

The Book
We Study

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David S. Warner





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The Book We Study

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A Brief Tribute to the Holy Scriptures

By
DAVID S. WARNER



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PREFACE

It is not our purpose in the preparation of this booklet to view the Bible from the standpoint of history, philosophy, theology or mere literature, but to pay a brief tribute to the sacred Volume, God's great gift to man. We have gathered the estimates which many distinguished persons in various walks in life have of the Bible. Some are modern and some speak from the remote past. With one voice they exalt the precious Word of God. It is our earnest desire that this little work may bring courage and comfort to some, at least, of those who shall read it.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the Book of which we speak, and is THE BOOK in comparison with all the other books in the world. A catalogue giving the titles of books now in print in the United States with their authors and publishers is as large as an unabridged dictionary of the English language, yet the Bible is the one Book in all the world. When Sir Walter Scott lay dying at his home in Abbotsford, Scotland, he asked Lockhart, his son-in-law, to read to him. Lockhart asked, "From what book shall I read?" Scott replied, "Need you ask? There is only one Book." Lockhart read to him the fourteenth chapter of John and he was comforted, as has been many another by the words there recorded. Since this is the one

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Book, it is worthy of our study. More than that, it demands our study.

On one occasion Dean Stanley, a noted clergyman and author of the last century, was visiting Heinrich Ewald, a great German scholar and critic, and during their conversation Ewald took up a copy of the New Testament, saying, "All the wisdom of the world is in this little Book." The Bible is worthy of such tributes as these and of tributes immeasurably stronger.

Day by day and year by year the Bible is proving its worth and its right to live and do its work for the uplifting and salvation of humanity. The demand for the Scriptures was never as great as now, and many, many of these demands cannot yet be filled. The American Bible Society has been compelled to refuse requests for funds for Bible manufacture and distribution in 1921 amounting to many hundred thou-

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sand dollars. Calls have come to this society from all parts of the United States, from Central and South America, from Europe, Asia and Africa, and from the islands of the sea.

The Bible is the only book for which there is such a demand, and naturally so, for it is THE BOOK of all books. The Bible society just mentioned is looking forward to the securing of a five-million-dollar annual budget for the prosecution of its work. The British and Foreign Bible Society is doing a vast amount of work in giving the Book to the world, and yet the demand is not met. The Bible is adapted to every condition of mankind in every land under the sun. It is at home in the city and in the country; among raw heathen and among the cultured; in the homes of the rich and in the homes of the poor; in lumber camps and in mining camps; in military camps and in industrial cen-

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ters, and everywhere, in times of adversity and in times of prosperity. It is the Book for all nations, for all classes and for all times. It is the Book that leaves material improvement, moral uplifting and spiritual life in the train of its hearty reception. Any effort to put the Bible aside will result in inestimable loss, but its whole-souled reception will result in inestimable good.

This is the Book we study in our Sunday-schools, as well as in our private and family devotions, and as a treasury of truth it is inexhaustible. Its study, when carefully and properly pursued, will make one wise unto salvation, “perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:15, 17).

I

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOOK

THE Bible declares itself to be the Word of God. Over and over again we read in the Pentateuch, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,” and in the prophets, “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying.” It is not stating the whole truth to say that the Bible *contains* the word of God, for the Bible *is* the word of God. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1: 21). The words of Jesus Himself make up a large part of the four Gospels. The claims that the Scriptures make

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that they are the word of God, cannot with any show of reason be denied.

It is interesting to note the words of a great scholar and lifelong student of the Scriptures, Origen, who lived in the third century of the Christian age. With regard to the Gospels, as we now have them, and the other books of the New Testament, he says, "They are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven..... Matthew sounds first with his priestly trumpet in his Gospel; Mark also, and Luke and John, sounded with their priestly trumpets. Peter likewise sounds aloud with the two trumpets of his Epistles, James also, and Jude; and John sounds again with his trumpet in his Epistles and the Revelation, and Luke also, once more, relating the actions of

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the apostles. Last of all (in his list of books) comes Paul, and, sounding with the trumpet of his fourteen Epistles, he threw down to the foundations the walls of Jericho, and all the engines of idolatry, and the schemes of the philosophers."

In the fourth century a minister, Pamphilus, learned and wealthy, made a collection of all the Christian literature that he could gather. Upon his death he gave this library to the church at Cæsarea, in Palestine, his home, for the use of Eusebius, the great church historian. Pamphilus copied with his own hand most of the works of Origen. "Out of this large and rare material Eusebius wrote his history of the church during the preceding centuries, and authenticates the inspired books

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which had been in use from the beginning. He includes all found in our present canon and no others." It is not the purpose of this brief work to enter into a discussion as to the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, but the words of Origen are here introduced since they come down to us as a clear statement from the early Christian church, and show clearly the esteem in which the Scriptures were then held and the confidence with which they were accepted.

The authority of the Book is shown by the harmony of its parts. It must be borne in mind that it was written during a period of more than fifteen centuries by about forty different writers, in places remote from one another, and yet the finest consistency

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and agreement exist among all its parts. This is a remarkable fact in view of the great and almost numberless changes that took place in social, national and religious affairs during those centuries. The books of the Bible are interrelated and the Old Testament and the New are necessary to each other. The old Latin couplet is expressive :

"Novum Testamentum in Veteri latet ;
Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet."

"The New Testament is in the Old concealed ;
The Old Testament is in the New revealed."

The nature of the subjects treated in the Book and the manner of their treatment indicate its authority. Philosophies, ancient and modern, have attempted to solve the mystery of the origin of matter and their conclusions have been various and fanciful, as fan-

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ciful indeed as that of those who declared that the earth was supported on the shoulders of the giant Atlas. When asked to tell how Atlas was supported, they declared that he stood on the back of a tortoise, but they were at a loss to tell upon what the tortoise rested. The Book takes up the subject of creation in the most simple and matter-of-fact manner possible and brings to us all the information we need on the subject. There is no complex argument nor is there any indefiniteness in the account. "God said," "God made" and "God spake" are expressions employed in the story of creation.

The Book considers the subject of sin in its beginnings upon the race of man, shows its consequences and points to a remedy. It treats of the future state

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with all the positiveness with which the present might be discussed. Nothing that man needs to know for his highest well-being is left out. All that is essential to his present and eternal interests is revealed. He might desire to know more about the future than is revealed, but the Book does not undertake to gratify curiosity. What is revealed, however, comes to us with divine authority.

The remarkable preservation of the Scriptures declares in favor of their authority. The Book has come down to us substantially as God gave it to the world through those whom He inspired to write it. The enemies of God and of the Bible have attempted again and again to destroy it, and have prophesied that it would be a rejected and

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forgotten thing in a few years, but every such prophecy has thus far failed and will ever fail. The ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures vary somewhat in minor details, but with all these various readings, there are none that affect a doctrine that is vital to man's salvation. This uncorrupted preservation of the Book may well be looked upon as miraculous, and may be regarded as showing its authority.

No other ancient literature has come down to us as well authenticated as this. The Jewish scribes were most scrupulous in their copying of the Scriptures, taking care that no word, no letter or part of a letter should be omitted or changed. When various sects came to exist, each was watchful to see that no other made any changes

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in the Scriptures. We accept the works of the ancient Greek and Latin writers as being theirs, as claimed, but upon less evidence than we possess respecting the writings of the Old Testament and of the New.

The Bible is the book for all ages and for all lands and for all peoples and has been preserved through the ages, and will be preserved to the end of time. Profane history over and over again confirms the history given to us in the Book we study, and ancient ruins with their numerous inscriptions declare for the authority of the Scriptures.

The geography of the Book fits the lands involved. We read of this city, that mountain, that brook, that river and that sea, and in the geography of Bible lands we find the city, the moun-

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tain, the brook, the river and the sea. Years ago there was a bolt of cloth stolen from a factory in England. A quiet search was made in an effort to locate the stolen property. Shortly afterward a bolt of cloth was found that appeared to answer the description of the stolen goods, yet no witness was found that could positively identify it. It was a moral certainty that it was the stolen bolt of cloth, but the proof was lacking. At length a workman in the factory thought of a test that would show whether or not the cloth found was the missing bolt. In the factory the cloth, after it had been woven, dressed and shrunk, was hung up to dry. It was hung by its selvage upon hooks in the walls of the drying-room. The workman said, "We will try hanging

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the cloth on the hooks to see if the holes in the selvage correspond with the hooks about the room.’’ It was found that the holes in the selvage fitted exactly the hooks in the wall. For every hole there was a corresponding hook. Therefore it was shown to the satisfaction of all that the stolen bolt had been recovered.

If we spread the records of the Book over Bible lands, we shall find a pleasing and most remarkable correspondence between the places mentioned there and actual places in the lands involved. There is mentioned in the Book the Sea of Galilee, and there is the Sea of Galilee in the land. We read of Mount Carmel, and there it stands in its beauty and strength. Jerusalem, “beautiful for situation,” is described in the Book,

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and it stands on hills and is surrounded by hills. Yes, the land and the Book are mutually related, and this perfect correspondence declares the authority of the Bible.

As we open this precious Book, we have the assurance that it is of full authority. It is God Himself who is speaking, and He is bringing to us the message that our very natures crave and need. We study its pages with the full confidence that its truths are vital to our present and eternal well-being.

The first manuscript version of the whole Bible in the English language was made by John Wyclif in A. D. 1380. The first printed copy of any portion of the Scriptures in English was made by William Tyndale early in the sixteenth century. Tyndale was burned as a

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martyr for this publication and his last words were, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Following this there was published the Matthews Bible, and in 1536 Coverdale's Bible was published in London. The clergy were ordered to exhort and encourage all to read it. The historian Froude says, "In this act was laid the foundation-stone on which the whole later history of England, civil as well as ecclesiastical, has been reared." A writer on this subject says, "It was a jubilee among the poor of England when, for the first time in the national history, they could listen from Sabbath to Sabbath to 'the sweet and glad tidings of the gospel' without the fear of prisons, the scourge and the stake." "Everybody that could bought the Book and busily read it, or got

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others to read it to them if they could not themselves, and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read."

The Bible has an appeal possessed by no other book, and it fills a place that no other book can fill.

II

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE BOOK

THE Book is superior in its excellence when considered merely as literature. This excellence is recognized by the great authors whose writings we highly prize, for they have made free and copious allusions to Scripture events and truths, and have quoted with great frequency from the sacred Word. The writings of Bacon, Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Longfellow, Bryant and a host of others would be inexpressibly impoverished should all Scripture quotations and allusions be taken away from them.

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These allusions and quotations add both beauty and strength to the masterpieces of literature.

DeQuincey makes a distinction between the literature of wisdom and the literature of power. The literature of wisdom has for its purpose the imparting of information, while the literature of power is designed to move the reader to action. The Book is both these. It gives information obtainable nowhere else. Its truths emanate from God Himself. It is also a literature of power, for it stirs men and women to action as does no other book in all the world. Who can be unmoved by the faith and obedience of Abraham, the integrity of Joseph, the fidelity and courage of Daniel and his companions and by the Sermon on the Mount?

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If one is looking for sublimity and eloquence, he can find these in the utterances of the prophets and of the Master and His apostles. Their words are tipped with fire not kindled on earth. John Milton says, "There are no songs to be compared to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets." Edmund Burke made it a practise to read a chapter from Isaiah before going to the House of Commons because of the inspiration and elevation it gave to his thoughts. Daniel Webster adopted the plan of reading the eighth Psalm, which opens with, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth," and contains the words, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained;

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what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands," and also the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, as the completion of his preparation for delivering his speeches before the United States Senate.

"Doctor Schaff remarks of the Book of Revelation that it surpasses all the other prophetic writings in harmony, elevation, fulness, unity of view, progress of action, majesty of style, and above all, in the direct relation of all parts of the picture to the central figure of the crucified and now glorified Christ, who rules the whole history of

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the world and the church, and is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.” Of this book he says, “In a succession of visions and mysterious allegories it unfolds before the reader the great epochs of the kingdom of God upon earth to the close of its earthly development. Its burden is the comforting truth that the Lord comes, the Lord fights, the Lord conquers and leads His church through tribulation and persecution to certain victory and eternal glory.” He declares that the Book of Revelation was not designed “to gratify idle curiosity concerning the future, but for practical, religious ends.” He says, “Prophecy, in the nature of the case, remains more or less obscure until it is fulfilled. And as the Old Testament became clear only in the New, so the

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Revelation of John can be perfectly understood only in the triumphant and glorified church. Still it has been a book of consolation and hope to the church militant in every age, especially amid her great persecutions and struggles; and it will remain so until the Lord come in glory, and the New Jerusalem come down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. He who cannot lie assures His people, ‘Lo, I come quickly. Amen.’ And His people answer with the holy longing of a bride for her spouse, ‘Yea; come, Lord Jesus.’ ”

John Ruskin called the Bible the one essential part of education. James A. Froude, the English historian, declared that the Book of Job towers above all the other poetry of the world. When

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Charles Dickens was asked to name the most touching story of the world's literature, named the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Samuel Taylor Coleridge says that the richest passage in all literature is the Beatitudes.

Walter W. Moore tells in his little work, "The Indispensable Book," of the Bible's attractiveness in the following incident: Senator Beveridge, of Indiana, and a companion went on a long vacation in the north woods. They were thoroughly tired and needed rest. Proceeding far from human habitations, they camped by a beautiful spring and were pleased with their surroundings. In a few days they felt a strong desire for something to read. The senator's companion expressed this desire and was directed to the magazines they had with

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them, but he said he had read them all. "What is the matter with the Bible?" asked Mr. Beveridge. "Oh," said his companion, "I do not want anything dull." "Why, man," replied the senator, "the Bible has more good reading in it than any other book I know of. What will you have, poetry, adventure, politics, maxims, oratory? for they are all here." He then read from the Book and when he had finished, his companion said he never knew that was in the Bible. He asked for further reading the next day. First one guide and then all the guides listened to these daily readings and became greatly interested.

The excellence of the Book is seen in the range of its subjects. It forms the basis of all just laws. We may study the Ten Commandments and the sum-

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mary we have of these as given by our Lord, and we shall find that they are the embodiment of all righteous principles, as they pertain to the individual, to society and to government. The Pilgrim Fathers brought with them to America the Bible as their choicest treasure, and whatever is good and worth while in this country is due to the presence of, and regard for, the Scriptures. A nation that is founded on principles opposed to the law of God is destined to fall sooner or later. A nation that obeys and reveres God's law will continue and will enjoy prosperity both temporal and spiritual. It has foolishly been thought by some who have been known as statesmen that it was belittling to one to pay much attention to the Book, but the greatest men

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and women of the Christian age have had high respect for it. We honor our Pilgrim Fathers for their reverence for the Bible, and we cannot too highly appreciate their stand for the principles which it inculcates.

Queen Victoria was once asked for an explanation of England's greatness. She unhesitatingly produced a copy of the Scriptures as her reply. She had a great mind and a keen grasp upon the affairs of men and nations. She was ready to recognize the authority of God and of His Word. The nation that accepts and honors the Bible in its administration of the affairs of government and urges its citizens to practise its teachings will be prosperous and a praise in the earth.

Thomas Jefferson was a great char-

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acter in early American history. Although he was inclined to be somewhat skeptical in his religious views, he made this impressive statement: "I always have said and always will say that the studious perusal of the sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands." All its teachings are pure and uplifting. It rebukes selfishness and exhorts to charity; it condemns sin and exalts holiness; it draws the mind from the sordid things of earth and points to the glories of heaven.

Lord Macaulay speaks of "that stupendous work, the English Bible, a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power." The noted Amer-

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ican writer, Charles Dudley Warner, says of the Book, "Wholly apart from its religious or ethical value, the Bible is the one book that no intelligent person, who wishes to come into contact with the world of thought and to share the ideas of the great minds of the Christian era, can afford to be ignorant of." President Schurman, of Cornell University, has this to say: "The Bible is the most important document in the world's history. No man can be wholly uneducated who really knows the Bible, nor can any one be considered a truly educated man who is ignorant of it."

This precious Book has been the solace and support of untold myriads of men, women and children. Its promises have cheered them in the darkest hours that can come to human-

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ity. The great English statesman, William E. Gladstone, said, "If I am asked to name the one great comfort in sorrow, the safe rule of conduct, the true guide of life, I must point to what in the words of a popular hymn is called 'The Old, Old Story,' told in an old, old Book, which is God's best and richest gift to man."

The Bible discloses to man his true character. It has been called a looking-glass, for he who looks carefully into it can see himself as he really is. The disheartened will find that in themselves that is capable of an uplift as they note God's promises to them. They who think of themselves too highly find themselves pictured in the Scriptures to their own humiliation. This Book sets forth human nature in a remarkable light. Samuel Taylor Coleridge says,

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"I know the Bible is inspired because it finds me at greater depths of my being than any other book."

Thomas Carlyle says, "David's life and history, as written in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggles of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, down as into an entire wreck, yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew." In speaking also of the Book of Job, he says, "Noble book; all men's book. It is the oldest statement of the neverending problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in the earth. And

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all in such free, flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic-melody, and repose of reconciliation. So true every way, true eyesight and vision of all things, material things no less than spiritual; the horse—hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? he laughs at the shaking of the spear. Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind! so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars."

Bishop Butler, who died in 1752, said, "To all who take up the oracles of God with integrity and honesty, the Bible will ever possess the peculiarity of meeting every want, and appeasing every difficulty. In its pages every

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longing of our nature, the most superficial and the most profound, will find satisfaction. Here provision has been made alike for the tender susceptibility of the child and the mature intellect of manhood; and whatever shadow our imperfect knowledge may allow for the present to rest upon certain of its statements, the mourner will still find solace in the songs of Zion, and philosophy will drink wisdom from the parables of Galilee. It is true that all difficulties may not have been removed which the enemies of Christianity have started; nevertheless, the marvelous success with which most of them have already been met must convince any fair mind that such as still remain are not insurmountable, and that here, if anywhere, it befits our weakness 'to be

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thankful and to wait.' " Bishop Butler spoke with prophetic vision.

William Wilberforce was an English statesman and philanthropist, and a man who honored the Holy Scriptures. In his dying hour he said to a friend, "Read the Bible; let no religious book take its place. Through all my perplexities and distresses I never read any other book, and I never knew the want of any other. It has been my hourly study; and all my knowledge of the doctrines, and all my acquaintance with the experience and realities of religion, have been derived from the Bible only."

On one occasion when Daniel Webster was commended for his superior eloquence, he said, "If anything I have ever said or written deserves the feeblest encomiums of my fellow country-

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men, I have no hesitation in declaring that for their partiality I am indebted, solely indebted, to the daily and attentive perusal of the Holy Scriptures, the source of all true poetry and eloquence, as well as of all good and all comfort."

John Milton said, "Let others dread and shun the Scriptures for their darkness; I shall wish I may deserve to be reckoned among those who admire and dwell upon them for their clearness."

Said Sir Isaac Newton, "We account the Scriptures of God to be the most sublime philosophy."

Lord Erskine offers this tribute to the Word of God: "My firm belief in the holy Gospel is by no means owing to the prejudices of education, but it arises from the most continued reflections of my riper years and understanding. It

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forms at this moment the great consolation of a life which, as a shadow, must pass away."

M. Guizot, the great French statesman, remarks, "I have read the sacred volumes over and over again; I have perused them in very different dispositions of mind; at one time studying them as great historical documents, at another admiring them as sublime works of poetry. I have experienced an extraordinary impression quite different from either curiosity or admiration. I have felt myself the listener of a language other than that of the chronicler or the poet, and under the influence of a breath issuing from other sources than human."

Sir Walter Scott is said to have written these expressive lines in his Bible:

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“Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries ;
Oh ! happiest they of human race,
To whom our God has given grace
To hear, to read, to fear, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way ;
But better had they ne'er been born
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.”

Rev. B. T. Roberts wrote, “The Bible is a wonderful book. It never ceases to be interesting and instructive. The more we read it, the more we enjoy it. We always find in it something new. It is a field, the fertility of which increases the longer and the more thoroughly it is cultivated. The more there is taken from it, the more it is capable of yielding. It is a mine, which grows richer and richer the deeper it is worked. We lose interest in other books after reading them a few times. It is not so with the Bible. It is the oldest book in the

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world, and yet it is always fresh and new to those who devoutly read it. It was adapted to every period of the world's history in the past; it is especially adapted to our times."

The same writer says, "Salmasius was one of the most learned men of the age of Milton. When ten years old he translated Pindar, and composed Greek and Latin verses. Balzac pronounced him infallible; and the curators of the University of Leyden, of which he was for many years professor, declared that their 'university could no more do without Salmasius than the world without the sun.' Yet this great man said on his death-bed, 'Oh! I have lost a world of time. If one year more were added to my life, it should be spent in reading David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles.' "

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John Wesley was a man strong intellectually as well as spiritually, and he pays this noble tribute to the Holy Scriptures: "I want to know one thing, the way to heaven. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a Book. Oh, give me that Book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it, here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*—a man of one book. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of man, I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read this Book, for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of light—

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Lord, is it not Thy Word? If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Thou 'givest liberally and upbraidest not.' Thou hast said, 'If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do; let me know Thy will. I then search after, and consider parallel passages of Scripture, 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual.' I meditate thereon with all the attention of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God. * * * And what I thus learn, that I teach."

Says Rousseau, "I will confess that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how con-

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temptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and so sublime should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred Personage whose name it records should be Himself a mere man? What sweetness, what purity, in His manner! What sublimity in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! Where is the man, where is the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

Charles H. Spurgeon expressed his thought of the excellence in these brief and impressive words: "There is gold in the rocks which fringe the Pass of

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the Splugen, gold even in the stones which mend the roads, but there is too little of it to be worth extracting. Alas, how like too many books and sermons! Not so the Scriptures, they are much fine gold; their very dust is precious."

The Bible is an inexhaustible treasure. Sir Walter Scott says of it, "The most learned, acute and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct the conduct and illustrate the work of God and the ways of men; and he will at last leave the world confessing that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his

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own ignorance, and of their inestimable value."

The Book we study is excellent in its origin, excellent in its scope, excellent in its purpose, excellent in its contents, excellent in its sublimity, and excellent in its effects upon humanity.

III

THE POWER OF THE BOOK

THE word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." These words may be applied most appropriately to the Book we study. While it comes to us with full authority, written by those whom its several parts declare to have been their respective authors, and worthy of full acceptance because of its authenticity, and it comes

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to us with superior excellence of literary merit and of scope and sublimity of subjects treated, it also comes to us with a power that is far above the merely human. It is, as De Quincey says, "literature of power." That there is power in it is plainly seen by comparing the different nations of the earth. In those countries where the Bible is not known, vice, ignorance, superstition and cruelty prevail. In countries that profess to have the Book, but where this precious Volume is not possessed and read by the people, there is not only spiritual blindness, but there is also a lack of material prosperity. In lands where the Bible is freely circulated and is in the hands of the people, the highest type of civilization exists and strong religious sentiment prevails.

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The Bible has power to search out and condemn sin. It deals with truths that penetrate to the inmost recesses of the spiritual nature. It is far more than a treatise on ethics. It goes to the center of the region of choices and motives. It does not make excuses for sin, but condemns it. It goes still further and points to the remedy for sin. Professor James says that in all men there is a sense of wrongness and a seeking for deliverance from it. The solution of the difficulty is a proper connection with the higher powers. The Bible points out the cause of the uneasiness and the way to a connection with the only power that can give the desired relief.

That the Word of God has in it the element of power is made evident in the figure used by the prophet Jeremiah.

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“Is not thy word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces” (Jer. 23:29)? The hammer is an instrument to be used where a great amount of force is necessary. The hammer alone is powerless, but it becomes a powerful instrument in the hands of a strong man. With it one can break the rock, fashion the iron or drive the nail. The Word of God is like a hammer, when, wielded by one who is moved by the Holy Spirit, it strikes upon the heart and conscience of the hearer or when the Holy Spirit takes the Word and applies it directly to the heart. Enormous pressure would be needed to drive a nail into a plank, but a man with a hammer is able to do it with little effort. A great amount of steady pressure would be needed to

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crush the rock, but a lad can break it with a hammer. The Word of God has again and again been applied by the Spirit to hearts that were like adamant, and they have been broken. Common indeed is the experience that a portion of God's Word has fastened itself upon the mind and heart, and caused such spiritual concern, that the person has sought the Lord with true earnestness and found Him. That Word has had a saving effect upon even the hardest hearts.

In the foregoing passage from Jeremiah, the prophet uses the term fire to represent the Word of God. Fire is one of the most powerful agencies in the natural world. It breaks, it melts, it consumes. When uncontrolled, it is most destructive. When it is properly

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directed and controlled, it is of untold benefit to man. The Word of God, as a fire applied by the Holy Spirit, melts the heart, rendering it capable of being molded, and it consumes the impurities of the nature. As the fire and the hammer soften and break the rock, so the Word, directed by the Spirit, makes the heart right and capable of fully loving God and of rendering acceptable service to Him.

Another figure used to represent the Word of God is that of a lamp. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). One cannot appreciate the blessing of light unless one has been groping unsuccessfully in darkness. Under such circumstances light is a most welcome gift, showing the dangers and illuminating

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the desired and safe path. The Bible sheds pure light upon the pathway of life. It reveals the evil of the heart and the sins of the life. It shows the way of escape from the sinful life and points clearly to the way of holiness, the way that leads from the wilderness of sin to God's eternal glory. The psalmist gives us the figure of himself walking in uncertainty only as light shone upon the path before him. But for the light that shines upon us from the Word of the Lord, our path would be dark, and we should stumble and fall into the pit of eternal night and despair. Spurgeon says, "We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into the darkness; let us never venture there without the light-giving Word, lest we slip with our feet. Each

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man should use the Word of God personally, practically and habitually, that he may see his way and what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the Word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. Having no fixed lamps in Eastern towns, in olden times each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of ordure that defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark world: we should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it.”

D. L. Moody relates this incident to illustrate the illuminating power of divine truth: “When I was going through the land of Goshen in Egypt, a

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few years ago, as I came near the city of Alexandria, I saw the strangest sight I had ever seen. The heavens were lighted up with a new kind of light, and there seemed to be flash after flash; I could not understand it. I had heard that the Khedive had died, and that a new Khedive was coming into power. I found later that England had sent over some war vessels, and the moment that darkness came on, they had turned their searchlights upon that city; it was almost as light as noonday. Every street was lighted up, and I do not suppose that ten men could have met in any part of Alexandria without being discovered by that search-light. May God turn His search-light upon us, and see if there be any evil way in us."

The Word of God is called a sword.

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“And take * * * the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). The sword is of so great account in warfare that it has come to represent all the weapons used in battle, as is seen in the adage, “The pen is mightier than the sword.” The fact that Paul by the Spirit makes use of this term indicates that the Christian is engaged in a conflict. He has a wily and stubborn foe to overcome, and his chief weapon of offense is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Jesus Himself used this weapon when He was assaulted by Satan in the great temptation in the wilderness. As the enemy was defeated then, so the child of God is provided with the sword of the Spirit, a weapon so powerful and effective that Satan can not stand against it. Gur-

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nall, a preacher of the seventeenth century, said, "The sword was ever esteemed a most necessary part of the soldier's furniture, and therefore hath obtained a more general use in all ages and among all nations than any other weapon. Most nations have some particular weapons proper to themselves; but few or none come into the field without a sword. A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But above all these, absurd is it for one to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the Word of God, and some skill to use this weapon. The usual name in Scripture for war is the sword, 'I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth,' that is, I will send war. And this because the

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sword is the weapon of most universal use in war, and also that whereby the greatest execution is done in battle. Now such a weapon is the Word of God in the Christian's hand. By the edge of this his enemies fall, and his great exploits are done."

The power of the Word of the Lord is further shown by what Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63), and from what God had long before said to Israel, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. 8:3), and later quoted by our Lord (Luke 4:4). There is life, and therefore energy, in the Word of God. The entrance of that Word giveth life (Psa. 119:130). The

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Bible is a power in that it points the way to spiritual and eternal life. He who receives the Word and feeds upon it will become more and more enlarged in his spiritual life. It is impossible to increase in spiritual life without receiving and meditating upon God's Word.

The Book we study has the power to lead to the conquest of sin. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11). Where the Word has its designed effect, the power of sin is broken. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7). Says C. H. Spurgeon, "The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, 'the soul' is moved and renewed. The great

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means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry, the more likely are we to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls." When the Word is hidden in the heart, a moral and spiritual state is produced in which there is an end of sinning. That Word points to Jesus Christ through whom alone sin is conquered. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. It well becomes us to be very familiar with the contents of the Book, to have its promises, warnings and directions well fixed in our minds and hearts. No other so-called sacred book has power over sin or points to a remedy for the disease of sin.

There is power in the Book to make

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the vicious good and peaceable. That heathen man recognized this fact, who became alarmed when his dog chewed and swallowed a leaf that had been torn from a Bible. He deplored the fact, for he feared that his dog would be useless in guarding him from his enemies or in pursuing game. He thought the portion of the Word he had swallowed would make him altogether too gentle and peaceable for any use. This heathen man had evidently seen the effects of Christianity upon those of his people who had accepted it.

There is power even in a single sentence of the Book we study. A native of India on the coast of Malabar was anxious about his soul and had made inquiry of various priests and devotees how he might make atonement for his

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sins, for they were a burden upon him and he longed to be free from them. At length he was told to drive blunted spikes through the soles of his sandals and to walk a distance of four hundred eighty miles wearing these sandals with his naked feet upon the blunted spike-points. The poor man was so desirous of getting rid of his sins that he at once undertook this terribly painful journey. He was told by the priest that if through loss of blood or weakness of body he was obliged to halt, he might stop to rest or to allow his wounds to heal. One day while he was resting under a large shady tree, where the gospel was sometimes preached, one of the missionaries came to hold a service. As the missionary preached, the poor heathen listened and heard the words, "The blood of Je-

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sus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." While the missionary was preaching, the man arose and took off his sandals and cried aloud, "This is what I want," and he became a saved man and a witness to the saving power of Jesus.

The Book is effective in convincing of sin and in leading sinful and convicted souls to the only relief to be found anywhere. Many years ago a Chinaman named Ting became distressed over his sins. One day as he was passing along the way, he heard the voice of a Christian missionary saying, "Jesus can save from all sin." Ting's interest was at once aroused and he followed the missionary to his home. He asked him what he meant when he said that Jesus could save from all sin. The missionary saw that the China-

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man was in earnest about his soul and he explained to him the words that had gripped his heart, and taught him how to find the Lord. Ting immediately sought in earnest and was clearly saved. The young convert was full of joy, and his interest in his fellow countrymen led him to preach the Word to them. One day as he was preaching on the street that Jesus Christ was the only hope of salvation, his hearers became enraged and stoned him, leaving him for dead. He was loaded into a cart, drawn to the city wall and thrown over it. His life was still in him and after a while he regained consciousness. He went to a brook and washed the blood from his face, and then went back to the place where he had been stoned and preached

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again that Jesus Christ could save from all sin. This time he was arrested and sentenced to receive two thousand lashes upon his bare back. The punishment left him so lacerated that his enemies said he would never preach again. The doctors said he could not live. When his friends came to comfort him, he told them that if he ever got out of that, he would go back to the same place and preach the gospel to his people. He recovered and did as he said he would, and hundreds were converted. The Word had found a place in his heart, and had made him invincible as a preacher of its truths.

The Word of God arrests the attention of men and is so tenacious in its hold that it is not easily shaken off. The following incident in the life of Mr.

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Moody, as related by himself, is a case in point: "A lady came to me once when I was preaching some years ago in a western city, and asked me if I would not talk to her husband; that when she spoke to him on religion, he paid no attention, and she might as well talk to a post. I told her she better pray God to convince and convict him. They used to come to the meetings together, and often as I was speaking, I would see her eyes close and her lips move, and I knew she was praying God to convict him. They came about a dozen times during the winter. One night after he had taken his seat, I noticed that his eyes looked as if he had been weeping. I gave out one hymn after another, all bearing on the atonement, as that was the subject for the sermon.

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When I gave out the text, ‘The precious blood,’ I saw him cover his face and bow his head, and he fairly wept aloud. He followed me into the inquiry room after the meeting was over, and said to me, ‘Mr. Moody, this has been the most extraordinary day in my life. When I got up this morning the words “precious blood” came into my mind. When I went down town to my place of business, the words, “precious blood,” were ringing in my mind, and all during the day it was, “precious blood, precious blood.” They followed me here to-night, and when you gave out your text, “The precious blood,” I could hardly stay in my seat. I cannot understand it.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I can;’ and after talking with him for a while, he accepted Christ then and there. He is now dead,

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but when I was passing through that city years after, I asked about him, and they told me in all the years he had lived, he had never lost his hold on Christ."

The power of the Book is seen, not only in the transformation of the hearts and lives of those who receive it, but also in the change that takes place in communities where it is accepted. John G. Paton was divinely called to labor in the New Hebrides whose inhabitants were cannibals. His friends endeavored to dissuade him from his purpose, but to no avail. He had received the Word in his heart and he was called to dispense it to the savages of the South Sea Islands. His life story is a story of Christian heroism. He endured privation and opposition. His life was many

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times threatened, but he was miraculously preserved. The Word was received by the cannibals of the islands and they became gentle and loving followers of Jesus Christ. Of one of the islands it has been said, "When Mr. Paton went there for the first time, there was not one who was not a cannibal, but after a few years there was not one who was not a Christian."

The Earl of Rochester was a pronounced rationalist. He seemed beyond the reach of the influence of Christianity. In some providential way his attention was directed to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He decided that he would read it carefully with a passive and open mind. He read the chapter through and was deeply impressed with it. He read it again and again and be-

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lieved that Jesus Christ was the only person that could answer to the description there given. The Word of God took such a hold upon him that he became a true and devoted Christian, and he lived the Christian life the remainder of his days.

Said Joseph Cook, "Do you know a book that you would put under your pillow when you lie dying? Very well, that is the book you should study while living. There is only one such Book."

The Bible has elevated the standard of living wherever it has been received. Where the Book is not known, woman is considered an inferior being and is subjected to servitude and dishonor. Her children are taught to look down upon her. She lives a life of drudgery. She is simply suffered to exist. In these

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lands the children are neglected and the unfortunate are uncared for. When the Bible is brought in and its teachings accepted, woman is accorded her rightful place and treated with proper deference. Children are considered worthy of receiving attention. The sick and other unfortunate persons are cared for. The Bible teaches us our duty with respect to the weak, the poor and the distressed of every class. The Book is designed to accord to humanity its rights, and will accomplish its purpose wherever its authority is recognized and its teachings obeyed.

We ought reverently to thank God for the Bible. From its pages we learn about God and His love for us. We learn what is our true state and what

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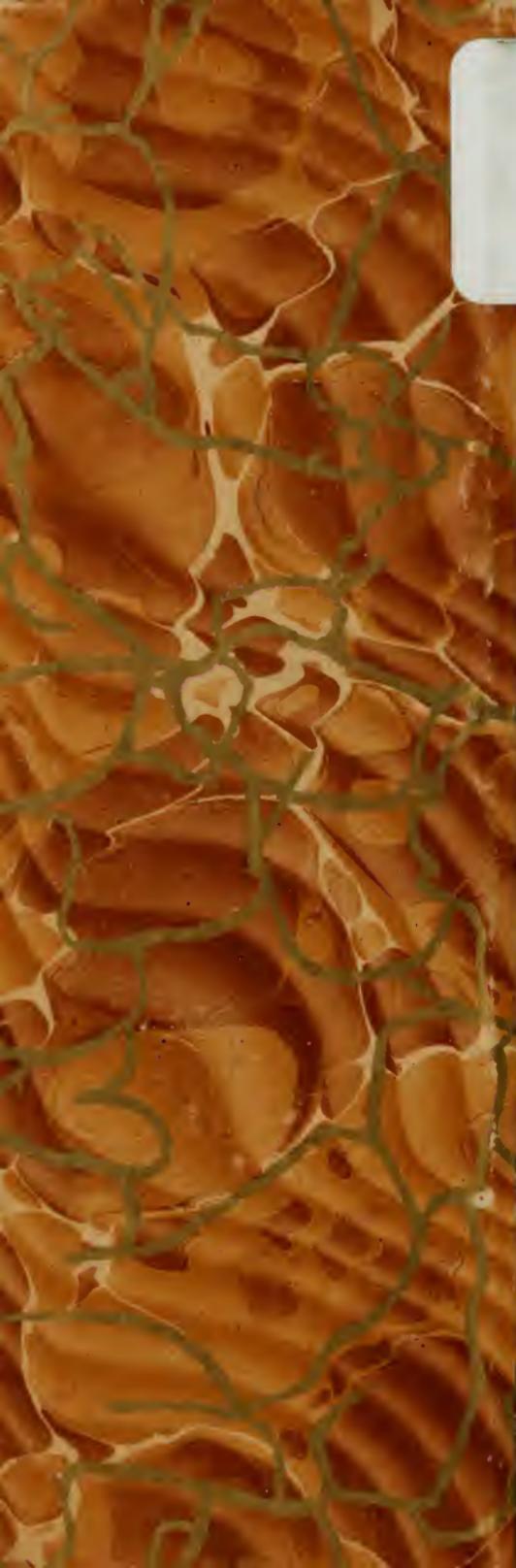
are our needs. We learn the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. We learn how to live the life that is useful and happy. We learn the blessedness of service for others. We learn about the future life and how to attain to the state of bliss prepared for God's people. The best attainable for us in this life and in the life to come is clearly and impressively brought to us in the Book we study.



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