his people on every verse in the Bible. The writer, also, can add his testimony to the fact that this method of preaching is delightful both to pastor and people. Both need training for it, but when once the taste has been acquired it demands constant gratification.

Let me now supplement these observations on the nature and history of expository preaching with some remarks upon its practicality and value.

[Sidenote: The Easy Way]

In the first place, when the art is learned, it is the easiest form of preaching; and this is saying a good deal in an era of the conservation of energy. The other day my attention was called to an announcement of a series of Sunday evening discourses by a city pastor, on "The Gospel in Recent Fiction," in the course of which he proposed to speak of the spiritual and ethical teaching of some half-dozen of the popular novels of the day. I could not but think if he had put the same time and interest into the reading and analysis of as many books of the Bible, he would have worked less and accomplished more. It might be said he would not get as many people to hear him, but I doubt the truth of that statement, if it were known what he was going to do, and if he did it well. Moreover, there is another side to the question. The *Watchman* says: "Time and again we have seen Sunday congregations increased greatly under the stimulus of what is called 'up-to-date' preaching, but the church as a spiritual body, effective for achieving the true ends of a church, became progressively weaker. The outsiders said that it was doing a tremendous work, but really it was not doing anything like the work it did in the days of its comparative obscurity."

At the risk of enlarging upon this idea beyond its due proportion, it is difficult to resist the temptation to quote a further paragraph from the *Interior*, to the effect that "nothing is of less value to the church than a full house—except an empty one. We happened the other morning," says the editor, "—it was Monday—to meet the treasurer of an important city church whose doors had been crowded the night before. We congratulated him upon the success of his pastor in 'filling the pews.' 'Yes,' was the hesitating reply, 'he has filled the pews, and filled the vestibule, and filled the pulpit steps—but he has emptied the collection baskets. We have the biggest audience in the city, and will soon have the biggest debt.' In another city two thousand miles distant, and in another denomination, we came upon a church

from whose doors hundreds were turned nightly away. Three years later we asked the principal layman how the church was doing now, and he replied, with a tinge of sadness, 'We had a grand debauch under Brother X., and we haven't quite recovered from it yet.'

[Sidenote: The Proper Way]

It is not only the easiest but the most appropriate form of preaching, *i.e.* it assumes and compels on the part of the preacher a large knowledge of the Word of God and aptness in imparting it. As was remarked in part, before, in another connection, where no extended exposition is attempted the preacher is naturally induced to draw upon systematic treatises, philosophical theories, works of mere literature, or his own ingenuity of invention and fertility of imagination; with the result that the rhetorical aspect of preaching attracts undue attention, and the desire to be original, striking, ingenious and elegant supersedes the earnest endeavour to be biblical. There are few ministers, honest with their own souls, who will not admit the truth and the seriousness of this implication. Here, too, is how heresy comes to raise its head and grow apace. The biblical preacher is always orthodox and evangelical, and has no trouble in remaining so.

And this is the same with his congregation, for here we have a rule that works both ways. A biblical preacher comes, in time, to make a biblical church, and should that not be the aim of every minister? Should not his example be that of Paul, "teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus"? The truth, however, is, as the authority quoted above says, that "the scriptural knowledge possessed by our ordinary congregations, amidst all our boasted light and improvement, bears no comparison with that of the Scottish peasantry of the last generation, who, from very infancy, were taught to follow the preacher, in their little Bibles, as he expounded in regular course." Why hear we so much in these days of Bible Training Schools and Bible Conventions, and Union Bible Classes and the like? They are good signs of the times, and bad signs. They demonstrate a hunger on the part of some of the people of God for His Word, and an inability to have it satisfied in the place where they naturally belong. Every church should be more or less truly a Bible Training School, and the pastor the head of it.

It is the most useful form of preaching. Dr. Alexander has some excellent observations that fit in under this head, every one of which I have experienced to be true in my own ministry, and earnestly recommend to the prayerful consideration of my brethren.

[Sidenote: The Useful Way]

For example, expository preaching affords inducement and occasion to the preacher to declare the whole counsel of God. It keeps him from neglecting many important doctrines and duties which otherwise would almost necessarily be overlooked. It gives a symmetry and completeness to his pulpit efforts. It promotes variety and enables him to escape ruts. To how many people are such biblical truths as predestination and election unwelcome! Yet, how important they are, how necessary to be discussed and explained by the minister of the Gospel, and how likely to be avoided nonetheless! But let him be expounding Romans, and he must deal with those difficulties, and glorify God in the doing of it. I say glorify God; for the reason that those doctrines, and some others, are abhorrent to the popular mind, is chiefly that they are usually set forth in their "naked theological form," and not in their scriptural connection.

And then, too, there are certain sins which every pastor feels he ought to inveigh against once in a while, but from which he is prevented either from delicacy, or through fear of being considered personal in his remarks. Let him adopt the expository method of preaching, however, and his hesitation in these respects will be removed as he comes across the very themes that should thus be touched upon, in a natural way.

[Sidenote: The Popular Way]

It may become the most popular form of preaching. Indeed, it should become so. The fault is ours, *i.e.* the ministers', if such is not the case. We should keep at it till we learn to do it well. We should besiege the throne of grace for power and wisdom to do it well. Who doubts that the Author of the Holy Scriptures would answer such entreaties? Chalmers' lectures on Romans, Archbishop Leighton's lectures on First Peter, F. W. Robertson's on First Corinthians, are old, but standard types of what may be done in this respect. I doubt not that Archbishop Trench delivered the substance of his book on the *Epistles to the Seven Churches* to his congregation before it appeared in print; and so in the case of Bishop Ryle and his *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and Dr. Moule and his *Studies in Philippians*. I, myself, have seen large congregations held from week to week in city churches, where the chief attraction was the exposition of the Bible text. God wrote the Bible for the "common people," and it is

irreverent to suppose that they cannot be interested in the reading and explanation of it. There is no other book in the world which sells like God's Book; it leads the market! How short-sighted, then, are we ministers who fail to take advantage of the fact, and utilise it to draw our audiences, and interest them, and nourish them with the bread of life! [1]

[1] A part of what the author has here written on the subject of expository preaching formed the substance of a previous communication from his pen in *Current Anecdotes*, a monthly magazine for ministers, F. M. Barton, Cleveland.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINES

PART V

EXPOSITORY OUTLINES

Our concluding chapter has been reserved for one or two "sample" expository outlines that may prove helpful as suggestions to inexperienced beginners. The first is drawn from the author's own store, and the second is that of Pastor F. E. Marsh, of Sunderland, England, which has come under the author's observation and affords a good illustration of another variety of the species.

[Sidenote: How Obtained]

The principle on which the first-named was obtained was that explained in the previous chapters. The synthetic reading of Romans led to certain discoveries, as follows: (1) That epistle contains a single theme, viz., the gift of God's righteousness to men. (2) This theme is developed along three main lines: its necessity, its nature, and its effect upon man. (3) Its effect upon man is developed again along three lines: his relations to God, his own experience, and his relations to others. (4) The last-named subdivision (his relations to others) covers chapters 12-16, and expands the idea socially, politically, and ecclesiastically.

[Sidenote: The Strong and the Weak]

Some time before this final thought was arrived at, the consideration of the epistle had already yielded material for several expository discourses, but it was conceived that still a good one of a very practical order lay embedded, say, in chapters 13:8 to 15:7, where the inspired writer is dealing with the Christian in his church or ecclesiastical relations. A sample better in some respects might readily be given, but this is chosen because it lies at hand, and also because it is not a "stock" piece got up for the occasion, but such an one as lies upon the surface of the text, and which any young beginner might evolve on his own account with a little pains.

The theme decided on was this:

The Strong and the Weak, or the Christian's Debt to His Brother. Romans 13:8 to 15:7.

1. We have here the command for Christians to love one another. 13:8-10.
2. The urgency for its observance. 11-14.
3. The particular call for its application (fellowshipping the weak). 14:1.
4. The description of the weak (conscientious scruples as to eating, and the observance of days). 14:2, 5.
5. The way in which fellowship is to be shown: (a) by not judging them, 3-12; (b) by not putting a stumbling-block in their way, 13-19; (c) by edifying them, 20-23.
6. The motive in the premises (the example of Christ). 15:1-4.
7. The object in view (the glory of God). 5-7.

In developing division 5 it was shown (a) that we should not judge the weak brother, for the following reasons:

- (1) God has received him. Verse 3.
- (2) He is accountable to God only. Verse 4, first part.
- (3) God can make him stand. Verse 4, last part.
- (4) Each man must be fully persuaded in his own mind. Verse 5.
- (5) The weak brother may be honouring and serving God even under the conditions named. Verse 6.
- (6) Each one of us must give account of himself to God. Verses 10-12.

It was shown (b) that we put a stumbling-block in the way of our weak brother by an undue insistence on our liberty (verses 14, 15), and that such insistence may itself become sin. 16-18.

Finally it was shown (c) that we edify one another by following after things which make for peace (verse 19), and that it makes for peace sometimes to control our zeal. Verse 22.

[Sidenote: Some Practical Hints]

Of course it is almost vital to the best results of expository preaching that the people bring their Bibles to Church, and use them more or less in following their minister. Frequently it is desirable for them to read the text aloud with him responsively, or in unison. A little gentle coaxing at first, preceded by private prayer, will get them to do both these things, bring their Bibles and read the text, while afterwards they will delight to do them. It will cause church-going and sermon-hearing to become a new and living experience to them. Young and old will like it, and sinners as well as saints.

But another almost necessity is to select a subject and treat it in such a way as to obviate as far as possible the turning over of the leaves or pages of the Bible during the progress of the exposition. The best plan is to limit the exposition, where you can, to the page or two just before the reader's eye. But if turning must be done, let it be on the principle of Edward Everett Hale's "Ten Times Ten" or "Lend-a-Hand" Society, *i.e.* forward and not backward. It is especially confusing and wearisome to a congregation to be turning pages backward, and then forward, and then backward again, and will not be relished as an innovation. Row with the tide.

In the outline now to follow there are leaves to turn, for it covers a whole epistle. And yet with a single (and perhaps unnecessary) exception, there is progress in each division. The hearers are stimulated by the thought of getting on, and that there is an end in sight. It might be styled:

The Character of the New Born.

What kind of persons are those who are born again? We have only to turn to the First Epistle of John for the answer. Mark the words "born of him," or "born of God," which we have again and again in the epistle. We get seven characteristics of those who are begotten of God:

1. The people who are born of God are righteous. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (2:29). If I am not doing righteously, what evidence have I that I am born of Him?

2. Those born of God are an unsinning people. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (2:9). Sin is not the habit of life of the one who has been born again. The trend of his life is not in the old paths of sin.

3. Those who are born of God are an abiding people. "His seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (3:9).

4. Those who are born of God are a loving people. "Every one that loveth is born of God" (4:7).

5. They are a believing people. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (5:1). It is not merely that they say that Christ is Christ, but they know Him experimentally as the Christ in power.

6. Those who are born of God are an overcoming people. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (5:4). The evidence, therefore, of being born of God is victory over the world.

7. Those born of God are a preserved people. "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that was begotten of God keepeth him" (5:18, R.V.).

Those who have been born of God are kept by the power of God. These are the people who constitute

the church of God, and they answer to everything that is said of those who are found faithful, and who escape the things that are coming on the world.

The author lingers over the closing word, for he is enamoured of the theme and loath to leave it. No typewriting machine has ground out these pages for the press; the subject has been too sacred for other than his own pen. He covets the love of it for every fellow-member of the body of Christ. He sees the regeneration of the Church in the general adoption of the plan. He sees the sanctification of the ministry. He sees a mighty quickening in the pews. He sees the worldwide revival for which a thousand hearts are praying. He sees the unmasking of a Christianised rationalism, and the utter rout of a rationalised Christianity. He sees the first thing in the world getting the first place in the world. He sees the solution of a score of civic problems. He sees the protection of vested rights against lawlessness, and the labourer receiving the due reward of his hire. He sees the oppressed set free; no longer

"Condemned by night, enchained by day,
Drowned in the depths of grim despair;
While running brooks sing roundelay,
And God's green fields are ev'rywhere."

He sees the missionary treasures repleted. He sees the hastening of the day when this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached as a witness to all nations, [1] and when He who is our life shall appear, and we also shall appear together with Him in glory. [2]

O brethren of the ministry and the laity, get back to the Bible! Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. [3] Let us preach the preaching that God bids us. [4] Diminish not a word. [5] Let us be as His mouthpieces, nothing more, nothing less, taking forth the precious from the vile, [6] for who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him? [7]

[1] Matt. 24:14.

[2] Col. 3:4.

[3] Col. 3:16.

[4] Jonah 3:2.

[5] Jer. 26:2.

[6] Jer. 15:19.

[7] Joel 2:14.

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