

Marked Bibles.

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When we buy for ourselves a Bible, we, acting wisely, get the very best we can afford. The best in binding, in paper, and in print. If it be always cheapest to get the best in other things, it is the same here. There is a real pleasure in possessing and using a first-class Bible. It is our sacred book and we cannot honor it too lightly, so long as we keep distinctly in mind what the Bible is for. It is to tell us, instead of God's voice ringing in our ear, the mind of God concerning everything that is of importance to us. It is the revelation of His will to men. That is a sacred thing, and that being so, we almost instinctively carry this sacredness into the very paper and binding of the book. Now the paper is no better than any other paper. It is there to bear to us its message. Its use is to hold up before our eyes the sacred communication. But it is the communication alone that is of prime moment to us. We want to get that out of the Bible. We want to take that off the page and get it wrought into our hearts. We want the spiritual truth transferred from paper and ink to thought and feeling and energy within us. And so we must make diligent use of our Bibles to this end. We must not be afraid to wear them out. They shall wear out if we handle them, turn over the leaves, and carry them about. They shall get blackened and rubbed with the thumbs, creased with being turned down at the corners, and, may be, torn with the rapid motion of the fingers, and the leaves too loosened from the binding thread—but we are always to bear in mind that we got them to use. Their value to us lies in their use. They are not to be ornaments merely on a table or on a shelf. Their ornamenting power is to be seen in transforming our characters; in changing us into the likeness of Christ. The Bible carries His image and as we study it we are changed into His image and bear His likeness. The Bible reveals God and as we meditate in it night and day we become like God.

Now, all, or nearly all, great Bible students have marked their Bibles. They have spoiled them in the right way—they have taken the sacred spoil out of them. So have I seen the text-books of students spoiled. They are all scored with pencil or pen to make the passages emphatic, and render them so conspicuous as to be easily found. They say as they read "I want to remember that passage and so I will mark it off from the rest." It is a most interesting thing to read a marked book, and to find out traces of the action of mind and heart on every page. It is like going along a road that another has travelled before us, and seeing his footprints all the way. It stirs our souls to a sense of fellowship. It arouses us to attention and thought. It gives us food for reflection.

Joseph Cook holds that every Bible reader should mark his Bible so that in five years, that he shall require a new one. And he truthfully affirms that that shall be the best record of spiritual progress that can be offered. Would to God that such an interest were taken in the Bible that this was the case! In the Diary of Dr. A. A. Bonar, we have this entry: "1856. Tuesday, May 10th. In Edinburgh. Sitting with my sister's Bible before me, find it all marked throughout. I was struck. I thanked God for all the comfort, and the light, all the grace, which this book has yielded to souls like hers; also for all it has yielded to me. But I sigh for far more light and love and power to gather much from every book, and to have my heart softened so that I may feel more deeply. I once felt something of this in seeing the Bible of David Sandeman all marked through, and

then part of one marked by a lad here, and Mr. McCheyne's Bible I well remember. It was as if you could read his soul's experience at the time."

A Bible marked by a saintly mother, or by a loving, godly father is the best heirloom they can leave to their family. It is a witness to their own love for the unseen Holy, and a testimony of a real relationship existing between God and their souls. The Bible is a mine where sparkling diamonds are hidden, where veins of white silver and yellow gold run in every direction. Where all store of precious stones are treasured, and he who will work the mine must leave the mark of his pick, and the scar of his blasting powder upon the rock. He must not be afraid to disfigure that in which the precious things are, so long as he succeeds in extracting them. It is the precious things he is after, if he be serious, and earnest and truly spiritual. To get at them he shall be willing to grind the rock to powder.

Mr. Moody, who has long been a devoted Bible student, has his Bible not only marked, but the margin covered with notes—the thoughts that arose in him as he read. Speaking of the kind of Bibles men get, he says "I am sick of these little fine types. It is a good thing to get a good sized Bible, because you will grow old by and by, and your sight may grow poor, and you won't want to give up the one you have been used to reading in after it has come to seem like a sort of life long companion."

Whatever we spend on other books we ought not to spare the cost of getting a good Bible, with good margins on which markings may be made in a free hand. We might even put there date and thoughts and marks together, which in after years would form a most valuable record. We should not be afraid to underline statements, surround passages with lines, or fill the margin with notes. The spiritual life is fed by the Word of God. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby," "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." In every revival of the spiritual life of the individual or the Church there is a return to the Word of God with hungry desire and great anxiety to get at God's thought and to rest on God's bosom. Nothing can satisfy the intellect and the conscience and the heart like the Word of God. Like milk it has all the elements of food in it. It meets every part of our nature. Its light is the clearest, its love is the dearest, its grace and hope are the grandest of all we can know. So it is no marvel that the Psalmist exclaims: "Oh the blessednesses of the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—Ps i. 1-3. George Whitfield once said in a sermon of his, "I love to see the Word of God well *thumbed*, as if it had been read till the inside is dirty; but there are some whose Bibles, I grieve to say it, lie in a corner so outwardly covered with dust, that 'damnation' may be traced on it with the finger in legible characters." Is not an unused Bible a terrible witness against us?

Better used Bibles would make nobler, grander, beautifuller lives. The Bible gives instruction and inspiration and strength for all the life of God.

TRIAL AND DISCIPLINE.—However long the series and painful the character of our trials may be, we shall call them "light afflictions and but for a moment" if they open our way to our eternal Home.