

THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. 4—MAR.-APRIL, 1896.

I.—LITERARY.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIAN PEOPLE FEEL SUCH DEEP INTEREST IN THE CONVERSION OF THE YOUTHS IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES?*

The Southern Presbyterian Church has, from the first week of its organization to the present, evinced a most intense concern for this part of her people. It had been no matter of wonder, if the detonating clouds of the awful war which was to be fought during the years 1861-'65—if those clouds, by which the country was overhung by a canopy darker than night, had driven from the minds of our first Assembly all

*DEAR BRO. LINGLE :

This paper was prepared for delivery in the College Church on the last Thursday of February, 1895. I send it to you in place of the article on "The Testing System in the Irish Presbyterian Church", which I had promised. I have all the material gathered for the latter article but my present circumstances make its putting into shape embarrassing.

I am glad to publish the paper sent, for notwithstanding its marks of hasty preparation, it is really a plea for the observance of a day of prayer for the youths of our schools and colleges. Our last Assembly did much toward the practical abolition of the observance of such a day, by changing the time to a Sunday in November. The observance is so important that the Assembly may well appoint from year to year a week day; and the Church may well meet for prayer on the subject. I very much fear that under the inspiration of our last Assembly the Church would soon reduce this honored and useful observance to a mere incident in the regular service of the Sunday appointed—a reference to our youth in the long prayer it may be.

Yours very truly,

Orlando, Fla., 11th March, '96.

THOS. C. JOHNSON.

THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE WITH A VIEW TO PREACHING IT.

My subject is definitely stated above. You will observe its limitations. I am not to write upon the devotional study of the Scriptures—such study as has in view your own spiritual nourishment and growth in grace—precious and delightful as such a theme would be. Neither am I to say aught concerning the critical study of the Scriptures in the inspired originals, nor aught concerning that study of them from which systematic theology derives its chief support, important as these are to the full equipment of all who aspire to be able ministers of the New Testament.

But every man who intends to govern his ministry by the explicit command, "Preach the Word," must have a practical familiarity with the Word of God in the mother tongue of the people to whom he preaches. He must know the Bible "in the original English" as a painter knows his colors, as a drummer knows his samples; he must learn how to handle it as the mason does his trowel, or as the surgeon his lancet and probe. Most of us, who are now in the ministry, felt when we left the seminary that here was our great need. We knew something of how to *exegesize* and also to *theologize*, we knew little of how to *preach the Word*. It was, I take it, this felt need which secured for Union Seminary the establishment of the chair which Dr. English now fills. But those of us who did not enjoy the advantage of this special training have had to work out our plan of practical Bible study for ourselves.

At the request of the managing editor of this periodical, the present writer gives the lines along which his Bible study has been guided during the fifteen years this April, since his ministerial life began.

Let us suppose a young man expecting soon to preach or just settled in his first pastoral charge. We take it for granted he does what he exhorts his congregation to do—that he reads his Bible. Nay more, that he spends much time in daily meditation on the Word of God, both to slake his own spiritual thirst from that "River of God which is full of water," and because of the keen intellectual relish for the Scriptures which

exegetical and theological studies have imparted to him. I would have him form the simple habit of marking such verses as feed his soul and stimulate his mind, with a cross-mark thus †, or with some similar hieroglyphic, put in the margin opposite the said verse or verses; which, whatever it might signify if found on the Moabite Stone, or the clay tablets of Assurbanipal, conveys to his mind wherever seen, this simple legend, "here is a good text to preach from."

There is nothing erudite in this idea, but if faithfully followed for a few years, the young brother (or old), whose lip now curls disdainfully over such a childish suggestion, will find his bosom swelling with thankfulness as under the stern demands of two sermons a Sunday and a prayer-meeting talk every Wednesday night, he can turn for texts to a Bible starred all over with these humble remembrancers.

Moreover, the habit of marking "good texts" naturally leads to higher things. Very many Bible verses suggest their own homiletic outline. Two or more heads of discourse may lie on the surface of such a text, or be readily suggested by it, especially at a time when this particular verse has captivated you by its spiritual or intellectual suggestiveness. Then, in addition to the hieroglyphic indicating a good text as above, let the student put in the margin the briefest outline of a sermon, or jot down the text and outline in a note-book kept for the purpose. Take, for example, the following from the margin of Mr. Moody's Bible, opposite John 10: 27, *Christ's sheep marked in two places*, (1) in the ear, "My sheep hear my voice;" (2) in the foot, "They follow me." Or jot down in your note-book under Gal. 5: 11, *The Cross an Offence*: 1. To morality. All have sinned. Works cannot justify. 2. To philosophy. It appeals to faith. 3. To culture. Its truths revealed to babes. 4. To rank. God chooses the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised. 5. To the will of man. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Or put opposite 1st Cor. 16: 2, the following, adapted from Dr. Vaughan's article in the last Union Seminary Magazine. *The New Testament Law of Giving* (compare 2nd Cor. 9: 7): 1. Time for giving, "First day of the week," i. e. the Christian Sabbath, hence, giving an act of worship. 2. Who are to give, "Every one of you." 3. In what proportion, "As God hath prospered you." 4. How be able to give, "Lay by

in store." 5. Evil to be avoided, "No gatherings when I come." (Our 'special collections.')

The experienced minister well knows that the outline is half the sermon (and the better half, too). He also knows that in the moment when a text fastens on him, as if it said, "preach from me," a sermonic outline, often, if not always, rises in mind along with the text; and if not noted down then the same text rarely ever presents its truths to him in such clear-cut shape again. Hence, the value of this our second suggestion, not only mark the good texts, but note along with them (in the margin of your Bible preferably) such a brief sermonic outline as will give you a running start towards a good sermon, when in time to come you feel called to preach on that text.

In the third place, the same suggestion just made with regard to single verses will be found highly applicable to two or more verses, or an extended passage. Very many parts of the Bible embody the development of a single thought; and often a whole passage groups itself naturally around the proposition stated in a single verse. What more natural in reading such a passage than to put by the side of it a skeleton sermon, with such a central verse for your text, and the other verses of the context falling into line as the main heads of your discourse? Or without taking any particular verse as a text, the passage may be threaded, as it were, upon the line of truth which runs through the whole. It is obvious that large portions of the doctrinal epistles, the parables and many of the miracles of our Lord, the prophecies and the historical scriptures of the Old Testament, are readily susceptible of this sort of homiletic analysis. One example is given, a Bible study made some years ago, on the latter part of the 2nd chapter of Hebrews. The apostle's object in this passage, evidently, is to show how completely our Lord became *one with his people*, in that, 1. He was made like unto his brethren, v. 17, so was not ashamed to call them brethren v. 11. 2. He partakes of flesh and blood, v. 14, by taking on him the seed of Abraham, v. 16. 3. He suffers being tempted, v. 18, so (1) made perfect through sufferings, v. 10, (2) able to succor them that are tempted, v. 18. 4. He tastes death for every man, v. 10, so, (1) makes reconciliation for the sins of his people, v. 17, (2) delivers from fear of death, v. 15, (3) destroys the power of the devil, v. 14.

If you were going to preach on this passage you might take either v. 17 or perhaps v. 11 for your text and construct your sermon out of the whole passage, as above. Or better still, you might preach an expository sermon on the entire passage.

By the way, the reader sees how easy is the passage from this plan of Bible study into that method of sermonizing to which allusion is made in the last sentence, the method of *expository preaching*. It is a token for good that in so many quarters the desire is expressed to return to this old-time way of preaching. From the days of the apostles to the thirteenth century no other way was known. In that dark hour just before the dawn of the Reformation, the modern method of single text sermons took its rise. During the Reformation period there was a return to the expository method, and the great Scotch and Puritan divines of a century later, whilst they preached many, if not most of their sermons on single texts, also made a practice of expounding the Scriptures "in course." It may be a sign betokening a return of the Puritan, the Reformation and the Apostolic Life, that this soul satisfying method of sermonizing is coming once more into favor. But while many recognize the advantages of this time-honored method, they are deterred by the difficulty of it. Yet, does it not seem that to a minister who is faithfully studying his Bible after the plan herein suggested, an expository sermon would afford one of the easiest and most natural ways of preaching?

But I would by no means be understood as advocating the entire abandonment of the modern way of preaching from a single text. That single text has too often proved the thin edge of the wedge opening the way for all the truth as it is in Jesus. So it was with the text, Eze. 36: 26, on which John Livingstone preached at the Kirk of Shotts, June 21, 1630, under which it is estimated that above five hundred were converted to God. So, too, was it with Edwards' no less powerful sermon on Deut. 32: 35. 2nd clause; and W. C. Burns' sermon at Kilsyth on Ps. 110: 3, 1st clause. The Holy Ghost has too fully set his seal to sermons preached on what have been reproachfully termed "mere fragments of scripture," for the church to give up entirely such a method of sermonizing. But I would have sermons on a single text developed far more scripturally than is usually done. And to this end I make a fourth suggestion. In the fourth place, let the student whose

attention is arrested by any verse in his daily Bible study, not only compare that verse with the passage of which it forms a part, but with every similar passage in the Word of God. The *context* of any one verse in the Bible is every other verse in the Bible—that is, if you believe in the plenary inspiration of the entire book. So let every Bible student make a daily business of referencing his Bible for himself. Let the margin of his Bible or his note-book bear witness daily to his habit of comparing spiritual things with spiritual. And let him pursue this plan not merely to accumulate long strings of references, but such as have direct sermonic value. You are reading, let us suppose, in Ezekiel, and have reached the 36th chapter. You come to the 26th verse, “A new heart will I give you,”—the text of Livingstone’s memorable sermon. You put in the margin the following double series of references: 1. *The natural heart is*, “evil continually,” Gen. 6 : 5; “desperately wicked,” Jer. 17 : 9; “impenitent,” Ro. 2 : 5; “hard,” Ezek. 3 : 7; “Haughty,” Prov. 18 : 12; “foolish,” Ro. 1 : 21. 2. *God can make it*, “clean,” Ps. 51 : 10; “good,” Lu. 8 : 15; “contrite,” Ps. 51 : 17; “soft,” Job 23 : 16; “tender,” Eph. 4 : 32; “wise,” Prov. 11 : 29.*

Now should you want to preach on the subject of Regeneration, here you have your text, and with it choice stones hewn from the Spirit’s quarry for the best kind of sermon building. Not only verses or passages containing great facts or fundamental doctrines of scripture may be thus illustrated or enforced by parallel scriptures, but comparatively insignificant expressions found in one part of the Bible may be a “lead” (in mining phrase) into rich veins of sermonic material. Let the reader take his Bible and concordance and see what he can make out of the two words, “one thing,” thus, for example: “One thing is needful,” Lu. 10 : 42; “one thing I know,” Jno. 9 : 25; “One thing I desire and seek,” Ps. 27 : 4; “one thing I do,” Phil. 3 : 13. Spurgeon builds a sermon out of this material, entitled “A many-sided motto.” A noted bishop of the Episcopal church used the same Bible study as the basis of a baccalaureate sermon before Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Of course the simplest method of pursuing this sort of study is to avail yourself of the help of a reference Bible and concordance, and to use the most pertinent references which they

*Taken from Miss Havergal.

afford. Let me repeat, however, that the object to be kept in view is not to accumulate references as such, but mainly those which can be used in this kind of sermon building. And with this end in view, *make your own references*. Well would it be if every Presbyterian minister thus learned to embody in his practice, as well as in his creed, this statement of the confession of faith, "the only infallible rule for the interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself, And the true and full sense of any scripture may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

These four suggestions then, for the study of the English Bible with a view to preaching it, may be briefly summed up thus: Learn to mark the good texts; make a brief outline of such texts as strike you; do the same with more extended passages; compare with this the whole counsel of God by diligent examination of parallel scriptures—and *do this daily*.

Of course I need hardly say that in practice it is well to combine all four of these suggestions. Also I need not take time to show the readers of this magazine, that in utilizing such suggestions as these, the mental discipline, the exegetical and theological stores of a thorough seminary training, are of the utmost importance.

In concluding this article, however, it would be well for me to give some idea of the sources from which the foregoing suggestions have been derived. I would first pay tribute to one already widely known by her hymns and other devotional writings, but who deserves to be equally well known as a model searcher of the scriptures. I refer to Miss Frances Ridley Havergal, from whose *memorials* one of the preceding Bible studies is taken. In the record of that sainted woman's life nothing, not even the deathbed scene, which rivals the glory of Payson's dying hours, has that abiding interest for me, which attaches to the two facsimile pages of her Bible, given near the close of the book (pp. 278-279). I do not see how any one can look over these two pages without imbibing something of that enthusiastic diligence in Bible study there displayed.

The next "authority" to which I will refer is of a very different character, namely, an article in the old Princeton Review, for January, 1838, on *expository preaching*. If the reader has access to the old numbers of that mighty exponent of the Presbyterianism of the past, let him look that article up. He

will find there urged upon him, with far more fulness and power, some of the same ideas I have endeavored here to express. I quote but one brief sentence: "The assiduous study of the Bible with direct reference to the services of the pulpit, is indispensably necessary." Though written fifty-eight years ago, that differs only in the wording from the subject at the head of this article.

From the old Princeton review to Mr. Moody is another wide transition, yet in the citation of these sources, due acknowledgement must be made to the modern "evangelists," of whom Mr. Moody is the least objectionable representative. The question is not raised as to whether these brethren, most of whom are self-sent, so far as the churches are concerned, are to be countenanced or condemned. But he must be hide-bound indeed who is unwilling to learn from their methods of Bible study. What these are, any book of Bible readings, with selections from Moody, Whittle, &c., will sufficiently show. But these men are not originators, they simply reproduce—not in form, perhaps, but in essentials—the sermonic methods of the great Puritan divines; and also of some of the brightest lights among the Scotch preachers in the disruption period. Lack of space prevents the extended comparison necessary to show this. But I cannot forbear giving the reader one gem which flashes out from a discourse of McCheyne (who confessedly took Owen and Edwards as his models) on *Mary of Bethany*.

"She hath done what she could"—what can a woman do?

1. She can choose the one thing needful, sit at Jesus feet and hear his word; she can brave the world's scorn in her loving devotion to Him—as Mary did.
2. She can labor much in the Lord—as the beloved Persis did.
3. She can be a succorer of many—as Phoebe was.
4. She can clothe the Lord's poor—as Dorcas did.
5. She can teach some eloquent ministers the way of God more perfectly—as Priscilla did.

I have no doubt that if Mr. Moody had ever come across this, he would have appropriated it as a choice "Bible reading" for use the next time he preached to "women only."

In this hurried survey of "sources," it is with regret that I make only this casual mention of Owen and the generation of mighty men to which he belonged. When Spurgeon, under

the demands made by the weekly publication of his sermons, felt, to use his own words, that he "was in danger of running dry," what did he do? He threw himself back upon the exhaustless homiletic stores of the great Puritan preachers. See the proof of this in his *"Flowers from a Puritan's Garden,"* and in the voluminous quotations in *The Treasury of David*. So, dear reader, when you have marked all the good texts, made all the expository analyses and topical or textual Bible studies of which your own mind is capable, then take down from the dusty shelves of your grandfather's library, the works of John Owen in 14 volumes and the works of Jonathan Edwards in 10 volumes, with Manton or Howe or Charnock or Baxter, if they happen to be there; and make a new start in the homiletic study of the scriptures under these "old masters."

And now the reader must pardon me for committing the grave homiletic fault of having already said, "in conclusion," and now proceeding to say "finally." I promise, however, that after "finally," there shall neither be "in the last place" nor "I hasten to close."

Finally, what result in your preaching will follow these methods of Bible study? Most of these have already been hinted at, they need only be summed up now in the briefest form. Note the effect on your style of preaching, making it scriptural, expository, so that you may say when you stand up to preach, "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," so that you will "declare all the counsel of God," so that you will "read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and give the sense and cause the people to understand the reading."

Resulting also in an inexhaustible fertility of homiletic Resource. The short sounding lines which I have tried in this article, to put in your hands, will only reach beneath the surface of the profound deep of divine revelation. But they stretch with the using. You will not get through marking the good texts, analysing pregnant verses and passages, comparing scripture with scripture, until the day when it shall be said, "the Master is come and calleth for thee."

Imparting also to your ministry growing favor with God and man. Here I speak from a most inadequate but a most thankful experience. May yours be the same experience, only far richer! In the degree to which you follow either these or better methods for "the assiduous study of the Bible, with direct reference to the services of the pulpit," will "the common

people hear you gladly ;" and will there rest upon your labors the blessing of Him who has said, "so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth ; it shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

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