

CHAPTER V : THE WORD OF GOD (THE HOLY SCRIPTURES)

Christianity is the religion of a Book. Without this Book Christianity cannot be perpetuated. Wherever this Book has not gone there is no evidence of anything Christian. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, and people cannot believe in Him of whom they have not heard: *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Rom. 10:14). And we are shut up to this Book for news about Jesus Christ. This Book is the Bible, and, in its original, is God's word to us today. Efface the teachings of the Bible from human thought and Christianity passes into oblivion. The Bible is an infallible Book, sufficient and authoritative in all matters of religious faith and practice: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (II Tim. 3:16,17).

"Bring me the Book!" cried Sir Walter Scott on his death bed. "What Book?" he was asked. And this genius of the Scottish people replied, "There is but one Book; bring me the Bible!" When Queen Victoria was asked the secret of England's greatness, she took down a copy of the scriptures and said, "This Book explains the power of Great Britain."

Scripture vs. Tradition

The word for Scripture in the Greek is "graphe" and means "a writing," or "anything written." The expression "holy scriptures" occurs only twice in the New Testament: *"(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)"* (Rom. 1:2); *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (II Tim. 3:15); but wherever the Scriptures are referred to, the Divine writings are meant. The usual reference is to the Old Testament writings, but Peter speaks of Paul's epistles as Scripture: *"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction"* (II Peter 3:16).

The Scriptures of our Lord's day were the writings of the Old Testament. The Bible of that time was the Septuagint, which was the Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament. To our Lord and the apostles the Old Testament was the word of God. This was the Book Christ challenged the Jews to search: *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39). This was the Book He meant when He said *"If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;"* (John 10:35). This

was the Book the Bereans searched to see if what Paul preached was true. *"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).

Our Savior charged that the "traditions of men" were against the Scriptures. The Scriptures were the verbally inspired writings of God; the traditions of men were the teachings handed down by the Jewish elders. When the scribes and Pharisees charged Jesus with transgressing "the traditions of the elders," He turned on them with this question: *"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"* (Matt.15:2,3). Before Saul of Tarsus became a believer in Jesus Christ: He was *"exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers"* (Gal. 1:14). But when he became a believer he renounced the traditions and turned to the Scriptures. There are many traditions which need to be given up today, things handed down that are contrary to Scripture.

Revelation and Inspiration

These two words must not be confused. The word of God came to the prophets; that was revelation. Inspiration is the method by which the word came through them to us. It is by inspiration that the revelation to them became a revelation to us. Without inspiration we would have no revelation, for the word of God does not come today as it came to men of old. This inspiration has given us a written revelation. God's word which we have today is in the form or nature of a Book, the Bible.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (II Tim. 3:16). This does not say the prophets were inspired; inspiration has to do with the words; the words of scripture came from God; they were God breathed. It is not our purpose to enter the controversy about theories of inspiration, except to say that we believe in the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, which means that the very words were selected by God, and the men spake as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit. They were not given conceptions or ideas of truth; they were given words of truth and directed by the Spirit to put those words of truth in writing.

The human element in the production of the Bible is fully recognized, the Book came to us through human agency, but the human element was not allowed to hazard the accuracy or infallibility of the Book. The Bible is as accurate and infallible as if God had written it without the human agent. *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were*

moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21).

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). The Old Testament is the Divine record of what God said at different times and in different ways to Israel through their prophets. The New Testament is the Divine record of God speaking in the Son. The comparison between the prophets and Christ is to point a contrast. God was using the prophets to give His word to Israel; but in Christ it was God Himself speaking. The prophets were many; the Son is one. The prophets were servants; the Son is the Lord. The prophets were temporary; the Son abideth for ever. The prophets spoke the word; Christ is the Word.

The Bible is in two editions, commonly called the Old and the New Testaments. They are not two but one book. The Old Testament is the New enfolded; the New Testament is the Old unfolded. In the Old Testament the New is concealed; in the New Testament the Old is revealed. The Old is patent in the New; the New is latent in the Old. The Old is prediction; the New is fulfillment. The two Testaments have the same Author: God; they have the same subject: Christ. The crimson thread runs through the whole Bible. You can begin anywhere and, preach Jesus. In both Testaments it is recorded that the Lord said: *"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me" (Ps. 40:7); "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).* And in Rev 19:10: *"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* Martin Luther quaintly compared the two testaments to the two men who brought the branch with the cluster of grapes from the promised land. They were both bearing the same fruit; but the one in front did not see it, but knew what he was carrying. The other saw both the fruit and the man who was helping him. The prophets who came before Jesus testified of Him, although they did not see Him; and we who live since He came, see both Him and them.

Arguments that the Bible is the Word of God

1. There is a presumption in its favor. Man needs a revelation from God, and if the Bible is not this revelation we have none. To be sure there are the sacred books of other religions, but they are like the gods they witness to, and are obviously not the revelation of the true and living God. Man needs the kind of revelation we have in the Bible. There is a revelation of God in nature, but this revelation is inadequate; it does not cover enough subjects. Nature reveals His eternal power and Deity, but has nothing to say about His moral qualities. Nature tells us there is a God, but it does

not tell us what He is. A savage on an island far removed from civilization, finding a watch, might reach the conclusion that it was made by man, but he could not, by examining the watch, learn anything about the character of the maker. And man cannot learn the character of the Creator through the study of geology, biology, and astronomy. The Bible makes no effort to prove the existence of God, but it goes to great lengths in telling us what God is. He is revealed in His mode of existence and in His many moral perfections.

Man is in darkness about himself. He needs a written revelation to tell him what he is, whence he came, and, whither he is bound. The Bible answers every question concerning the eternal welfare of the human soul. It convicts every man of sin and tells him how to be saved. Yes, there is a presumption in favor of the Bible. Man needs a revelation; God is able to give it, and the Bible is the kind of revelation man needs. The Bible satisfies the thirsty soul.

2. The Bible claims to be the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). If the Bible is not what it claims to be it is a bad book. It is utterly inconsistent to extol the Bible as a good book, and at the same time deny its infallibility. All through the Bible runs the expression, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" This expression or its equivalent is used fully two thousand times in the Old Testament.

3. The testimony of Christ argues for the authenticity of the Bible. The Old Testament was in existence in His day, and He accepted it and quoted it as the word of God. The very book most frequently attacked by the critics (the book of Deuteronomy) was the book from which He made every quotation when tempted by Satan: "*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that 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); "*Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah*" (Deut. 6:16); "*Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name*" (Deut. 6:13), and compare with: Luke 4:4-12: "*And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of*

God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

4. The uniqueness of the Bible attests its Divine origin. It is different from all other books. To drink at this fountain of Truth is to taste the difference. It is unique in its teaching about God, about creation, about man, about sin, and about salvation. It has been said that man could not have written such a book if he would, and he would not if he could. Any honest man, who knows much about the Bible, will readily admit that it cannot possibly be a human production.

5. The frankness with which this Book deals with its heroes and authors, gives abundant evidence that it is the word of God. Human biographies give only the bright and best side of a man's life. They extol his virtues and praise his achievements, but say little or nothing about his weak points. But the characters of the Bible are painted in the colors of truth. The Bible does not whitewash.

6. The wonderful unity of the Bible is an argument for its inspiration. This is a miracle within itself. Penned on two continents, written in three languages, its composition and compilation extending through the slow progress of sixteen centuries, having about forty different authors; parts of it written in tents, palaces, dungeons, in cities and deserts; written in times of danger and in seasons of ecstatic joy; among its writers were judges, priests, kings, prophets, prime ministers, herdsmen, scribes, soldiers, physicians, and fishermen; yet in spite of these varying circumstances, conditions, and workmen, the Bible is one Book. It holds together. There is affinity one part for the other. The more this truth is pondered the more amazing is the Bible.

"Imagine forty persons of different nationalities, possessing various degrees of musical culture, visiting the organ of some great cathedral and at long intervals of time, and without any collusion whatever, striking sixty-six different notes, which when combined yielded the theme of the grandest oratorio ever heard: would it not show that behind these forty different men there was one presiding mind, one great Tone-Master? As we listen to some great orchestra, with its immense variety of instruments playing their different parts, but producing melody and harmony, we realize that at the back of these many musicians there is the personality and genius of the composer. And when we enter the halls of the Divine Academy and listen to the heavenly choirs singing the Song of Redemption, all in perfect accord and unison, we know that it is God Himself who has written the music and put this song into their mouths"(A. W. Pink).

7. Fulfilled prophecies give testimony to the Divine origin of the Bible. Prophecy is the foretelling of events before they come to pass. This is the acid test of Divine revelation. God's appeal to fulfilled prophecy is made all through the Bible: *"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if*

the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22); "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together" (Isa. 41:21-23); "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:19-21). Men may make some general predictions about the future, but the Bible contains hundreds of prophecies, which have been literally fulfilled hundreds of years after they were written.

(1) Prophecies about Christ. He is the one great subject of prophecy: *"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10); "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). Micah predicted His birthplace: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Isaiah said his mother would be a virgin: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). We have many things about His death predicted in Psalm 22:1-22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my*

mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee," and Isaiah 53:1-12: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." And in

Psalm 16:10: "*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*" we have His resurrection foretold.

(2) Prophecies about the Jews. These like the prophecies about Christ, are too many to enumerate. Frederick the Great once demanded of one of his marshals, who was a devout believer, proof of the truth of the Bible in one word. "The Jew," was the laconic, unanswerable reply. The destruction of their royal city, Jerusalem, was foretold years in advance. "*And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city*" (Matt. 22:1-7); Matt. 24:1,2: "*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*" and Luke 21:5,6: "*And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* Read the account of the destruction of Jerusalem by Josephus, who was with Titus in this campaign and afterwards wrote the history of it. The wandering Jew has long been a proverb in human history, but it was a Divine prophecy a long time before.

(3) Prophecies about Babylon. "*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged*" (Isa. 13:19-22); "*For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for*

the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 14:22,23); "Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations" (Jer. 50:45-46). Of all the cities in prophecy apart from Jerusalem, Babylon figures most prominently. Babylon is mentioned in Genesis and in Revelation. This city is Divinely threatened through Isaiah; at great length through Jeremiah, and there are further threatenings through John in the book of Revelation. It would be interesting and profitable for the student, by the use of concordance, to read all the Bible says about Babylon.

(4) One of the most interesting bits of prophecy is that concerning Josiah, the boy king of Judah, who reigned from 637-608 B.C. When Jeroboam stood by his altar at Bethel to burn incense, an unknown prophet of God came out of Judah *"And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (I Kings 13:2). The date of this prophecy was 975 BC. Here is the prediction of the birth, and name, and deed of a later king of Judah, which took place three and one-half centuries later. The fulfillment is recorded in II Kings 23:15,16: "Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words". (II Kings 23:15,16). The fulfillment took place 624 BC, or 351 years after the prophecy was spoken.*

Some General Characteristics of the Bible As a Divine Revelation

1. It is a religious Book. It is not a textbook on natural science, but a revelation of moral and saving truth. It was not written to tell men how to get on here, but to tell them how to prepare for the hereafter.
2. The Bible is an open Book. Its truths are not veiled in scientific language, but are given in the popular language of the people. If the Bible had been written in the scientific language of the first century it would have been out of date in the twentieth century. If it had been written in the

language of the twentieth century nobody could have understood it until a few years ago. If written in scientific language only the scholars could understand it. The Bible was not written for scholars but for men. It is the people's Book. It was delivered to the saints, not to the pope, or priest, or cleric. If the gospel is veiled the veil is not on the Book but on the human heart. The best qualification for understanding it is a sincere and honest and Spirit-enlightened mind.

3. The Bible is a practical Book. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*" (II Tim 3:16). The value of the Bible is beyond human appraisal. This book came from God and takes us to God. I know it came from God because it treats the subjects beyond the human intellect. The Bible shows the way to God, and how to become righteous before his Holy law. It is a manual of life and conduct. It was not given to adorn a table, but to direct a life. Read this Book to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. As another has said, "know it in the head, store it in the heart, show it in the life, and sow it in the world."

4. The Bible is an immortal Book. All other books die. It can be said of the Bible as was said of Christ: "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth*" (Ps. 110:3). Time writes no wrinkles on the brow of the eternal Word.

The Bible is the world's best seller and at the same time the most hated of all books. Every weapon from the arsenal of hell has been used against it. All the strategists of Satan's empire have collaborated in an effort to destroy it. But the Bible is a living and indestructible Book. It has survived the fires of pagan and papal Rome, and the sophistries of all opposing philosophers. It triumphed over the arguments of Ingersoll, the ridicule of Voltaire, and the reasonings of Tom Paine. "*For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven*" (Ps. 119:89). The Bible is like the bush which Moses saw burning but not consumed, for God was in it. It is like the anvil that wears out all the hammers.

"Yes, like a solid anvil the sacred Scripture stands,
And fiercely is it beaten by unbeliever's hands;
With noise and show of learning they make a large display,
But, like the blacksmith's hammer they wear themselves away."

5. The Bible is an expensive Book. The cost to us is not much. We enter a book store and ask for a Bible; we lay down the price, one dollar, two dollars, or ten dollars as the case may be. But is that the cost of the Bible? God in providential mercy has made the costliest of all books cheap to us. We estimate the value of an article by the cost of producing it. The Bible is a costly Book in its human aspect. Men sank their lives in medieval monasteries to make copies of it for future

generations. Then there was the cost to martyrs who laid down their lives for love of the truth when pope or pagan would try to sweep away every copy of it. The Bible also represents a cost to God. From Genesis to Revelation it is written in the blood of His Son. The Old Testament is the finger of prophecy pointing forward to Calvary; the New Testament is the finger of history pointing back to Calvary. To write the message of love we have in the Bible God broke the heart of His Son on the cross. In olden times the word of God was inscribed on parchment which was the skin of sheep and today it is written on paper. The parchment speaks of the Lamb slain that its skin might clothe and its blood might atone, and that its skin might also bear the news of gracious love to sinners. The paper made from wood crushed into pulp reminds us that the Tree of Life was cut down and crushed on Calvary, crushed and marred beyond all the sons of men, that He might bear the glad tidings of God's love.

Metaphors or Symbols of the Word

It is both interesting and instructive to study the symbols or figures under which the Word of God is set forth.

1. It is likened to a lamp or light: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path...The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple"* (Ps. 119:105,130); *"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:"* (Prov. 6:23). The word of God is to man morally what a lamp is physically. This world is in a state of moral darkness; ignorant of how to become righteous before God, but God's word is a light shining in a dark place, and every believer delights to say, *"The entrance of Thy words giveth light"* (Ps. 119:130).
2. The Bible is a mirror: *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (II Cor. 3:18); *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed"* (Jas. 1:25). This cannot be said of any other book. I look into the Bible and see myself, not as I think I am, but as I really am, guilty and ruined: *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"* (Rom. 3:19). The Bible is a mouth stopper. The least way to stop a man's boasting is to have him look at himself in the mirror of God's holy word.
3. The word of God is a laver or wash basin: *"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"* (Eph. 5:26). The very Book that reveals moral dirt also provides for

washing. *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word"* (Ps.119:9). *"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"* (John 15:3).

4. The Bible is represented as food: *"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23:12). Every man by nature is a prodigal away from the Father's house and perishing with hunger; in the word of God we find the gospel table laden with soul satisfying food. There is milk for babes, and strong meat for men. There is bread for the hungry and honey for those who can take the sweets. The fat soul is the one who feeds upon the word of God.

5. The word of God is compared to a hammer: *"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* (Jer. 23:29). The best way to break stony hearts is to quote Scripture. There is no heart too hard for the word when wielded by the Spirit. It caused the hard hearted jailer to cry out, *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30).

6. The word is called the sword of the Spirit: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"* (Eph. 6:17). It is a perfect weapon with which to resist Satan. And the Holy Spirit knows how to use it in cutting the sinner to the heart and killing his self-righteousness. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12).

7. The word is likened to seed: *"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God"* (Lk. 8:11). In spiritual as in natural farming the seed must be sown. It is the commission of our Lord to sow this world down with the word of God. We must sow beside all waters, and at all seasons. *"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good"* (Ecc. 11:6). *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Ps. 126:6).

"Say, Christian, wouldst thou thrive

In knowledge of thy Lord?

Against no Scripture ever strive,

But tremble at His word.

"Revere the sacred page; To injure any part

Betrays with blind and feeble rage,

A hard and haughty heart.
"If aught there dark appear,
Bewail thy want of sight;
No imperfection can be there,
For all God's words are right.
"The Scriptures and the Lord Bear one tremendous name;
The written and the Incarnate Word
In all things are the same.
"For Jesus is the Truth,
As well as Life and Way;
The two-edged sword that's in His mouth
Shall all proud reasoners slay.
"Why dost thou call Him Lord, And what He says resist?
The soul that stumbles at the Word,
Offended is at Christ.
"The thoughts of man are lies,
The Word of God is true.
To bow to that is to be wise;
Then hear, and fear, and do."
--Joseph Hart.