

## Presbyterian Press.

## STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

(From New York Evangelist.)

There is a general want of earnest Bible study among Christians. The Bible was expressly framed to suit the capacity of the common mind. It was not slanted to the cultivated and speculative intellect. The Bible was purposely adapted to common life. It was not framed to harmonize with the pursuits of the study of the cloister. Hence, there is not only a fitness in the simple, earnest study of the Bible by the common mind, but there is, for the Bible's own sake, a pressing need for it.

The need is especially pressing now. The tendency of extensive theological investigation is to induce an exclusive style of technical theological exposition. Wide-spread philosophical study and disquisition leads to give exposition a philosophical bias. Neither of these can meet the wants of the common practical mind. It cannot best accord with the practical, common sense purposes and uses of the Bible. No preacher or expositor, who confines himself to such theological or philosophical channels of thought, will be best able to bring the Word home to the common mind, or to make it potential over the affairs of common life.

But how is he to get at this simple Bible truth, so long as the common people, from neglect of Bible study, are themselves deficient in it? He cannot well get it himself, for he is, to some extent, in another position. He is, from training and professional bias, forced to take a different stand point. His only practical chance is to be found in a personal contact with the religious thought and Bible knowledge of his people. But if they have no religious thought of their own—no Bible knowledge of their own—even that chance is gone.

So far, then, as the instructions of the pulpit are theological and technical, rather than practical and common sense-like, it is in good part due to the people themselves. If they would but, like Christians of a former generation, make themselves, by earnest Bible study, "mighty in the Scriptures," they would infuse more of their own practical, adaptive views into the pulpit. They would themselves help Bible-exposition to get more naturally and sympathetically into contact with the common life and daily convictions and wants of men.

Let us, fellow Christians, have more of this common, every-day, house-study of the Bible. Without the pulpit study, the people may lack light; but without this popular study, the pulpit will lack life.

## AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL.

(From the Evangelist.)

The proposition comes from Edinburgh, and from so judicious a man as Professor Blaikie, whose recent visit to our churches is fresh in memory, for a Confederation of English-speaking Presbyterians. He argues for it on various grounds in the columns of the Edinburgh Presbyterian. It would serve to convey the idea of a large brotherhood; it would give us great interest in one another, and "much more of communion in each other's gift and graces;" "to distinguished men in one branch would belong to the whole, and have influence accordingly; each section of the Church would benefit by the experience and wisdom of the rest. America would learn from Ireland and Scotland, and vice versa. A large confederation would serve to adjust better the relations between freedom and order. Missionary operations would be greatly assisted, and opportunities would be afforded for united prayer, which would be exceedingly precious; strong Churches like those of Scotland and the United States would feel the benefit of union and co-operation; but much more so would the weak and scattered branches of the family—soldiers doing outpost duty, or pioneering amid Heathen or anti-Christian foes. The basis of such a confederation is ready to hand in a common faith and polity. In conclusion, Dr. Blaikie proposes Edinburgh as the place where the first meeting of the Ecumenical Presbyterian Assembly should be held. It is the Jerusalem of the English-speaking Presbyterian Churches. The constituency of such a gathering would be widely scattered according to the ideas of a quarter of a century ago, but the constituents and isles of the sea are really much nearer together in thought and sympathy than were the communities of contiguous States within the memory of those now in middle life. Steam and the telegraph is so banding the world together, that there is really nothing chimerical in this bold suggestion. Indeed the thought is not new, but every day makes it more practical and probable. While the reunited Church in this country might not receive any special impulse from such a movement, it would be felt for good at all the extremities of Presbyterianism the world over, and powerfully tend to the unification and absorption of its smaller bodies.

Genius has limits; virtue has none, every one pure and good, can become purer and better still.

## HOW TO RUN A CONGREGATION.

OUTLINE OF DR. JOHN HALL'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, DEC., 1871.

(From N. Y. Observer.)

The minister must not be the only attraction. Some men are called because they will draw well.

Some churches are run entirely by the organ-loft, and may be said to be lofty in this sense. The music is the great attraction, and vast sums of money are annually expended upon it.

People should not come to a church merely for its social life, to gain a passport into good society.

Prayer meetings are good; but the Church must not be run in their interest alone. The activities of a church are apt to be exaggerated, thus appealing to the pride of men. But the model church is a harmonious unity in diversity, complete by the perfection of each of its parts, under the control of the pastor. It should be a living organism, with all its parts in harmonious action, under the guidance of a central heart. The graces should be preferred to the gifts, and spirituality above all things.

In the pulpit the stunning style (a vulgar word for a vulgar thing) should be avoided. Such preachers will preach the Bible from out-of-the-way topics—such as the Witch of Endor and the like. The Bible (being a sensible and not a sensational book) being soon exhausted, they will turn to the newspapers for their texts, and preach about volcano eruptions, shipwrecks, etc., etc. This style is evil only. The amazing style is also to be avoided. This runs into Ritualism, and eventually into Romanism. Shakespear, altered for the occasion, would say, "Rather be a dog and bay the moon, than such a Roman."

The true preacher will master and teach the Bible. He will love it and live it. This will make a preacher brave. Though there be many in the congregation who may know more about other things than he does, yet here he is superior to any of them on the knowledge of his text, and the feeling makes him brave. He is speaking the word of God, and he hath truth on his side. This will make longer pastorates. The average is now lamentably short, being about three years in New England; and is attributable to the essay writing of the pulpit, allowing the light of fancy, history, science and metaphysics to play about the text, instead of digging deep into the mines for the truth which God has put there. Inspiration should come from the pulpit. This is only the human side. The divine side has all along been assumed. The Holy Spirit can alone give success to the means.

Young preachers should be willing to begin at the bottom of the ladder. He (Dr. Hall) began preaching at twenty years of age for what would be \$500 a year in our money. After all, great men are like the mountains. They look about them and wonder how they came up so high—they were thrown up. Still, they catch all the storms, and the fiercest winds blow about their heads.

The speaker was listened to with the utmost attention, and applauded several times during his most interesting and instructive address.

## LONELY WORKERS.

Many Christians have to endure the solitude of unnoticed labor. They are serving God in a way which is exceedingly useful, but not at all noticeable. How very sweet to many workers are those little corners of the newspaper and magazines which describe their labors and successes; yet some who are doing what God will think a great deal more of at the last, never saw their names in print. Yonder beloved brother is plodding away in a little country village; nobody knows anything about him, but he is bringing souls to God. Unknown to fame, the angels are acquainted with him, and a few precious ones whom he has led to Jesus, know him well. Perhaps yonder sister has a little class in the Sunday school; there is nothing striking in her or her class; nobody thinks of her as a very remarkable worker; she is a flower that blooms almost unseen, but she is none the less fragrant. There is a Bible-woman; she is mentioned in the report as making so many visits in a week, but nobody discovers all that she is doing for the poor and needy, and how many are saved in the Lord through her instrumentality. Hundreds of God's dear servants are serving him without the encouragement of man's approving eye, yet they are not alone—the Father is with them.

Never mind where you work; care more about how you work. Never mind who sees, if God approves. If he smiles be content. We cannot be always sure when we are most useful. . . . It is not the acreage you sow; it's the multiplication which God gives to the seed which will make up the harvest. You have less to do with being successful than with being faithful. Your main comfort is that in your labor you are not alone, for God, the eternal One, who guides the marches of the stars, is with you.—Spurgeon.

## Current Opinions.

## THE IRISH AND SCOTCH.

(From the London Times.)

The Scotch are a small people, and almost everywhere that such a people is combined with one of greater territory and numbers we have the phenomena of a discontented nationality. But we may restrict ourselves for an example to the British Isles. Ireland is an oppressed nationality. Do what you like, Irishmen will not give up their right to be called a downtrodden people. The most loyal of them—those who do not pretend to wish for any great political change—still like to bemoan the injustice of England. The great majority affect to believe in the possibility of removing the mysterious and intangible ills of the country by some great political change. It is of no use to ask them what they complain of. Even when they cannot imagine a grievance sufficiently solid to be stated, they are sure they do suffer in some hidden manner from the Saxon. At this moment the thoughts of no society of Irishmen, either in their own country or in Great Britain, are quite free from the assumption that they are somehow placed at a disadvantage and labour under disabilities. Among the fiercer politicians of the commonality we hear of proposed celebrations at which the name of the Queen is to be excluded from the list of toasts, and, either in seriousness or as a of political pastime, whole classes are ready to plunge into a new agitation for Home Rule.

In contrast to these we find our Scotch neighbours taking the political world as they find it, and prospering under, or in spite of, all kinds of institutions. The secret of their loyalty and contentment is that, as a rule, they make their way. Private success produces public tranquillity. The contrast has often been drawn between England's conduct toward Scotland, which was joined to her on equal terms, and her treatment of Ireland, which has never recovered from its position as a conquered country. But, in truth, the institutions of Scotland have been by no means models of excellence. The representation of Scotland before the Reform act of 1832 was in a much worse state than that of England; indeed, there was hardly any direct representation at all. Aristocratic usages have affected the law much more largely than with us, and the liberty of the subject has been by no means so well guarded. Scottish nobles and landowners have flocked to England just as much as the same classes of Irishmen; they have equally abandoned the church of the people, even though it is established; they carry on a propaganda of prelate, and love to display their attachment to a communion which, if it differs from Anglicanism, differs from it by being still further removed from Presbyterianism. All these things have not made the Scotch either disloyal to the Crown or acrimonious towards Englishmen, though there never have been wanting the same class of agitators who have succeeded so well in the sister island. The principle we can discern in this is that Scotchmen, under the influence of a good education, have realized how much the greatness and happiness of a people depend on individual effort and success, and how limited is the power of laws for good or harm. If we take the names of those Scotch residents in London who represent, as is often remarked, a larger Scotch population than exists in Edinburgh, we find men who had no more advantage to start with than thousands in whose hearts the disappointment of an unsuccessful career have roused the demon of political discontent. The Scotch have plenty of patriotism, but it takes the form of striving for the advancement of themselves, their relatives, their connections, their friends in an ever-widening circle; and, as the general prosperity is promoted by the prosperity of every section, it follows that it is largely permeated by prosperous and essentially conservative elements. While abroad and at home there are changes and rumors of change, we hardly hear of Scotland, except in connection with anniversaries, centenaries, festivals, and harmless and cheerful solemnities.

## POWER.

(From the Baptist Union.)

Abounding prayer, while inventing, developing, composing, and preparing to deliver, the sermon, will give both an intellectual and moral concentration and earnestness to the discourse most favorable to right spiritual impression. It will give life to preaching. It will fascinate men with something more than human.

It is well known that the most effective discourses of Whitfield, Wesley, Payson, McCheyne, and other preachers of great spiritual power, have been prepared in this manner. Prayer will necessitate vivid illustration, and indeed the best rhetoric, for it will eagerly seek its desired effect. Prayer will secure spontaneously what the most elaborate art alone could never attain. The sincerity and earnestness of such a preacher will convince and persuade men more than his arguments. His own burning convictions will pass over to them, with a

clearness impossible from mere passionless statement. But above all, the Holy Ghost will go before and follow after such a discourse. The spirit will bring particular persons to hear, will prepare their minds in accordance with the preacher's previous petitions, and give to his word a power not at all his own. The reflex influence of his prayer upon the preacher himself, and upon the formation of his discourse, will be but the beginning of the answer. There will be a deep solemnity in the audience as well as union in the preacher. The Word thus preached will not return void.

There is reason to believe that many a preacher would be more popular with his people, as well as more useful, if he prayed much more than he does for God's immediate blessing upon his very next sermon. Of course all preachers pray for such results, but do they agonize? Are their souls really aroused? Do they feel that they must have God's help, and must have it now? Such prayer will insure life, vigor, clearness, power. Is not My Word, says God, a fire and a hammer?

There are preachers now living of great eminence, the secret of whose power is in the closet. There the intellect as well as the heart is kindled. There are preachers of ample ability, education, and even industry, as well as unquestionable piety, who are comparatively feeble preachers, because they do not wrestle more for an immediate blessing upon their sermons.

## JOURNALISM.

This is now a power. Armies of strong men use it, and affect results which sword, and shot, and wheel, and screw, and steam can never reach. The agency is unique. These frail, transient sheets, seem so light and perishable, have so little body and materiality, and drop into obscurity so soon, that at first thought we judge them insignificant, and almost powerless. But when we consider how freshly they come from fountains of thought, how closely they are related to mind, how they convey current heart-throbs, purposes, and aspirations, reverence supersedes our doubts. They fit here and there as slight incarnations of thoughts, transcripts of soul-life, warm pulsations of the heart, and seem like sacred things, more spiritual than material, almost alive and talking.

Studying the daily or weekly journals, their origin and growth, the magic skill which gives them form; their adaptation to drop seed-thought into the public heart, their subtle influence on character and destiny, our conceptions are elevated, and we assign them a high position among forces chosen to secure the weal of man. They have no right to be low, or mean, or vulgar, or false. Their mission is too noble to admit of this. It is like desecrating the sacred and divine, prostituting the choicest gifts of God, to use them as agents to poison public morals, defile human hearts, scatter the infection of base and groveling natures, and make bad men in character and miserable in life. It is infamous for vile men to steal this instrument, and use it for evil. It is shameful to make it the medium of falsehood and deceit. But it is done. One of the most painful facts which confront us, is the lack of candor and purity in our public journals.

Do we expect candor and a conscientious record of facts in our leading political organs? We are too generally disappointed. The majority of their reports and criticisms are caricatures, or extravagant laudations. They are not manly and honourable to rivals, and they are often vulgar in style and false in utterance. Such a degradation of one of the noblest creations of human skill is worthy of the keenest reprobation.

And if our leading journals stoop to such vile uses, what can we expect of those of less pretense? If editors of culture and first-class powers of mind disregard the simplest amenities of gentlemen, indulge in vulgar and abusive epithets, and defile their papers with partial statements, those of a lower grade will be more vile. Even religious papers are not always free from unfairness, slang and coarseness. Some of them need a radical reform.

Upon the whole, our public journals are far from perfect; many of them are positively vile. The examples of leading papers fall far below a proper standard. They especially often by lack of candor and truthfulness. They often strive for sensation, indulge in extravagant, perverted facts for effect, deal in stilted phrase and wild description, which none can respect or trust. They seem to be on the stretch for something strange, ridiculous, sensational, and mistake such performances for smartness, life and enterprize. It may be their best substitute for thoughts, brain-work, solid sense, and real wit; but it repels respect and confidence, and begets feelings of disgust. It will be a day of delight when our daily and weekly journals shall be uniformly chaste, honest, and alive with noble thoughts and trustworthy reports of facts.—Baptist Union.

A cross is your portion, if a crown be your reward.

## THINGS NOT TO DO IN WINTER.

Don't let cows out to water when the barn-yard is covered with ice, they are liable to injure themselves by slipping, especially if heavy with calf.

Don't let your horse stand out in the cold after a drive, without throwing a blanket over him. The neglect of this precaution has caused many a cold and sickness, so that self-interest, if not humanity, should compel the duty.

Don't let your pumps freeze, if you wish to save trouble. It is a difficult job to thaw them out, and in the meantime your family and cattle may be suffering from it. Don't let water stand in troughs a single night lest it be frozen solid before morning.

Don't spend your evenings at the village grocery, spinning long yarns, talking gossip and politics, and getting scented with tobacco smoke. Better stay at home and read to your wife; but if you go out alone, let it be to the farmer's club, or some place where you will not forfeit self-respect.

Don't let the children mull over their lessons without helping them now and then over the hard spots. A very little encouragement goes a wonderful way with young folks under difficulty.

Don't neglect dumb animals—especially in extremely cold weather—at the barn, the sheep-house, the pig pen, or the hen coop. They need shelter and warmth, and food and water. Who is to supply them but you, the owner? They need not be starved almost to death before your obligation begins. They should be made comfortable and happy, or you do not discharge your duty.

Don't allow a pipe or cigar in the barn or other out-building. To enforce this rule on others, you must obey it yourself. How is it with you, do you smoke in your barn? If so, you must not complain if your buildings burn down before winter is out.

Don't saunter about of cold mornings, with hands in pockets, and neck and ears bundled up with mufflers. Out with hands, off with scarfs and stir round briskly at some useful job. There is plenty to do, if you only plan for it beforehand, and there is nothing like work to start the blood and make one jolly.

## THE BEAUTY OF WINTER.

Winter scenery has charms of its own, that yield to no other season. On a clear winter day, the landscape often has a depth of colouring such as no other time of the year affords. An indescribably soft and tender atmosphere rests upon the earth, through which glows the deep purple and blue of the distant hills. The whiteness of the snow gives to the scene a celestial purity, a suggestion of heavenly things.

There is abundant beauty, too, of the minuter kind. What is more delicate and exquisite than the tracery of the bare tree-tops relieved against the sky? And every snow storm-works a myriad miracles of dainty architecture. It clothes the black spruces with a hundred feathery plumes. It hides every unsightly object with a soft white mantle. Under its touch in a single hour the whole earth is transformed, and masquerades in every variety of beautiful and grotesque apparel. Then, as by the quick changes of a magician, comes a sudden shower or thaw, and, again a frost, and the sun rises upon a world clothed in diamonds.

But the deepest charm which nature has in winter is that which night brings forth. The earth is not more unlike in summer and winter than are the heavens. Compare the mellow glory with which the harvest moon floods the earth, with the cold bright light of the far-off moon of winter. And the winter stars,—what sight that is given to man so stirs his sense of awe and mystery, so moves him to rejoice, and reverence, and adore?

It seems to us that in the severity and sternness of winter, the moods which Nature suggests are higher and more heroic than the milder seasons inspire. When the earth about us with every fruitful thing, when the warm air wraps us and the wind breathes gently upon us, the sense of these things bring great delight. But when the blood quickens to resist the cold, and bound in frost and snow the earth seems under the power of some mightier influence than those which minister to the physical man, then we seem to come closer into the presence of the Infinite One. Let one stand in the forest at night, when the ground is white about his feet and look up through the network of the great branches to the stars blazing from their infinite distance and listen to the mysterious voices of the wind, and he may well feel himself within the courts of God.—Christian Union.

We are sorry to learn that Mr. James Young, M.P., for South Waterlool, met with an accident at Galt, last week. He was present at the curling match between the Galt and Guelph clubs, and falling on the ice, hurt his left ankle so badly that he will be detained in the house for some time.