

ADVANTAGES

OF THE

Study of the Bible by Books,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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Mr. President and Christian Friends: The main support of all individual Christian life, the main spring of all high Christian work, must be the truth of God. Truth is the life-blood of piety. Truth is always more potent and more precious when we draw it ourselves out of the Bible. I rode out yesterday afternoon with a kind friend among the glories of the famous avenue of Cleveland, and then away into the beautiful country region which they hope is to be Cleveland Park some day, until we passed presently a little fountain where the water, coming fresh and sweet and bright, was bursting from the hillside.

The water we drink in the houses here from the lake is delightful, but there it was a fountain. There is nothing like drinking water out of a fountain. And I remember what my Lord Bacon has said: "Truth from any other source is like water from a cistern; but truth drawn out of the Bible, is like drinking water from a fountain immediately where it springeth." Ah, this Christian work we have to-day in the world, will be wise and strong and mighty just in proportion, other things being equal, as it is directed and controlled and inspired by what we draw ourselves out of the Word of God! I have come to speak to people who want to study the Bible, who do study the Bible, who love the Bible, and would fain love it more and know it better. I am not to speak to biblical scholars, though such are present, no doubt; I am not to speak to persons of great leisure, who can spend hours every day over their Bible; but to busy workers, most of them, busy with the ordinary pursuits of human life, in their homes or places of business, and all of them busy, I have no doubt, in the varied work of Christian people in the world, and

they wish to know how busy people, often interrupted in their daily reading of the Bible, and often limited for time, can make the most of this daily reading. Therefore, they will be willing, perhaps, to listen.

I am to undertake by request, to set forth one of the many ways of reading the Bible, which I think may have special advantages, which is often too much neglected, and which may contribute to give us intellectual interest in the Bible, and to make its study spiritually profitable. I want your kind aid in doing this, my friends. I am going to speak of an intensely practical matter in as thoroughly practical a manner as I know how, and when I am done, I shall be exceedingly glad if one and another of you will ask me questions about the subject, or about anything that has been said. I rather like to answer questions under such circumstances; and a man who has been a teacher all his life, has, no doubt, learned himself in many cases, to give to questions the short, simple, if not sufficient answer, "I don't know." Please bear that in mind, and have your questions ready if you would like to ask them when I am done.

The Bible is one book; but the Bible is many books. It is rather an interesting subject of reflection to look back upon the process by which men ceased calling it books and began to think of it as a book. You know that the Greek name for Bible, *Ta Hagia Biblia*, means the sacred books; and when they borrowed the Greek word into the Latin *Biblia Sacra*, it was still plural—the Sacred Books. How has that *Biblia* come to be a singular word in our language? When the various writings of inspired men had all been completed and began to be thought of as one collection, complete in itself, and when men began to know that singular and beautiful harmony which pervades so wonderfully all this great collection of books, written by so many men, through so many long centuries, so that they saw that it was not only a complete collection of books, but that they were all in perfect harmony with each other, then the idea grew upon the Christian mind that this was really one book, and a very noble thought that is to be cherished and made plain to each successive generation—the internal harmony of all these various writings of inspired men.

But then we must not forget that, after all, it is many books. They were written separately; they were most of them published separately; they were originally read separately from each other; they had a separate character, a substantially separate meaning and value, a practical influence over those who read them, and they ought to be read as separate books.

Then each one of them must be read as a whole if we would understand them well. You cannot understand any book if you read it only by fragments—I mean the first time you read it. A cultivated gentleman of this city remarked at dinner to-day that he was reading for the third time that beautiful book of piety, "The Memorials of a Quiet Life,"—reading it for the third time fifteen minutes of every day, he said. That is very well when he is reading it for the third time; but if he had read it fifteen minutes of every day the first time, he could not have entered so fully into the meaning of the book. The celebrated John Locke has a saying on this subject in the preface to his commentary on the Epistles of Paul. He said that he had found from his experience that in order to understand one of the Epistles of St. Paul, it will not do to take it in fragments. Why, suppose (the philosopher goes on) that a man has received a letter from an absent friend, whom he loves very much—a letter full of valuable instruction to him, and that he reads a page to-day

and then lays it down ; the next day he takes another page and begins at the beginning of the second page, and does not notice much what was at the end of the first and reads the second page ; the third day he begins at the top of the third page and reads that. How much will he know about the letter when he is done. He tells you, perhaps, "I have been reading a letter from So-and-so—a letter full of valuable instruction," and you ask him what it is about ; he does not quite know what it is about, and no wonder, with such a process of reading. "You must take the Epistles," says Locke, "as you would take any other letter. You must take them each as a whole, and sit down and read each from beginning to end, and see what it is about. And then, if it is very valuable, you will take it afterwards in parts, not necessarily in pages, but in parts according to the subject of which it treats, and you will see what it says about this subject, and what it says about that subject, etc." That seems to be very plain common sense, and yet what a pity that the idea has not struck more widely into the minds of the Christian world.

Will you pardon a little personal reminiscence? I think that those who grow old ought to take occasion to bear their humble personal testimony to the way in which good is sometimes done for and through young men. It is a long time ago now—I am almost afraid to tell you how long ago—that I was a college student at the University of Virginia. One day, coming home from a lecture, Dr. McGuffey, Professor of Moral Philosophy, who used to be well known in Ohio, speaking to a student as one who he knew was contemplating the ministry, began to talk about reading the Bible, and he said, "I want you to get Horne's introduction, and hunt up a paragraph quoted there from John Locke about the importance of reading the Bible, a Book at a time, taking each Book as a whole. Now, be sure to get it, and read it." The young man got it, and read it, and the thought went into his heart of reading the Bible in that way, and took hold upon him, and in order to show the impression that was made, he must mention that one result was that a few years later, by a series of Sunday night sermons on the life and writings of the Apostle Paul, before Conybeare and Howson were heard of in the world, treating each epistle as a whole, in the place where it occurred in the history, he crowded the aisles and crowded the doors of the church and built a new church ; and a few years later still, another result was that the young man was drawn very reluctantly from the pastorate he loved and will always love better than anything else in this world, to be a teacher of others in this same work ; and the man cannot tell to-day, as he looks back, how much of the direction his life has taken is due to the recommendation the professor gave to his student, as they walked home from the lecture.

Oh, ye people that have to do with the world's young men, you never know what some little word you speak is going to do in shaping the whole character and controlling the whole life of the man who walks by your side!

But I wish not to argue this matter, but to offer some practical illustrations of it. Let us just take up together, now, some books of the Bible, and by your very kind permission, I will address myself to the average reader, the person of average intelligence. Of course, I know extremely well that the present audience is composed of persons far above the average. But, still, what I have to say is to persons of average intelligence, and those who are more intelligent than that will find it all the easier to do what I am proposing.

Take, now, the First Book of Samuel. You want to read that book through at a sitting. How long will it take you? Forty-five or fifty minutes. Read

it as you would read a Sunday-school book that one of your children brought home from Sunday-school, right straight through before you rise. Say to yourself, "What is this book about?" You find it is about Samuel, and presently it passes on to tell about Saul. Samuel continues to be his contemporary. After awhile young David comes into the history, and it goes on so till Samuel passes away and you reach the death of Saul with the end of the book. So that book has treated about Samuel, Saul and David, and you have got some idea of the general history of each of these persons, up to the death of Saul, and the time when you know that David succeeded him. Then you go to reading it again, the next day we will suppose, for you are a busy person. You take the book the next day, begin at the beginning and say, "Well now, the first part of this book is about Samuel. Let me look over it here, and see into what portions of Samuel's life it divides itself." You see pretty soon that you have first an account of Samuel's birth and childhood; secondly, you have an account of Samuel's active life as ruler of Israel; and then, thirdly, you have an account of Samuel's old age when he had anointed Saul as King of Israel and lived on as Saul's prophet, and finally came in contact with the youth of David. Those are the three periods of Samuel's history presented—his youth, his active life as ruler, and his old age as a prophet. You take up the account of his youth, and you purpose to read as much as you can of that for this first reading. Now the best way would be to read the book three times, if you are patient enough. I know this is a terribly impatient age, and I am afraid you will not do that. I am afraid you will wish to make only two readings of the book, and we will suppose that you adopt that course, although the other is better. While you are reading this life of Samuel, then, in its several portions, you will be studying Samuel's character as a prophet, a ruler, and a good man. You will be paying some attention to Samuel's mission and office in the unfolding of the history of the people of Israel; for he occupies a very unique and interesting position. You will at the same time be attending, paragraph by paragraph, without bothering yourself much about chapters, to the practical lessons which are presented to you. "What is there here for me to imitate? What is there here for me to learn? What is there in this trait of Samuel's character, what in this experience of Samuel's life, that I ought especially to lay to heart?" You are now getting the lessons out of one portion of the life, but with a reference to the other portion, taking it all as a whole; and so when you have completed the life of Samuel in that way, you pass to the life of Saul. You find you have Saul's early years and Saul's later history as a division into two parts, and you take them up and treat them. Perhaps you mark down on a bit of paper with a pencil, or you mark down on the fly-leaf of your Bible itself, the divisions in this way. Then you take one after another and study them. And so with the history of David as it comes in; the struggles of David's early years; then passing as you would have to do into the other book, Second Samuel, the history of David's prosperity in middle life, and finally, the history of his sore adversities in his later years, and you will see how the struggles of his early years prepared him for his day of prosperity, and how the sins of his day of prosperity brought on his adversity and bitter sorrow, and you begin to take David's life as a whole, and see the connection of the different parts of it. See how the different traits of character, good and evil, come out one after another, and apply each, one after the other, to yourself. Now, I suppose that that would be a much wiser way of reading the First Book of Samuel, than just to read one or two chapters to-day, and

the next day begin to read at the next chapter, and not stop to see what there is in the former, which is the way (present company of course excepted!) a great many people read their Bible.

But let us turn to another kind of book. Take one of the Epistles of Paul. You will find that the books of the Bible must be treated, for our purpose, in a great variety of ways, according to their peculiar character. Take, now, the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We will suppose that you sit down and read it straight through, and just let the chapters go. What are the chapters? and who was the chapter-maker? Not the inspired writer, as everybody knows. Chapters and verses are convenient enough, provided we use them as servants and do not allow them to be masters. You read it straight through and see what it is all about, and you will find as you read that Epistle that it treats of a number of entirely distinct subjects. They have nothing to do with each other so far as you can see. You take your pencil and mark them down as you go along. You find there are four chapters—for the chapter-maker made but one mistake in that Epistle, which is saying a good deal to his credit; more than can be said in other places—there are four chapters which treat of the divisions among the Corinthians, and the fact that they made these divisions with reference to the several preachers, and this leads Paul to speak of his own way of preaching. He would not accommodate himself to their mode of preaching, a lesson which preachers sometimes have to remember in this cranky world. Then you find two chapters in which he speaks of special evils that existed among them—evils of licentiousness, and evils of getting their personal difficulties settled by heathen judges, instead of getting them settled by their own brethren for the honor of Christianity. He said, in the first place, that they ought not to have personal difficulties to settle, and, in the next place, if they had them they ought to get them settled by their own brethren and not go to the heathen for it. Then you find the seventh chapter treats of questions pertaining to marriage, about which they had written inquiring of the Apostle. Then you go on and you will see that chapters eight, nine and ten talk about the question of eating meat which had been offered to idols. That was a grave practical question among them, far graver than many questions that we dispute about now-a-days, though to us it is dead and gone, just as many of our questions of dispute will be dead and gone in the coming centuries, and men will wonder what in the world made those good people of the nineteenth century spend so much time over matters that will seem to them of no consequence whatever. Those chapters treat of the eating of meat offered to idols, and in connection with that the Apostle indicates the right course by the course that he pursued. By the way, let me mention what his argument is there. It is familiar to most of you. He says: "Now grant that this meat offered to idols is not different from any other meat. The idols are nothing, and the meat is just the same as it was before it was laid on the altar. Yet if your weak brother cannot get over the old idolatrous associations, cannot eat it without a revival of the old reverence for the idol, and without its carrying him back to sin, oh! had you not better let it alone, even if it is innocent for you, for the sake of your brother?" And I think, sometimes, Oh! that we could content ourselves with that principle in regard to some practical questions of to-day—that argument which our fathers used about the use of intoxicating drinks, for instance; grant that it may be innocent for you, yet if it leads your brother into sin, cannot you let it alone for your brother's sake? "Then besides," the Apostle

says, "you had better not be too sure that this thing is innocent for you, for, before you know it, it may get you into trouble too." That is what I should call "A calm view of Temperance." But this by the way.

Then, to proceed with the Epistle, you find that chapters 11 to 14 treat of abuses that had arisen at Corinth in connection with their public worship. A variety of abuses are mentioned. Most of them refer to the disorderly conduct of their public worship, when ever so many of them would want to speak at once, and they would not sit down as gracefully as I saw gentlemen this afternoon in the social meeting. They would go on talking together, and were not willing to give up to each other. Some of them were proud that they had special gifts and others jealous because they did not have the like, and the Apostle tells them that all this must be managed in decency and in order, and that Christian love is a far brighter, sweeter, nobler thing than all the special gifts.

Just here please let the chapters alone, for what you call the 13th chapter of I Corinthians, comes right in as a part of his teaching about this matter of the displaying of gifts, the ambition, the jealousy, etc., and you have no business reading the first portion of that chapter without noticing how it links on with what precedes at the end of the twelfth chapter, and without noticing how the end of it is connected with the chapter that follows. It blazes like a diamond on the bosom of scripture, but then it fastens scripture together.

The 15th chapter of First Corinthians, treats of the Resurrection, and the 16th contains some practical information, etc.

Now you have half a dozen entirely distinct subjects there. You have observed that, and you have marked it down. Then you take the subjects up, one at a time, and study them. Four chapters are devoted to the dissensions and divisions. What was it all about? About the preachers. They were quarreling about which preachers they liked best, and that leads the Apostle to speak of his own method of preaching. You thus have entirely distinct topics which you can study one after another; but that will not often be the case.

You will find some other epistle, in which you cannot make that sort of absolute division—this topic, and then another topic, and then a third topic—but the writer goes from one thing to another sometimes, and comes back to the first subject; but in a good many of those cases, you can find that there is some one thought that is the key-note to the whole. Take the Epistle to the Philippians, for example. It is quite short; you can read it all through in less than half an hour. You ask yourself, What is this all about? What is the main idea here? for you perceive that you have not here several topics, as in First Corinthians. The main idea, however, is Christian joy. "Rejoice in the Lord." Wonderful idea, when you remember that the man who wrote the letter was a prisoner chained, his life subject to the caprice of the most terrific tyrant the world has ever seen. And he was writing to a church poor and persecuted, which had sore trials awaiting it in the future. Yet, in the midst of all this, Paul writes to his persecuted brethren, and the key-note of what he says is, "Rejoice in the Lord." It is true that, in the middle of the Epistle, he apologizes for saying it so often. He says, "To write the same things to me indeed is not grievous." He thought it might be grievous to them. Before he gets through with it he says it two or three times more, and at the end he breaks forth, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!" Our beloved brother Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, was yet a man of like passions with ourselves, and as our Saviour Himself showed

humanness, none the less genuine because so blended with the Divine nature, in the unity of His one person, and that humanness of his doth sweetly draw us toward the Divine ; so it is with the humanness of the sacred writings too, and we may feel the touch of human thinking, and the glow of human feeling, and not lose at all our reverence for the Divinity that is in it all.

I might take many other examples of this sort. What is the key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians? It is the unity of Christians. The dispute of many years whether the Gentiles should become Jews is not ended, but the Apostle is triumphant, and the thought he now urges is that the Christians are one, Jew or Gentile—that was the widest idea that ever existed among Christians in this world. None of our divisions of sect, of country or of race is half so hard to overcome as was that question of the junction of Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian, and the Apostle's great thought in that Epistle, is that all are one in Christ Jesus. The Epistle to the Ephesians was intended apparently to be sent around as a sort of circular letter to many churches, but that is the key-note. I do not say that everything in Ephesians is about unity directly and immediately, and if you get hold of that idea, the danger is that you will carry it too far, and will find it in many places where it is not. At least, if you do not brethren of the laity, you will be wiser than brethren of the ministry often are.

But you will find another kind of books. We are supposing you are examining for yourself. Of course, it will be very convenient if you get some of the works which give analyses of the books of the Bible, and tell the topics they treat of. That is helpful, especially helpful in enabling one at the outset to see how to take hold of the matter. But, oh, it is so much better to have a little rude analysis you have made yourself ; because that treats of the thing the way it looks to your mind, and you are able with that, though it may not be half so good as one you may find in the work of another, to get more of the sacred thought which this book suggests to your own mind. Many of these books you will find, I say, in which you cannot find one key-note, and you cannot find the division into separate topics, but you will find one subject that pervades the whole and gives unity to it in another way.

Let us take the great Epistle to the Romans. Some people think the Epistle to the Romans is tremendously hard to understand. I remember a time when I found it right hard to *believe*. I used to say that certain portions of it were the most difficult writing I knew of in any language—that is the way young fellows talk you know, and sometimes old fellows have not gotten over it. I used to say that certain portions of it were surpassingly obscure. And why? It seems to me now—and I mention it because the thought may be worth considering—that there never would have been any great difficulty in seeing what the Apostle meant to say, if I had only been willing to let him alone and let him say what he wanted to say. But I had my own notions as to what ought to be said on that subject, and what ought not to be said, and you see the plainer it was in saying what he wanted and what I did not want, the harder I found it to make it mean something else.

If you take up the great Epistle to the Romans, you find at once as you read it rapidly through, that it breaks into two parts. Eleven chapters contain doctrinal arguments and instruction, and then five chapters treat of practical matters only slightly connected with the doctrinal matters. These first eleven doctrinal chapters treat of justification by faith, and the first three of them give the whole substance of this doctrine. They show that the Gospel reveals

the righteousness of God, which is by faith, and then they show why men need justification by faith—because they cannot find justification in any other way—their works will condemn them, and if they find it at all, it must be by faith. This takes up the first and second chapters and a part of the third, and then the remainder of the third chapter tells about this provision which God has made, for justification by faith, and how beautifully this provision works to take all the pride out of repentant souls and humble them into taking the great salvation that God gives. The fourth and fifth chapters only give further illustration of justification by faith. They say that Abraham himself was really justified by faith (one whole chapter is given to this), and that this matter of our being justified through the effect of Christ's work of salvation, is only paralleled by the effect of Adam's sin upon his posterity. This takes a great part of the fifth chapter. These are mere illustrations, you see, from the case of Abraham and from the effect of Adam's sin, illustrations of the idea of our being justified through faith in the Saviour. Then you come to chapter 6, 7 and 8. You find that they treat of justification by faith from another point of view, viz.: In its bearings on the work of making men holy, *i. e.*, of sanctification. Then the next three chapters are on the privileges of the Jews and Gentiles. So you see that the Epistle divides into different departments of the one topic, and after you have read it through several times, and tried to find out the line of thought in it, and been willing to let the Apostle mean what he wants to mean, whether you like it or not, I think you will find that the subjects considered are not so very difficult. Of course there are questions we can ask about them at once that nobody can answer, but we must content ourselves with what is taught us.

¶ Take another kind of book: The Epistle to the Hebrews. There you find there is a line of argument, and one set of practical applications that runs through the whole letter. So that there are not half a dozen sentences in the Epistle which you can properly understand without reference to the entire thought of it as a whole. You must have that before your mind all the time. Now what is the practical object of that Epistle? Well, after trying persecution upon the Hebrew Christians, they tried argument, and persuasion; they used cunningly devised reasoning against Christianity. You can see it yourself, if you look at the Epistle and think about it. They said, "Well now we used to think that your Christianity was only one form of Judaism, but since you seem to have got the idea of cutting loose from Judaism and setting up your Christianity as a religion by itself, why, don't you see that it is no religion, that it is entirely inferior to the religion of our fathers? You had better give it up, and come back and be Jews and nothing but Jews. Why," they said, "the religion of our fathers was given through the holy angels at Mount Sinai. Are you going to turn away from it? The religion of our fathers was given through the great and revered Moses. Are you going to abandon Moses? The religion of our fathers is a religion, with its splendid temple, its smoking altars, its sacrifices, its incense, its robed priesthood, its splendid ritual. The religion of our fathers is a religion indeed! And what is your Christianity, if it is to set up for itself? Hadn't you better abandon Christianity?" And the sacred writer said, "Nay! I will take their own arguments, and turn them all against them." He says, "the religion of our fathers was given through the angels at Mount Sinai, but Christianity was given through the Son of God, and as the Son of God is revealed in the Old Testament to be incomparably su-

rior to the angels, so is Christianity superior to Judaism. The religion of our fathers was given through the great and revered Moses, but Moses was only, as it is said in Deuteronomy, a faithful servant in all the house, and the founder of Christianity is above him as the son of the household is above the servant. The religion of our fathers has its outward forms of worship, but they are only the pictures of the realities in the glorious world beyond the clouds through which our great High Priest passed, like the Jewish high priest through the vail of the temple, where lies the true Holy of Holies in the other world. And thither He has gone bearing not the blood of bulls and goats, but His own precious blood, offered not every year, but once for all, and all-sufficient, and there He stands not for a little time while they wait without till He appears again, but there He ever liveth interceding for them that come to God through Him, and so is able to save them to the uttermost." Don't you see that He takes every one of their own arguments and turns them right against them to show the superiority of Christianity? And the practical bearing of it, all the time, is, "Therefore don't abandon Christianity and go back to be a mere Jew; don't give up your faith in Christianity; see the evils of unbelief and apostasy." As I said, there is hardly a sentence in the whole Epistle, the full purport of which can be understood unless you bear in mind its relation to this line of argument.

Pardon me one other illustration in that direction. I think in practical experience one of the hardest books in the Bible to treat as a whole, is the book of Job. Yet I do not think it is very difficult to get the general outline of the book if you address yourself to that task, provided you will not allow the beautiful poetic phraseology to prevent you from seeing the line of thought. You see that in the first place you have the prosperity of Job described, and then the sore trials that were allowed to come upon him. How sore they were, and how he stood all the trials! Then you have his friends coming to him and treating him better than people among us sometimes treat their friends who are in affliction. For they go and talk them half to death, and Job's friends sat, how many days and nights was it—before they even spoke a word? and then they go to talking about him. And the theme of their talk is one of the greatest subjects of sorrowful human thought in all the ages of the world. What is the meaning of sore afflictions when God lets them come upon men? It is a question that has not been answered yet—one of the questions the full answer to which, if it ever enters into finite minds, must be reserved for the better light of the better world. But how much light is given upon it in that book? You will see that these friends of Job are mistaken on this subject, and they say many things about it that are not strictly true. They are said from a perverse point of view and a mistaken idea of the matter. I have heard people quote sayings of those men as sayings of Scripture, when it ought to be understood that the Scripture says that those friends of Job said certain things on that occasion, and how far they are exactly right will have to be judged by looking at the book as a whole, and cannot be judged otherwise. Take one man at a time and ask, what does he say? And then how does Job reply to him? You will find that at first they take hold of the subject delicately. They say: "The Almighty is just; He prospers all good men; He never sends sore trials upon a man unless that man has deserved it." They do not say yet, "You, Job, have deserved all these sore afflictions." They hint it. And then Job begins to reply; he gets warm with the argument; he sees what they are hinting at;

he says : " I have not committed any enormous sins, greater than men around me, to bring on me these great afflictions." Then they come squarely to the point and say, " Oh, Job, you had better confess it. The Almighty has found you out. We never knew that you were a very bad man ; we thought you were a very good man. Everybody thought so ; but the Almighty has laid his finger upon you, and that shows that you have committed great sins, and you had better confess them now, and maybe you will be forgiven." Job warms still more ; he lifts his hand to high heaven, and says : " God knows that I have not committed any such great sins as you speak of at all. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might get away from you who will not do me justice, and do not understand me. Before Him I could argue my case." And so the discussion goes on in an extremely interesting way, the great thought being, whether great sufferings do prove that a person has been guilty of extraordinary sins. Then a young man comes in (and it is a lesson which old men would do well to lay to heart), the young man talks more wisely than all the old men had done, though he does not explain the matter yet ; still he says : " Ah, the Almighty is greater than we, and we must not expect to understand all about Him ; we must try to submit ourselves to His ways, even though we do not understand them." And then Jehovah himself appears. I remember how, when I was a lad, I was first reading the book of Job, with some help in getting the idea, and when I reached this point my heart took a leap. I said : " Now Jehovah himself appears, and he will clear the whole matter up." But he does not ; he simply says : " Who are you ? What are you talking about ? What do you know ? What power have you ? What wisdom have you to survey the universe and compass eternity ? Why should you expect to understand everything ? Remember how great am I and remember how little are you, and bow yourselves in humility, even where you cannot understand." And oh ! friends and brethren, amid all our wide, wild questionings in life—and rightful questions too, if they are not mad—the loftiest knowledge in human life is to learn how to be willing when we cannot understand Jehovah's ways, to bow to Jehovah's will, and put our sole trust in Him.

There is only one more book that I shall mention for illustration—the Book of Revelation. Do you read the Book of Revelation in your family much ? Do you preach about it much in your pulpit ? I do not know whether to hope that you do or do not, because a great deal of the preaching about the Book of Revelation, and writing about it that I have come in contact with, would better have been let alone, according to my judgment ; but the greatest evil that happens about it is, that a great many good people are led to neglect the Book of Revelation. I asked a very able minister once, " Do you pay much attention to the Book of Revelation ?" He said, " No. I have no opinion of these calculations of prophecy, that have been made a hundred times over, and a hundred times over have turned out failures. I don't believe they know anything about it, and I am sure I don't. And so I think I had better read somewhere else." Meantime, get your little child to say, if your child has heard the Bible read much, whereabouts you shall read the next time, and see if the child does not say, " Please turn over there to that last part and read that again." There is much in the Book of Revelation that takes hold upon children. Allow me to mention a personal reminiscence that touched me very much. Years ago, when my family included servants, I used to try very hard to get the servants and the children interested in the family

worship. I tried the Parables ; I tried the life of Our Lord ; I tried many other parts of the Bible ; sometimes they were interested, and sometimes not, and at length it occurred to me, " Now I will see if they will not be interested in the Book of Revelation, that contains so much beautiful imagery." So I began, and I found that the servants and the children were very much interested for several days. I tried to explain a little, and I could do that very well for the first few chapters about the churches, etc., and I could explain the scene of worship in heaven in the fourth and fifth chapters. Then we got on into the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets, and I stopped explaining, for a reason that you can perhaps conjecture. But I did not stop reading. They told me to go on with it. They all seemed to be interested. At length, after many days, we were far over in the middle of Revelation, and I was reading some of that splendid, solemn, impressive imagery that is there presented—like the unrolling of a mighty panorama, scene after scene of wonder, and power, and struggle, and conflict, and hope and promise—and one day as I was reading I looked up through my tears and all the circle, from the aged grandmother down to the little child, were in tears too. You may say we did not know exactly what it was about. Yes, we did. It was about God—about God looking down on this world of ours, about the sorrows and struggles of this human life and the fact that God sees it all, is watching and controlling it all.

Now, I have mentioned this for a purpose. I beseech you, read the book of Revelation. If you have no definite views as to the predictive portions of the book (and I have not, I confess), let them alone, but read for the sake of practical instructions ; that the book may bring Jesus, the exalted Redeemer, close to you ; that it may make clear to you the idea that heaven is the headquarters of the Christian, from which the angels come as messengers to bring the word of command, and carry back word as to what is going on in this battlefield of life. The book of Revelation tells us that these sorrows, temptations, and trials, are to end at last in complete victory, and in everlasting peace and joy. And to get sentiments like these, oh ye cultivated men and women, in this cultivated age of ours—to get tender, devote, loving sentiments like these deeply impressed upon loving hearts, is worth all culture that falls short of them.

Now, I have just two or three remarks to make in conclusion. If we read the Bible by books, first taking each book as a whole, then seeing how it is divided up, then taking the several divisions and treating them, and so coming down to details, we shall learn in that way, and learn for ourselves how to interpret the several parts of Scripture with reference to their connection. Everybody will agree that you ought to look at the connection of a passage of Scripture. I remember one day, my father said he did not like to find fault with preachers, but he wished some of them would pay more attention to the connection of the text, as the preacher that morning did not do. I suppose they have grown wiser since that day, and always do pay attention to the connection now. But in talking about it my father said, " Now, I can prove to you out of the Bible"—it was an illustration to a little child—" that there is no God." He got his Bible, opened it to a certain place, put his finger down and said, " Come here and read." and the boy read, " There is no God," and it began with a capital T, too, as if it were a complete sentence. Then my father lifted his finger and said, " How is that ? ' The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' " ' Now,' he said, " don't you see you must always attend to the connection."

That was a very simple lesson, certainly. What is the connection of a passage of scripture? Only the other part of the sentence? Well, there are preachers sometimes who do not attend even to the other part of the sentence, and it may be true of some other persons besides preachers. But is that all the connection, only a sentence before or after a particular passage you are considering? Well, sometimes that is all, but in other cases it is a page or two that is the connection, and, as I have said, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the book of Job, it is the whole book that is the connection; you cannot be sure that you are getting the precise point of view and the real meaning of any one of the sentences, unless you take it as part of the whole, and with reference to the whole line of thought and the practical design. You see how important it is that we should learn to study every particular expression of Scripture in its connection. It is a very beautiful thing to pick out the passages of Scripture that treat of some particular subject, as you can do with the help of a concordance, and put them together in a mosaic. It is like taking many pebbles and combining them, as the Romans were fond of doing, into a mosaic. That is a very delightful thing, only be sure about your material. Take care that you see where these things come from, and that you have got them right. No man would be so unwise as to take out of the Epistle of Paul, "A man is justified by faith without the works of the law," and then take a fragment out of James, "We know that a man is justified by works and not by faith only," and lay those two together and say, "How beautiful is the harmony of Scripture!" We know we must see what Paul was talking about and to whom he was talking, and to what sort of persons James was talking, and what he was talking at, in order to judge what each meant by this particular form of expression; we dare not put those two passages side by side and neglect the connection. Now in many other cases, the difficulty and danger are not so obvious, but they may be just as real. So often when a man with his concordance is picking out passages that all contain a certain word or refer to a certain subject, and laying them all together in a beautiful picture to please the eye, it is as if he made a mosaic in this fashion: Here is a pebble and there is a diamond; here is a crumb of sugar and there is a flower bulb; and those make a mosaic, do they? A mosaic is a beautiful thing, but your materials must be harmonious. You must know where these things come from. You must understand their connection, or else you will break living things all to pieces, in order to build up the dead fragments into a dead thing.

Then another remark. Each of these sacred books has its special aim and practical value, and we ought to try to get the practical impression that each of them is designed to make. For instance, each of the Gospels presents certain aspects of the life, character and work of our Lord. Those aspects are often overstated in the books about them, but you can catch the matter practically. Next year when we shall all be studying the Gospel of Mark, in Sunday School lessons, the attention of half the Christian world will be turned to those particular aspects of the life, character and teachings of Jesus which are presented in that Gospel. You read one Gospel to see how that presents Jesus, and each of the other Gospels to see how it presents Him, and if you have done that and then try to blend them all together in your loving faith, and reverence and humble desire to live like Him, God being your helper, and to bring others with you to follow Him too, you have made the most beautiful and splendid harmony of the Gospels that ever is made in this world. So as to other portions of the Scripture. We ought to get the devout and practical

inspiration which each particular book is designed to give, and these, one after another, will unite themselves together in the symmetry of a complete Christian character, and the fulness and power of a true Christian life.

It is not an accident, brethren, that in this age, in which infidelity has anew become blatant and arrogant, the Bible is more studied than ever it was before. It is not an accident that there is a new demand, throughout the Christian world, springing up for Biblical, expository preaching. There has not been such a desire outside of Scotland, the great and noble home of expository preaching, for many generations. It is not an accident that these Bible-readings which have done so much in our time, and will do so much, have become so popular just now. People don't know about believing the preacher nowadays, and a great many people don't know about acknowledging the authority of a church as they once did; but the people who come to hear the Gospel, if you bring them something right out of the Bible, not a broken, dead fragment, but a part of the living whole, full of the true, divine life, and show them its meaning as God has taught it, and lay that meaning, explained, upon their hearts and their lives, the people everywhere respond to that; they like it; they feel that that is good. I think it is not an accident that in a time when infidelity is so bold, arrogant and noisy, there has come this revived love of Bible-study and Bible-preaching, Bible-readings, Bible classes and Bible-work in general.

They say that the cultivated mind of the age has had enough of the Bible. Does it look as though people had stopped reading the Bible? You see men in the street cars reading the New Testament. I stopped in Cincinnati on Monday, and as soon as dinner could be had I ran to the book-store to get a copy of the revised New Testament, and I saw a man buy, before my eyes, the last copy they had, out of a thousand sold over the counter that morning. God be thanked for this revived demand for it. But, oh men and brethren, we do not read the Bible as we ought to read it. It is easier to eulogize the Bible than to love it. It is as easy to praise as it is for some poor, silly opposer to make sport of the Bible. Dr. Johnson said that a man of real wit would be ashamed to make jests about the Bible, because it is too easy to do. It is just as easy to eulogize the Bible and then to neglect it.

I have spoken with the hope that I might by God's blessing awaken in some of you at least a greater desire to read the Bible attentively, and I pray God that we may all turn away with an earnest promise in our own souls, before Him who knows the heart, that in the remainder of our lives we will try to love His Word more, to read it more wisely, and to live more according to its blessed teachings.

If there is anybody that will ask some questions about the matters which have been discussed, and you are willing to listen a few minutes, I shall be glad to answer them if I can.

Ques. What helps would you advise to a careful Bible reader, if any?

Ans. Oh, I should advise helps, but the answer would embrace so much that it would be hard to give it here.

Q. You spoke of analyses. What analyses would you recommend?

A. The analyses which are contained in Horne's Introduction are very good for this purpose. It is an old book which can be picked up anywhere. The analyses in Angus's Bible Hand-book are short and very good for this purpose. I wish somebody would publish a little book containing analyses of the books of the Bible.

Q. If a person has read the Bible through two or three times, and has a general idea of it, with the intention to continue reading it through in that way, would you advise his stopping that plan, and spending the time on separate books?

A. The best of all ways, of course, would be to read the Bible in three different ways at one time, if a man had time for it. To read very rapidly through the Bible once or twice a year, also read some books carefully, and daily some small portions for private prayer. But I should say that most persons would find it better instead of continuing to read it through in the way you mention, to take a book and study in the way I have indicated.

Q. What book would you advise a young convert to begin with?

A. Well, that would depend upon his previous Bible knowledge and the general intelligence of the person. But I think that in our time there is after all nothing so important for the young Christian as to read the story of Jesus Himself as told in the Gospels. The whole thought and feeling of our time seems to gather itself about the idea of Jesus. That is the citadel of the Scriptures for attack and defence, and that is the heart of the Scriptures for love. I should say to the young convert, "Read the Gospel of Mark; then read Matthew, Luke and John."

Q. Would you advise haste in going from one book to another before you have got the best judgment on one?

A. It would depend upon your knowledge of Scripture whether you should go rapidly. It would depend upon your own staying qualities, too.

Q. If you wanted to impress a skeptical man, who was seeking sincerely for light, with the inward truth of the Scripture, what book would you advise him to begin with?

A. Oh, I would give him the Gospels, and tell him, "Try to get near to Jesus Christ; try as you read it to seem to be looking at Him and listening to Him."

Q. Would you advise the reading of books of the New Testament and books of the Old together for the light they throw on one another?

A. That is very desirable sometimes. Leviticus and Hebrews may be read together, very profitably; or Matthew and Isaiah. There are different expedients that each person will discover and adopt according to his own judgment and advantages.

Q. Do you recommend the use of the marginal references?

A. Oh, they are very desirable, indeed, provided you pay attention to the connection which you find referred to. You must not take them as scraps, and put them where they are cited as if they belonged there. You must remember where they do belong.

Q. In the family worship, where there are young children, would you advise reading the Bible in course?

A. Well, I have often found it very desirable to read the Bible in course in family worship, but not to read all parts of it for children of a certain age. I think one must select certain portions for children of different ages. If, like some of us, you have children of a good many ages, then you must act accordingly.

Q. What brief word of counsel would you give in regard to the use of commentaries?

A. Well, it would be this: Be sure you get the very best commentaries there are; for there are commentaries and commentaries.

Q. Will you please recommend one?

A. Well, that is a very hard thing to do here. Use your commentaries all that you can, provided you do not read them instead of reading the sacred text. Read the Bible itself in its own connection, and commentaries to help. I remember a singing-master from whom I took lessons when a lad. He came all the way from New York to Virginia to teach, and he said that the ladies would not beat time. He used to stop and say, "Why don't you beat time? Ladies, if you can't sing and beat time both, stop singing and beat time." If you can't read the Bible and commentaries both, let commentaries alone.

Q. Would you advise that two persons, in distant places, should follow your advice, and take the Bible by books and by sections, and compare notes by correspondence?

A. That would be very desirable, only I should say they ought not to come together to study, for, if they did, the one who has the stronger will of the two would get the best in their arguments.

Q. Would you advise the marking of Bibles?

A. Yes; mark them in every way.

Q. Would you not advise much prayer and communion with God in the study of the Bible, in order to a better understanding of it?

A. Oh, assuredly I would advise prayer and communion with God. I ought not to have taken that for granted. I blame myself that I did not say that. We ought to pray to God every time, for that is the heart of the matter.

Q. A young man asked me to ask you, how should we learn to love the study of the Bible?

A. Well, it is a good question; but, like a good many others of the wisest questions, the answer cuts deep. To love the reading of the Bible more, we must love Him more of whom it tells us. And then, by reading the Bible more, we shall learn to love Him more. And then, by trying to live the way the Bible tells us to live, we shall read it with more satisfaction and understanding. For if any man is willing to do the will of God, he will know concerning the doctrine.

Q. Would you advise regular hours for Bible study?

A. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Regular hours for reading the Bible, and irregular ones to boot. It depends upon your mode of life what hour is to be chosen. It depends upon how much time you give to the morning newspaper.

Q. Would you recommend the morning hour rather than the evening?

A. That depends upon whether you are an early riser. I do not think you can lay down any law in regard to that matter. Everybody must find out for himself what his circumstances and his habits will allow him to do most profitably.

Q. On the subject of the newspapers, don't you think that a man could derive just as much benefit and pleasure and inspiration if sections of the Bible were published in our daily newspapers?

A. I have thought about that, whether it would not be well to get the morning newspapers to publish portions of Scripture. Then I have thought, too, how in the Art-galleries of Europe they hang close by some painting that they know people ought not to look at, some unobjectionable painting. People go and stand at the unobjectionable painting and look to one side at the other, and I am afraid when they took the morning paper, they would say they took it to read that lesson, even on Sunday morning, and if you watched them you would find they were reading somewhere else.