

Halley's Bible Handbook

by Wayne Goff

Henry H. Halley, the author of *Halley's Bible Handbook*, was born on April 10, 1874. He was a preacher, but due to ill health had to stop preaching for a time. During this enforced time off, he memorized large portions of Scripture. Eventually, he memorized the gist of every book of the Bible.

The idea of the handbook came almost by accident. One day he was invited to preach at another church. He forgot to bring his notes. So he decided to recite some of the Scripture he had memorized, linking together related passages. The audience loved it. They invited him back to recite more passages. Other churches began to invite him to do the same. Before reciting a passage, he always gave an explanation of the context. People tried to jot down what he said. One preacher even went so far as to hire a stenographer to take notes!

Mr. Halley found her typing and shuffling so distracting that he made up his mind to hand out his own notes. The first notes were only sixteen pages long. But as he added more, the handouts grew and grew. By his 90th birthday, they amounted to almost a thousand pages! The Handbook was now a published work on sale in bookstores. And it sold well.

Its popularity was owing not only to its usefulness — it featured maps, outlines of Bible books, archaeological discoveries and much more — but to the honor it accorded to God. Halley emphasized that the Bible is God's word. And he recognized Christ Jesus as the heart of that word. As a consequence, Halley insisted that "every Christian should be a constant and devoted reader of the Bible..."

His handbook was "not designed as a textbook, but rather as a handy, brief manual of a popular nature, for the average Bible reader who has few or no commentaries or reference works on the Bible." One reason for its success was that Mr. Halley tried to stick to the facts presented by the Bible itself and the facts of history and keep his own opinions out of the book.

When Mr. Halley died in 1965, he was buried in Lexington, Kentucky. New editions of the Handbook were issued by his family.

by Dan Graves
via christianity.com

edited by Wayne Goff for publication in this bulletin

Lessons To Be Learned —

Mr. Halley was a student of J.W. McGarvey at the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky. He became a preacher for the Disciples of Christ in 1898. It appears that he also spoke to "groups of interfaith churches" once he became popular for his Handbook. Denominational language is found throughout his life's work, and he admitted to avoiding controversial topics in order to appeal to a larger audience of readers. So those who have and use a copy of the book should be wary of these things.

Just the same, the small book is a valuable asset, especially to those who have few religious books. **The information at the back of the Handbook criticizing both churches and preachers for their lack of Bible teaching is worth reading!** What was true in denominations in the first half of the nineteenth century has become more true even in the conservative churches of Christ!

Mr. Halley *began* memorizing Scripture intently at age 39. He said that he had an average memory in school and college, but that when he learned to memory by "**intensive application,**" he was able to remember large sections of Scripture. The advantage of doing so is seen in this comment: "You may have read a passage a hundred times, yet hidden truths come out crystal clear as memorization spotlights every sentence into importance."

continued on page 311804

311803