

“How to Enjoy Your Bible,” No. 2

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Source for “How to Enjoy Your Bible,” No. 2

- (1) R. A. **Torrey**, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit: The Methods and Fundamental Conditions of the Bible Study That Yields the Largest Results* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the Sadlers pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Light blue** indicates a passage which anticipates something in the Urantia Book.
- (f) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake.

HOW TO ENJOY YOUR BIBLE. No. 2.

BY W. S. SADLER.

The Comparative Method of Bible Study.

2.1 “WHICH things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Cor. 2:13.

[1. THE best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself (“Christian Axioms,” in *The Youth’s Instructor*, Sep. 12, 1901, p. 4). Also in *Pacific Union Recorder*, Sep. 25, 1902, p. 15; and in R. E. Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life* (1906), p. 56.]

2.2 The Bible itself is the best commentary on the Bible.

One of the best ways of getting light on some difficult passage is to search out other scriptures along the same line, and compare the fruit of your labors.

2.3 Of course one should make a free use of the concordance in such work, but many students of the Bible fail to appreciate the wealth of help there is in the ordinary marginal references found in the Bible.

2.4 Let us just open the Bible for an illustration, and see the help we can get out of our marginal references.

Our Bible is opened at Revelation.

[Note: Sadler doesn’t mention which Bible he was using, but he quotes from the King James Version, not the American Revised Version.]

SOURCE

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It is in the fourth chapter, and we find a verse marked in our Bible, which we have read many times, the fifth verse: “And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.”

2.5 Now, let us suppose that we are especially anxious to understand what is meant by “the seven spirits of God.” Elsewhere in the good Book we read of the one Spirit of God—

[*Note:* The King James Version uses ‘the Holy Ghost’; the American Revised Version uses ‘the Holy Spirit.’]

the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost.

What can these seven spirits of God mean?

[*Note:* See endnote #1 for my comments about this article.]

Let us proceed by the comparative method of Bible study, and see what help we can get from our marginal references, or, if they fail us, by resorting to the concordance.¹

[*Note:* One Bible whose marginal references match the ones cited by Sadler is *The Pronouncing Edition of the Holy Bible, Containing the Authorized and Revised Versions of the Old and New Testaments*, published by A. J. Holman & Co., 1872, 1890.]

2.6 By referring to the marginal reference, we are referred to the first chapter and fourth verse.

Let us turn there and read: “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before His throne.”

2.7 Here we learn again of the seven spirits of God which are before the throne.

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We turn back to Rev. 4:5, and find that our second marginal reference carries us to the third chapter of Revelation and the first verse, which reads as follows: “And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

2.8 Here we get more light, which would lead us to recognize that the seven spirits of God are somewhat under the control and direction of Christ.

[Note: Why?]

This would lead us to believe that the seven spirits of God must be the same as the one spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. But let us look again.

2.9 We are next referred to the fifth chapter of Revelation and the sixth verse, which reads: “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

[Note: Why?]

2.10 Here again we are led to consider these seven spirits of God to be identical with the one Spirit of God, by which and through whom Christ discerns all things, knows all things, and directs all things in the earth.

II: THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL BOOKS. (Torrey 14)

V.—*The fifth work is to take up each verse in order and study it.* (T 22)

2.11 Now, we have used up our marginal references;

SOURCE

To study the Bible usage of words one must have a Concordance.

Altogether, the best Concordance is Strong's "Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible."

The next best, Young's "Analytical Concordance" (T 23).

[Note: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance has entries for 'spirits', so Sadler wasn't using that concordance. *The Pronouncing Edition of the Holy Bible* contains a concordance, which has only 'spirit', as does Young's *Analytical Concordance*.]

[Note: The concordance in *The Pronouncing Edition of the Holy Bible*, lists this verse, but only names "the spirit of judgment". Young's *Analytical Concordance* has 'the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit'.]

[Note: Why?]

[Note: In the concordance in *The Pronouncing Edition of the Holy Bible*, Isa. 11:2 immediately follows Isa. 4:4.]

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therefore let us go to the concordance.

(And if you want to get the best results from the use of the concordance in your Bible study, have a complete concordance,

either "Strong's Exhaustive Concordance,"

or "Young's Analytical Concordance.")

2.12 Now, by turning to "spirit" you will find many references, some of which you know as you glance over them in the concordance, and many of which you will readily see shed no light on our subject.

But when we strike the references in Isaiah, we at once recognize the use of the word "spirit" in a plural sense.

2.13 In the fourth chapter of Isaiah and fourth verse, we see a reference to the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning.

Now we take it for granted that this must be the same Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, being called by different names, according to its different work.

But the next reference in the concordance gives us the light we are seeking. Isa. 11:2 says,

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

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2.14 Here we have it; the comparative method of Bible study gives us light. Here we have a reference to the Spirit of God where the Spirit is called by several names:

[*Note:* The UB’s seven adjutant mind-spirits are: (1) the spirit of intuition, (2) the spirit of understanding, (3) the spirit of courage, (4) the spirit of knowledge, (5) the spirit of counsel, (6) the spirit of worship, (7) the spirit of wisdom. (See 36:5.5-12.) In 34:4.10 these spirits are listed in reverse order.]

(1) The Spirit of the Lord; (2) The spirit of wisdom; (3) The spirit of understanding; (4) The spirit of counsel; (5) The spirit of might; (6) The spirit of knowledge; (7) The spirit of the fear of the Lord.

2.15 And so we could open our Bible to almost any verse and trace it out in this way. Sometimes we shall quickly get the light, and at other times we might search repeatedly, and frequently examine the same scriptures, before gaining the help we sought.

2.16 This is the method of Bible study that was pursued by the Bereans in Paul’s day, of whom the apostle writes: “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.” Acts 17:11.

2.17 Most likely the Bereans followed out this very method of studying the Bible. Of course it was more laborious in their day, for they did not have the complete concordances and the elaborate systems of marginal references that we find in our Bibles to-day.

I: INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER TO
METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY. (Torrey
11)

It is certain that one will find gold in the Bible, if he digs (T 11-12).

If you would enjoy your Bible, you must search for its truths with the eagerness and perseverance with which the miner goes in quest of the treasures that lie hidden in the bowels of the earth.

2.18 We trust you will not be tempted to refer to commentaries and other works of reference to find out the meaning of scripture, until you have first used your concordance and your marginal references, thus comparing scripture with scripture. In this way, new light and beauty will be discerned in many of the scriptures which have been read in a mechanical way scores of times; your faith will be strengthened, your soul developed, and the Bible become as it were a new book to you.

1. Sadler’s conclusion that “the seven spirits of God” is another name for the one Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—was clearly not reached as the result of his own independent study, even though he leads the reader to believe that it was. Sadler was simply falling in line with the prevailing interpretation among evangelical Protestants, which he would have learned from Seventh-day Adventists as well as from his teachers at the Chicago [Moody] Bible Institute. Uriah Smith expresses this view in his explanation of Rev. 5:6:

Seven Horns and Seven Eyes.—Horns are symbols of power, eyes of wisdom; and seven is a number denoting completeness, or perfection. We are thus taught that perfect power and perfect wisdom inhere in the Lamb, through the operation of **the Spirit of God, called the seven Spirits of God** [my bold], to denote the fulness and perfection of its operation (S 395).

According to Google AI, the Church fathers arrived at this view by applying Isa. 11:2 to Rev. 4:5 and Rev. 5:6. They thus used what Sadler calls “the comparative method of Bible study” to arrive at their interpretation, while Sadler retraced their steps.

Ironically, the Urantia Book rejects this view. It asserts that “the seven spirits” mentioned in Rev. 4:5 and Rev. 5:6 do *not* refer either to the Infinite Spirit or the Creative Mother Spirit, but rather to other beings, namely, the Seven Master Spirits and the seven adjutant mind-spirits. In 16:4.1, Rev. 5:6 (“... the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth”) is paraphrased as “the Seven Spirits of God sent forth to all the universe”) and made to apply to the Seven Master Spirits:

It is literally true that these Seven Spirits [created by the Infinite Spirit with the mysterious participation of the Universal Father and the Eternal Son] are the personalized physical power, cosmic mind, and spiritual presence of the triune Deity, “the Seven Spirits of God sent forth to all the universe” (16:4.1).

In 34:4.11, Rev. 4:5 (“... and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God”) is paraphrased (“like lamps burning before the throne”) and, with 34:4.10, made to apply to the seven adjutant mind-spirits:

The seven adjutant mind-spirits are the creation of the Divine Minister of a local universe. These mind-spirits are similar in character but diverse in power, and all partake alike of the nature of the Universe Spirit, although they are hardly regarded as personalities apart from their Mother Creator. The seven adjutants have been given the following names: the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of worship, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of courage, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of intuition—of quick perception.

These are the “seven spirits of God,” “like lamps burning before the throne,” which the prophet saw in the symbols of vision (34:4.10-11).

Interestingly, the Urantia Book’s identification of the Seven Master Spirits as “the seven spirits of God” is similar to interpretations found in some inter-testamental texts as well as in the writings of a few early Christians. According to Google AI:

The identification of the “seven spirits before the throne” (Revelation 1:4, 4:5) as the seven archangels stems from Jewish inter-testamental literature (like the Book of Enoch and Tobit). While most later church fathers interpreted them as the Holy Spirit, several notable early writers connected them to angels:

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 AD): He referred to seven “first-created” or “highest” angels. In his esoteric theology, these seven angelic beings (or protoctists) mediate between the Divine and lower earthly hierarchies.

The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 2nd Century AD): Widely read and respected as scripture by many early church fathers, this text frequently speaks of the highest and “first created” angels standing beside the Son of God.

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 AD): In his writings, he popularized the early Christian angelomorphic perspective, which heavily influenced later interpretations that associated the heavenly council in Revelation with the seven chief angels of Jewish tradition.

Note: The majority of orthodox church fathers, such as Augustine and Athanasius, strongly argued against the angelic interpretation. They viewed the “seven spirits” as symbolic of the fullness of the Holy Spirit (rooted in Isaiah 11:2).

The Seven Master Spirits, while not archangels or angels, are described as “the primary [*i.e.*, the highest and first-created] personalities of the Infinite Spirit” (16:0.1).