

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

5-17-1948

Methods of Bible Reading and Study and thei Critical Evaluation

Paul H. Strege

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_stregep@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strege, Paul H., "Methods of Bible Reading and Study and thei Critical Evaluation" (1948). *Bachelor of Divinity*. 227.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/227>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

METHODS OF BIBLE READING AND STUDY
AND THEIR CRITICAL EVALUATION

A Thesis Presented To
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Practical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Paul H. Stroege

May 1948

Approved by:

Otto E. Solms
A. M. Reinhardt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline	111
I. Introduction	1
II. The Book Method	13
III. The Chapter Method	30
IV. The Verse Method	38
V. The Word Method	44
VI. The Biographical Method	47
VII. The Doctrinal Method	51
VIII. The Topical Method	54
IX. The Unit of Thought Method	59
X. Using the Bible for a Present Situation	67
XI. The Bible Student and the Family Altar	70
XII. Methods Adaptable to Children	72
XIII. Conclusion	78
Bibliography	81

METHODS OF BIBLE READING AND STUDY
AND THEIR CRITICAL EVALUATION.

(Outline)

I. Introduction.

- A. God and men advocate the use of the Bible.
- B. Use of the Bible benefits the Christian's spiritual life.
- C. The Christian should approach God's Word with a proper attitude.
- D. Bible reading and study are defined.
- E. The Bible should be read at well chosen times.
- F. In the interest of systematic Bible study a number of methods of Bible reading and study together with an evaluation will be presented on the following pages.

II. The Book Method.

- A. The book method implies reading the Bible by books.
- B. There are several prerequisites to profitable use of this method.
 - 1. The exaggerated idea of the length of books of the Bible must be corrected.
 - 2. The format of the Bible should be readable.
 - 3. Some attention should be given to the version used.
 - 4. A knowledge of the background of the books will aid the reader.
- C. This method has advantages for the reader.
 - 1. It gives him an unbroken story sequence.
 - 2. It gives him a deeper insight into God's Word.
- D. There are several approaches to the book method.
 - 1. The reader might follow or compile an outline of the book to get its thought.
 - 2. The reader might search for the central theme of a book.
 - 3. The reader might read related books together.
- E. This method is recommended to the reader.

III. The Chapter Method.

- A. The chapter is the basis of most schemes to read the Bible in a year.
- B. The chief danger in this method is that it might deteriorate into a mere formalism.
- C. There are arguments both for and against this method.
- D. The method is useful within certain limits.
 - 1. It leads the reader to concentration on a short portion of Scripture.
 - 2. Meditation is essential to profitable use of the method.

IV. The Verse Method.

- A. There are several approaches to this method.
- B. A verse must always be considered in its context.
- C. Memorization is an important part of this method.
 - 1. An aid to memorization is Bible-marking.
 - 2. The reader, in most instances, must determine which verses he will memorize.

V. The Word Method.

- A. There are two major approaches to this method.
 - 1. Tracing a word through the Bible is impractical.
 - 2. Tracing a word through a single book can be useful.
- B. There are some minor variations of this method.

VI. The Biographical Method.

- A. This is an interesting approach to Bible study.
- B. The purpose of the method is to learn the principles of Christianity for our day from the example Bible characters gave in their day.
- C. The method carried out to its ultimate becomes a detailed study.
- D. The Bible offers much material for study with this method.
- E. The method is good for either individual or group use.

VII. The Doctrinal Method.

- A. The reader's purpose is to formulate and classify teachings he discovers in Scripture.
- B. There are two approaches to the use of this method.
 - 1. The inductive approach is used quite extensively.
 - 2. The deductive approach is preferable if followed properly.
- C. This method is usable with both Old and New Testaments.

VIII. The Topical Method.

- A. The object of the method is to assemble all material on a given topic.
- B. Topics are subject to various treatment.
- C. There are two classifications of topics.
 - 1. The general topic has wide possibilities.
 - 2. The topic that meets a problem is more challenging and usually profitable.
- D. The usefulness of this method is dependent largely on the choice and treatment of the topics.

IX. The Unit of Thought Method.

- A. The unit of thought is defined.
- B. The basis for this method is that the Bible is made up of "story" units.

- C. There are various types of story units.
 - 1. An entire book may constitute a story.
 - 2. A book may contain a number of character stories.
 - 3. The prophetic units are definitely marked.
 - 4. In some books the story unit revolves around a problem or teachings.
 - 5. Some books are built up around a mood rather than a thought unit.
 - a. Some shorter books have a single mood.
 - d. The Psalms contain a number of moods.
- D. This method is recommended to the reader.

X. Using the Bible for a Present Situation.

- A. Regular use of the Bible is more advisable than attempting to find help from it in critical moments only.
- B. Special readings from the Bible are practical on family or national anniversaries and seasons of the church year.
- C. Vacation time should also be a Bible reading time.

XI. The Bible Student and the Family Altar.

- A. The Bible should be used by the family group.
- B. The individual Bible student can contribute to successful family use of the Bible.
- C. Family altar helps should direct readers to the Bible.
- D. The use of hymns at the family altar is advised.

XII. Methods Adaptable to Children.

- A. Parents have the obligation of teaching the Bible to their children.
- B. Children are interested in stories.
 - 1. The use of various versions is considered.
 - 2. Young children should be guided in applying stories to their own life.
 - 3. Children should be introduced to both Testaments.
 - 4. Some books are obscure to children.
- C. Memorization should be stressed in childhood.
- D. The teen-age group presents special problems.
- E. Beginning with the biographical method, children should be introduced to others as parents deem it practical.

XIII. Conclusion.

- A. The methods presented and evaluated will not produce Bible reading.
- B. The Christian must use the Bible for spiritual growth.
- C. A proper use of the Bible will result in blessings to the reader.

METHODS OF BIBLE READING AND STUDY
AND THEIR CRITICAL EVALUATION.

I. Introduction.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."¹

"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read . . ."²

"By the common consent of all who are competent to judge, the Bible is the greatest literature of the world. Not to recognize it as such, not to read it, is simply to acknowledge the mental and spiritual incapacity of the individual and the age."³ "The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible. I speak as a man of the world to men of the world, and I say to you, 'Search the Scriptures.' The earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society."⁴

1. Acts 17:11.

2. Is. 54:16.

3. Newton M. Hall and Irving F. Wood, The Book of Life, VIII, 173.

4. John Quincy Adams, quoted in Martin Hegland, Getting Acquainted With the Bible, p. 5.

Thus both God and men advocate the use of the Bible. Perhaps the greatest abuse that the Bible has suffered is that it is not used as it ought to be and in many instances has been relegated to a place on the shelf, somewhat as a museum piece or perhaps a religious fetish which is looked into occasionally to "guarantee" God's good will. This lack of use, or misuse of the Bible, has been the tragedy of the ages and is particularly a tragedy today when the Bible is the most widely circulated book in the world. The Bible was given to man to be used. Speaking to Israel concerning its possession by the king, which is applicable also to all people, God said, "It shall be with him and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them."⁵ In the New Testament St. Paul writes to the Romans: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."⁶ The Bible contains the one message that the entire human race needs--and needs desperately--the story of God's love through His Son, Jesus, who suffered, died, and rose again so that we might live with Him in both this world and the next. St. Paul says of this message, the Gospel, that "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."⁷ In a rather extensive article on

5. Deut. 17:19.

6. Rom. 15:4.

7. Rom. 1:16.

Bible Study, Dr. Wilbur M. Smith lists the benefits to be derived from the Bible under seven headings. He says that the Bible: 1. Discovers and convicts us of sin; 2. Cleanses us from the pollutions of sin; 3. Imparts strength to us; 4. Instructs us in what we are to do; 5. Provides us with a sword for victory over sin; 6. Makes our lives fruitful; and 7. Gives us power to pray.⁸ Although these points are not the only divisions⁹ that might be used in systematizing the values of the Bible for us, everything that God gives us through its use can be included under one or the other of them.

The question has been asked whether the Bible should be read like any other book. The great Bible scholar, Dwight L. Moody, has made an interesting comment in this matter when he said that if he could understand the Bible at one sitting like any other book, he would have lost faith in it long ago.¹⁰ This seems to imply that the question should be answered negatively. However, any answer given to that question must be

8. Wilbur M. Smith, "How to Study the Bible for the Enrichment of the Spiritual Life," Revelation, VI (1936), 38-41.

9. A. T. Pierson, Keys to the Word, p. 9, gives another interesting division. He says the Word of God pictures itself to us under the following symbols: 1. A Mirror to show us ourselves as we are and may be (James 1:25); 2. A Laver to wash away our sin and defilement (Eph. 5:26); 3. A Lamp and Light to guide us in the right way (Ps. 119:105); 4. Milk, Bread, Strong Meat and Honey, affording sustenance and satisfaction to the believer at all stages of spiritual development (Heb. 5:12-14; Ps. 19:10); 5. Fine Gold, to enrich us with heavenly treasure (Ps. 19:10); 6. Fire, Hammer, and Sword to be used in the work and warfare of life (Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17); 7. Seed to beget souls in God's image and to plant harvest fields for God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Matt. 13).

10. Dwight L. Moody, Pleasure and Profit in Bible Study, p. 17.

qualified to some extent. The following statements by Trumbull and Torrey seem to answer the query very adequately.

There is a sense in which the Bible is like any other book, in being made up of words that must be noted in their connection and uses, and that therefore it is to be studied like any other book in order to arrive at its meanings. But there is another sense in which the Bible is unlike all other books, in that it contains God's peculiar message to mankind through men whom He trained and inspired for that special purpose, and that therefore its study must be mainly for the ascertaining and understanding of the divine truths that, unlike any other book, it has for ourselves as we are in our present needs and our ultimate destiny.¹¹

Many distinguished university professors say we should study the Bible just as we study any other book, and they fancy that they have said something wondrously wise when they have said it. But while it is partly true, it is very largely false; indeed, it is very largely abject nonsense. We should study the Bible as we study any other book to this extent, that we apply to it the same laws for the discovery of the meaning of words and phrases and the same laws of grammatical construction that we apply to any other book; but there the principle ceases. We should study it as we study no other book, for it is what no other book is: it is God's Word and all other books are men's words, and we should study it as what it is, and we should study other books as what they are.¹²

The Bible has a special purpose in the world and, therefore, should be approached differently than any other book. The Psalmist shows us the proper attitude in the brief prayer: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."¹³ This prayer should be in the heart of every one of us every time we open our Bibles for reading

11. H. Clay Trumbull and others, Hints on Bible Study, pp. 11-12.

12. R. A. Torrey, To Shew Thyself Approved, pp. 44-45.

13. Ps. 119:18.

or study. "Prayer is necessary to drive out the demon of indifference."¹⁴

Since our Bible reading is useless without gains for ourselves, we should give some attention to the matter of our attitude as we approach our Bibles. In the Bible God is speaking to us and, therefore, we are in the presence of God when we use it. In fact, Torrey suggests that we be in His presence only. He says: "When you study the Bible, resolutely shut everything else out, shut to [sic] the door of your mind to everything else and shut yourself up with God alone."¹⁵ The Bible is the Word of God by which we are to live today, and some day to die. This should prompt us to approach it open-mindedly, reverently, prayerfully, thoughtfully, and meditatively. These thoughts do not imply that the Bible is something mysterious or that the book itself must be revered. But because of the nature of its message, something inside of us should be different when we go about reading it than when we read anything else. "Our gains from Bible-study will be in direct proportion to the condition of our spiritual life," says Charles A. Berry.¹⁶ Only a true believer can properly use the Bible for devotional purposes. In this connection, a statement by W. H. Griffith Thomas is in point:

14. Francis Carr Stifler, Every Man's Book, p. 17.

15. Torrey, op. cit., p. 35.

16. Charles A. Berry, in Clifford, Waller and others, Hints on Bible Study, p. 54.

The devotional study of the Bible is at once a cause and an effect in relation to the spiritual life. It is a cause of increased spiritual vitality, power, insight and blessing, while in turn this spiritual reality of life leads to yet more spiritual revelation of God in His Word.¹⁷

Our aim as Christians is to experience both this cause and effect in our spiritual life as we study our Bibles. With that purpose in mind we will approach our Bible study in accordance with the advice of Rome A. Betts in The Bible and Youth:

Don't approach Bible reading as you would a good-luck charm, to keep off witches and goblins. A chapter a day, in that spirit, will certainly not keep the devil away. Approach it in the spirit of a miner searching for precious metal, who is not content until he has struck pay dirt.¹⁸

To acquire what the Bible offers for himself, the individual must use that Bible. That implies reading and study, two of the words which appear in our title: "Methods of Bible Reading and Study and Their Critical Evaluation." Mention has been made above of devotional reading of the Bible. To be beneficial, it must not be devotional only, but reading as well. Most of us, when we think of reading, think of picking up printed material and directing our eyes over the letters, words and sentences for the purpose of acquiring the thought they convey. This is a proper concept. The danger that must be guarded against in reading, particularly in Bible reading, is to let the eyes pass over the printed matter without

17. W. H. Griffith Thomas, Methods of Bible Study, p. 105.

18. Rome A Betts, The Bible and Youth, p. 5.

appropriating the thought. Real reading involves attention to the material at hand. Really to see and understand requires concentration. This "involves a self-discipline which unfortunately many individuals are not prepared to exert," says Howard T. Kuist.¹⁹ The reader can train himself, however, to exercise this concentration in his Bible reading. This almost makes Bible "reading" a form of study.

Almost consistently when God speaks of using the Bible He employs terms which imply more than reading only. In that famous passage, John 5:39, He uses the phrase, "Search the Scriptures." And St. Paul, writing to Timothy, says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."²⁰ These and other passages, together with the opinion of most successful users of the Bible, induce us to include the thought of Bible "study" in this consideration. It has been said that "nothing of any value comes without effort."²¹ This applies also to Bible reading and study. Moody writes: "Merely reading the Bible is not what God wants. Again and again I am exhorted to 'search.'²² E. J. Braulick has said: "The Bible unsearched is a mine unworked. The casual reader rarely stumbles upon hidden treasures. Diligent and persistent searching, however, brings its own reward."²³ Dr. Clifford draws an interesting

19. Howard T. Kuist, These Words Upon Thy Heart, p. 67.

20. 2 Tim. 2:15.

21. Hall and Wood, op. cit., p. 270.

22. Moody, op. cit., p. 47.

23. E. J. Braulick, Principles of Christian Faith, p. 77.

analogy when he writes:

Life gives up its best in all things only to patient, loving labour. Skim over the pages of Scripture, and you inhale an evanescent scent of hidden sweetness. It is the busy, lingering bee, that forces its way down into the deep chalice of the flower blooms, that carries the golden honey home, and gathers, against the dark days that must come, a rich store of comfort, strength and sustenance.²⁴

Thomas also holds that casual Bible reading is not Bible study, because proper Bible study involves hard work. It demands thought.²⁵ Let these opinions suffice to show that there is strong sentiment that proper use of the Bible includes also Bible study.

In considering the statements quoted above, the distinction between casual reading and real reading should be kept in mind. The essential element in either Bible reading or Bible study is the concentrated attention of the individual who is using his Bible. Since these terms are so closely related, they will be used somewhat interchangeably throughout the thesis.

Another consideration which should receive at least brief attention in this introduction is the matter of time involved in Bible reading. The question is sometimes asked: How long and when should I read my Bible? There is a variety of opinion on the first part of the question. Moody suggests setting aside at least fifteen minutes a day.²⁶ Torrey, who

24. Clifford, Waller and others, op. cit., p. 26.

25. Thomas, op. cit., p. 2.

26. Moody, op. cit., p. 122.

says that "most of us spend too little time in prayer and almost every one of us spends far too little time in Bible study,"²⁷ thinks that it should surely be more than fifteen minutes. Some have suggested half an hour a day or longer. Of course, as soon as a rule is set down, Bible reading is going to lose some of its significance in the interest of meeting a time table. Generally, however, the consensus of opinion is in favor of a definite daily period. Wilbur Smith says that this period should be unchangeable, and in fairness to God and justice to our own souls should be at a time when the faculties of the mind are the keenest. For most people this is in the morning.²⁸ Prof. Julian Price Love, in his book, How To Read the Bible, has some very pertinent remarks to offer when he says:

Many well-meaning people seldom pick up their Bibles except when they are tired and sleepy and ready for bed, and then wonder why the words do not leap out at them in the way they did from the pages of the story two hours earlier in the evening. . . . how many intelligent Christians drop down on the arm of a chair to fidget nervously over a page of the Bible for a few minutes, half in satisfaction of a conscientious scruple that they ought to be reading it, and half in pathetic longing for something, they know not exactly what!²⁹

On the other hand, the same author makes the statement that "It would be better to read from the Bible only two or three times a week, and read longer portions at a time, than to

27. Torrey, op. cit., p. 37.

28. Smith, op. cit., p. 128.

29. Julian Price Love, How to Read the Bible, p. 9.

read a little something each day just to be able to say, 'I haven't let a day go by without reading the Bible.'³⁰ More will be said on this point of reading longer sections later in the thesis. Another suggestion is also worthy of mention in this brief consideration on the time for Bible reading, namely, that of carrying a pocket Testament or portion at all times to use up spare moments.

Assuming that these prerequisites to profitable Bible reading and study are met, the question arises, "But how do I read the Bible?" When a person undertakes an important task, he usually has some blue-prints, some plan to follow. Bible study is certainly an important undertaking and the honest reader here also will do well to follow some plans. It is true that the Bible can be read and benefits gained without a plan. Such benefits will arise in most such instances, however, despite the lack of method, and not because of it. Love says,

. . . one who trusts entirely to random Bible reading will get little of the real message of the Bible, or of its full-orbed worth for his life. He is trusting the greatest book in the world to chance, and though, on occasion when his need is real, God may speak to him through that chance, on most occasions he gets nothing at all.³¹

Amos R. Wells, eminent Bible commentator and illustrator, has expressed the futility of getting a clear understanding of God's Word by such haphazard reading in the following poem:

30. Ibid., p. 76.

31. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

I supposed I knew my Bible,
 Reading piecemeal, hit or miss,
 Now a bit of John or Matthew,
 Now a snatch of Genesis,
 Certain chapters of Isaiah,
 Certain Psalms (the twenty-third!)
 Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs--
 Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
 But I found that thorough reading
 Was a different thing to do,
 And the way was unfamiliar
 When I read the Bible through.

You who like to play at Bible,
 Dip and dabble, here and there,
 Just before you kneel, aweary,
 And yawn through a hurried prayer;
 You who treat the Crown of Writings
 As you treat no other book--
 Just a paragraph disjointed,
 Just a crude, impatient look--
 Try a worthier procedure,
 Try a broad and steady view;
 You will kneel in very rapture
 When you read the Bible through!³²

Rather than pursue such haphazard methods, many Christian people are interested in reading their Bible more profitably according to some system. Many of them do not know how. A number of eminent Bible readers and students have discovered various methods or plans which might be employed with benefit by Bible users. It is the purpose of this thesis to present and evaluate these methods which will be of aid to the Christian interested in his Bible. The thesis is particularly concerned with the use of the Bible by the individual, although occasionally a reference might be made to its use by groups where a method is especially applicable.

32. Amos R. Wells, quoted in James M. Gray, "How to Master the English Bible," Moody Bible Institute Monthly, XXXIV (January 1934), p. 210.

In viewing and evaluating these methods of Bible reading and study it must be kept in mind that one cannot be recommended in every case above the rest of them. Various parts of the Bible are more adaptable to one method than to another. The individual personality of the reader will also enter into a choice of methods. Kuist has embodied this thought in his definition of a method: "Method is orderly procedure within a consciously guided process which calls into full play the distinctive personal capacities and aptitudes of an individual."³³ Wilbur Smith also agrees with other authors on this subject when he says,

[A person] can devise a method of Bible study which he may wish to commend to others, but the only Bible study that is of any large value to a man is the Bible study that meets his own personal needs. . . . The method of Bible study which will be best for him will probably be best for him alone.³⁴

Therefore, the writer attempts only to present methods of Bible reading and study under a number of definite heads, together with an evaluation, and the individual who uses them will have to decide by use which of them suits himself best. This does not imply that a person should be restricted to one method. Interest in Bible reading will undoubtedly be stimulated through the use of a variety of methods. Moody once said, "Never think you have to read the Bible by courses."³⁵ An occasional change of method can be very profitable.

33. Kuist, op. cit., p. 49.

34. Smith, op. cit., p. 37.

35. Moody, op. cit., p. 36.

II. The Book Method.

The Bible is a book. It would be logical to assume, therefore, that it ought to be read as a book. Yet, says Dr. Clifford,

No book is treated so badly as the Bible. We buy a novel--often full of sickly sentimentality or sanguinary sensationalism--and, beginning with the title-page, we go carefully through the volume, reading even preface and dedication, and hardly missing the advertisements. But the grand old Bible--God's eternal Book--is taken up at uncertain intervals, and some familiar passage is merely scanned in the most careless and slipshod style. Who ever thinks of beginning at the first chapter of Genesis and reading steadily through to Revelation, putting all prejudice on one side, and trying to find out the main purpose, the central meaning, the vital message, of the Book?¹

Reading the Bible through can be a profitable experience. The Rev. M. E. Dodd of Sareveport, La., after reading through the Bible from beginning to end without delay, makes the following comments:

It was a university course. I studied what I believe to be the most accurate science of all centuries concerning the origin of things. I delved into the world's profoundest philosophy, read classic literature, followed the divine outlines of history, and was thrilled by the tenderest and sweetest poetry of all times. . . .

Such a blessing as this, reading the Bible through without delay! I think I shall reread it at least once a year the rest of my life.²

1. Clifford, Waller and others, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

2. M. E. Dodd, "Reading the Bible Through," Bible Society Record, LXXXIII (July, 1938), 91.

Thomas, in his Methods of Bible Study, states that reading the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation will provide the reader with a general overview of the Bible and some of the interesting facts in it.³ It has also been pointed out that reading the Bible in this way is a corrective to one-sidedness and lack of balance, preventing the reader from reading only favorite passages and leading him into the whole Bible.⁴ Despite these possible benefits, however, reading the Bible in this way is perhaps not exercising the best stewardship of time. Love makes this statement:

There are many devout souls who read the Bible straight through from beginning to end in portions of varying length. This method, too, has its values. One is at least sure that he is not habitually slighting any part, and he is sure that he has gone over it all, though he may take so long in doing it that he has forgotten much of the first part by the time he neared the end. But, it is at best an artificial plan.⁵

A number of reasons might be listed against reading the Bible straight through from Genesis to Revelation besides those referred to by Love. The books of the Bible are not set up in chronological order and the reader fails to get a running story as he might in another book. For this reason, reading through the Bible in chronological order, i.e., reading its books as they appeared on the stage of history, can be more useful than reading through the Bible from Genesis to

3. Thomas, op. cit., p. 17.

4. Hegland, op. cit., p. 31.

5. Love, op. cit., p. 12.

Revelation. Reading straight through may also lead to a misplaced emphasis at times since some portions, e.g., genealogies or listings of tribes and their population, are not as important to the reader as are the Gospel stories and God's promises of personal aid to him, although each section receives an equal amount of time.

It might be advisable, therefore, to think of the Bible--for reading purposes--not only as one Book, but as a library of sixty-six books. This in no way militates against the unity of the Bible, which is ultimately established more firmly by the fact that each one of these books is a part of that unity. The books of the Bible were written individually, however. That is the way God has given them to us. Common sense, therefore, would presume that the proper way to read the Bible is in these book divisions. The experience of many Bible readers has proved this premise true.

Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation which put the Bible into the hands of the people, read the Bible by using this method and advised others to do the same. In a discussion on Luther and the Bible, Braulick says:

Luther said that he studied the Bible as he gathered apples. First, he shook the whole tree, that the ripest might fall. Then he climbed the tree and shook each limb, and when he had shaken each limb, he shook each branch, and after each branch every twig, and then looked under each leaf.
 . . .

Thus the student would do well first to read the Bible by books, then to give attention to the

chapters, and then later to the paragraphs, the sentences, and the words.⁶

The idea of following Luther and a great many other Bible students by reading a book at a time presents itself to some present day Bible readers as a Herculean task. It seems that such a method is going to consume an enormous amount of time. This notion is at least partially false, however. Hall and Wood, who have made an investigation into this matter, have the following to say:

Many people have a curious misconception with respect to the length of time it takes to read the Bible, as compared with secular reading. A story in a recent popular magazine contains 13,000 words. The entire Book of Judges contains no more than 16,000; the Book of John, about 20,000; the Epistle to the Romans, 11,000. We find no difficulty in reading several magazine stories at a sitting. We would never dream of reading a magazine story at the rate of a page a day; why should we read the Bible in that way? How can we expect to know the Bible unless we give it fair and consecutive study?⁷

Wilbur Smith notes a similar fact when he writes that a person who reads through an issue of the Saturday Evening Post in one week, reads the equivalent of the entire New Testament.⁸ We might also quote a statement by Love:

The time required to read most of the books of the Bible at a sitting is really very slight. Making ample allowance for leisureliness in reading habits, even for oral reading, more than half of the sixty-six books can be read in an average of about twenty minutes, no one of them requiring an hour.⁹

-
6. Braulick, op. cit., pp. 77-78.
 7. Hall and Wood, op. cit., p. 182.
 8. Smith, op. cit., p. 128.
 9. Love, op. cit., p. 16.

As an elaboration on that statement, Love gives a listing of thirty-four books of the Bible, together with the time required to read them. Most of them are under 30 minutes. Here are just a few selected at random:

Ruth	20 minutes
Esther	45
Lamentations	40
Joel	20
Obadiah	5
Jonah	10
Habakkuk	15
Malachi	15
Galatians	30
Philippians	20
I Thessalonians	20
I Timothy	25
Titus	10
Philemon	5
James	25
I John	30 ¹⁰

It appears that in this time-table Love is evidently accommodating the slowest readers. The writer, not a fast reader, was able to read through Galatians with ease in 15 minutes, whereas Love lists a 30 minute period for that particular book. Thus we see that the ominousness of attempting to read an entire book of the Bible at one time is only apparent, and not too real. These facts and figures do not mean to imply that speed is an essential, or even a desirable part of Bible reading, but are to show merely that it is not an impossible task. Even the longer books, as some of the Gospels, rarely take over two hours of reading time.

10. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

There are, however, some other difficulties in reading books of the Bible at one sitting which are doubtless more real than the time element just considered. Some of them are presented most strikingly in Love's book, when he says that one of the greatest deterrents to Bible reading is that

the average churchman will find the Bible an uninviting book to take up in his hands. In most versions its pages have two columns, while every other book he owns has but a one-column page. It is divided into very short chapters, inviting him to stop reading before he has got fairly started. The chapter divisions often interrupt the real connection of thought. Still worse, the chapters are divided into verses, whose recurrent numbers suggest single isolated thoughts that would make the Bible a mere collection of good sayings instead of a connected narrative or theme, as it generally is. . . . Poetry may be even printed as prose, and in general it is exceedingly difficult to find in any ordinary version of the English Bible what is evident at a glance in any other book--the kind of literature one is reading.¹¹

The truth expressed in that statement can hardly be denied. For reading purposes the paginal set-up of the great majority of our King James Bibles is the most artificial form of literature that people are expected to read. Other difficulties are presented very often in the size of the print, or in the size of the book, or in its binding. On this point Hall and Wood ask: "Why should we give the classical mythologies a beautiful dress and clothe the royal book in such beggarly and unbecoming garments?"¹²

11. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

12. Hall and Wood, op. cit., p. 166.

One other matter to be considered here is that of the language of our Bibles. Despite any sentimentalities we might have connected to it, and despite the fact that from a purely literary standpoint some of the sections of our Bibles stand unsurpassed, it nevertheless is true that the King James Version of 1611 is almost 350 years old and is not in the language that the American people use today. Dean Luther A. Weigle states the case quite well when he writes:

In the Bible we have not merely an historical document and a classic literature, but the Word of God. And the Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it that they may discern and understand God's Word to men. That Word must not be hidden in ancient phrases which have changed or lost their meaning; it must stand forth in language that is direct and clear and meaningful to the people of today.¹³

A similar opinion is that of Prof. Love: "If people are to have the Bible they should have it, not alone in their own language, but in the most intelligible and inviting form possible."¹⁴ Since the King James Version, by and large, can, nevertheless, still be understood quite well today and is the most commonly used version, especially in public, it would be improper to advocate setting it aside, but anyone who is willing to face the issue realistically must consider the fact that the Revised Version or the Revised Standard Version of

¹³. Luther A. Weigle, An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, p. 13.

¹⁴. Love, op. cit., p. 6.

the New Testament are more readable to the average American of today. Our Christians should be able to use them without danger provided misinterpretations or errors are pointed out to them.

It seems a valid conclusion, therefore, that a wise use of either the R.V. or the R.S.V. of the New Testament or possibly even other versions, will definitely contribute to the usefulness of the book method of Bible study, particularly in certain sections of the Bible, e.g., the prophets of the Old Testament or some of the Epistles of the New Testament. The Authorized Version can, of course, also be used effectively with this method, or it might be used side by side with one of the other versions. The method is really above Bible versions.

The Bible is different from most books in that it has no preface or introduction under the front cover to prepare the reader and lead him into its contents. This handicaps the reader somewhat because, as in all reading, also in Bible reading, and particularly in the use of the book method, a knowledge of the background of the book, its author, and the conditions of the world in which it originated is a great aid to the understanding of the book. The value of this information, of course, varies with different books of the Bible, yet the advice of Braulick is not out of place when he says, "To understand and appreciate the Bible books, learn to know and to appreciate the general background which sets off, like

the background of a painting, the contents of each Bible book."¹⁵ Howard T. Kuist holds that an important factor in Bible reading is the art of observing, a close paying of attention. To gain a real understanding in this way, he says, necessitates a re-creation in the reader's mind, similar to that needed really to enjoy and appreciate music. Thus, the study of the historical setting of a book of the Bible aids in "reconstructing" the situation out of which that book grew.¹⁶

The Gospels in the New Testament, because of their narrative character, clearly contain much of the information of an introductory nature to make them understandable. That is not the case, however, with most of the Epistles. To know why Paul wrote to the Thessalonians or the Philippians and what kind of people they were will greatly increase the meaning of their message to the reader. This is also true of many of the Old Testament books, particularly some of the prophets. Who were these men--Joel, Amos, Hosea, or even Jeremiah? Why did they write what they did and to whom? An answer to these questions means much toward an understanding of what they said. Moody suggests that the reader seek to determine what he calls the "5 p's" concerning a book,-- "place, person by, people to, purpose, period."¹⁷

This background information can be acquired from two places. First of all, much of it is in the respective books

15. Branlick, op. cit., p. 79.

16. Kuist, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

17. Moody, op. cit., p. 79.

of the Bible themselves, although it is not always immediately evident. A reading and re-reading will present them to the mind of the reader. But useful, also, is the other source, namely, a presentation of this material as compiled by one of the number of authors of Introductions to the Bible.¹⁸ Here the reader can obtain helpful information in a few paragraphs or pages which are readily accessible. A word of caution, however, must accompany any advice to resort to books about the Bible. Such books must always remain in their sphere as helps to Bible reading, and dare not replace the Bible itself. The Rev. O. E. Feucht writes:

Our emphasis should be on direct Bible study. People do not learn if others do all the thinking for them. Guides to Bible study which give directives to the learner, that awaken appetites for the discovery of the truths in a book and their application to life should be preferred.¹⁹

Although this statement applies to all Bible helps and not only to Introductions, it is well to remember the principle it lays down from the very first mention we make of the use of a help to Bible study. On the other hand, Trumbull says, "Helps can get in the way of or substitute for Bible study, but that should not condemn them. They are indispensable to complete Bible study."²⁰ Thus also, in the matter at hand, a wise use of an Introduction to the Bible will prove helpful

18. A number of excellent books of this nature are listed in the catalogue of Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

19. O. E. Feucht, An Introduction to the Bible Study Project, pp. 2-3.

20. Trumbull and others, op. cit., p. 143.

to the reader, particularly if he is following the book method.

The heading, "Book Method" of Bible reading suggests reading a book of the Bible at a time. That is the meaning the heading intends to give. A number of authorities on Bible reading suggest that a book of the Bible be read not only at one time, but at one sitting. This opinion is not altogether unanimous, as the following views of Smith and Burgon indicate. The book method (applied particularly to young people), says Smith, has no place in devotional study of Scriptures.²¹ Burgon holds that we read the Bible too fast and do not take time to meditate on and consider it.²² These criticisms, however, are not altogether justified, provided the book method of Bible reading is properly used. This method can and does have devotional value, at least in the case of some books, as Love points out:

Wherever it is possible, it is desirable to read at a sitting those books of the Bible which are in themselves units of thought. In this way the flow of a single idea is not interrupted but oftentimes sweeps in upon the heart, where otherwise it would get dammed up and forgotten.²³

This suggestion also includes the thought that not all books of the Bible are adaptable to the book method in the same degree. The length of some of the books of the Bible may seem to be a reason to substantiate this, and yet we have

21. Smith, op. cit., p. 5.

22. John W. Burgon, A Treatise on the Pastoral Office, pp. 4-5.

23. Love, op. cit., p. 16.

the fact, which we noted earlier, in a statement by Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, "The longest books in the Bible may be read in less than two hours, and there is a very great advantage in getting a whole letter or a historical account in one picture."²⁴ Other authors also suggest reading any book of the Bible at one sitting as the first step in the study of that particular book.^{25 26}

There are some books, which, because of their character, are not necessarily recommended for this method, e.g., Psalms or Proverbs, which will be discussed later under methods which suit them better. Also among the remaining books of the Bible some are more adaptable to reading by the book method than others. Usually those telling a story or having a central theme throughout are most suited, e.g., Ruth, Jonah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Hosea, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, and many others. Prof. Love discusses some of these books quite extensively in How to Read the Bible, and draws conclusions on all of them similar to this one concerning Jonah: "Now all the movement of the story of Jonah is missed if one stops reading at the end of any of the book's four short chapters. The book itself is but a leaf, and needs to be read at one sitting, and fairly rapidly, to make its message glow."²⁷ After the Bible reader has experienced the thrilling insights acquired

24. P. E. Kretzmann, "Why and How to Study the Bible," Walther League School of Correspondence, p. 6.

25. Clifford, Waller and others, op. cit., pp. 46 ff.

26. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 22 ff.

27. Love, op. cit., p. 22.

by reading some of these books at one sitting, it should not be necessary to urge that he try the same method with others.

Besides preventing the undue breaking up of the thought sequence of any particular book by this method, the reader also profits by getting the thought that the book as a whole presents. As was pointed out in the Introduction, Bible reading, to be useful, must be purposeful. Reading by the book method should also have more motivation behind it than just trying another method. Thomas suggests that we use this method to get the contents, teaching, purpose, place, and power from each book.²⁸ Power will come with the acquisition of the other four. Prof. F. K. Sanders says, "The basis for the exact and fruitful study of any biblical book must always be a grasp of its course of thought as outlined in the book itself."²⁹ He asks whether the reader can think a book through without referring to the Bible. The Lutheran Bible Institute of Minneapolis, Minn., has as its aim in the use of the book method familiarity so the student can readily think it through by chapter and paragraphs.³⁰ The average Bible reader may not want to set his goals quite that high immediately. Acquiring a general outline of the book in his mind, however, will be an assurance to the reader that he is beginning an acquaintance with that book as the writer presents it. Thus, "for profitable

28. Thomas, op. cit., p. 22.

29. Trumbull and others, op. cit., p. 57.

30. O. E. Feucht, Toward Principles in Bible Study as Related to Bible Institutes, p. 6

reading an outline of each book with goals to look for would be very helpful," according to Dr. Thomas.³¹ Following his own suggestion, he presents such an outline for every book in the Bible in his Methods of Bible Study,³² which might be used with profit in connection with the book method of Bible study. To choose an example or two at random, we note that in Genesis Moses has recorded ten family records from Adam to Jacob and Joseph. It is also the book of origins, chiefly of creation, man, the Sabbath, marriage, sin, grace, races and the chosen people.³³ To read Genesis from one of these viewpoints will give the reading a definite objective. Or we might look into the New Testament, e.g., at the Epistle to the Romans. A number of outlines have been offered for this book, but Thomas suggests considering this analysis in reading and re-reading Romans:

Theme: The Righteousness of God

Introduction, Chapter 1:1-15

1. Righteousness required by God because of sin,
1:16--3:20
 2. Righteousness provided by God in Christ, 3:21-26
 3. Righteousness received through faith, 3:27-30
 4. Righteousness anticipated and illustrated in the
Old Testament, 4:1-25
 5. Righteousness realised in personal experience, 5--8
 6. Righteousness rejected by the self-righteous Jews,
9--11
 7. Righteousness manifested in daily living, 12:1--
15:13
- Conclusion, 15:14--16:27.³⁴

31. Thomas, op. cit., p. 25.

32. cf. also Martin Hegland, op. cit.

33. Thomas, loc. cit.

34. Ibid., p. 47.

Such an outline can be a great aid to the reader in using the book method of Bible study.

One of the best suggestions as to aims in Bible reading, also in using this method, is given by Dr. Theo. Huggenvik in his book, Your Key to the Bible. Throughout his volume he points out that the central theme of the entire Bible is Redemption. Every book of the Bible points to this great central fact. To discover just how that happens in each case is the quest of every reader of the books of the Bible. He will find the promise of redemption, e.g., throughout the Pentateuch, and more specifically the manner of redemption in Exodus, redemption by shedding of blood in Leviticus, the cross foreshadowed in Numbers, and redemption in a future prophet in Deuteronomy.³⁵ Similarly Huggenvik shows how every book of the Bible ties up with Christ's redemption of the world. To discover these things for himself is one of the greatest joys of the Christian who reads his Bible.

Another useful suggestion for the use of the book method is made by Prof. Love, namely, to read books together. What he means by this can perhaps be explained best by some of his examples. Books that deal with the same period of history will cast light on each other, e.g., Judges and Ruth, or Kings and Chronicles, or the four Gospels, and can, therefore, be read advisedly in conjunction with each other. There is also

35. Theo. Huggenvik, Your Key to the Bible, pp. 7-24.

an interrelation of books of teaching with books of history, e.g., the prophets with Kings or Chronicles, or in the New Testament, Paul's epistles and Acts. Books of similar themes might be correlated in reading, e.g., Amos and Hosea, Joel and Zephaniah, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, or in the New Testament Ephesians and Colossians, 1 Timothy and Titus, the Gospel of John and his three epistles, Jude and 2 Peter. Or similar themes might be studied in contrast, e.g., Nahum and Jonah in relation to the city of Nineveh, or Leviticus and Hebrews in relation to the priesthood. Many similar suggestions are made in Prof. Love's book regarding this particular subdivision in the book method of Bible reading and study.³⁶ This type of correlation can be very helpful to the Bible student.

The question may occur to some who are interested in beginning to use the book method, "Which book should I read first?" The order of reading books is rather immaterial, yet this suggestion might be passed on. Francis Carr Stifler, in Every Man's Book, suggests the following order to get started, particularly if an individual is not too well acquainted with the Bible: Mark, Luke, Acts, John, Matthew, then some of the Old Testament books and New Testament epistles.³⁷ Such a listing is somewhat arbitrary, but some readers may find it useful in pursuing this important method of Bible reading.

36. Love, op. cit., pp. 63-74.

37. Stifler, op. cit., p. 109.

III. The Chapter Method.

"Read through the Bible once a year" is the policy followed by many Bible readers. An explanation of and an appeal for this plan is presented by Dr. P. E. Kretzmann. He writes:

The best plan according to the opinion of many successful Bible students is to read the Bible once every year. This is the plan which has been accepted by the Walther League, and in numerous cases it is found to be very successful. This means that three chapters are read on every week-day and five on every Sunday. If we divide Ps. 119, with its 176 verses, into eight parts, thereby increasing the number of Bible chapters by 7, the plan proposed will just fit into one year of Bible-reading. There are various advantages connected with this system of studying the Bible. There is a definite beginning and a definite goal. One begins on January 1 with Gen. 1, and concludes on December 31 with Rev. 22. Both the beginning and the end of the year's study is very appropriate to the particular occasion.¹

A similar three-chapter-a-day plan has been developed by Dr. John R. Sampey. He suggests that the reader put three bookmarks into his Bible when undertaking this plan, one at Genesis, one at Job, and one at the beginning of the New Testament. Then by reading one chapter a day in each section, in 520 days he will have read the Old Testament once, the New Testament twice, plus some favorite chapters three or four times. These extra readings of favorite chapters are made possible by the fact that there are only 436 chapters from

1. P. E. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 6.

Genesis to Esther inclusive and 488 from Job to Malachi, but 520 chapters in two readings of the New Testament. Thus, while the reader completes the New Testament the second time, he substitutes his favorite chapters for the Old Testament readings after he has finished each section there.²

It might be said for the Sampey plan that the simultaneous reading from three different sections of the Bible will perhaps tend to liven the reading because of the variety. In the first plan suggested, however, the reader may have a better opportunity to gain a clear thought connection in three consecutive chapters than will the person reading from various sections of the Bible. Incidentally, the Rev. Fredrick D. Niedermeyer suggests in a magazine article that the pastor who is following a chapter plan of reading for his congregation might do well to publish the chapters for the week in his Sunday bulletin.³

Another suggestion in the same article points out to us the chief danger involved in following a three-chapter-a-day or similar plan of Bible reading. That suggestion is that the person who fails to read the three chapters for a certain day (or the five on a Sunday) must read that portion twice on the following day. Rev. Niedermeyer contends that this "prevents forgetting" and gives a "double blessing."⁴ That this penalty would prevent forgetting to one who is conscientiously following such a plan can hardly be denied. But that it would give

2. John R. Sampey, A Good Plan for Reading the Bible.

3. Fredrick D. Niedermeyer, "Getting the Bible Read in the Home," Moody Bible Institute Monthly, XXXVIII (Nov. 1937), 123.

4. Ibid.

a double blessing--at least in the majority of cases--is open to question. It seems that the tendency under such a system would be to view the reading of a certain number of chapters of the Bible each day much as the Pharisees in New Testament times felt about their ceremonial laws,--that this is something which must be done because of the personal benefits which will accrue from it. This attitude could make of the Bible somewhat of a fetish--the danger referred to at the beginning of this paragraph. To benefit spiritually, the Christian dare not become a slave to a method in his Bible reading, reading only for reading's sake. The individual who follows the somewhat stereotyped methods outlined to read through the Bible in a year is strongly subjected to such tendencies since human beings all too easily become creatures of habit. This danger, of course, need not exist for every Christian, but a person following such a plan should be strongly on his guard against it and might do well to ask himself whether this is really the best way for him to read his Bible.

Although the plans outlined embody much of what is thought of in connection with a "chapter" reading of the Bible, they do not include everything. Some Bible students may read only one chapter a day, rather than three or five. These chapters, again, may be consecutive or chosen at random. Or possibly more than one day may be given to one chapter.

The advisability of any chapter plan of reading the Bible is somewhat contested, both pro and con. One of the strongest

testimonies in favor of it is made by Dr. Wilbur Smith, who says that the chapter divisions we have in our Bible are perfect divisions for daily devotions. He suspects that the Holy Spirit led Cardinal Hugo to divide the Bible thus.⁵ On the other hand, notice this statement by Julian Price Love:

A second popular way of reading the Bible is by chapter divisions. This may be done in order or . . . at random. Now sometimes a chapter of the Bible is a unit in itself and a real message may come from this way of reading, as for example, the 55th chapter of Isaiah with its gracious invitation. But more often a chapter belongs in a larger setting--a story or a discussion or a teaching. To stop at the end of the second chapter of the Gospel of Mark, just because it is the end of a chapter, is to stop in the midst of Jesus' presentation of the Sabbath to the Pharisees of the Galilean synagogues. To begin at the beginning of even so famous a chapter as the thirteenth of I Corinthians is to miss the point out of which it grows in the last few verses of the twelfth. The twentieth chapter of Exodus with its presentation of the Ten Commandments has suffered greatly by being severed from the nineteenth, which describes the setting of awe in the midst of which the commandments were given. Chapter divisions, like verse divisions, are an expedient of the church, devised in the middle ages for convenience of reference, but never intended as stopping points in reading. They sometimes represent happy divisions in thought and sometimes they do not. A chapter may even begin in the middle of a sentence, as in the case of the 22nd chapter of the Book of Acts.^{6 7}

The true usefulness of the chapter divisions undoubtedly lies somewhere between the extreme views of those who hold that this is the best method of Bible reading and those who hold it is practically useless. This statement can be clarified by

5. Smith, op. cit., p. 51.

6. Love, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

7. To counteract this shortcoming of chapter divisions, Love suggests "unit of thought" divisions, which will be discussed in another chapter.

looking at some of the specific suggestions of those who advocate use of the chapter method.

Some of the following statements contain the key to the usefulness of a chapter method for the Bible student. Dwight L. Moody says: "It is a good deal better to take a single chapter and spend a month on it, than to read the Bible at random for a month."⁸ W. H. Griffith Thomas writes: "The Bible must be our daily food if we are to be strong and vigorous. Not quantity, but quality, determines the nutritive value of food. What we must emphasize is capacity to receive, power to assimilate, and readiness to reproduce."⁹ A. T. Pierson reiterates this when he says that "the profit of Bible study depends not on how much we read, but on how much we understand, receive, incorporate into ourselves."¹⁰ And in Hints on Bible Study we note: "A little of the Bible well understood and thoroughly mastered will go further and help more than a cursory knowledge of larger portions of it. It adds to the interest of the pursuit, and confers such a command as enables the reader afterwards to engage in the study of other portions with increased success."¹¹

According to these statements, it is seen that the value in the chapter method of Bible reading does not lie in a cursory reading of a chapter, but in a somewhat more concentrated

8. Moody, op. cit., p. 47.

9. Thomas, op. cit., p. 111.

10. Pierson, op. cit., p. 9.

11. Clifford, Waller and others, op. cit., p. 6.

study of the individual chapter. Smith becomes more specific in giving us details to substantiate this conclusion. He writes: "When you read a chapter . . . [you] do not conclude your study of it until you have discovered an outline for the chapter, however simple that outline may be."¹² He goes on to add that almost every chapter in the Bible has a definite development, and even advises that the Bible student never leave a chapter until he has seen in it a development of some theme.¹³ He also takes cognizance of a suggestion by Miss Grace Saxe, who lists ten questions which might be asked with the study of each chapter of the Bible:

1. What is the principal subject?
2. What is the leading lesson?
3. Which is the best verse?
4. Who are the principal persons?
5. What does the chapter teach concerning Christ?
6. Is there in it any example for me to follow?
7. Is there any error for me to avoid?
8. Is there any duty for me to perform?
9. Is there any promise for me to claim?
10. Is there any prayer for me to echo?¹⁴

Martin Hegland similarly suggests an analysis and summary of each chapter of the Bible in terms of headings, such as: 1. Contents; 2. Characters; 3. Conclusions; 4. Key Word; 5. Strong Verses; 6. Striking Facts.¹⁵

Such an approach to a chapter of the Bible implies more than a hurried reading. Rather, it implies thought, concentration, and meditation. These three mental processes, all in-

12. Smith, op. cit., p. 51.

13. Ibid., p. 82.

14. Ibid., pp. 83-84.

15. Hegland, op. cit., p. 31.

cluded essentially in the latter term, are indispensable to Bible reading or study following any method, but are particularly applicable here under the chapter method. Quotations and thoughts from several recognized Bible students should suffice to elaborate on this matter of meditation. Prof. F. K. Sanders holds that "the most fruitful Bible study is that which allows much time for meditation and review, and adjustment of new material to old."¹⁶ Dr. Smith points out that Bible study means more than reading; it includes also meditation. He cites George Müller, another Bible student, as saying that true meditation leads almost automatically into confession, thanksgiving, intercession, or supplication.¹⁷ Dr. Thomas gives us his definition of meditation. He says it must be first-hand, real, and practical. It consists of careful reading, resolute application of what is read to one's own needs, prayer that it become a part of one's life, a sincere transfusion of it into one's life, and a whole-hearted surrender and trust in God for power to practise it.¹⁸ Together with these men, R. A. Torrey points to Psalm 1:2, where we are told of the blessed man that "his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law doth he meditate day and night."¹⁹

An application of these principles of study and meditation can, indeed, make the chapter method of Bible study profitable.

16. Trumbull and others, op. cit., p. 53.

17. Smith, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

18. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 105-108.

19. Torrey, op. cit., p. 39.

As has been indicated, every chapter of the Bible will not be equally adaptable to this method. The Bible student who uses it will discover this fact for himself.

Dr. Martin Luther recommended that from a study by words and answers, the Bible student proceed to verse study. The verse study is also advocated by other men who have written on Bible study. Every verse is open to a different type of investigation, says Dr. Hilber Selin. Some of the approaches he suggests are to check the verbs for their meaning, to check the adjectives, to note the brief outline, or to ascertain the type of God in a certain verse. He says that thousands of words in the Bible individually give us all we need in our spiritual period.¹ This method, of course, will include the use of the principles of study and meditation outlined in various chapters. In his discussion on the study of verses, W. H. Griffith Thomas suggests three useful approaches together with examples of typical verses for each: the study of a single verse, e.g., Ps. 66:4, Phil. 4:19; successive verses, e.g., Ps. 138:7; Rom. 8; verses which are in contrast to each other, e.g., Ps. 23:1 and 6, Luke 12:1 and Luke 11:2-4.

¹ Selin, pp. 113, pp. 66-68.
 2. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 90 ff.
 3. W. H. Griffith Thomas, "Approaches to Bible Study in a Christian School," Journal of Theological Education, VIII (1917), 271-272, suggests that students who are particularly able to put a half-hour's work into it, may make excellent use of a form of verse method study by finding passages which are most profitable for themselves.

IV. The Verse Method.

Dr. Martin Luther recommended that from a study by books and chapters, the Bible student proceed to verse study. The verse method is also advocated by other men who have written on Bible study. Every verse is open to a different type of treatment, says Dr. Wilbur Smith. Some of the approaches he suggests are to check the verbs for their meaning, to glean the main thoughts, to note the brief outline, or to ascertain the truth about God in a certain verse. He adds that thousands of verses in the Bible individually can give us all we need in one devotional period.¹ This method, of course, will involve use of the principles of study and meditation outlined in previous chapters. In his discussion on the study of verses, W. H. Griffith Thomas suggests three useful approaches together with examples of typical verses for each: the study of a single verse, e.g., Ps. 64:4, Phil. 4:19; successive verses, e.g., Ps. 25:6,7; Rom. 5; verses which are in contrast to each other, e.g., Ps. 23:2 and 3, Luke 3:22 and Luke 4:1.^{2 3}

1. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

2. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 ff.

3. Rev. A. R. Kretzmann, "Approaches to Bible Study in a Metropolitan Center," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, VIII (1937), 674-675, suggests that shut-ins who are physically able to put a half-hour's work into it, may make excellent use of a form of verse method study by finding passages which are most comforting for themselves.

The use of the cross reference system found in many Bibles often will be an aid to an understanding of the verse at hand.

There are undoubtedly some spiritual benefits to be gained from a verse study of Scripture, since many of these short sentence units of God's Word are full of deep meaning for the Christian. A warning must be issued with any recommendation of this method, however, that the Bible student does not misinterpret the meaning of a verse as he deals with it individually. It must be understood together with its context, the sections preceding and following it. Rev. O. E. Feucht points out that "one of the fundamental rules for Bible study is 'understanding the part in the light of the whole.'" This rule, he adds, suffers when words or isolated passages are overstressed.⁴ Prof. Love says that the person who fails to observe this rule "may put together two things that are really on different subjects altogether. Before long he may be off on a tangent. Many of the sects and isms that beset American Christianity have come about in just this way."⁵

A worthwhile suggestion in connection with the verse method is that of memorizing certain passages of the Bible, particularly those which are of special significance to the individual. Moody recommends learning at least one verse of Scripture each day.⁶ Not only will this personally benefit the Christian who learns them, but it will also aid him when he

4. Feucht, Toward Principles, p. 3.

5. Love, op. cit., p. 11.

6. Moody, op. cit., p. 122.

wishes to use the truths of the Bible effectively with other individuals he will meet.⁷ Torrey gives a few valuable hints concerning memorization in his book, To Shew Thyself Approved. He suggests memorizing should be done systematically according to classified and associated texts so that the verses are learned with a purpose, and that verses should be committed to memory by chapter and verse.⁸ To have this knowledge of its location together with the verse will be a great time-saver in many instances and will also carry with the verse a certain authority, if that should ever be necessary.

Memorization need not, in every instance, be verbal. To remember the thoughts contained in a certain verse or section of the Bible is also a great asset to the Christian. An aid to such memory work according to those who have tried it is marking one's Bible. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann writes:

Another point which may well be remembered by the Bible student is that of marking carefully, either by underscoring or by drawing lines on the margin of the page, such passages as seem particularly appropriate for one's own use. No two people are alike in the things which appeal to them, and for that reason each individual ought to be guided in his Bible study by his own particular needs in the matter of devotional expression.⁹

Moody holds that Bible marking is necessary to keep things in memory which otherwise are liable to slip away. Over against those who disagree, he says that proper marking aids rather than hinders memory. A number of methods of marking have been

7. Hegland, op. cit., p. 32.

8. Torrey, op. cit., p. 41.

9. P. E. Kretzmann, loc. cit.

developed, some so complex as to use six or eight different colored pencils to mark certain types of passages or sections. Moody advises using only black, either under the word, alongside the verse, or by thickening the letters of a word by tracing over them. He suggests numbering oft repeated phrases in the margin and using a small "x" next to things generally unobserved, e.g., Deut. 22:5-6. A number of other suggestions he offers are: 1. Mark cross-references; 2. Mark railroad connections; 3. Mark variations of the Revised Version; 4. Note words with changed meaning; 5. Mark unfortunate chapter divisions, e.g., John 7 and 8; 6. Write a short summary of a book at the beginning; 7. Mark key words and key verses; 8. Note texts particularly meaningful in your personal religious life. He also suggests that a few words written in the margin of a text on which an individual has heard a striking sermon will recall that sermon years later.¹⁰

A few words of explanation should be inserted here concerning the term "railroad connections" used above in Moody's recommendations for Bible marking. This is a system of Bible marking developed and popularized particularly by Mrs. Stephen Menzies. This system, simply stated, consists of a network of fine lines drawn across the page of the Bible between connected and fresh thoughts. These lines are called "railways." Their purpose is to make sort of a notebook of the Bible. Whether this complicated system of lines and notes benefits

10. Moody, op. cit., pp. 100-107.

the spiritual life of the Christian in proportion to the time he spends installing them in his Bible seems to be open to question. Anyone interested in further details of the system is referred to Mrs. Menzies' books on the subject.¹¹

In connection with Bible marking, Moody also suggests that a person might profitably borrow the marked Bible of a friend. However, he warns against marking "anything because you saw it in some one else's Bible. If it does not come home to you, if you do not understand it, do not put it down."¹²

So that an over-abundance of markings does not get in the way of devotional reading of the Bible, Dr. Thomas suggests that the Bible student have two Bibles, the one for concentrated study to be marked, the other to be left unmarked. If the markings become too extensive, references might be left on the margin of the Bible to the pages of a note book kept separately.¹³

Just how extensively he is going to use a Bible marking system will have to be decided by the individual Bible student. It cannot be denied that a form of it serves a purpose in memory work, and can be particularly helpful in the verse method of Bible study.

The decision on which verses of the Bible to study will also rest largely with the person using this method. He may

11. Mrs. Stephen Menzies, How to Mark Your Bible, and Hints on Bible Marking.

12. Moody, op. cit., p. 111.

13. Thomas, op. cit., p. 111.

follow the example of George Müller, who said, "I read until I come to a verse upon which I can lean my whole weight, and then stop."¹⁴ Every Bible reader will frequently find verses to which he will wish to give special consideration and study according to the verse method.

14. George Müller, quoted in Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

It is to be granted that the word study method is an interesting deviation from other methods of Bible study. Its usefulness varies with the individual attempting it and also with the particular type of word study pursued. The advisability of searching for a word throughout the Bible, particularly if it is rather common, seems to be rather questionable. L. Smith, for example, suggests these words among others: love, full, increase, strength, grow, hope. In the first place, such an undertaking can convert the Bible student to a pronounced leech. Young's *Individual Importance in the Bible*, p. 10, lists over 3,000 occurrences of the word "love" in the Bible.

¹⁴ L. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

V. The Word Method.

In the original languages of the Bible there are 8,674 different Hebrew words and 5,624 different Greek words. Our English Bibles contain 6,000 different words.¹ A number of Bible students have advocated a study of many of these individual words as a method of Bible study. The most frequent suggestions here are either that a word be traced throughout the Bible or through an individual book of the Bible. This method will necessitate the use of a concordance to the Bible. Excellent volumes are on the market by Young, Strong, Walker and Cruden.

It is to be granted that the word study method is an interesting deviation from other methods of Bible study. Its usefulness varies with the individual attempting it and also with the particular type of word study pursued. The advisability of tracing a word throughout the Bible, particularly if it is rather common, seems to be rather questionable. Dr. Smith, for example, suggests these words among others: come, full, increase, abound, grow, know. In the first place, such an undertaking can confront the Bible student as a phenomenal task. Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, e.g., lists over 3,000 occurrences of the word "come" in the Bible.

1. Smith, op. cit., p. 86.

The word "know" occurs over 1,000 times. "Increase" and "grow" occur approximately 100 times. It seems that the impracticability of such a study is rather evident. The other factor to be considered here might be cited from Alfred E. Garvie's A Guide to Preachers. He contends that the verbal method of study is not always satisfactory because the same word may take on different shades of meaning in various contexts. Thus this method may even be harmful to understanding the Bible.² This observation seems to be very much in place since various meanings of the same word may lead to confusion rather than understanding.

A more workable variation of the word method is that of tracing a word through an individual book of the Bible, suggested by Dwight L. Moody, who was fond of this method. Some of the examples he gives are: "blessed" in Revelation, "overcome" in Revelation, "believe" in John, "precious" in Peter, "walk" in Ephesians, or a phrase, "the fear of the Lord" in Proverbs.³ Many others might be added to this list. Limiting the search of words thus to one book adds to the interest of the study and can be profitable in giving a fuller meaning to a particular word which a certain writer uses or in presenting relationships of ideas connected with any particular word.

A study of any and every word in the Bible is not going to be equally profitable by this method. The Bible student

2. Alfred E. Garvie, A Guide to Preachers, pp. 15-16.
 3. Moody, op. cit., pp. 97 ff.

should also always keep in mind that paging through the Bible finding various words is not necessarily "searching the Scriptures," but is useful only insofar as it gives a deeper insight into the meaning of God's Word for himself.

Other uses of the word method have also been suggested. It might prove interesting to make a study of the meaning of proper names in the Bible.^{4 5} Some of the authorities on Bible study also suggest finding the "Key Words" of a certain book or chapter in the Bible.^{6 7} This may be a word which occurs in the book or a word which might be applied to it as its central thought. This interpretation of the word method differs a little from that presented above, but is among the variations of the word method which have proved useful.

4. Ibid., p. 86.

5. A Bible Dictionary will be an aid in such a study.

6. Moody, op. cit., pp. 98 ff.

7. Huggenvik, op. cit.

VI. The Biographical Method.

Because the life story of one human being is of interest to others, all of whom have experiences common to the race, biographies have been among the popular forms of folk-lore and literature throughout history. The Bible, also, has much to offer us in biographical material. Of the 2,930 different men and women mentioned in the Bible, hundreds can be used for biographical study.¹ This is a very appealing approach to Bible study because it presents to us the facts in the lives of people who have gone over the path from the cradle to the grave which we are now traveling. We dare not, however, restrict our biographical study to facts alone, since that would rob us of much of the spiritual benefit for our own lives which we might acquire from a true biographical study.

The American Bible Society in one of its pamphlets suggests that the individual read to find the person most like himself and study his experience with God and life.² Dr. Thomas similarly advises the Bible reader to study the biographies of both great and small men and women to "note the effects of the working of God on the souls of men."³ Martin Hegland suggests that the reader using this method analyze the character of the

1. Smith, op. cit., p. 36.

2. Worthwhile Ways of Reading the Bible, p. 4.

3. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

person under consideration, noting elements of strength and weakness, difficulties faced, successes attained, and lessons to be learned.⁴ A more extensive statement of the values and approaches to this method is given by Prof. Love. In answer to the person who might complain that the Bible "just doesn't tell me what to do or what to think," he replies:

. . . Of course not! David and Hosea, Peter and John were not told arbitrarily what to do or what to think. They learned by putting their religion to the acid test of life in the midst of perplexities and problems. Their problems were as real as ours, as difficult, as new. The Bible presents us always with flesh and blood people; no mythological Beowulfs fighting symbolic monsters of the sea, but "men of like passions to us" meeting bread and butter situations and deep heart yearnings. Our environment is dressed in modern garments, theirs in ancient; we must face our own day in our own way. But the great value of the Bible to experience comes in just here, not that it tells us to do as they did, but that it gives great illustrations of how men and women reacted under the guidance of God. There is guidance for us, not so much in seeing what they thought and did, but how, in what spirit, with what motives, with what success or failure they lived their lives. We honor the men of the past, not by keeping unaltered the results of their deeds, but by giving to our own tasks the courage and confidence in God that we see to have been in them. "Considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith." (Heb. 13:7)⁵

Among the Bible students consulted, Dr. Wilbur Smith gives the most comprehensive outline of just how to use the biographical method of Bible study. He suggests the following steps:

1. Collect all material on the character.
2. Study his ancestry.
3. Note the training in his youth.

4. Hegland, op. cit., p. 51.

5. Love, op. cit., p. 151.

4. What work did he accomplish?
5. What was the great crisis of his life and how did he meet it?
6. Note his traits of character.
7. Were his friendships noble or ignoble and what were their effects on him?
8. Note his influence on others, his nation, and the history of religion.
9. Check the growth of his character.
10. Note his religious life, prayer, faith, service to God, knowledge of Scripture, courage in testimony, attitude in worship.
11. Note his faults and shortcomings.
12. Note any great sin and its effect on his life.
13. What were the character and influence of his children?
14. Was he in any way a type or anti-type of Christ?
15. Determine the one great lesson in this person's life for you personally.⁶

Every step in such an extensive outline may not be applicable to every person of the Bible who is studied. To the extent that they are applicable, however, the Bible student will have obtained something for his own spiritual life in such a study.--In connection with point 14 of these suggestions, the warning by Dr. Thomas concerning the study of types bears mention. This kind of comparison can be easily abused, and therefore he says, "In no study do we so much need 'sanctified common sense' as in the study of types."⁷ We dare not make a type of someone who is not a type.

The possibilities for the use of the biographical method are quite extensive, since there are so many characters of the Bible who might be studied this way, both men and women. Nor should this method be restricted to the study of well-known characters, as some of the patriarchs of the Old Testament or

6. Smith, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

7. Thomas, op. cit., p. 69.

St. Paul of the New Testament. These are, indeed, among the biographies which might be studied with great benefit, but there are many, many other persons--prophets, judges and less-known people of the Old Testament--disciples, converts and others in the New Testament. A comprehensive study of the life of Christ should not be overlooked by the biographical student. A helpful suggestion here is to use a good harmony of the Gospels as an aid to that study.⁸

Because the discussion ensuing would undoubtedly be valuable, the biographical method should be well suited to group activity as well as being a method of Bible study to be pursued by the individual.

8. Outstanding in this field is Adam Fahling, A Harmony of the Gospels. Cf. also The Life of Christ, by the same author.

VII. The Doctrinal Method.

The Bible is the source of all Christian doctrine, all the teachings of the Christian religion which God has revealed to man. One of the chief quests of the Bible reader is to discover these doctrines for himself. Trumbull writes that the Bible "contains God's peculiar message to mankind through men whom He trained and inspired for that special purpose, and that therefore its study must be mainly for the ascertaining and understanding of the divine truths that, unlike any other book, it has for ourselves as we are in our present needs and our ultimate destiny."¹ This is a restatement of the truth that God's teachings--the doctrine in our Bibles--are vital for us Christians in their relationship to our lives. The Bible reader, of course, is learning these teachings in every method of study he uses. The particular emphasis in the doctrinal method is that in it he attempts to formulate and classify these teachings for ready reference and use.

There are two approaches to the doctrinal study of the Bible. The one, which we might call the inductive, is to state the truth of God's teaching and then to substantiate that truth by means of the various Bible passages which pertain to it. This is the method used in much of our catechetical instruction.

1. Trumbull and others, op. cit., p. 12.

The other approach to doctrinal study, which might be called deductive, uses the Bible as its starting point and formulates the teaching from what is found there. This approach is less liable to be influenced by bias, although it must proceed along sound principles of study and Biblical interpretation, some of which were presented in previous chapters.

A variation of this method, which might be classified under both approaches, is presented by the Rev. A. R. Kretzmann, when he suggests that a number of related Bible passages, e.g., taken from a section in the Catechism, might be mimeographed. The individual or group which receives this sheet through study discovers what doctrine or doctrines they contain.² A number of similar variations have also been developed.

Dr. Thomas, who advocates the doctrinal method quite strongly, treats the Old and New Testaments separately as he discusses it. The Old Testament reader should keep in mind that there is a progressiveness of revelation in this section of the Bible which is most complete at the end. Nevertheless, the reader can find quite an adequate doctrine of God already in Genesis, noting that He appears there as Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, Provider or Ruler, and Redeemer. The doctrine of man is also quite clearly set forth in his glory in creation, his humiliation through sin, his need of redemption, his longings

2. A. R. Kretzmann, op. cit., pp. 676-677.

for God, and his endeavors after righteousness. To mention just a few in the New Testament, the reader will discover in the Gospels alone the doctrines of the Messiahship of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven, the person of the Son of God, the sufferings and death of Christ, the second advent, the dispensation of the Spirit and the great commission.³

The central doctrine of all of Scripture is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. All other doctrines revolve about it and are dependent upon it. The reader, either individually or in a group, who discovers and substantiates these doctrines of the Bible for himself in relationship to his own life will not have used the doctrinal method in vain.

3. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 57-63. 80-85.

1. Love, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

VIII. The Topical Method.

The Bible is full of topics which might be discussed in this chapter. In fact, every page of Scripture might yield a number of them. It is perhaps this utter profusion of topics, coupled with other factors, that leads Love to write:

Sometimes, studious people try to follow a guide for reading the Bible by topics, . . . whatever values may be gained are decidedly limited by the artificiality of the pursuit. For men do not live by topics. You cannot trace purity through the Bible, and then love, and then truthfulness, and then something else, and get a good life by adding them all together. Not only are you bound to miss much because you never can get enough topics, but you miss much related thought that is couched in different language. You are like the man who traced the thought of sacrifice through the Bible in this way and omitted the fifth chapter of Revelation with its wonderful picture of the Lamb, standing as though it had been slain. That glorious chapter happens not to contain the word "sacrifice."¹

In the face of such adverse opinion, it may seem rather useless to continue this chapter. However, although what Love says is true, there can, nevertheless, be some value in a topical method of Bible study, depending largely on the topics which are considered and the way in which they are handled. In fact, some Bible students recommend it very highly.

The object of the topical method is to find everything in the Bible referring to a certain subject and to gain thereby

1. Love, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

a full insight into what God says concerning that topic. Doing this will necessitate the use of helps. Almost any Bible will offer a limited amount of aid to this method in the cross references down the center of the page. Special Bibles and concordances have also been published as an aid to this method of study.²

Not all subjects or topics need be treated alike, nor can they. Smith gives us an example of what might be done with the topic: Prayers of the Bible. He tells us that there are 33 in the Old Testament and 49 in the New Testament. He suggests that the Bible student might consider the following for each prayer:

1. Who is praying? Is he or she a child of God?
2. Circumstances in which the prayer is offered.
3. The physical aspects: time, posture, etc.
4. The definite word used to indicate the act.
5. To whom is it offered--Father, Son, or Holy Ghost?
6. The general order of the prayer.
7. The subject of prayer.
8. Its relation to the promises of God's Word.
9. The answer to the prayer. Is it recorded? Assumed? When did it occur?
10. The result of the prayer for the one praying and for others.³

For our purposes we might classify the various topics as those of a general nature and those which meet a problem. A great number of possible general topics are suggested by various authors. Smith lists the following as examples:

2. Cf. Nave's Topical Bible, Harper's Topical Concordance, and Thompson's The New Chain Reference Bible.

3. Smith, op. cit., p. 88. This is merely an example and should not be considered a pattern for the topical method.

1. Words that have come down from heaven to men.
2. "Fear Not's" of the Bible (ca. 200 in number).
3. Great Conversions of the Bible.
4. What the Bible has to say about itself.
5. Violations of the 10 Commandments and their Consequences.
6. "Must's" of the Bible.
7. Teachings of Jesus as practiced in His own life.
8. Attributes of God.
9. Gifts of God and of His Son.
10. Questions Jesus asked men.
11. What Christ asks us to do for Him (follow, look, seek, believe, love, watch, etc.).
12. Invitations of Jesus.
13. Emotions of Jesus (joy, sorrow, grief, etc.).
14. Emotions aroused in others by Jesus (amazement, anger, etc.).
15. Verdicts concerning Christ in the Gospels (Simeon, Pilate, etc.).
16. The person and work of the Holy Spirit.
17. Great revivals of the Old and New Testaments.
18. The Words of Christ.
 - a. Their Divine Origin.
 - b. Their abiding characteristics.
 - c. Their power in our hearts.
 - d. Their ultimate place in final judgment.
 - e. The place we should accord them in our lives.^{4 5}

Other approaches and topics have also been offered. Thomas, for instance, suggests that in the Old Testament the leading ideas of individual books might make excellent topics, e.g., the idea of origin or beginning in Genesis, redemption in Exodus, worship in Leviticus, conquest in Joshua, failure in Judges, the providence of God in Job, communion with God in the Psalms, and faithfulness in Isaiah.^{6 7}

4. Ibid., p. 95.

5. A number of these topics might also have been listed under the doctrinal method, others under the word method. A certain amount of overlapping is unavoidable. The topics are listed as by the authors suggesting them. The study of some of these topics will be more satisfying than that of others.

6. Thomas, op. cit., p. 51.

7. This is almost identical to finding the key word of these books.

A great number of topics have been built up around the life of Christ, e.g., His parables, miracles, conversations, prayers, the Lord as Teacher, the relation of Paul to Christ, the second advent, etc.

Thomas also suggests the study of historical periods in the Old Testament. He separates seven periods:

1. Stages from Egypt to Canaan.
2. Steps in the conquest of Canaan.
3. Causes of the separation of the kingdoms.
4. Rise of the prophets.
5. The kingdom of Israel.
6. Three stages of the captivity of Judah, (Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah).
7. Three stages of the return (Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah).⁸

Another approach to the general topic worthy of mention is that of map study. This might be used effectively with the journeys of the patriarchs and Israel in the Old Testament, and the travels of Jesus and Paul in the New Testament.

The second classification for the topical method is that of topics which meet a problem. By this is meant topics which arise from a situation or are of special interest to an individual or a group for some special reason. Examples of this type of topic might be: a study of the liturgy in its Scriptural background, the Biblical teaching on a false view held by some denomination in the community, the Bible's teachings on war, the relationship of the Christian to the house of worship, etc. A topic of this sort will undoubtedly elicit

8. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

more interest than will most general topics, since it has a direct bearing on the life of the individual or the group, and will, therefore, also be more profitable.

It is admitted that perhaps the widest possible interpretation of the topical method has been presented in this chapter. Because its possibilities are almost infinite, it is difficult to localize. It is well that the reader who uses this method consider the statement by Prof. Love quoted at the beginning of the chapter and remember that a profitable topic study presupposes the wise choice of a topic and a discreet treatment of it.

IX. The Unit of Thought Method

The best of all ways to read the Bible with satisfaction is by units of thought. A Bible that is well paragraphed, and one in which the chapters and verses do not stand out too prominently will help greatly in this. For the paragraph of writing represents more nearly than anything else the way people think.

. . . A unit of thought is any passage, however long or short, that naturally belongs together, and should be read and understood together because it deals with just one theme. In much of the book of Proverbs, though not in all, each separate verse is a unit of thought by itself, and therefore reading by verses is quite in order. You can begin anywhere and stop anywhere; it does not matter much. But in the book of Judges, the story of Samson, chs. 13-16, is one unit of thought in itself, and it is absurd to stop short of these four chapters in reading. To one who has never tried it, the effect of reading a complete story from the Bible at a sitting comes with a thrill of surprise, and often produces an enthusiasm for Bible reading that transforms life habits.¹

Thus Prof. Julian Price Love of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary introduces and defines what he calls "unit of thought" Bible reading in his recent book, How to Read the Bible. Although some Bible students have bordered on this method by referring to a paragraph study of the Bible,^{2 3 4} the unit of thought idea differs from the approaches to Bible study advocated by most previous authorities.

-
1. Love, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
 2. Braulick, op. cit., pp. 77-78.
 3. Stifler, op. cit., p. 19.
 4. Trumbull and others, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

The merits of this method speak for themselves as one reads Love's book and tries what he suggests in his own Bible reading. Much of what will be presented here concerning this method is in the words of Prof. Love himself, since he presents his case better than could someone else.

The unit of thought method assumes that the Bible consists of a number of "story" units. The object of the Bible reader using this method is to read these stories without paying particular heed to chapter and verse divisions in his Bible. Some of the most obvious of these stories in the Bible are those which consist of entire books, e.g., Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Galatians and others. These have already been discussed at some length in the chapter on the book method and will, therefore, be dispensed with here with a quotation concerning a longer book of the Bible--Mark--which is typical of Love's enthusiasm for this method: "Anyone who reads the gospel of Mark thus, at one sitting, has in store for him a new entrance into the heart of the Master, a real vision of Jesus as though he were here in the flesh."⁵

Story units, however, need not necessarily embody entire books. A single book may contain a number or series of such units.

Take Genesis for example. If one knows the life story of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, he knows the book of Genesis. He does not even need to make an exception of the story of creation,

5. Love, op. cit., p. 25.

for this is artistically told as part of the story of Adam. The universe was made for man. Indeed one of the most disastrous mistakes that can be made in reading the book of Genesis is to pin the mind on the stories of events rather than on the stories of men. The events are narrated to trace the development of the characters of the men.⁶

In succeeding pages Love elaborates on these thoughts, and makes a still stronger appeal for his contention by saying:

The most fascinating of all the cycles of the book of Genesis is that of Joseph. The story runs in romantic development from chapter 37 to the end of the book, though it contains by contrast in chapter 38 the story of the lechery of Jacob's sons. This complete story of Joseph can easily be read in an hour or less, . . . Yet how few Christians have ever read the story as one! The division into thirteen [sic] different chapters makes it look like a stupendous task, and scores of good people who think nothing of an hour's magazine story have never thought to read the story of Joseph. Yet there are few stories in literature more rewarding. I have myself known several families with children who had found difficulty in becoming interested in the Bible, but who found that interest whetted by the reading of the life of Joseph at one or two sittings. . . .^{7 8}

The book of Judges may be treated similarly to Genesis; but not all books of the Bible fall into story divisions of characters. Some, e.g., Deuteronomy, can best be divided by the occasions on which Moses addressed the people. The prophets are yet another type of book. "In the case of the prophets, learning to start and stop with a new prophetic vision is the beginning of wisdom. The prophets preached, or taught, only when they had a particular 'burden' or 'vision,'

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

8. This example, incidentally, is closely related to the biographical method.

and the markings of these new messages usually stand out."⁹
 A few random examples of such markings are: "Hear this word,"
 "Thus saith the Lord," "In the days of Ahaz," "The burden of
 Babylon," etc.¹⁰

In still other books the story units revolve around
 problems. Among others, Love cites I Corinthians as a clear
 example.

. . . One may read this letter of Paul as a collec-
 tion of remarks of good advice, and may find in it
 some good doctrine, and beautiful poetry as well,
 without realizing how the thoughts are fitted to-
 gether. So he will fail to get the real message of
 the letter from reading it piecemeal. But, if he
 senses the fact that the first four chapters, with
 all their emphasis on the different work of dif-
 ferent leaders, and with all their seemingly un-
 related teaching about the cross of Christ and the
 wisdom of God, are dealing with just one problem,
 that of party strife in the Corinthian church, he
 begins to get the thought together and to delight
 in its sense. The apostle is trying to solve the
 case of division into four parties by showing that
 the Corinthians are following the worldly wisdom
 of pride in favorite personalities, while the cross
 of Christ is God's real wisdom that binds all groups
 together. . . .¹¹

And thus through the book of I Corinthians Love points out the
 problems which Paul attempts to solve in his letter.

Another type of story unit is exemplified in Matthew--the
 unit of teaching. The various sermons of Jesus as recorded
 here constitute the units.¹²

Not every book of the Bible can be read from a unit of
 thought approach, strictly speaking. Love contends that some

-
9. Love, op. cit., p. 30.
 10. Ibid., pp. 30-33.
 11. Ibid., p. 34.
 12. Ibid., pp. 35-37.

of the sacred literature of the Bible is primarily feeling.

. . . This is not to disparage any of the sixty-six books, nor is it to say that any one of them is devoid of thought. But it soon becomes evident to the reader of the Bible that . . . others [books] can be understood only by entering into their mood. They have come into existence because of a single mood, as in the case of some of the shorter ones, or they are a collection of many moods, as is supremely the case with the Psalm Book. To lay the stress on thought content is often to miss the purpose of such literature. To learn to feel with the author or authors is to get the real value.¹³

As an example of such a book, Love cites Nahum. In explaining his reasons for this position, he includes the following statements:

The prophecy of Nahum is not in the reading canon of a good many Christians. Some who have read it once have dismissed it as impossible for Christian experience. Bitter, vengeful, even vindictive, if this brief message is understood to be final thinking about the way a believer in God may react toward his enemies, then it just does not belong in the same volume with the teaching of Jesus on forgiveness. But the prophecy of Nahum is not teaching at all; it is feeling. It is a magnificent presentation of the spectacle of exultation over the downfall of evil. Its inspiration lies in its faithful picture of aroused indignation. . . .¹⁴

Turning to the New Testament, Love lists Philippians as a book of a different mood. In its discussion he includes:

. . . To get into the mood of joy and of loving Christian fellowship, and to read this little letter (preferably at one sitting) as the high-water mark in the expression of such joy and fellowship, is to understand it with the heart.

"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus," (Phil. 2:5) is really the key-note of the

13. Ibid., p. 33.

14. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

letter. It is pre-eminently the New Testament's exhortation to the imitation of Christ. To get into the spirit of the letter is to feel in turn the wide ranges of that fellowship. The willingness of Paul to imitate his Lord, his humility, his readiness to obey the higher will, his refusal of satisfaction with himself balanced by his contentment with "whatever state,"--all these and many more expressions of the mood of following Christ are caught up into the atmosphere of Christian fellowship in which the apostle can most effectively urge his readers, "Be ye imitators together of me." (Phil. 3:17) To get this "mind" is to read Philipians.¹⁵

As was noted above, the Book of Psalms is the outstanding example of a book which does not confine itself to a single mood, but "about runs the gamut of human feeling."¹⁶ When we read them from this approach, various Psalms will appeal to us more than others because the mood may be ours or it may be unnatural to us.

. . . But, at all times, we will strive to follow sympathetically along this arterial highway of spiritual emotions. If the Psalmist, exulting in God's providence, declares that he has "not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," (Psa. 37:25) we will rejoice with him in that spirit, even though we have seen good people go hungry. If the Psalmist proclaims that God has rewarded him according to his righteousness, we will rejoice with him that that was possible and will forget the appearance of pride. (Psa. 18:20,24) If the Psalmist imprecates the wrath of God upon his foes, going farther than Nahum in begging for wrath that has not yet been decreed, we will enter the poignancy of his suffering and be humbled by our own impatience rather than by his. (See, e.g., Psa. 137:7-9) For we must never forget that we are New Testament Christians, and that not all the Psalms of the days of the old covenant measure up to the spiritual and moral heights of the New Testament. But they may still be very valuable; for some of us have not yet caught up to their state of mind, and it will be worth while for all of us to see

15. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

16. Ibid., p. 41.

out of what varieties of religious experience God has brought his people to the full light that is in Jesus Christ. With this in mind, we shall be better fitted to remember that the Psalm Book has been the great source of Christian, as well as of Jewish, devotion.¹⁷

Because they do express moods, Love feels that the Psalms can be read more profitably in groups classified according to the feeling that is dominant in them. Although some of them might be listed under several classifications, he divides the Psalms under the following heads:

1. Psalms of Adoration.
2. Psalms of Meditation.
3. Psalms of Trust.
4. Psalms of Complaint.
5. Psalms of Earnest Petition.
6. Penitential Psalms.
7. Psalms of Thanksgiving and Gratitude.
8. Festal Psalms.
9. Liturgies.
10. Historical Psalms.
11. War Psalms.
12. Messianic Psalms.
13. Imprecatory Psalms.
14. Psalms of the Glorification of Zion.
15. Psalms of the Law.
16. Psalms of the Future Life.¹⁸

In fact, Love devotes a large part of his book to a detailed outline of all of the books of the Bible with their proper divisions according to the unit of thought method as he sees it. He has in all instances broken all the units down into the shortest possible sections to accommodate also those readers who cannot spend longer periods of time on every occasion that they read the Bible.¹⁹

17. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

18. Ibid., pp. 43-62; 92-94.

19. Ibid., pp. 75-148.

The unit of thought method seems to be a very sane approach to Bible reading. If the experience of the writer is a true indication of its effectiveness, every Bible reader who tries this method will retain it permanently as one of the methods he will continue to pursue in his reading and study of God's Word.

which is one or the other of the individual's emotions. At the same time the Christian might turn to one of the printed aids which are available, of which Love says,

There are numerous passages that advise us, when we are in a state of doubt, or in temptation, or in some other special condition, turn to this or that part of the Bible. Such help is no doubt good, but it is not an essential step in the process of a man's growth, forgetting that man's very high

In a situation or occasion such as those referred to, the Christian who by a systematic use of his Bible has learned to know it and its message from God to man is going to have a great advantage over the Christian who is not acquainted with his Bible. He can turn to those sections in the Bible which are known by experts and his needs and is also able to put his own experiences in life with the many practical lessons acquired by a constant use of the Bible before him. In applying God's word to our special emotional experiences it is more important to have such an abundant

11. Love, pp. 111, 112, 113.

X. Using the Bible for a Present Situation.

There come times in every Christian's life when he feels that he should like to turn to God and his Bible in a special way. These times usually coincide with events in his life which arouse one or the other of the individual's emotions. At such a time the Christian might turn to one of the printed helps available, of which Love says,

. . . There are numerous pamphlets that advise us, "When in sorrow read such and such a chapter; when in trouble, or in doubt, or in temptation, or in some other special condition, turn to this or that place in the Bible." Such help is no doubt good, yet it often is but an artificial effort to fit a passage to a mood, forgetting that moods vary with individuals.¹

In a situation or occasion such as those referred to, the Christian who by a systematic use of his Bible has learned to know it and its message from God to him is going to have a great advantage over the Christian who is not acquainted with his Bible. He can turn to those sections in the Bible which he knows by experience meet his needs and is also able to meet uncommon experiences in life with the strong spiritual life acquired by a constant use of the Bible before that situation arises. In applying God's Word to our special emotional experiences it is more important to have seen and absorbed the

1. Love, op. cit., p. 151.

spirit and method of persons in the Bible who met with great experiences also, than to hunt for the experience of another that exactly corresponds to our own.²

On the other hand, there are special occasions in a Christian's life--those which recur year after year--at which he might turn to specific sections of Scripture with benefit to himself. Birthdays or other family anniversaries give occasion to read special passages of the Bible concerning the family and family life. Among these are: Gen. 2. 3; Deut. 6; 1 Sam. 1-3; Prov. 1-9. 31; Luke 1:51-52; John 2:1-11; John 19: 25b-27; Mark 3:31-35; Eph. 5:15--6:9. National anniversaries and holidays might also be suitable occasions for special readings. Thanksgiving Day, particularly, might lead the Christian to turn to the Psalms of Thanksgiving or other sections on giving thanks, among them Hab. 3; Luke 17:11-19; Philippians; II Corinthians 8 and 9. Special seasons of the church year, particularly Advent and Lent, lend themselves to the reading of portions of Scripture especially applicable. This should not be limited to reading the specific Christmas or passion stories in the New Testament only, but might also go back into Old Testament prophecies and suitable Psalms.³

Vacation time, which also becomes vacation time from religion for many Christians, should never be overlooked as a

2. Ibid., p. 152.

3. Ibid., pp. 158-160; 162-163.

most fitting time for sharing some of the experiences of Biblical authors with God's creation. "Real joy awaits the one who will prepare his schedule for his Bible reading during the vacation as carefully as he marks his road maps or packs his bags," says Prof. Love.⁴ A large number of Psalms make excellent reading out in the open, among them favorites being 8, 19, 46, 84, 93, 104, 121, and 148. Other selections which may have special meaning and perhaps even arouse new thrills in a vacation setting away from the hustle and bustle of civilization are Micah 6; Isaiah 5, 40 and 55; Jeremiah 23 and 24; 1 Kings 18 and 19; Matt. 4:1-11; Matt. 5-7; Mark 9:1-13; Mark 4; John 6; and Mark 14:32-42.⁵

4. Ibid., pp. 160-161.

5. Ibid.

XI. The Bible Student and the Family Altar.¹

Although the main emphasis in previous chapters has been on the individual's use of the Bible, the writer does not want to leave the impression that the Bible should be restricted to such use. It should also be read with others. Especially is this true in the family. On the other hand, family reading of the Bible dare never replace individual reading. It seems that personal acquaintance with and use of the Bible by the individual Christian is almost essential to a successful family use of the Bible, sometimes called "The Family Altar." The individual, particularly the parent, who has experienced God's blessing in his private use of the Bible will want to share that blessing with his family and will be able to contribute much to its mutual spiritual growth.

One such contribution to the family altar is that of adapting a method of Bible reading which the individual has found particularly useful to family use. It appears that the unit of thought method might be readily adaptable, as might also the biographical, on occasion the book method, or perhaps some of the others.

1. It is not the purpose of this chapter to suggest methods for conducting a family altar, which deserve a much more extensive treatment. The writer merely wishes to point out that there is a relationship between the individual and the family as far as Bible reading is concerned, together with a few random suggestions.

An important consideration in planning and conducting a family altar is the age of the children in the family. More specific suggestions in this matter will be made in the next chapter.

A great number of helps for the family altar have appeared and are appearing on the market. If any of them are used, the choice should be made rather carefully. Emphasis should be placed particularly on reading from the Bible itself. It seems that a certain amount of explanatory or devotional material used with it can be helpful as long as it does not supercede or replace the Bible.² A brief, informal discussion might be more beneficial than several pages of written material which is read.

For the sake of the children in the family, a suggestion from Love's book is included here:

Too much cannot be said for the value of reading the Bible to children along with the hymn book. To find hymns that suggest something along the line one is reading, and to sing them together, is to do more than books can do to help plant the Bible in the children's minds and hearts forever. . . . A child who early learns to sing his religion will be apt to grow the most fruitfully in his faith.³

It might be added that an adult who sings his religion may have much the same experience. Some of the grandest religious expressions of our Bible in the Psalms and elsewhere are hymns.

2. Martin Hegland has incorporated into a recent volume, For His Name's Sake, some of these principles.

3. Love, op. cit., p. 174.

XII. Methods Adaptable to Children.¹

Children, also, should be Bible readers. The Bible gives us God's injunction to parents: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."² This implies that the children are also to learn God's Word. The most direct method that the parent has of teaching children God's Word is directly from the Bible.

This is perhaps not as simply done as stated. For, says, Prof. Love,

. . . the Bible is written to adults. Its language and point of view are adult. Its purpose is to persuade and ground those who are able to think and reason. Its writers nowhere attempt to adapt their thought to the child mind. They leave that entirely to the heads of the families that make up the believing household.³

The parents' obligation of teaching the Bible to their children begins in the child's infancy. In the early years children should be told the Bible stories in simple language which they understand. The age at which the child itself may be able to begin reading personally will vary with children.

1. The subject of children and the Bible might receive a treatment as extensive as this one on methods of Bible reading and study. Since children are among Bible readers, however, this subject of methods would be incomplete without a chapter on some of the particular considerations to be made with children, although it by no means exhausts them.

2. Deut. 6:6-7.

3. Love, op. cit., p.164.

When they do begin reading, Prof. Love holds that at least up to the age of eight a series of well-illustrated Bible stories is preferable to having the child read directly from the Bible.^{4 5} Hall and Wood feel that as soon as possible children should hear the reading of the Bible text itself,

. . . for children should be accustomed at an early age to the music of Biblical language. There are versions of the Bible in which the whole book is told in short and familiar words. This is wholly unnecessary and deprives the child of the discipline and training which come from familiarity with noble and exalted language.⁶

This latter view is not completely in harmony with that of Love, who holds, especially of children who are beginning to read the Bible themselves, that "Parents will frequently find that introducing their children to some of the modern speech versions will give a thrill of new discovery and lead to much steadier delight in Bible reading."⁷ Particularly is this true of Bibles printed much as are other books which the child uses, in paragraph divisions. Educational and child psychology, as far as interest and learning is concerned, agrees here with the position of Love. The parents who follow this policy with their children should, of course, be aware of the shortcomings which the version being used might have. It might be well also to use the King James Version at least part of the time with the older children to acquaint them with some of its peculiarities

4. Ibid., p. 173.

5. Other visual aids will be helpful during this period also.

6. Hall and Wood, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

7. Love, loc. cit.

and its superior linguistic characteristics. Caution should be observed, however, particularly with the younger children, that they do not become confused about the whole thing.

Perhaps one of the most pressing matters to parents is that of choosing the parts of the Bible most suited to reading to and with their children. It is well to keep in mind always that children like a story. Younger children, especially, like stories that deal with other children, and some of the stories of children in the Bible might be used to advantage. Since these are limited, though, they should not be over-used.⁸ Parents must also always remember that they are not telling the child the story for the story's sake only. Children are to grow spiritually just as adults should. They need more help, however, in determining the applications to be made to their own lives than do adults. To give them this guidance is part of the parents' responsibility.

It is sometimes assumed that the Old Testament is primarily the children's book because of its great number of stories. Although there are many stories in the Old Testament, the child should read the New Testament also, and particularly the Gospels and Acts.⁹ The Gospel message is as important for the child as for anyone else and he should read it for his spiritual growth. Love points out that because of its fast moving action, Mark is perhaps best suited to younger children,

8. Ibid., p. 165.

9. Ibid., pp. 167. 172.

and Luke to those a little older, while John and Matthew are still a little more adult in their approach and outlook.¹⁰

Although much of the Bible can be understood by children, there are some books and portions of books which are rather obscure to them and might, therefore, be saved until they are a little older. Among these might be listed some sections from the major prophets and some of the minor prophets entirely. In the New Testament, some of the epistles are a little above the mental reach of children.¹¹

Childhood is undoubtedly the best time to stress memorization of God's Word. Hall and Wood list a number of sections which they consider worthy of such emphasis, including a large number of Psalms, many Proverbs, the Beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, Good Samaritan, Lost Sheep, John 20, Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 13, Phil. 3:13-21, James 3, and others.¹² We might subtract from this list or might add a great many other passages. But the importance of memorizing from the Bible should not be ignored. Besides the blessing of having these portions of Scripture for their own throughout life, many people in old age or under handicaps have been especially thankful for and have experienced many blessings from the passages learned in youth. The memory work of the child, incidentally, should not be mere rote learn-

10. Ibid., pp. 167-168.

11. Love, op. cit., pp. 168-172, lists all the books of the Bible with the sections he considers advisable to be recommended for children.

12. Hall and Wood, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

ing, but he should, of course, understand what he is memorizing so that it does not become a chore without a purpose.

The teen-age group presents special problems in all religious fields, and also in the matter of Bible reading. An important factor at this time, as always, is the example of the parents. Perhaps the biographical method of Bible reading is one of the most appealing also to this group, as it is to younger children. Hall and Wood suggest that their Bible reading might be correlated somewhat with their school work, e.g., by studying the contacts of Israel with the great nations of the earth--Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome--through Bible references. An attempt to place themselves into Bible times through exercises such as writing an imaginary letter describing the David and Goliath story from the Israelite camp, might be usable.¹³ Although these suggestions may not fully satisfy us, they should stimulate us to more thinking on the problem.

To teach children God's Word is one of the most satisfying activities in the world. Jesus Himself points to a child's faith as exemplary and admonishes all Christians to cultivate such a faith. Christian parents who are aware of this will consider it one of their foremost privileges to teach their children God's Word in the Bible and to study it with them, beginning with the biographical method and expanding to some of

13. Ibid., pp. 181-186.

the others as their experience with the children proves this practicable.

III. Conclusion.

"When I pray, I talk to God, but when I read the Bible, God is talking to me, and it is really very important that God should speak to me when I speak to Him." The purpose of the preceding chapters has been to help the Christian to do this most important thing in life effectively, to let God speak to him. A number of methods of Bible reading and study have been presented by way of definition and explanation and of showing how to use them to reach their individual and relative aims and purposes.

A lengthy presentation of methods of Bible reading and study in itself, however, cannot produce Bible reading. In order that these methods accomplish anything, the Christian must use his Bible. Although the case may be otherwise a bit, Prof. Love puts it very interestingly when he writes:

"We need to avoid 'idolatry.' To worship the book as a book is not to possess another form of idolatry. We are saved by God in Christ, not by a book. The Bible is not a talisman, to be kept on one's person and held in the living hope of a protection against the ravages of the soul. The Bible's binding, red edges, and limp leather in which most of our Bibles come, the phrase 'Holy Bible' prominently printed on the cover, the covering in which it is wrapped and stored, all these are useful in their proper use, but they are not the means of defeating its real purpose. To use it as a talisman for life is the only sure way to ruin it."

XIII. Conclusion.

"When I pray, I talk to God, but when I read the Bible, God is talking to me, and it is really more important that God should speak to me than that I speak to Him."¹ The purpose of the preceding chapters has been to help the Christian to do this most important thing in life effectively--to let God speak to him. A number of methods of Bible reading and study have been presented by way of definition and explanation and an attempt has been made to show their individual and relative strong points and weaknesses.

A lengthy presentation on methods of Bible reading and study in itself, however, cannot produce Bible reading. In order that these methods accomplish anything, the Christian must use his Bible. Although the case may be overdrawn a bit, Prof. Love puts it very interestingly when he warns:

We need to avoid "bibleolatry." To worship the book as a book is but to practice another form of idolatry. We are saved by God in Christ, not by a book. The Bible is not a talisman, to be kept on some end-table in the living room as a protection against the goblins of the soul. The black binding, red edges, and limp leather in which most of our Bibles come, the phrase "Holy Bible" awesomely printed on the cover, the reverence in which it is rightfully used, all these can become but the means of defeating its real purpose. To use it as a dynamic for life is the only cure for this sin.²

-
1. Moody, op. cit., p. 8.
 2. Love, op. cit., p. 193.

But use of the Bible, alone, regardless of the method employed, is not God pleasing nor truly beneficial unless the reader experiences spiritual growth from it. The same author says in another place.

. . . it needs to be emphasized that the reading of the Bible is not an end in itself. One may read in prodigious quantities and with increasing frequency and be little the better spiritually. One may have developed even such a good habit as that of reading his Bible with pencil, making all kinds of notes in the margin. He may go so far as to write out his own comments. He may memorize long passages as he reads,--in itself the truest reading. Yet he may do it all as an accomplishment or even as a task. The mere knowing of the Bible, however thoroughly done, may not produce an effective life.

We are not transformed by knowledge of a book, but by fellowship with a Person. . . . The Bible, especially the New Testament, fulfills its purpose by introducing us adequately to God in Christ. Unless we learn to know and fellowship with him, reading the Bible is fruitless. Life in its richest meaning is the issue of such a fellowship. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John 17:3)³

Our use of the Bible must be for a purpose--the purpose of permitting God to come to us and to mold us individually to be a true Christian, such as He only can effect. We call that use of the Bible "devotional reading." The following anecdote gives us an interesting interpretation of the term.

A young lady, asked by her friend to explain what is meant by devotional reading of the Bible, made answer as follows: "Yesterday morning I received a letter from one to whom I had given my heart and devoted my life. I freely confess to you that I have read that letter five times, not because I did not understand it at the first reading, nor because I

3. Ibid., pp. 195-196.

expected to commend myself to the author by frequent reading of his epistle. It was not with me a question of duty, but simply one of pleasure. I read it because I am devoted to the one who wrote it.

"To read the Bible with the same motive is to read it devotionally, and to one who reads it in that spirit, it is indeed a love letter."⁴

A truly devotional reading and study of the Bible according to the methods which best suit his needs, will surely contribute to making the Bible reader a man or woman of God who will be a living testimony to the power of God's Word in the world. And when that Christian's task is accomplished in the world, he will personally experience the full meaning of St. Paul's conviction concerning that Word: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."⁵

4. Selected from United Presbyterian.

5. Rom. 1:16.

Bibliography

- Anonymous, Criteria for Bible Study Helps, (Mimeographed).
- _____, Worthwhile Ways of Reading the Bible (#U-116), New York, American Bible Society.
- Bell, Alvin E., The Gist of the Bible, Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan Publishing House, c. 1926.
- Betts, Rome A., The Bible and Youth (#U-17), New York, American Bible Society.
- Braulick, E. J., Principles of Christian Faith, Columbus, Ohio, The Lutheran Book Concern, 1936.
- Burton, John W., A Treatise on the Pastoral Office, London, Macmillan & Co., 1864.
- Clifford, Waller and others, Hints on Bible Study, Chicago, Fleming H. Revell Co., c. 1891.
- Dodd, M. E., "Reading the Bible Through," Bible Society Record, LXXXIII, (July, 1938), 91.
- Eakin, Frank, Getting Acquainted With the New Testament, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1927.
- Fecht, O. E., An Introduction to the Bible Study Project, (Mimeographed).
- _____, Toward Principles in Bible Study as Related to Bible Institutes, (Mimeographed).
- Garvie, Alfred E., A Guide To Preachers, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1911.
- Gray, James M., "How To Master the English Bible," Moody Bible Institute Monthly, XXXIV (January, 1934), 209-210.
- Hall, Newton Marshall, and Irving Francis Wood, The Book of Life, 8 vols., Chicago, John Rudin & Co., Inc., 1924.
- Hegland, Martin, For His Name's Sake, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1947.
- _____, Getting Acquainted With the Bible, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1944.

- Huggenvik, Theo., Your Key to the Bible, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1946.
- Kretzmann, A. R., "Approaches to Bible Study in a Metropolitan Center," Concordia Theological Monthly, VIII (1937),
- Kretzmann, P. E., Walther League School of Correspondence, Part IV, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1923.
- Kuist, Howard T., These Words Upon Thy Heart, Richmond, Va., John Knox Press, 1947.
- Laurin, Roy L., How to Have Profit and Pleasure in Bible Reading. (Tract)
- Love, Julian Price, How To Read the Bible, New York, Macmillan Co., 1946.
- Menzies, Mrs. Stephen, Hints on Bible Marking, Chicago, Young Men's Era Publ. Co., 1890.
- _____, How To Mark Your Bible, Chicago, Fleming H. Revell Co.
- Moody, D. L., Pleasure and Profit in Bible Study, Chicago, Moody Press, 1895.
- Niedermeyer, Fredrick D., "Getting the Bible Read in the Home," Moody Bible Institute Monthly, XXXVIII (November, 1937), 122-123.
- Pierson, A. T., Keys To The Word, New York, Charles C. Cook.
- Sampey, John R., A Good Plan for Reading the Bible. (Tract)
- Schaeffer, Henry, "The Pastor's Devotional Study of the Bible," Lutheran Church Quarterly, I (April, 1928), 156-157.
- Smith, Wilbur M., "How to Study the Bible for the Enrichment of the Spiritual Life," Revelation, VI (1936), 1-5; 37 ff.; 51; 82 ff.; 95; 123 ff.; 149; 163 ff.
- Sommer, Martin S., The Truth Which Makes Us Free, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1932.
- Stifler, Francis Carr, Every Man's Book, New York, Harper & Brothers, c. 1941.
- Thomas, W. H. Griffith, Methods of Bible Study, Philadelphia, Sunday School Times Co., 1926.

Thompson, Frank Charles, The New Chain Reference Bible, Indianapolis, B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., c. 1934.

Torrey, R. A., To Shew Tyself Approved, Chicago, Moody Press, 1921.

Trumbull, H. Clay, and others, Hints on Bible Study, Philadelphia, John D. Wattles & Co., 1898.

Weigle, Luther A., An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946.

Young, Robert, Analytical Concordance to the Bible, 21st Edition, New York, Funk & Wagnalls Co.