

How to Study the Bible-Stalker

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

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The best preparation for the successful study of the Bible is deep devotion to Him who is its Author, and to the Saviour of whom it speaks. But only second to this is a good method of study, which will conduct the mind naturally into the subject, and lead it on from attainment to attainment. Without love to God the Bible has little chance of being much read; but without an intelligent method a nascent love for it may be arrested or even extinguished. Love quickens study; and study, pursued in the right way, increases love.

The purpose of this article is to give a few practical hints on the best ways of studying the Bible.

1. The Study of Texts

The way in which, as children, we are taught to read the Bible is to take a chapter, or perhaps a smaller portion, daily, or perhaps twice a day — in the morning and at night; and, when those who may have dropped the habit of Bible-reading take it up again, during some season of religious impression, this is usually the way they begin. Perhaps they go through a book, reading a chapter every day; or they may take a chapter of the Old Testament in the morning and one of the New Testament in the evening. There are in circulation many programmes of Daily Bible Readings, issued by different churches and societies, to guide in this kind of study.

When this mode of reading is followed, that which the reader generally gets is a verse here and there, which warms his heart at the moment and remains for a shorter or longer period in the memory. Now and then, indeed, the chapter may be such a connected whole — like the fifty-third of Isaiah or the thirteenth of 1 Corinthians — that it goes into the mind entire; and sometimes a few verses are so connected that they can scarcely help making a united impression; but in general the profit of this kind of reading lies in the impression made by isolated and striking verses. And this may be no small blessing. It is a marvelous proof of the wealth of Scripture that there is hardly a chapter in which there does not occur some golden verse, which arrests the mind by the felicity of its diction, the beauty of its sentiment, or its spiritual depth; and in many chapters such verses are so numerous that the difficulty is to choose among them.

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses facilitates this kind of study, and, indeed, was invented for the purpose. But these divisions do not belong to the original book. On the contrary, they are a comparatively modern device; and it has become common of late to rail at them as impediments instead of helps. On the whole, they have probably been a blessing, and are worth preserving. The chapters encourage the simple and the busy to read by presenting to the eye portions not too difficult to face; and the verses, by isolating the pithy, proverb-like sayings with which the Bible abounds, have caused them to be noted and remembered.

But this arrangement has also serious drawbacks. One of these is the tendency to render devotion mechanical. Of all modes of Bible reading the most unprofitable and deadening is to read a daily chapter and then lay the book aside without attempting to retain any definite impression. This, it is to be feared, is often done; and, if it is allowed to become habitual, the reader will scarcely remember, after closing the book, a single thing he has read.

Means, therefore, require to be taken to overcome this tendency. It is a good plan, as we read, to pick out the choicest verse in the chapter — the one most attractive in itself or most adapted to our circumstances — and, before closing the book, commit it to memory. Then let it be kept in the mind till the next reading, as something sweet is kept in the mouth till all its sweetness is extracted. In this way the attention is kept on the strain whilst the reading proceeds; the memory is gradually stored with a collection of choice texts, every one of which is tinged with the experience of the day on which it was learned; and, almost unawares, the reader becomes the possessor of spiritual wealth.

The selected text may be imprinted still more deeply on the mind by writing out a few lines of reflection on it. Every one who knows what it is to give a lesson or an address occasionally on Scripture is aware how the verse or paragraph on which he has had to prepare himself to speak stands out in his Bible afterwards from the rest of the text, as if its letters were embossed on the page. Something thus to awaken the mind and concentrate the attention should be devised by every one; because it is not mere reading, but meditation — "meditation all the day," as the Psalmist says — which extracts the sweetness and the power out of Scripture. When the mind sinks down and down into a text, like a bee into a flower, and abides in it, applying to its study every energy it possesses — memory, imagination, reasoning, feeling — then it comes forth at length as the bee comes out of the flower, when it flies away laden with honey to build up the treasure of the honey-comb.

2. The Study of Books

There are many who never all their days advance beyond the method of reading the Scriptures which I have called the study of texts. But it is a more masculine and advanced method to study the books of the Bible as connected wholes.

Here is an interesting sketch of an experience which some may recognize as similar to their own:

"I well remember something happening when I was a boy, which made a complete change in my classical studies. I had long been learning Greek as boys are taught it; that is to say, having a score of lines of poetry, or two or three paragraphs of prose, prescribed for each day. The attention for the day is fixed on this little bit, every word of which has to be examined as to its meaning, etymology, syntax, and so on. Now and then the boy may be struck with a choice line or a fine thought; but he pays little attention to these things, and has no idea of the history or treatise as a whole which he is reading. But one day I went away by myself into the woods with a volume of Plato in my pocket, and, stretched on the grass, commenced to read. The piece at which I chanced to open is one of the most wonderful products of Greek genius — the Apology of Socrates, that is, his address to his judges before his execution. I read on and on, not making out every word, but easily following the drift of the thought, till I forgot where I was, and my brain was aglow with the sublime scene and the immortal sentences. When I rose from the ground, Greek had become a new thing to me. Till then it had only meant lessons — parsing, construing, and drudgery. Now I knew it as literature; I knew that a Greek book could tell a thrilling story and pour into the mind thoughts that breathe and words that burn. And I obtained this new power by reading a book, not in fragments, but as a whole."

A precisely similar awakening in regard to the Bible may be experienced by beginning to read its books, not in separate chapters, but as wholes. The same pen goes on to describe this also:

"I remember perfectly well the first time I ever read an entire book of Scripture at one sitting. I chanced on the Sabbath to be in a continental country and in a town where there was no Protestant service of any kind. In the early morning I had gone to the Roman Catholic service, but it was over before breakfast; and I was thrown on my own resources for the rest of the day. Strolling out behind the hotel, I lay down on a green knoll, where I remained the whole forenoon. I opened the New Testament and dipped into the pages here and there, till, chancing on the Epistle to the Romans, I read on and on through it. As I proceeded, I caught the spirit of St. Paul's mighty theme, or rather was caught by it, and was drawn on to read. The argument opened out and rose like a great work of art above me, till at last I was enclosed within its perfect proportions. This was a new experience. I saw for the first time that a book of the Bible is a complete discussion of a single subject; I felt the full force of the whole argument; and I understood the different parts in

the light of the whole as I had never done when reading them by themselves."

The advantages of this method are here indicated. In the first place, it makes you feel the impression of the book as a whole; and this must, in the nature of the case, be far greater than that produced by a single chapter or a single verse of the same book. Nearly every book of the Bible may be said to be a discussion of some particular theme. For example, Job is on the Problem of Evil, Ecclesiastes is on the Highest Good, Romans is on Righteousness, Timothy and Titus on the Pastoral Office, and so on. It has pleased God thus to give in His Word full statements on a number of the greatest subjects; and to master the contents of these books is to fill the mind with the great thoughts of God.

The other advantage is that the different parts of a book are much more intelligible when read in the light of the whole. It is surprising how clear the meaning of obscure verses sometimes become when they are seen in their place in the entire structure to which they belong; and verses which have been impressive by themselves sometimes receive an entirely new importance when they are seen to be the keynotes of an argument whose strength depends upon their truth. It must, indeed, be confessed that occasionally, when examined in this way, favourite texts are discovered not to mean what has been supposed. A meaning suggested by their sound has been attached to them; and, if this has been in accordance with the general teaching of Scripture, the text, so interpreted, may have done the reader good; but, when we come upon it in the course of the argument to which it belongs, we perceive that the meaning is different. Any exact study of Scripture will bring some disappointments of this kind, because many favourite texts have not really the meaning which they carry to the popular ear. But surely every virile mind will wish to know precisely what the writer meant by every word he wrote; and every reverent reader must believe that the very mind of the Spirit is the best. The application of texts to circumstances widely different from those to which they were first applied is quite legitimate; but the modern application ought in every case to be derived in a fair way from the original sense.

Some may think this method of studying whole books to be above them, because demanding too much time. But few know how limited the Bible literature is; and it may serve a good purpose to compare its external compass with that of ordinary books. It would not be thought a great intellectual achievement to read through five of the Waverly Novels or three of the works of Thackeray; many would consider this a moderate allowance of reading for a few weeks. Yet either of these courses would contain as many words as the entire Bible. Even a long book, like Job, can be read without haste in a couple of hours; and many books scarcely take longer than ordinary letters. In fact, they are just letters.

Of course, the Bible is not to be always read as quickly as this. But to read rapidly is a great advantage when what you wish is to catch the drift of a book as a whole. When this has been done, it is a good thing to note down somewhere, say at the top of the book in your Bible, what the theme is and where the chief hinges of the story or argument come in; because, in the subsequent reading of single chapters of the same book, you can refer

to this scheme and see in what portion of the whole you are.

A more serious impediment will sometimes be encountered in the difficulty of making out what the drift of a book is; and it may be asked if any aids are to be used in doing so. The articles on the different books in any Bible dictionary, or in Dr. Wright's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, or Dr. Dod's *Introduction to the New Testament*, will help (see also Farrar's *Messages of the Books* or Fraser's *Synoptical Lectures on the Books of the Bible*); and the use of the Revised Version along with the Authorised will clear away many obstacles. There are some books, especially among the Old Testament prophets, that cannot be read through with full intelligence without some assistance from commentaries; and to the reader who wishes to pursue the subject further, Collins' *Critical and Experimental Commentary*, by the Rev. Robert Jamieson, D.D., the Rev. Canon Fausset, D.D., and the Rev. Principal Brown, D.D., can hardly be too highly recommended.

The best help to the understanding of any book of the Bible is knowledge of the time and circumstances in which it was composed. If you know in what circumstances the author was when he was writing, and what was the condition of those he was writing to, there is generally little difficulty in understanding what he says. In this way some of the Bible books throw light on one another. The histories of the kings, for example, in the Old Testament, explain the prophets who wrote in the reigns of those kings; and the life of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles throws light on his epistles. Some modern books make excellent use of the same method. There is, for example, a book worthy to be called one of the glories of the English Church in this century — Conybeare and Howson's *Life of St. Paul* — which thus casts a flood of light on the Apostle's writings. It follows his footsteps from stage to stage with the most patient accuracy and luminous fulness of information. It shows the precise condition in which he was when each of his epistles was penned, and what were the circumstances of those to whom he was writing. It inserts each epistle in its own place in the history; and at the same time gives a fresh translation. Any one who will take the trouble to master this great work will easily be able to discover what is the subject of every one of St. Paul's epistles, and what the course of its argument, and thus put himself in possession of the substance of what, taken all in all, is, next to the four Gospels, the most instructive portion of Holy Writ.

Yet let it always be remembered that, whatever assistance may be derived from these and similar sources, the most serviceable division for every one will be that which he has made for himself.

3. The Study of Groups of Books

This is a method of study more advanced than that of which we have just spoken, but following naturally upon it; and it is one which at the present time is proving to many so fascinating as almost to make the Bible a new book.

When the books of the Bible are carefully examined, it is found that not only is each book

a connected whole, but sometimes several books, either on account of their chronological proximity or from being penned by the same hand, or for other reasons, all bear the impress of the same type of thought. It is advantageous to study them together; because they cast light on one another and produce on the mind a united impression or effect. In the Old Testament there are three outstanding groups — The Historical, the Poetical, and the Prophetical books; and in the New Testament we may distinguish four great groups — first, the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts; secondly, the Writings of St. Peter and, along with them, Hebrews, St. James and St. Jude; thirdly, the Epistles of St. Paul; and fourthly, the Writings of St. John. Within these large groups smaller ones may be formed. In the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, for instance, there are important divisions not only according to the size of the books (Major and Minor Prophets), but according to the different epochs to which the prophets belong (see the article *Bible* in *Chambers' Encyclopedia*) and in St. Paul's voluminous writings there are four minor groups distinguishable partly by the chronology and partly by the distinctive sets of ideas with which his mind was occupied at different stages of his career (see Stalker's *St. Paul*).

The principal charm of this mode of study is the perception of the growth of revelation. When the books of the Bible are thus arranged, and the groups placed in chronological succession, it becomes manifest at once that there is in them a gradual unfolding of the truth. Even in the career of a single writer, like St. Paul, this is perfectly manifest. The ideas of his earlier epistles are much simpler than those of the later ones. Evidently the Spirit of inspiration made use of his growing experience as a means of leading him to more recondite and comprehensive views of the truth. So it was also with the men of revelation from age to age. Each of them, standing upon the attainments of his predecessors, was enabled to reach forward to the apprehension of the still undiscovered; and so all the facets of revelation by degrees flashed their light upon the world.

4. The Study of Doctrine

The three methods of study already spoken of inevitably lead on to a fourth, which is more advanced than any of them. This is the study of the Doctrine of Scripture.

The study of verses and chapters yields us the truth contained in separate morsels of Holy Writ; and the study of whole books or groups of books gives the mastery of larger portions of the divine revelation. But it is inevitable to those who go so far to ask, What is the message conveyed by God to man in the Bible as a whole? Though the Bible is a large collection separate books, each of which contains its own leading thought, it is, in another aspect, one Book, conveying to the sinful children of men the mind of the loving and redeeming God. What then, is this message? As we ascertain the meaning of the verses and the messages of the books, we are collecting fragments of it; but what is it as a whole?

The catechisms, the creeds, and the doctrinal systems of the churches are attempts to

answer this question.

It is well known that at the present time these do not stand in very high repute; and the use of them as tests is a question much disputed even among earnest Christians, and therefore not to be touched upon here. But, apart from this, it is difficult to see how the human mind could have refrained from making these efforts. Every reader of the Bible is encouraged to try to understand the meaning of single texts and chapters and to state it in his own words. It is considered meritorious on the part of the student to grasp the drift and leading idea of a whole book, and to be able to show how every part of the book falls into its natural place when viewed in the light of this idea. It is even more in accordance with the intellectual fashion of the time to admire the mastery which any one may be able to display of a whole group of books, like the Minor Prophets or the writings of St. John. But, if we go a step further and, grasping the message conveyed by all the books taken together, express it in our own words, this is only doing what the earlier procedure, which every one applauds, has made inevitable; and to forbid it is to put an arbitrary arrest on Christian thought and condemn the Christian mind to remain in a state of intellectual nonage.

In like manner, to avail ourselves, in this study, of the help and guidance of the great and good who in the past have devoted themselves to the same task is only to do what is done in every other department of knowledge. A good catechism or manual of Christian doctrine serves to the student of Scripture the same purpose as is served to the tourist in Switzerland or Norway by his Murray or Baedeker. He will be ill-advised, indeed, if he does not use and trust his own eyes and allow the Scriptures to make on him their own natural impression, just as the traveller, if he has any wisdom, will not wait to see what the guide-book says before enjoying a lake or a mountain or a sunset, if it happens to be beautiful. But the catechism will direct him to the most important statements of Scripture and acquaint him with the relation of the different parts of truth to one another in the very same way as the guide-book conducts the tourist to the best points of view and shows him, in the map, the relation to each other of the different parts of the country. Nor is it wiser to scorn such assistance from the thinkers of the past, and act as if the study of the Bible had begun with us, than it would be to go to a foreign country without a guide-book on the ground that every one should see the world with his own eyes.

Here, however, as before, the principle holds good that the truth most valuable to us will be that which, whether with assistance from others or not, we have appropriated by our own thinking and confirmed by our own experience. In point of fact, the earnest and intelligent reader of Scripture cannot help gradually forming a conception in his own mind of the entire message which the Scripture conveys. Nor is it so difficult to do as might be imagined. The leading features of it are written on the face of Scripture so plainly that he who runs may read. That God loves us; that we are fallen creatures, exposed for our sins to a terrible doom; that the Son of God died for sinners; and that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved — these and similar truths are written in capital letters, so to speak, in the divine record, and so large that they cannot be mistaken. Let them be clearly outlined in the mind as the essentials; and the

smaller print will also by degrees fill itself up and take its proper place.

A simple plan is to take a single doctrine at a time, such as the love of God, the person of Christ, or the destiny of man, and collect from the different books or groups of books in chronological order the most important passages bearing on the subject. This will frequently be found to yield surprising results, disclosing unexpected points of view, and producing on the mind an overwhelming total impression; and, applied to truth after truth round the circle of doctrine, it will supply to any diligent student a comprehensive and Scriptural theology.

It has pleased God to give us the whole Bible; and it ought to be the ambition of the Christian mind to take complete possession of it. It is one of the principal means of preparing for the other world; and our stature in that world, the station and degree which we shall occupy, and the volume of our joy throughout eternity may depend on the faithfulness and diligence with which we now make use of this precious heritage.

It will be observed that these different modes of study do not exclude but supplement one another. The simpler lead on to the more elaborate; but it is not less true that the attempt to cultivate the more difficult kinds of study will lend new interest to the daily reading of brief portions of the Word, which must always for the great majority of Christians be the common way of using this means of grace.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER'S USE OF THE BIBLE.
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THE OUTLINE.

1. The Bible is the one text-book of the Sunday-school teacher.
2. The Bible becomes exceedingly important when we find its relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of men. It enlightens, quickens, converts, sanctifies, edifies, etc. No wonder it is in itself compared to "seed," "word," "fire," "manna," "silver," "gold," etc.
3. The Bible is to be used by the whole church —the ministry and the laity.
4. The teacher's use of the Bible, to be effective, requires the aid of the Holy Spirit.
5. The teacher's use of the Bible must, however, be in harmony with the true, natural, and human laws of teaching.
6. The teacher's use of the Bible is twofold- personal and professional.
7. The teacher must use the Bible to find Christ since Christ the Word is in his Word.
8. The teacher must also seek the indwelling of Christ, that he may say, "I live; yet not I,

but Christ liveth in me."

9. The teacher thus finding Christ in the Word, and having Christ in his own soul, will be earnest, will love his pupils, and will be patient with them and in his work.

10. Certain important facts' are to be recognized by the teacher in his use of the Bible:

(1) The Bible is a human as well as a divine book.

(2) The Bible presents many difficulties to the student of it.

(3) The Bible difficulties may be obviated by the observance of certain suggestions.

11. Certain rules will aid the teacher in the use of the Bible:

(1) He should make much of the spiritual and ethical aim in his work.

(2) He should study the examples of teaching- work which abound in the Bible.

(3) He should study the Bible independently.

(4) He should study it systematically. (Guide-questions to exhaustive analysis.)

(5) He should study every lesson from a pupil's point of view.

(6) He should illustrate fully and wisely.

(7) He should use the art of conversation and questioning.

(8) He should secure home work by his scholars.

12. The teacher's real work and his true preparation.

THE DISCUSSION.

1. The Sunday school is a school with one text-book— the Holy Scriptures; therefore, the Sunday-school teacher must use the Bible. Whatever other works he consults, his final authority is the Bible. Whatever helps he employs, they must be, in every case, helps to the better understanding and use of the Word of God.

2. This is the more evident when one considers the relation of the truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures to the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men. No man can say in what way or how far the Spirit of God acts immediately upon the human spirit without the intervention of revealed truth, nor to what extent other truth not found in the Bible, but set forth in nature and in the constitution of man, has its influence in promoting the gracious work of God in the human soul; but this much is plainly set forth in the book of divine revelation: The processes of divine grace in the life of man are performed through the truth of God as contained in the written Word of God. It is the word of God that "quicken" the soul (Ps. 119:50). It is the "entrance" of the word of God that giveth "light"

(Ps. 119:130). The word is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) which Christ used with the adversary in the wilderness (Mt. 4:4, 7, 10). It is the "law of the Lord " that is "perfect, converting the soul " (Ps. 19:7). It is the "word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe " (1 Thes. 2:13). It is the word of God which is able to build up believers, and to give them "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Through the "exceeding great and precious promises " of the Word, believers are made "partakers of the divine nature" (II. Pet. 1:4). Spiritual enlargement comes from running in the way of God's commandments (Ps. 119:32). If God's Word be so goodly and mighty a thing as these scriptures, declare, no wonder that they who knew best its source and mission should account the truth it contains like "seed" (Luke 8:11), like a "sword" (Heb. 4:12), like a " fire " and a " hammer " (Jer. 23:29), like " rain " and "dew" (Deut. 32:2). like "honey" and the "honey-comb" (Ps. 19:10), like "silver" (Ps. 12:6), like "gold" (Ps. 19:10), like "thousands of gold and silver" (Ps. 119:72), and, finally, like "all riches" (Ps. 119:14). No wonder that the Psalmist made it his song in the house of his pilgrimage (Ps. 119:54), and that his delight was in the law of the Lord, in which he meditated day and night (Ps. 1:2). No wonder that we are exhorted to take earnest heed what we hear (Mark 4:24), and how we hear (Luke 8:18). No wonder that earnest Jews searched the Scriptures (John 5:39), and that the Bereans were commended as being " more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

3 . It is this wonderful Word which the Sundayschool teacher, as one of the servants and officers of the church, must use in all his work. Parents at home, like the mother of Timothy (II. Tim. 1:5; 3:15); men like Aquila; women like Priscilla, in their own places of abode (Acts 18:26), — all church members, from apostles and prophets to deacons and unofficial disciples, are to set forth the word of life. Here among divinely called and appointed teaching-disciples stand the Sunday-school teachers.

4. But since it is the "church of the living God" (I. Tim. 3:15) in which the teacher serves, he may trust in divine aid. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). And the best use to which the Sunday-school teacher can put his Bible is to find in it doctrine and promise on which he can rest.

5. In the use of his Bible the Sunday-school teacher must remember that while his work is spiritual, and dependent upon divine cooperation, he is to observe all natural laws of teaching which are based upon a wise human psychology. By the best processes of instruction, which represent the most advanced thought of modern educators, the Sunday-school teacher must use his text-book in gaining access to his pupils, winning and holding their attention, exciting curiosity, eliciting questions and statements of their own, training memory, encouraging rigid analysis, developing self-activity and self-application. In the use of his Bible the Sunday school teacher should seek to be at his human best in his personal qualifications and in his method of work.

6. It will, therefore, easily appear that there is a twofold use to be read of the Bible by the Sunday-school teacher, the one personal and the other professional. He must know, and be possessed by, the truth; and he must be able rightly to divide and wisely to apply it.

The first is necessary to the second.

7. As a means to this the teacher must understand the relation of the personal Christ to the Scriptures. Are they not the "word of Christ"? (Col. 3:16.) Old Trapp says: The Babe of Bethlehem is wrapped up in the swathing bands of both Testaments." The whole book is full of him. He is the keystone of the arch; the heart of the Holy Scriptures; the Sun of righteousness among the planets that shine in Psalms, Prophets, Gospels, and Epistles. The teacher begins the proper use of Scriptures when he begins with Christ. Since the teacher rightly kindling the Word is bringing Christ to his pupils, with what loving tenderness, what scrupulous care, what holy reverence, should he use it!

8. There is another feature of the divine revelation to man which the Sunday-school teacher must remember. Not only does Christ dwell in the Word which the teacher is to use, but Christ may dwell in the heart of the teacher himself. He may sit before his class with the Word of Christ in his hand, and with the very life and personal force of Christ in his heart. Here is the Sunday-school teacher's best preparation for using his Bible. He not only knows, he is.

9. Among the effects of such use of the Bible as one makes who rinds Christ in it and draws Christ from it into his own life, will be a peculiar earnestness; an ardent love for the pupil, a love for the very soul life, regardless of social position, personal attraction, or intellectual gifts; so that no stone will be left unturned, no page or text will be left unexamined, no device unemployed, for the bringing of Christ and the redeemed soul together.

10. Certain important facts are to be remembered by the teacher, lest he be too easily disheartened in his great work.

(1) The Bible is in one sense a human book, and there are many human marks about it. The divine treasure has been given to us in earthen vessels. God has revealed himself through human eyes and ears, intellect and hearts, tongues and pens. The book is God's book, but he has used men in the making and completing of it, and by this process man is immensely helped, and is still further to be helped, as the original gift of God in the most ancient tongues is gradually unveiled and set forth through human investigation and scholarship.

(2) The Bible is full of difficulties— the ancient languages, the references to almost obsolete usages, the idiosyncrasies of the Bible writers, the Oriental imagery employed, the divine interpositions in miraculous deeds, the mysteries of divine providence, the severities and apparent cruelties of the divine administration, the gross inconsistencies of certain Scripture characters, whose lives are recorded, and who, in spite of their sins, receive proof in words and in official promotion of the divine commendation. Again, the Bible is, in fact, a book so different from the ideal revelation. It is not at all a systematic and carefully classified series of plain and applied principles. It is a book of ancient history, full of hard names, indefinite

chronologies, unattractive genealogies, bloody battles and transactions, some of which it is painful and almost impossible to read to little children. The Sunday-school teacher, in his casual and professional reading, in his conversation in parlor and class, must meet these embarrassments. He cannot refuse to consider them as unworthy of his notice. What shall he do?

(3) The old commentator Trapp says, concerning the difficulties of Scripture, " Plain places therein are for our nourishment, hard places for our exercise." The Bible as a true history of rugged times must reflect the features of the ages it represents. It was not meant to be "an easy book." To the man who really desires to know, love, and obey the truth, there are no insurmountable obstacles in the Holy Scriptures. Difficulties that there appear speedily vanish before his spirit of surrender to the will of God. "If any man will do his will," saith the Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

11. Let us therefore present certain rules to govern the teacher in his use of the Bible:

(1) It will at once appear that the most important work of the teacher is to present to his pupils, with much urgency, the spiritual and ethical claims of the book. They must accept Christ as their righteousness, but they themselves for this reason must be righteous.

(2) The teacher may find in the Bible abundant illustrations of the true principles and methods of teaching; processes adopted by patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, in the proclaiming, upholding, applying, and enforcing of truth; plans for arresting and riveting attention; for illuminating doctrine and ethics; for answering objections; for enlightening and quickening the conscience; for exciting fear, kindling desire, and bringing to decision. Every fundamental teaching process finds clear and attractive illustration somewhere in this great text-book, so "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Ti 3:16). In Jesus we have the perfection of teaching. To understand him, to master his methods, to possess his spirit, is to become a teacher of the highest order. Therefore let the Sunday-school teacher use his Bible to gather from it lessons in teaching, and especially from the great Model. Study carefully every word he used, every conversation he conducted, every figure of speech, every method of arresting attention, every argument, every reference to his own times, and every quotation which he made from the Old Testament.

(3) The teacher must study his Bible independently, going to it alone before consulting commentaries or other human helps. The appetite for the truth will be whetted, intellectual freshness and vigor increased,

and with enlarged capacity he will turn to the library for the help which other men have provided.

(4) The teacher must study his Bible systematically. He must, first of all, collate every passage from the entire book bearing upon the subject in hand, all parallel accounts of the same events, miracles, conversations, sermons, with all incidental references. This will form his body of biblical authority. He should then critically analyze the text material thus provided, by some such series of questions as the following:

First. Some person here writes, and he writes to or for some other person or persons. Who writes? To whom? He writes concerning some person or persons, meaning or referring to them. Who are they? What do we know about them?

Second. These persons speaking, acting, writing, or written to, named, or simply referred to, must have lived in some country, city, or other locality named or implied. Where are the places of this lesson—the topographical elements of it? Can we find them on the map? What can we find out about them — their connection with other biblical events, and the accounts given of them by travelers?

Third. All persons who here sustain a relation to place, also sustain a relation to time. Therefore we ask: When did these people in these places do or say the things here recorded? Or when were they recorded? What references do we find here to days, hours, seasons, festivals, months, years?

Fourth. And now we come to the historical questions. What things are here written concerning these persons, in these places, at these times? What did they do? What did they say? Who had the most to say or do? How far did the words or acts of one person or class of persons influence the words or acts of other persons introduced in this scripture?

Fifth. Through this passage, biographical, historical, didactic, runs a divine thought. There are some direct teachings or truths to be inferred, concerning God, man, sin, personal character, the past, the present, the future. What are these teachings or doctrines?

Sixth. All this history, biography, doctrine, has an ethical significance and design. It is intended in some way to lay down laws of practical life. There are here some duties specifically stated or easily inferred, which every student of Scripture should be able to know and obey. What are these duties? For the teacher? For the pupil?

Seventh. All ancient history, especially that which records an extinct civilization, is sure to contain many things which are obscure and which perplex the student— references to obsolete customs, to

eccentricities of conduct and government, to relations of individuals, and to administration of divine government. There occur verbal and grammatical difficulties in the text, apparent discrepancies of various kinds, affecting the very foundations of faith. What are these difficulties? What added difficulties are likely to present themselves to the youthful student, who, hearing of them from irreverent skeptics, may come to his teacher at any time with his hard questions?

(5) The teacher having then analyzed his lesson, and having transferred the which subject to his own mind, that he may have it well in hand for further study, should again and again look at it from the point of view occupied by his pupils. A vivid conception of their condition and necessities will present the subject to his own mind in a new light. He should therefore form the habit of thinking intently and sympathetically upon each scholar in his class, his home life, hindrances, faults, perils, most immediate need, and then review the already carefully prepared lesson with this thought burning in his heart: "How shall I make this lesson most profitable to this pupil? "

(6) The teacher must employ the illustrative element in his class work. The open eyes of wide-awake youth must be arrested, the imagination stimulated. Objects, incidents, comparisons, similes, metaphors, parables, facts of this busy everyday world, historical anecdotes, mental pictures, must be employed to place the truth vividly and attractively before the learner.

(7) The Sunday-school teacher, like all successful teachers, must master the art of questioning. This is necessary to find out what the scholar knows; to stimulate his desire to know more; to give him knowledge by making him seek it; and finally, to test the teacher's own work. Attention is necessary to success in teaching and in learning, and attention which is simply the stretching of the pupil's mind with desire and purpose, will break out into numberless questions. When this end is attained, the success of the teacher is assured.

(8) The teacher should awaken within the pupil, first, an interest in the subject matter of the lesson for the ensuing Sabbath, an interest sufficient to secure some advance preparation ; and second, an interest in his own spiritual and eternal welfare, that he may apply to his heart and life the truths which he finds.

12. To save his scholars from all evil, by leading them to know Christ, in whom abides all good; to develop within them, through the divine grace and truth, the love of God and the love of men; to make conscience tender and intelligent, faith simple and strong, the will prompt and firm, and the outward life consistent and useful,— this is the varied and divine mission of the Sunday-school teacher. That he may do his work well the teacher must be a

Christian in experience as well as in profession ; a consistent Christian in life and deportment; a Christian teacher in life and tact, and a Christian friend in sympathy and helpfulness. What he is and does will be a living proof of the truth he teaches, and he may then say in all sincerity and humility to those who are under his care, " Follow me as I follow Christ." "Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Books:

- H. C. Trumbull's Teaching and Teachers, Yale Lectures on the Sunday School, and Principles and Practice;
- Boynton's The Model Sunday School;
- Bishop J. H. Vincent's The Modern Sunday School and A Study in Pedagogy;
- Lyon's The Sunday School; Gregory's Seven Laws of Teaching;
- Holborn's The Bible: The Sunday-School Text-Book;
- Hurlbut's Revised Normal Outlines and Studies in Old Testament History.