

FBC Canton Sunday am January 4, 2026

Desire the Word of God above all other words I Peter 2:1-3

Introduction: What benefit comes from desiring the Word of God? Progress towards being like Jesus.

Because growth without purpose is failure.

True change comes from discipline, responsibility, and confronting the gap between who you are and who you could be. Jordan Peterson

I. If you feed a spiritual infant junk, they will manifest disease. V. 1-2

a. Remove relationship destroyers: Ephesians 4:17-34

- i. All malice=desire to do injury.
- ii. All deceit=tell no lies, believe no lies.
- iii. Hypocrisy=be genuine.
- iv. Envy=hate when others have good.
- v. All evil speaking=speaking against=gossip.

b. We can change our taste buds.

i. Pure versus junk food.

- 1. If you leave sugar behind your body will crave it no more.

c. Replace with an insatiable hunger for the milk of God's word.

- 1. You have to have it, for cannot live without it.

ii. Growth produces Christian maturity. II Peter 3:18

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1. Having biblical expectations. Romans 12:1-2

- 1. Because wrong expectations produce misery.

2. Gap between hearing and obeying is narrow. James 1:22

3. Unshakable hope. Romans 15:13

4. Handle solid food. Hebrews 5:12

II. How to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus? Answer what is the greatest why! V. 3

a. You have tasted that Lord is gracious!

i. The tyranny of the how is solved by the greatest why. When the greatest why exists...then the how will arise.

ii. If all you do is want to know how, you will live pragmatic lives, not charismatic lives.

b. How to apply your greatest why? Purpose fuels our application.

Greatest purpose ever!

i. Learn from the best.

Silence is nothing else but waiting for God's Word and coming from God's Word with a blessing.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"The amount of time we spend with Jesus, meditating on His Word and His majesty, seeking His face, establishes our fruitfulness in the kingdom." Charles Stanley

"Often times God wants us to sit before Him in quietness. He doesn't want us to do all the talking. As Is. 30:15 says "In quiet and confidence will be your strength." Charles Stanley

"I ought to pray before seeing any one...Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: 'Early will I seek thee' ...I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see His face first, to get my soul near Him before it is near another." Robert Murray M'Cheyne

"We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results." R. A. Torrey

1. Odb.org
2. Blueletterbible.org

- ii. **Avoid the worst.**
- iii. **Tune into the word of God.**
 1. **Early=1st.**
 2. **Consistency over time=subject matter expert.**

Conclusion: Become the C.E.O of your faith journey.

Take command of your mornings.

You are what you repeatedly do, excellence then is not an act, it is a habit. Aristotle

66 days to form a new habit.

The State of Quiet Time: Who's Most Likely to Practice Daily Devotions

MARISSA POSTELL – LIFEWAY RESEARCH

Survey finds that two-thirds of churchgoers set aside time with God at least every day, but practices vary.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY JANUARY 3, 2023

Priscilla Du Preez / Unsplash

Most Protestant churchgoers spend time alone with God at least daily, but there's a range in what they do in that time and what resources they use.

According to a study by Lifeway Research, nearly 2 in 3 Protestant churchgoers intentionally spend time alone with God at least daily, with 44 percent saying daily and 21 percent saying more than once a day.

Meanwhile, 17 percent of churchgoers say they are alone with God several times a week, and 7 percent say once a week. Others admit to being alone with God a few times a month (5%), once a month (2%), less than once a month (3%) or never (1%).

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This time looks different for different churchgoers, but they are more likely to talk to God through prayer than to listen to him through his Word.

Churchgoers most often pray in their own words (83%), thank God (80%), praise God (62%) or confess sins (49%). Fewer than 2 in 5 read from the Bible or a devotional (39%). Fewer repeat a set prayer (20%), consider God's characteristics (18%) or something else (1%).

But if churchgoers were to read something during their time alone with God, most would read from a physical Bible (63%). Others would read the Bible in a different format such as a Bible that includes additional commentary or devotional thoughts (25%) or Scripture from an app (20%).

Fewer than 1 in 3 say they would read from a devotional book that prints some Scripture (32%), and even fewer say they would read from a devotional book that doesn't print Scripture (8%). Still, others say they would read a devotional from an app (7%) or read something else (3%).

Quiet time frequency

When it comes to spending time alone with God, women (48%) are more likely than men (38%) to say this is a daily habit for them. Those in the South (49%) are also among the most likely to say they spend time alone with God on a daily basis.

One in 4 Baptists (25%) say they have alone time with God more than once a day. And those with evangelical beliefs (30%) are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs (15%) to say the same.

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/AI9n0>

Church attendance is also an indicator of quiet time frequency. Those attending worship services at least four times a month (26%) are more likely than those who attend one to three times a month (13%) to say they spend time alone with God more than once a day.

“We see a pattern in Scripture of followers of God withdrawing to spend time alone with him. Jesus Christ himself also did this,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. “Most Protestant churchgoers continue this relational interaction with God and use a variety of resources as they do.”

Preferences on prayer

When spending time alone with God, some prefer to pray in their own words, while others would rather repeat a set prayer. Younger churchgoers—ages 18-34 (31%) and 35-49 (26%)—are more likely than those 50-64 (16%) and over 65 (11%) to say they repeat a set prayer during their alone time with God. And those ages 50-64 (85%) and over 65 (89%) are more likely than those 18-34 (77%) and 35-49 (77%) to say they pray in their own words.

“There are many reasons to pray a set prayer. Whether someone is praying the model prayer Jesus gave or repeating the same request to God each day, these can be meaningful,” McConnell said. “At the same time, Scripture also records Psalms and prayers within its narrative accounts that show how personal and forthright we can be when talking to God in our own words.”

Females (86%) are more likely than males (79%) to pray in their own words. And those in the South (86%) are more likely to pray in their own words than those in the Northeast (77%).

Evangelical beliefs and the frequency of church attendance are also factors in how a person prefers to pray. Those who attend worship services at least four times a month are more likely than those who attend less frequently to pray in their own words (85 percent v. 79%). But those who attend a worship service one to three times a month are more likely than those who attend more frequently to repeat a set prayer (24 percent v. 16%).

Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without such beliefs to pray in their own words (92 percent v. 76%), while those without evangelical beliefs are more likely than those who hold those beliefs to repeat a set prayer (22% versus 16%).

Preferences on practice

What it means to spend time alone with God varies from person to person. But there are some indicators of which practices are most important to different demographics of people.

While females are more likely than males to say they praise God (66% versus 57%) or read from the Bible or a devotional (42% versus 36%), men are more likely than women to say they consider God’s characteristics (21% versus 16%) when spending time alone with him.

Older churchgoers—those 50-64 (45%) and older than 65 (42%)—are more likely than those 18-34 (32%) and 35-49 (34%) to say they read from the Bible or a devotional when spending time alone with God. And those over the age of 65 are the least likely to say they consider God’s characteristics (10%).

Evangelical beliefs and church attendance frequencies are also indicators of a person’s preferences in spending time alone with God. Those who attend worship services the most (four or more times a month) are more likely than those who attend one to three

times a month to praise God (67% versus 53%), confess sins (55% versus 38%) or read from a Bible or devotional (46 percent v. 28%).

And those who hold evangelical beliefs are more likely than those who do not hold evangelical beliefs to thank God (87% versus 74%), praise God (76% versus 51%), confess sin (64% versus 38%) or read from the Bible or a devotional (52% versus 29%). But those without evangelical beliefs are more likely than those with evangelical beliefs to consider God's characteristics (20% versus 15%).

“An earlier [discipleship study](#) from Lifeway Research showed that praising and thanking God is one of the top five predictors of high spiritual maturity,” McConnell said. “This is a widespread practice among churchgoers when they are alone with God.”

Preferences on resources

Several factors play into what a churchgoer wants to read when spending time alone with God. The youngest adult churchgoers (ages 18-34) are the most likely to read Scripture from an app (40%) and the least likely to read from a devotional book that prints some Scripture (21%). And females are more likely than males to say they would prefer to read a devotional from an app (9% versus 4%).

“Today’s Christians have more resources than ever to aid them in spending time with God and his Word,” McConnell said. “As new resources are created, they can encourage someone who, without that innovation, wouldn’t have spent time with God. But there is also a strong relationship between spending time alone with God’s Word and worshiping frequently with others who may encourage you in your walk with God.”

Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely than those without evangelical beliefs to say they would read from a Bible (78% versus 52%) if they were reading something in their time alone with God. And those without evangelical beliefs are more likely than those with evangelical beliefs to say they would read from a devotional book that doesn’t print Scripture (11% versus 3%) or Scripture from an app (22% versus 17%).

While those who attend a worship service at least four times a month are more likely than those who attend one to three times a month to say they would read the Bible in their quiet time (70% versus 52%), those who attend one to three times a month are more likely than those who attend more often to say they would read a devotional from an app (9% versus 5%).

David Guzik

Study Guide for 1 Peter 2

THE GLORY AND THE DUTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A. Coming to Jesus through His word.

1. (1 Peter 2:1-3) How to respond to the eternal word of God.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

a. **Therefore:** Peter has just demonstrated the glory and eternal character of God's word.

Now **therefore**, in light of what God's word is to us, we should receive the word and receive it with a particular heart.

b. **As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word:** The word **desire** is strong. In the Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) it is used for man's deepest longing for God: *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God* ([Psalm 42:1](#)). It speaks of the **desire** each believer should have for the word of God.

i. **Babes... desire:** A healthy new baby has an instinctive yearning for its mother's milk.

When things are right, you don't have to tell it to want the milk.

ii. The failure to either **desire** or to **receive** this **pure milk of the word** is the reason for so many problems in both individual Christian lives and in congregations. "The sickly condition of so many Christians sets forth a lamentable complaint of the food with which they are supplied. To say nothing of strong meat, they do not even get milk. Hence the Church of God too much resembles the wards of a children's hospital." (Meyer)

c. **That you may grow thereby:** The Word of God is necessary for the growth of the Christian. We should all **desire the pure milk of the word**, even though Paul rebukes the Corinthians for being able to **only** receive milk ([1 Corinthians 3:1-2](#)), the Christian should **never** get tired of the simple truths of the Gospel simply presented.

i. Who are the **newborn babes**? In a sense, we all are. "The most advanced among us, in knowledge and attainment, are, in comparison with what they shall be, only as babes." (Meyer)

ii. "To drink the milk of the Word is to 'taste' again and again what he is like, for in the hearing of the Lord's words believers experience the joy of personal fellowship with the Lord himself." (Grudem)

d. **Laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking:** This described the attitude of heart that receives the word and grows by the word. This is a humble, honest heart, willing to **do** what the Word of God says.

i. **Evil speaking:** This ancient Greek word has more the idea of spicy and hurtful gossip than the idea of profane speech.

e. **If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious:** If we have received from God and have **tasted** (personally experienced) **that the Lord is gracious**, then we have great reason and responsibility to receive the word in the enthusiastic way that babies receive their milk.

The Bible Says 1 Peter 2:1-3 Meaning

1 Peter 2:1 begins to express specific actions believers can take to address Peter's admonition from Chapter 1: to be holy, set apart from the world, purified in heart. His first exhortation is that believers ought to be **putting aside** the tendency of our fallen nature toward five relational sins. Connecting with Chapter 1, Peter begins Chapter 2 with **Therefore**, which draws an application based on a main idea of the letter revealed in the first chapter "Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls" (**1 Peter 1:9**).

We discovered that this phrase "the salvation of your souls" in **1 Peter 1:9** was not in reference the past tense of salvation-our deliverance from the Lake of Fire-but rather the present tense of salvation. In the present, believers can have their physical life on earth delivered from the adverse effects of sin by walking in obedience to God's Word. The five relational sins Peter exhorts believers to avoid will each damage our lives/souls if we practice them. If we avoid them, our quality of life/the health of our souls is delivered and improved.

Walking faithfully delivers us from the negative consequences of sin in this life-as in **Romans 1:24, 26, 28**, where sin is shown to progress from lust to addiction and loss of mental health. If we submit to any of the five relational sins Peter addresses in this passage, we will be led down a path of destruction. Conversely, walking as faithful witnesses allows us to possess the reward of our inheritance and gain eternal rewards when our deeds are evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10, Colossians 3:23**).

In the first chapter, Peter also exhorted his disciples to "prepare your minds for action" (**1 Peter 1:13**). This shows that being a faithful witness by walking in obedience takes active effort. This is why he begins verse 1 with an action: **Therefore** **putting aside**. Peter also set forth a perspective he desires

his followers to adopt, that life on this earth is short and temporary ([1 Peter 1:24](#)) so we should place our hope in God, for His Word endures forever ([1 Peter 1:25](#)). This brings an urgency to *putting aside sin*.

Peter instructed his followers to “fervently love one another from the heart” ([1 Peter 1:22](#)). The “love” in “love one another from the heart” is the Greek word “agape,” which refers to a love of choice—again showing that living as a faithful witness is an active endeavor. An apparent application of 1 Peter is that *putting aside* these five relational sins is an active part of making a choice to “love one another from the heart.”

Now in Chapter 2, Peter begins a list of specific instructions of choices believers can make to love one another rather than sin against one another. He exhorts believers to actively be *putting aside* our fallen human nature’s tendency to commit five relational sins: *putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy, and envy and all slander* (v. 1).

The first relationship instruction is to put aside *all malice*. The phrase *putting aside* that applies to each of the five relational issues Peter will address is an active verb implying ongoing action. This indicates that our natural proclivity as humans is to do to one another all five of these harmful actions. Thus, to “fervently love one another” requires an ongoing effort to set aside these natural negative impulses and choose a constructive path.

The Greek word translated *putting aside* also appears in [James 1:21](#), which exhorts us to actively choose to set aside the lusts within us that tempt us into sin, which leads to death and destruction ([James 1:14](#)). [Galatians 5:17](#) also indicates that our first inclination is to walk in the flesh, the fruit of which is listed in [Galatians 5:19-21](#). In [Romans 7:23-24](#), Paul discloses his own struggle against sin; even though he desires not to sin he finds himself sinning.

To set aside *all malice* means to set aside harboring ill-will toward another person. The Apostle Paul uses the Greek word translated *malice* in four verses—each of which addresses a list of sins to lay aside: ([Romans 1:29](#); [Ephesians 4:31](#), [Colossians 3:8](#); and [Titus 2:3](#)). James also mentions the word translated *malice* in connection with the saving of our lives from our inner lusts by receiving and responding to God’s Word:

“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness [*malice*], in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”
([James 1:21](#))

In [James 1:21](#), the Greek word translated “souls” is “psyche” which is translated about half the time as “life.” So, this could reasonably be translated as the “word implanted” being able to save our lives

from the adverse consequences of sin. The context of [James 1](#) speaks of saving our lives from the death and destruction our inner fleshly lusts will lead us into if we do not take vigorous action to follow God's word instead. To set aside *all malice* is to make an active choice to seek the welfare of others instead of seeking their harm.

That Peter includes *all* in the phrase *all malice* means that there are no loopholes and no exceptions. Jesus was not "nice" in the way that word is often used in modern times. He was not concerned about managing His image or being seen as a "good guy." He spoke truth in a manner that greatly upset many people.

He threatened the status quo to the extent that Israel's leaders overlooked the fact that He had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead and could only think of killing him ([John 11:47-48](#)). But He did this that they might have the opportunity to see the light and escape the darkness.

Jesus had no personal *malice* toward those who sinned against Him, even praying to His Father that those who killed Him might be forgiven ([Luke 22:34](#)). In the Lord's prayer, Jesus teaches believers to pray that God will only forgive us as we forgive others ([Matthew 6:12](#)). He explained that we should pray this because God only forgives us as we forgive other people ([Matthew 6:14-15](#)).

We can presume that an active part of *putting aside all malice* is to forgive others as Jesus forgave. By forgiving, we do not stay their accountability. Rather, we recognize that God is the judge (not us), and He will judge righteously ([Romans 12:19](#)). Therefore, forgiveness is a matter of trusting God.

The second relational sin native to our sin nature that Peter urges us to lay aside in order to have fervent love for others is *all deceit*. Again, the qualifier *all* is included. This refers to taking advantage of someone by twisting or abusing the truth. The inclusion of *all* makes clear that even just a little twisting of the truth is not acceptable to meet the standard of having fervent love for one another ([1 Peter 1:22](#)). The Greek word "dolos," translated *deceit*, is used two additional times by Peter:

- In [1 Peter 2:22](#), Peter elevates Jesus as an example to follow. He had fervent love for others, even though He suffered unjustly on the cross. He embodied the command to speak what was true, He "committed no sin, nor was any deceit ["dolos"] found in His mouth" ([1 Peter 2:22](#)).
- In [1 Peter 3:10](#), Peter quotes [Psalm 34:12-13](#), which says anyone who seeks life and "good days" should keep deceit ("dolos") far from him.

In each case, the same basic point is being made: truthfulness in love is the path to fulfilling our design. Therefore, speaking truth is the path to experiencing the maximum benefit from life. Peter's admonition sets forth a pathway that leads to life, a path that is for our best. This is the path that leads to human flourishing ("life").

The next relationship sin we should be *putting aside* is that of *hypocrisy*. This refers to creating a public impression that is at odds with what is true. The word translated as *hypocrisy* in the Greek is “hypokriseis” from which we get our English word “hypocrite.” Hypocrisy is saying one thing while doing another. In modern terms, we might think of it as “managing our image.” This is seeking to be something other than what we are. It is a matter of logic that seeking to live as someone we are not will lead to loss of our selves, a form of death.

A root of hypocrisy is to seek to control other people’s opinions of ourselves. We do this by believing an illusion—an illusion that we actually know what others think of us, and that we can control their image of us. The reality is that in all likelihood the other person is not thinking of us at all. It is much more likely they are thinking of themselves and are managing an illusion of what we think of them.

Living in such an illusion separates us from reality and steals our opportunity to “die to sin and live to righteousness” ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). The Greek word translated “righteousness” in this context refers to humans living in harmony (shalom) with ourselves and with one another, according to God’s design.

The fourth relationship issue that is a natural inclination which Peter instructs believers to be actively *putting aside* is *envy*. To *envy* is to desire to extract from others. It is a desire to gain what they have, or gain benefit for ourselves at their expense. This is the opposite of having fervent love for one another as Peter admonished believers to have in [1 Peter 1:22](#).

The Apostle Paul uses the Greek word translated *envy* to describe expressions of the sin nature in [Romans 1:29](#), [Galatians 5:21](#), [1 Timothy 6:4](#), and [Titus 3:3](#). All who believe in Jesus are made a new creation in Christ ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). But each believer still has their old sin nature that seeks to lead them back into their old ways, ways that are destructive ([Romans 7:18-19](#), [Galatians 5:17](#)). One of the key elements of our inner sinful nature is *envy*.

Peter’s Jewish audience would have recognized the admonition to set aside *envy* as mirroring the tenth of the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:17](#)). God made a covenant with Israel to show them the way that leads to life and benefit ([Deuteronomy 30:19-20](#)). It is a matter of common sense that a society with a culture that seeks truth and mutual benefit will thrive, while a society based on envy and exploitation will sink into violence and poverty.

As we see in [Leviticus 18](#), the pagan cultures surrounding Israel were full of exploitation and violence, including child sacrifice ([Leviticus 18:21](#)). God’s covenant/treaty with Israel led them away from these destructive cultures and showed them a way to live in harmony with mutual benefit. Now, in the New Testament era, God has provided the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead us to walk in the ways of life. But this requires us to set aside our sin nature and have faith that God’s ways are for our best ([Galatians 5:16-17](#)).

The final sinful desire from our sinful nature that we need to be actively *putting aside* is *all slander*. Again, *all* is included, closing any loophole that “just a little is okay.” The Greek word “katalalia” translated *slander* is rendered as “evil speaking” in some translations. Paul uses “katalalia” to describe disobedient Christians ([2 Corinthians 12:20](#)) and people controlled by their sin nature ([Romans 1:30](#)). Some translations render “katalalia” in these passages as “backbiting.” The idea seems to be to tear people down using words.

Thus, “katalalia” (*slander*, evil speaking, backbiting) is similar to *envy* in that it seeks to diminish someone else for our own gain. Like *envy* then it is fundamentally oriented to extract from others. This is the opposite of having fervent love for one another, which is what Peter admonishes in this letter ([1 Peter 1:22](#)). As Peter stated in [1 Peter 1:23](#), God has given new birth to believers through His Word, therefore we have the power to love as He loves. Peter wants his disciples to recognize this inner battle with evil and make choices that cause us to win that battle. The beginning choice requires recognition of these inner tendencies, then to start *putting* them *aside* and choosing love in their place on an ongoing basis.

Part of winning a battle is recognizing and knowing the enemy. Each of our sin natures is predisposed to *malice*, *deceit*, *hypocrisy*, *envy* and *slander*. Peter wants us to adopt a perspective that recognizes this reality about our inner selves. And he wants us to choose to believe the truth of God’s Word and the inner testimony of the Spirit that following these sinful ways leads to consequences of death, while following God’s ways lead to life. As he stated in Chapter 1:

“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.”

[\(1 Peter 1:22\)](#)

[1 Peter 1:22](#) tells us that a key to *putting aside* our native desires to extract from and exploit others (*malice*, *deceit*, *hypocrisy*, *envy* and *slander*) is “obedience to the truth.” This purifies our lives and clears us to walk in a sincere love for others because we have a changed heart.

To have a changed heart is to have a perspective that is altered from rationalizing sinful behavior and is instead recognizes sin as leading to death. This makes following the truth the path of least resistance, because we recognize that the truth sets us free and leads us to life. The Apostle Paul says we are transformed by having a renewed mind, which is a mind that thinks what is real and true ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).

These relationship sins of *malice*, *deceit*, *hypocrisy*, *envy* and *slander* are destructive to our lives. We are admonished to be actively *putting* them *aside* and instead obeying the truth so our souls/lives can be saved from the adverse effects of these sins ([1 Peter 1:9](#), [Romans 1:24](#), [26](#), [28](#)). Believers are

given a specific action to take in order to avoid the negative consequences of sin that our flesh will lead us into. We will avoid the adverse effects of sin through ***putting aside*** these desires and choosing instead to walk in “obedience to the truth.”

The image behind the action of ***putting aside*** (“apothemenoi” in Greek) is literally taking off an article of clothing. Perhaps Peter had in mind an illustration of taking off an outer layer of clothing to prepare for vigorous work.

This action of ***putting aside*** is used figuratively for setting aside our inner sinful desires in a number of New Testament passages:

- **Romans 13:2** urges believers to “lay aside” (“apothemenoi”) the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
- **Colossians 3:8** says to “put them all aside” referring to anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech.
- **Ephesians 4:25** urges believers to speak truth to one another, which requires “laying aside falsehood,” where “laying aside” is again “apothemenoi.”
- **James 1:21** urges believers to be “putting aside” (“apothemenoi”) all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness so that we can “receive the word implanted.” James uses the same statement that Peter used in **1 Peter 1:9**, saying that this setting aside the sin nature and receiving the truth of God’s word leads to the saving of our souls, or lives. As with **1 Peter 1:9**, this refers to saving our lives from the wreckage and destruction that sin brings to those who are born again.

As Paul stated in **Romans 1:24**, **26**, **28**, sin progresses from lust, to addiction, to loss of mental health (a “depraved mind”). Later in **Romans 6:20-21**, Paul asserts that sin enslaves us and creates consequences that lead to death. Romans is written to faithful believers, whose faith is spoken of throughout the world (**Romans 1:8**). Even though believers are new creations in Christ, they retain their sin natures on this side of glory. These sinful natures must be set aside on an ongoing basis to allow the new nature to flourish. If we continue to walk in sin, we reap a consequence of death.

Death is separation, and these behaviors Peter urges us to be ***putting aside*** all lead to separation from God’s (good) design. When we have **malice** and **envy** against others, or present ourselves falsely through **deceit** and **hypocrisy**, or speak **slander** against someone, it will logically lead to separation and division from our own conscience and from one another. This destroys community and connection, which are keys to human flourishing.

As Paul stated in [Galatians 5:15](#), walking in the flesh leads us to “bite and devour one another.” This logically would lead to separation, death of fellowship and opportunity to collaborate. Great teamwork leads to fulfillment.

- [Hebrews 12:1](#) exhorts believers to “lay aside” (“apothemenio”) “every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Again, believers are exhorted to actively set aside false perspectives and adopt true ones, then make choices to “run with endurance the race” of life. The “race” evokes an image of a contest that requires great effort. The [\[putting aside\]](#) of sin in the spiritual race of life is like setting aside comfort or laziness to train for an Olympic race.

Peter instructs us that making our lives count for eternity requires an ongoing [\[putting aside\]](#) of lusts that lead to sin, sin that hinders accomplishing our goal. But it also involves actively doing something that can nourish us to accomplish that goal.

To accomplish that goal, Peter encourages us to [\[like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation\]](#) (v. 2).

It is apparent that putting aside laziness is required to win a race, so putting aside sin is a necessity to win the race of life. Similarly, having a good nutrition program is also a necessity to win a race. In the race of life, the nutrition program begins with [\[the pure milk of the word\]](#).

The main action commanded here is to [\[long for\]](#) this [\[pure milk of the word\]](#). To [\[long for\]](#) means to have a strong desire to obtain a recognized need. The Greek word “epipotheo” translated [\[long\]](#) is also rendered as “yearn” and “desires.” Other verses where “epipotheo” is used follow:

- A desire for fellowship with other believers ([Philippians 1:8](#), [2:26](#), [1 Thessalonians 3:6](#))
- The desire to gain a glorified resurrection body ([2 Corinthians 5:2](#)).

Here in [1 Peter 1:2](#), we are instructed to choose to desire [\[the pure milk of the word\]](#) ([1 Peter 2:2](#)). This makes clear that desires can be chosen. In this case we are recognizing a necessity to reach a goal. We are not to be captive only to our natural feelings or lusts. We are to choose to have a strong desire for [\[the word\]](#), referring to God’s Word, the Bible.

We might think of this longing to be more like a commitment. The effort here is to be committed to [\[grow in respect to salvation\]](#). This growth leads us to win the race of life. If we have a goal and recognize a need to reach that goal, we will naturally have a great desire to fill that need. The

phrase *by it* tells us that the *pure milk of the word* is the means to *grow in respect to salvation*. When we recognize this need, it should lead us to have an intense desire to ingest God's word.

When Peter uses the word *salvation* here he is speaking of the present tense salvation, where our lives are saved from the destructive consequences of sin in our daily walk by obeying *the word*. Present tense salvation is something we can *grow* in. We can *grow* by ingesting the *pure milk of the word* and increase our ability to be *putting aside* sin (like *malice*) and instead be loving others.

Whether we walk in the Spirit or the flesh does not affect the past tense aspect of salvation; believers are saved from the eternal penalty of sin merely through faith in Jesus. Past tense salvation is not something we can *grow* in. Jesus did all that is necessary for our justification before God.

Believers are born again as members of God's forever family by simply having enough faith to look upon Jesus on the cross, hoping to be saved from the deadly venom of sin ([John 3:3](#), [14-15](#)). There is nothing that can be added to Jesus's finished work on the cross.

When Peter speaks of choosing to be committed to consume the *pure milk of the word* so that we might *grow in respect to salvation*, Peter is speaking of the same "salvation of our souls" as in [1 Peter 1:9](#). This could also be translated "deliverance of our lives" referring to delivering our lives from the negative effects of sin.

A commitment to consume the *pure milk of the word* allows us to *grow* spiritually. Just as a physical baby grows from consuming his mother's milk, we as believers in Jesus grow from consuming the *pure milk* that is God's *word*. We grow in our capacity to walk apart from sin and walk in the Spirit, thus fulfilling God's perfect law, which reflects His design for humanity ([Romans 8:4](#)).

To drink the *pure milk of the word* includes reading, understanding, and following the words of the Bible. The book of Revelation makes a specific promise that any believer who reads, understands, then follows the words of that prophecy will gain a great additional blessing ([Revelation 1:3](#)). [1 Peter 2:2](#) indicates that this is also a broad principle; that reading, understanding, then putting into action the word of God allows us to *grow in respect to salvation*. This will lead us to a better and more flourishing life, rather than a life that is materially marred and destroyed (present tense *salvation*).

The Greek word translated *grow* is used in scripture to refer to plant or crop growth, the growth of a human child, and population growth. To *grow in respect to salvation* would not refer to the past tense of salvation, since being saved from the penalty of sin comes solely by faith in Jesus. This past tense salvation is completely independent of our deeds ([Romans 4:2-3](#), [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). But the present tense of salvation requires spiritual growth.

There are a number of things we are saved from when we become new creations in Christ through faith in Jesus ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). But to fully experience the benefits of this salvation requires spiritual growth.

- When we are born again into Christ we are saved from slavery to sin. However, we experience that only to the extent we walk in obedience to God ([Romans 6:16](#)). To *grow in respect to salvation* is to increasingly gain freedom from the lust, addiction, and loss of mental health that is the consequence of sin ([Romans 1:24](#), [26](#), [28](#)).
- When we are born again into Christ, we are saved from being a captive of our flesh, but we experience this deliverance only to the extent we choose to put to death our flesh and walk in the Spirit ([Romans 8:5-6](#), [Galatians 5:16-17](#)). To gain victory over the flesh requires that we *grow in respect to salvation*. A key way we fuel this growth is to consume the *pure milk* that is God's *word*. God's word shows the way to life and freedom, giving us *salvation* or deliverance from the adverse consequences of our fleshly, sinful nature.
- When we are born again into Christ we are saved from the futility of the fall. We are restored to our original design by being given an inheritance in Christ ([Ephesians 1:11](#), [14](#), [18](#), [Colossians 1:12](#)). God is always our inheritance, because believers are born anew into God's forever family solely by faith in Jesus ([John 3:3](#), [14-15](#)).

However, in order to fully possess our inheritance requires that believers *grow in respect to salvation*. As [Hebrews 2:3](#) states, if we neglect such a great salvation by failing to grow, we will not escape the adverse consequences. [Hebrews 2:5-10](#) tells us that Jesus has restored humanity's right to reign over the earth in harmony with God, nature, and one another, as God intended. Jesus restored this right through the "suffering of death" ([Hebrews 2:9](#)).

As a result of His obedience, He was given the reward of being "crowned with glory" to reign over creation. He was given the title of being a "Son" over all creation ([Hebrews 1:5](#), [13](#), [Matthew 28:18](#)). And He desires to bring "many sons to glory." Those who join Jesus in sharing this reward of being restored to our original design to reign are those who join Him in experiencing the "suffering of death" ([Hebrews 2:9](#), [Romans 8:17b](#)). It will be those who overcome as Jesus overcame who will share with Him in His reign ([Revelation 3:21](#)). It will be those who are faithful stewards over the gifts God gave them that will enter into the joy of their Master and rule over many things ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

All believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards for what they did while living their life on this earth ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)). We can gain good rewards through being committed to *grow in respect to salvation*. In this respect, we can be saved from wasting our life as poor stewards, and squandering our inheritance ([Hebrews 12:16](#)).

This intense longing for the nourishment of God's Word is conditioned on the fact that we have previously fully experienced the goodness of God. Peter expresses it this way in verse 3:

- *if*, a fact assumed to be true,
- *you have tasted*, meaning to fully experience ([Matthew 16:28](#); [Hebrews 2:9](#)),
- *the kindness of the Lord*, referring to the compassionate, good nature of God, most likely experienced at the time they first believed in Jesus Christ.

In adding this condition, Peter emphasizes that to *grow in respect to salvation* only applies to those who have been born again into God's family and been made new creations in Christ ([John 3:3](#), [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). We cannot earn our way into God's family through growth or obedience to the Law ([Romans 3:20](#)). Being born again is a free gift that is received through faith ([Romans 5:18](#)). Being born into God's family and receiving new birth only transpires through the *kindness of the Lord*.

Peter made clear in [1 Peter 1:23](#) that those reading this letter are believers in Jesus, saying "for you have been born again." The point in verse 3 is that *if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord* then you are saved from the penalty of sin, being born into God's forever family. But you then need to *grow in respect to salvation* by setting aside the flesh and learning from the *word* to walk in the resurrection power of Jesus. This leads to having the capacity to "fervently love one another from the heart" ([1 Peter 1:22](#)).

In order to gain the greatest fulfillment from life, believers need to commit to possessing that life. This commitment should lead to a desire for God's Word, for that is the equipping that leads to life ([1 Peter 2:1](#)). Such a commitment will lead to reading the Bible ([1 Timothy 4:13](#)) and studying it ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)). In addition to a commitment to read and understand, we must commit to heed and obey the word ([James 1:22](#)). It is hard work. But as Jesus said, the path to life is one that is difficult ([Matthew 7:13-14](#)). It is challenging to set aside our natural sinful desires and be transformed by the renewing of our minds ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).

To walk in obedience to God's word will make us faithful witnesses who overcome as Jesus overcame. Such a commitment executed faithfully leads to the greatest possible blessing and reward from this life ([Revelation 1:3](#), [3:21](#)). To *grow in respect to salvation* ([1 Peter 2:1](#)) leads us to maturity in Christ, allowing us the faculty to discern good from evil ([Hebrews 5:14](#)). This equips believers to be productive in their lives, leading to the greatest possible rewards ([Romans 8:17](#), [2 Timothy 2:10](#), [12](#), [3:17](#); [James 1:12](#), [Revelation 3:21](#)).

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Chapter 2

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and all envying, and all evil speakings ([1Pe 2:1](#)),

Set these things aside, we're to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Set aside the envying, the hypocrisy, the guile, the evil speaking.

And as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: If so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious ([1Pe 2:2-3](#)).

There are so many people who desire sensationalism. They desire the hot fudge sundaes, and you can see them advertising the spiritual hot fudge sundaes in the paper every Sunday, you know. Come and see; come and taste the hot fudge, you know, delicious, and ours is more exciting than anybody else's. Guaranteed to titillate your sensors, get you excited emotionally; you don't grow by that, though, that's the problem.

You see, it may taste good, it may be exciting to eat, but it isn't nourishing. It doesn't strengthen you. It has very little value when the real testing comes. You'll find yourself weak and anemic. But if you have partaken of the word of God and you know from the word, God is good, God is gracious; then when the trials come, you're strengthened by that word and that knowledge of the goodness and the graciousness of God. So "desire the sincere milk of the word that you might grow thereby." Just like a new baby.

And how I love to see these new babes in Christ. These people have just been born again by the Spirit recently, how I love to see them devouring the word. I get a thrill every time I go by the tape library and I see people carrying bags of tapes in and carrying bags of tapes out. I love it!

Some people came to me this morning. They said they were going to be here tonight, and they said we came from our ranch in Texas. They live twelve miles out of a big metropolis of twelve hundred people. Now in Texas, you know, you can get lost way out there in the country. And these people live way out there, but they said, "We've been feeding off of yours and Chuck Missler's tapes, and we just had to come out here and to see you and just to give you thanks. And we're going to be in Chuck's class on Monday night, too, because we want to thank him". I love it!

The word of God going out, "desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby." It's the word of God that feeds you, that develops spiritual growth. You cannot grow spiritually apart from the word of God. Now I would like to emphasize that. You can only experience spiritual growth through the word. It is the food that feeds the spiritual man and apart from the word of God, you cannot

experience real spiritual growth. You can experience spiritual excitement through experiences and sensationalism, but you cannot experience real growth. That takes the word of God.

So "desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow as newborn babes.

If so be, you've tasted that the Lord is gracious. [The Lord] To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious ([1Pe 2:3-4](#)),

It's interesting to me. Here's big old, rough Peter, the fisherman, I mean; he's just as tough as nails, you know, he's ready for anything. Ready for a fight. You want to fight? You know, want to take Jesus? Man, I'll -- he draws a sword, he starts to flail. You know what I mean? He's ready for it, against him all these soldiers. Hey, you'll see it out, you know, tough, rough guy. And what seems to be his favorite word when he gets, you know, he's a marshmallow.

I mean, you come to the things of the Spirit. His favorite word is "precious". Now that's not a word for a big, tough guy, you know, "precious". I love the way the Lord makes marshmallows out of some of these jocks. It's beautiful to me. And so all the way through you find Peter using this word "precious". I think that's precious.

Matthew Henry Commentary on 1 Peter 2

Chapter 2

The general exhortation to holiness is continued, and enforced by several reasons taken from the foundation on which Christians are built, Jesus Christ, and from their spiritual blessings and privileges in him. The means of obtaining it, the word of God, is recommended, and all contrary qualities are condemned ([v. 1-12](#)). Particular directions are given how subjects ought to obey the magistrates, and servants their masters, patiently suffering in well doing, in imitation of Christ ([v. 13-25](#)).

[1Pe 2:1-3](#)

The holy apostle has been recommending mutual charity, and setting forth the excellences of the word of God, calling it an *incorruptible seed*, and saying that it *liveth and abideth for ever*. He pursues his discourse, and very properly comes in with this necessary advice, *Wherfore laying aside all malice*, etc. These are such sins as both destroy charity and hinder the efficacy of the word, and consequently they prevent our regeneration.

- I. His advice is to lay aside or put off what is evil, as one would do an old rotten garment: "Cast it away with indignation, never put it on more."

- 1. The sins to be put off, or thrown aside, are,
 - (1.) **Malice**, which may be taken more generally for all sorts of wickedness, as [Jam. 1:21](#); [1 Co. 5:8](#).
But, in a more confined sense, malice is anger resting in the bosom of fools, settled overgrown anger, retained till it inflames a man to design mischief, to do mischief, or delight in any mischief that befalls another.
 - (2.) **Guile**, or deceit in words. So it comprehends flattery, falsehood, and delusion, which is a crafty imposing upon another's ignorance or weakness, to his damage.
 - (3.) **Hypocrisies**. The word being plural comprehends all sorts of hypocrisies. In matters of religion hypocrisy is counterfeit piety. In civil conversation hypocrisy is counterfeit friendship, which is much practised by those who give high compliments, which they do not believe, make promises which they never intend to perform, or pretend friendship when mischief lies in their hearts.
 - (4.) **All envies**, every thing that may be called **envy**, which is a grieving at the good and welfare of another, at their abilities, prosperity, fame, or successful labours.
 - (5.) **Evil speaking**, which is detraction, speaking against another, or defaming him; it is rendered **backbiting**, [2 Co. 12:20](#); [Rom. 1:30](#).
- 2. Hence learn,
 - (1.) The best Christians have need to be cautioned and warned against the worst sins, such as malice, hypocrisy, envy. They are but sanctified in part, and are still liable to temptations.
 - (2.) Our best services towards God will neither please him nor profit us if we be not conscientious in our duties to men. The sins here mentioned are offences against the second table. These must be laid aside, or else we cannot receive the word of God as we ought to do.
 - (3.) Whereas it is said **all malice, all guile**, learn, That one sin, not laid aside, will hinder our spiritual profit and everlasting welfare.
 - (4.) Malice, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking, generally go together. Evil-speaking is a sign that malice and guile lie in the heart; and all of them combine to hinder our profiting by the word of God.
- II. The apostle, like a wise physician, having prescribed the purging out of vicious humours, goes on to direct to wholesome and regular food, that they may grow thereby. The duty exhorted to is a strong and constant desire for the **word of God**, which word is here called **reasonable milk**, only, this phrase not being proper English, our translators rendered it **the milk of the word**, by which we are to understand food proper for the soul, or a reasonable creature, whereby the mind, not the body, is nourished and strengthened. This milk of the word must be **sincere**, not adulterated by the mixtures of men, who often corrupt the word of God, [2 Co. 2:17](#). The manner in which they are to desire this sincere milk of the word is stated thus: **As new-born babes**. He puts them in mind of their regeneration. A new life requires suitable food. They, being newly born, must desire the milk of the

word. Infants desire common milk, and their desires towards it are fervent and frequent, arising from an impatient sense of hunger, and accompanied with the best endeavours of which the infant is capable. Such must Christians' desires be for the word of God: and that for this end, that they may grow thereby, that we may improve in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, [2 Pt. 3:18](#). Learn,

- 1. Strong desires and affections to the word of God are a sure evidence of a person's being born again. If they be such desires as the babe has for the milk, they prove that the person is new-born. They are the lowest evidence, but yet they are certain.
- 2. Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace are the design and desire of every Christian; all spiritual means are for edification and improvement. The word of God, rightly used, does not leave a man as it finds him, but improves and makes him better.
- III. He adds an argument from their own experience: *If so be, or since that, or forasmuch as, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,* [v. 3](#). The apostle does not express a doubt, but affirms that these good Christians had tasted the goodness of God, and hence argues with them. "You ought to lay aside these vile sins ([v. 1](#)); you ought to desire the word of God; you ought to grow thereby, since you cannot deny but that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The next verse assures us that the Lord here spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence learn,
- 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious to his people. He is in himself infinitely good; he is very kind, free, and merciful to miserable sinners; he is pitiful and good to the undeserving; he has in him a fulness of grace.
- 2. The graciousness of our Redeemer is best discovered by an experimental taste of it. There must be an immediate application of the object to the organ of taste; we cannot taste at a distance, as we may see, and hear, and smell. To taste the graciousness of Christ experimentally supposes our being united to him by faith, and then we may taste his goodness in all his providences, in all our spiritual concerns, in all our fears and temptations, in his word and worship every day.
- 3. The best of God's servants have in this life but a taste of the grace of Christ. A taste is but a little; it is not a draught, nor does it satisfy. It is so with the consolations of God in this life.
- 4. The word of God is the great instrument whereby he discovers and communicates his grace to men. Those who feed upon the sincere milk of the word taste and experience most of his grace. In our converses with his word we should endeavour always to understand and experience more and more of his grace.

R. A. Torrey

Life in the Word

LIFE IN THE WORD

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INTRODUCTION

It must be evident to all who pay close attention to the spiritual conditions of our day that there is being made at this time a very determined and widespread effort to set aside entirely the *authority* of the Bible. Let us note that one of the unique characteristics of that Book is that it claims the right to control the actions of men. It speaks "as one *having* authority." It assumes, and in the most peremptory and uncompromising way, to rebuke men for misconduct, and to tell them what they shall do and what they shall not do. It speaks to men, not as from the human plane, or even from the standpoint of superior human wisdom and morality; but as from a plane far above the highest human level, and as with a wisdom which admits of no question or dispute from men. It demands throughout unqualified submission.

But this assumption of control over men is a direct obstacle to the democratic spirit of the times, which brooks no authority higher than that of "the people," that is to say, of Man himself. To establish and to make universal the principles of pure democracy is the object, whether consciously or unconsciously, of the great thought-movements of our era; and the essence and marrow of democracy is the supreme authority of Man. Hence the conflict with the Bible.

Not only is the Bible, with its peremptory assertion of supremacy and control over mankind, directly counter to the democratic movement, but it is now the only real obstacle to the complete independence of humanity. If only the authority of the Scriptures is gotten rid of, mankind will have attained the long-coveted state of absolute independence, which is equivalent to utter lawlessness.

The state of ideal democracy would be accurately described as "lawlessness," since it is manifest that an individual or a society which is under no restraint except such as is self-imposed, is really under no restraint at all. To attain this ideal state is the end and purpose of present day movements; and, in order to promote these movements, that mighty spiritual intelligence who is designated "the spirit that now

works in the children of disobedience" ([Ephesians 2:2](#)) very wisely, and with consummate subtlety, directs the attack, from many different quarters, against the authority of the Bible.

The great mass of men, including the majority of the leaders of the age, are already completely absorbed in the activities of the world and utterly indifferent to the claims of the Bible. As to these, it is only necessary to take care that they are not aroused from their indifference. But the Bible nevertheless, by reason of its hold upon the consciences of the few, exerts, upon society as a whole, a mighty restraining influence, against which the assaults of the enemies of truth are now being directed.

In some quarters the authority of the Bible is directly assailed and its Divine origin disputed in the name of "Science" and of "Scholarship." Much of the learning and theological activity of the day are concentrated upon the attempt to discredit the Bible, and to disseminate views and theories directly at variance with its claims of divine inspiration and authority.

In other quarters the attack takes the form of a pretense of conceding the inspiration of the Bible, coupled with the claim that other writers and other great literary works were equally inspired. "God is not limited," we are told, "and can speak to man, and does speak to man, in our day, in like manner as in the days of Moses, Isaiah, or Paul."

Manifestly it makes practically no difference whether the Bible be dragged down to the level of other books, or other books be exalted to the level of the Bible. The result is the same in both cases; namely, that the unique authority of the Bible is set aside.

But even in quarters where the Divine origin of the Bible is fully recognized, the enemy is actively at work with a view to weakening its influence. There is much teaching abroad (heard usually in connection with certain spiritual manifestations which have become quite common of late) to the effect that those who have the Spirit dwelling in them, and speaking directly to and through them, are independent of the Word of God. This is the form which the idea of a continuing revelation takes in quarters where a direct attack on the authority of Scripture would fail. But the result is the same.

In such a state of things it is manifestly of the very highest importance to insist unceasingly upon the sufficiency, finality and completeness of the Revelation given by God in His Word. With the desire to serve this purpose, even though it be in a very small degree, these pages are written. It would be, however, a task far beyond the capacity of the writer to present all the unique characteristics of the Bible, whereby it is so distinguished from other books that it occupies a class by itself. The writer has, therefore, singled out for consideration one special attribute or characteristic of the Holy Scriptures; namely, that signified by the word "living."

If one is able to apprehend, however feebly, the tremendous fact that the Word of God is a LIVING Word, such knowledge will go far towards affording him protection from what is perhaps the greatest danger of these "perilous times."

1. THE INCARNATE WORD, AND THE WRITTEN WORD: BOTH ARE "LIVING"

Of the many statements which the Bible makes concerning the Word of God, none is more significant, and surely none is of greater importance to dying men, than the statement that the Word of God is a LIVING Word.

In [Philippians 2:16](#) we have the expression, "The Word of Life." The same expression occurs in [1 John 1:1](#). It is here used of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, whereas in Philippians it is apparently the Written Word that is spoken of. The Written Word and the Incarnate Word are so identified in Scripture that it is not always clear which is referred to. The same things are said of each, and the same characters attributed to each. The fundamental resemblance lies in the fact that each is the revealer or tangible expression of the Invisible God. As the written or spoken word expresses, for the purpose of communicating to another, the invisible and inaccessible thought, so Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word, and the Holy Scriptures as the Written Word, express and communicate knowledge of the invisible and inaccessible God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" ([John 14:9, 11](#)).

In [Hebrews 4:12](#) we find the statement that "The Word of God is LIVING and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (R.V.). Clearly this refers to the Written Word. But the very next verse, without any change of subject, directs our attention to the Searcher of hearts ([Revelation 2:23](#)), saying, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." [[Hebrews 4:13](#)].

Again in [1 Peter 1:23](#) we read of "the Word of God which liveth," or more literally, "the Word of God living." Here again there might be uncertainty as to whether the Incarnate Word or the Written Word be meant; but it is generally understood that the latter is in view, and the quotation from [Isaiah 40:6-8](#) would confirm this idea.

From these passages we learn that the Word of God is spoken of as a "living" Word. This is a very remarkable statement, and is worthy of our closest examination and most earnest consideration. Why is the Word of God thus spoken of? Why is the extraordinary property of LIFE, or vitality, attributed to it? In what respects can it be said to be a living Word?

But the expression "living," as applied to the Word of God, manifestly means something more than partaking of the kind of life with which we are acquainted from observation. God speaks of Himself as

the "Living God." The Lord Jesus is the "Prince of Life" ([Acts 3:15](#)). He announced Himself to John in the vision of Patmos as "He that liveth." Eternal life is in Him. ([1 John 5:11](#)).

It is clear, then, that when we read, "The Word of God is living," we are to understand thereby that it lives with a spiritual, an inexhaustible, an inextinguishable, in a word a divine, life. If the Word of God be indeed living in this sense, then we have here a fact of the most tremendous significance. In the world around us the beings and things which we call "living" may just as appropriately be spoken of as "dying." What we call "the land of the living" might better be described as the land of the dying. Wherever we look we see that death is in possession, and is working according to its invariable method of corruption and decay. Death is the real monarch of this world, and we meet at every turn the gruesome evidence and results of the universal sway of him who has "the power of death, that is, the devil" ([Hebrews 2:14](#)). "Death reigned" ([Romans 5:17](#)), and still reigns over everything. The mighty and awful power of death has made this earth of ours a great burying ground—a gigantic cemetery.

Can it be that there is an exception to this apparently universal rule? Is there, indeed, in this world of dying beings, where the forces of corruption fasten immediately upon everything into which life has entered, and upon all the works of so-called living creatures, one object which is really LIVING, an object upon which corruption cannot fasten itself, and which resists and defies all the power of death? Such is the assertion of the passages of Scripture which we have quoted. Surely, then, if these statements be true, we have here the most astounding phenomenon in all the accessible universe; and it will be well worth while to investigate an object of which so startling an assertion is seriously, if very unobtrusively, made.

Before we proceed with our inquiry let us note one of many points of resemblance between the Incarnate Word and the Written Word. When "the Word was made flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us" ([John 1:14](#)), there was nothing in His appearance to manifest His Deity, or to show that "in Him was life" ([John 1:4](#)). That fact was demonstrated, not by His blameless and unselfish behavior, nor by His incomparable teachings and discourses, but by His *resurrection from the dead*. The only power which is greater than that of death is the power of life. He had, and exercised, that power, and holds now the keys of death and of Hades. ([Revelation 1:18](#), R. V.)

Similarly, there is nothing in the appearance and behavior (so to speak) of the Bible to show that it has a characteristic, even divine life, which other books have not. It bears the same resemblance to other writings that Jesus, the son of Mary, bore to other men. It is given in human language just as He came in human flesh. Yet there is between it and all other books the same difference as between Him and all other men, namely, the difference *between the living and the dying*. "The word of God is living."

It will require, therefore, something more than a hasty glance or a casual inspection to discern this wonderful difference; but the difference is there, and with diligence and attention we may discover some clear indications of it.

2. NO DEFINITIONS OF LIFE

Man's wisdom and learning are incapable of furnishing a definition of life. The attempts of the wisest and most learned to furnish such a definition only serve to exhibit the futility of the attempt.

Herbert Spencer, who has made the most ambitious attempt of modern times to explain the visible universe, gives this as the result of his best efforts to define life: "Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations."

This definition manifestly stands as much in need of explanation as that which it purports to explain. But it will serve at least to remind us that the wisdom of men is foolishness with God.

Another eminent man of science defined life as "the twofold internal movement of composition and decomposition, at once general and continuous."

These modern definitions are scarcely an improvement upon that of Aristotle, who defined life as "the assemblage of the operations of nutrition, growth, and destruction."

What a marvelous thing is life, and how far it transcends the comprehension of man, since his best efforts to define it give results so ridiculously inadequate!

The ignorance of scientific men on this subject is frankly confessed by Alfred Russell Wallace, who in one of his latest books, "Man's Place in the Universe," says, "Most people give scientific men credit for much greater knowledge than they possess in these matters." And again: "As to the deeper problems of life, and growth, and reproduction, though our physiologists have learned an infinite amount of curious and instructive facts, they can give us *no intelligible* explanation of them."

But, if none of us can say what life is, we can all distinguish between that which is living (even in the ordinary sense of the word) and that which is not living; and our best idea of the meaning of life is obtained by comparing that which has life (whether animal or vegetable) with that which has not life, as minerals, or any non-living matter. We know that between the two there is a great gulf, which only divine power can span; for it is only the living God who can impart life to that which is lifeless.

We look then at the Written Word of God to see if it manifests characteristics which are found only in living things, and to see if it exhibits, not merely the possession of life of the perishable and corruptible sort with which we are so familiar by observation, and which is in each of us, but life of a different order, imperishable and incorruptible.

3. PERENNIAL FRESHNESS

The Bible differs radically from all other books in its perpetual freshness. This characteristic will be recognized only by those who know the Book in that intimate way which comes from living with it, as with a member of one's family. I mention it first because it was one of the first *unique* properties of the Bible which impressed me after I began to read it as a believer in Christ. It is a very remarkable fact that the Bible never becomes exhausted, never acquires sameness, never diminishes in its power of responsiveness to the quickened soul who comes to it. The most familiar passages yield as much (if not more) refreshment at the thousandth perusal, as at the first. It is indeed as a fountain of living water. The fountain is the same, but the water is always fresh, and always refreshing. We can compare this to nothing but what we find in a living companion, whom we love and to whom we go for help and fellowship. The person is always the same, and yet without sameness. New conditions evoke new responses; and so it is with the Bible. As a living Book it adapts itself to the new phases of our experience and the new conditions in which we find ourselves. From the most familiar passage there comes again and again *a new message*; just as our most familiar friend or companion will have something new to say, as changed conditions and new situations require it from time to time.

This is true of no other book. What man's book has to say we can get the first time; and the exceptions arise merely from lack of clearness on the writer's part, or lack of apprehension on the part of the reader. Man can touch only the surface of things, and he cares only about surface appearances. So, in all his writings, whatever substance they contain lies on the surface, and can be gathered by a capable reader at once. If the Word of God may be compared in this particular to a living person, the books of men may be compared to pictures or statues of living persons. However beautifully or artistically executed, a single view may readily exhaust the latter, and a second and third look will be mere repetitions. The difference is that which exists between the living and the dead. The Word of God is LIVING.

But while the Bible resembles in this important respect a living person, who is our familiar, sympathetic, and responsive companion, it differs from such a human companion in that the counsel, comfort, and support it furnishes are far above and beyond what any human being can supply; and the only explanation of this is that the source of its life and powers is not human, but Divine.

4. THE BIBLE DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE

One of the most prominent characteristics of books written by men for the purpose of imparting information and instruction is that they very quickly become obsolete, and must be cast aside and replaced by others. This is particularly true of books on science, text-books, school-books and the like. Indeed it is a matter of boasting (though it would be hard to explain why) that "progress" is so rapid in all departments of learning as to render the scientific books of one generation almost worthless to the

next. Changes in human knowledge, thought and opinion occur so swiftly, that books, which were the standards yesterday, are set aside today for others, which in turn will be discarded for yet other "authorities" tomorrow. In fact, every book which is written for a serious purpose begins to become obsolete before the ink is dry on the page. This may be made the occasion of boasting of the great progress of humanity, and of the wonderful advances of "science;" but the true significance of the fact is that man's books are all, like himself, dying creatures.

The Bible, on the other hand, although it treats of the greatest and most serious of all subjects, such as God, Christ, eternity, life, death, sin, righteousness, judgment, redemption is always the latest, best, and only authority on all these and other weighty matters whereof it treats. Centuries of "progress" and "advancement" have added *absolutely nothing* to the sum of knowledge on any of these subjects. The Bible is always fresh and thoroughly "up to date." Indeed it is far, far ahead of human science. Progress cannot overtake it, or get beyond it. Generation succeeds generation, but each finds the Bible waiting for it with its ever fresh and never failing stores of information touching matters of the highest concern, touching everything that affects the welfare of human beings.

5. SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

Human teachers and teachings have, indeed, frequently set themselves in opposition to some of the statements of the Bible; and it has often been announced, upon human authority, that errors in history and in matters of science have been detected in the Bible. Some, indeed, have endeavored to save the reputation and authority of the Bible by saying that it was not written to teach men "science." In a sense this is true. The Bible was not written to impart that kind of knowledge which "puffeth up," but just the contrary. It was written to impart that kind of information which takes man down by showing him his true position as a ruined, perishing creature, under the condemnation and power of death, and utterly "without strength," that is to say, incapable of doing anything to deliver himself out of this deplorable condition. It declares that, "if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" ([1 Corinthians 8:2](#)). Such is the plain declaration of Scripture as to the limitations of all human knowledge; and he who knows the most is most conscious of these limitations. But if, by the statement that the Bible was not written to teach "science," it be meant that the Bible is unscientific, that statement is not true. On the contrary, the Bible is the only book in the world that is truly "scientific;" for it is the only book which gives precise, accurate and *absolutely reliable* information upon every subject whereof it treats. It is the only book in the world upon every statement of which one may safely put implicit confidence. Countless millions have believed the statements of the Word of God, every one of them to his unspeakable advantage, not one of them to his hurt.

We used to hear a great deal, some thirty years ago, about the many "mistakes of Moses," and the errors which "science," with her keen eye, had detected in the Scriptures. But we hear very little today

from scientists themselves about the "conflicts between science and religion." These conflicts have, one by one, ceased, as "science" has revised her hasty conclusions and corrected her blunders. The writer has been a diligent student of the physical sciences and of the philosophies based on them, for upwards of twenty-five years, and a practicing lawyer for a still longer period, and having now acquired a fair knowledge of the text of Scripture, he can say that he is aware of no demonstrated fact of science which is in conflict with a single statement of the Bible. Among all the "assured results of science" there exists not, to his knowledge, evidence sufficient in character and amount to convict the Bible of a single error or misstatement. Of course, such evidence could not exist. The Lord Jesus said of the Word of God, "Thy Word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)); and of course, true knowledge of God's creation cannot conflict with His Word.

A recent book by Alfred Russel Wallace entitled, "Man's Place in the Universe" (1904), furnishes a striking illustration, on a large scale, of the way in which "science," after leading the thought of cultured and highly educated minds away from the truth revealed by Scripture, sometimes leads it back again.

The reading of Scripture undoubtedly gives, and was clearly intended to give, the impression that the earth is the center of interest in the universe, and the object of the Creator's special care; that it was fitted with elaborate pains to be the habitation of living creatures, and especially of man; and that the sun, moon and stars were created with special reference to their service to the earth. Hence, for many centuries, man believed that the earth was the center of the universe, and (though the Bible does not say so) that the Sun and stars were relatively small bodies which moved around and waited upon it.

But these ideas have been completely upset by the discoveries of modern astronomers, who ascertained, at least to their entire satisfaction, that not only is the sun enormously larger than the earth, but that it is attended by other planets, the largest of which is twelve hundred times larger than the earth. Moreover, it has also been learned, so we are told, that our sun itself is but one of an almost infinite number of stars, many of which are immensely greater in size, and which, it may be assumed, are themselves the centers of planetary systems on a much grander scale than our little solar system.

In such a universe as modern astronomy has brought into the view of man our little earth, once thought to be its center of interest and importance, shrinks into utter insignificance. In proportion to the vast universe of which it is a member its size is relatively less than that of a tiny particle of dust in proportion to the mass of the earth itself. How, therefore, can it be supposed that the Creator of so inconceivably great and complex a universe would have a special regard for this insignificant attendant of a fourth-rate sun, and for the still more insignificant creatures who dwell upon it? The earth with all its occupants could drop out of the universe and be no more missed than a single grain of sand from the seashore or a single drop of water from the ocean.

It is inevitable that these teachings of astronomy concerning the universe should have produced impressions directly opposite to those produced by Scripture, and should have placed obstacles in the way of believing the doctrine of redemption by the incarnation and sacrificial death of the Son of God.

But now comes Mr. Wallace, the contemporary of Charles Darwin, and probably at the present day one of the most prominent men of science, and reverses the ideas which have been so widely disseminated in the name of science. Mr. Wallace masses a great body of evidence, derived both from astronomy and physics, to support the propositions, First, that the solar system occupies (and always has occupied) approximately the central portion of this vast universe, getting all the advantages due to such favorable position; Second, that the earth is certainly the only habitable planet in the solar system, and presumably the only habitable spot in the whole universe. Mr. Wallace, by a vast accumulation of facts and inferences, shows that the physical conditions necessary for the maintenance of life depend upon a great variety of complex and delicate adjustments, such as distance from the sun, the mass of the planet, its obliquity to its orbit, the amount of water as compared with land, the surface distribution of land and water, the permanence of this distribution, the density of the earth, the volume and density of the atmosphere, the amount of carbon-dioxide therein, etc. These, and other essential conditions, are met (says Mr. Wallace) only in a planet such as this earth, situated and constructed as it is. From Mr. Wallace's premises, if the universe is assumed to be the work of an intelligent Creator, it would follow that everything in this inconceivably vast and complex universe has been planned and arranged with special reference to making this little earth of ours a place suitable for the habitation of living beings, and especially of mankind.

We give Mr. Wallace's conclusions in his own words. He says: *"This completes my work as a connected argument, founded wholly upon the facts and principles accumulated by modern science; and it leads, if my facts are substantially correct and my reasoning sound, to one great and definite conclusion,— that man, the culmination of conscious organic life, has been developed HERE ONLY in the whole vast material universe we see around us."*

Thus we have the surprising fact that one of the foremost living exponents of the teachings of science, a man who certainly attaches no importance to the teachings of Scripture, has been at great pains to show that the earth is, after all, the center of, and most important place in, the whole universe; and that, so far as any purpose can be detected in it, the universe may well be supposed to exist for the sole benefit of the earth, and for the sake of producing therein those peculiar conditions necessary for the existence and maintenance of life.

We may say then that, considered merely as a book of instruction, the Bible is, as to every subject whereof it treats, not merely abreast of, but far ahead of, the learning of these and all other times, whether past or future. The impressions it makes upon believing minds are the impressions of *truth*,

even though (as in the instance we have just been considering) contemporary science may give, as its settled conclusions, impressions directly to the contrary.

Unlike other books of instruction THE BIBLE DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE. This is a fact of immense significance; and its only explanation is that the Bible is a LIVING book, the Word of the living God. All other books partake of the infirmity of their authors, and are either dying or dead. On the other hand, "The Word of God is living."

6. THE BIBLE IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

The Bible manifests the possession of inherent and imperishable life in that it survives all the attempts that have been made to destroy it.

The Bible is the only book in the world that is truly hated. The hatred it arouses is bitter, persistent, murderous. From generation to generation this hatred has been kept alive. There is doubtless a supernatural explanation for this continuous display of hostility towards the Word of God, for that Word has a supernatural enemy who has personally experienced its power. ([Matthew 4:1-10](#)).

But the natural explanation of this hatred is that the Bible differs notably from other books in that it gives no flattering picture of man and his world, but just the reverse. The Bible does not say that man is a noble being, ever aspiring towards the attainment of exalted ideals. It does not describe the career of humanity as "progress," as the brave and successful struggle of man against the evils of his environment; but quite the contrary, declares it to be a career of disobedience and departure from God, a preference for darkness rather than for light, "because their deeds are evil" ([John 3:19](#)).

The Bible does not represent man as having come, without any fault of his own, into adverse circumstances, and as being engaged in gradually overcoming these by the development and exercise of his inherent powers. It does not applaud his achievements, and extol his wonderful civilization. Quite the contrary. It records how God saw that the **wickedness** of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ([Genesis 6:5](#)). It speaks of man as "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, guile, evil dispositions; whisperers, slanderers, hateful to God, insolent, proud, vaunting, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, perfidious, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" ([Romans 1:29-31](#) Gr.). It says that "They are **all** under sin," that "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one" ([Romans 3:10-12](#)). Man's condition by nature is described as "**dead** in trespasses and sins," "children of disobedience; among whom also we **all** had our conduct in times

past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *by nature* the children of wrath" ([Ephesians 2:1-3](#)).

The Bible has nothing to say in praise of man or of his natural endowments. On the contrary, it derides his wisdom as "foolishness with God." It declares that God has made foolish the wisdom of this age ([1 Corinthians 1:20](#)); that the natural man is incapable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)); and that if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. ([1 Corinthians 8:2](#)).

Nor does the Bible predict the ultimate triumph of "civilization." It does not say that the progress of humanity shall bring it eventually to a vastly better state of things. It does not say that human nature shall improve under the influences of education and self-culture, even with that of Christianity added. On the contrary, it declares that evil men "shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" ([2 Timothy 3:13](#)).

Even of "this present evil age" ([Galatians 1:4](#)), during which the professing church is the most conspicuous object on earth, and during which the world has the enormous benefit resulting from the light of revelation and an open Bible, it is not predicted that man and his world would undergo any improvement, or that the developments of the age would be in the direction of better conditions on earth. On the contrary, the Bible declares that "in the last days perilous (or difficult) times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, lovers of money, vaunting, proud, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, untruthful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, inconsistent, savage, not lovers of good, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety, but denying the power of it" ([2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) Gr.).

Such is the character of man, and such is to be the result, as Scripture foretells it, of all his schemes of betterment, education, development, self culture, civilization and character-building. And because of this the Bible is heartily detested. Men have sought nothing more earnestly than they have sought to destroy this appallingly accurate portrait of themselves and their doings. How astonishing it is that any intelligent person should suppose that man drew this picture of himself, and predicted this as the outcome of all his own efforts! No wonder the Bible is hated, and for the simple and sufficient reason that it declares the truth about man and his world. The Lord Jesus set forth clearly both the fact and its explanation when He said to His unbelieving brethren, "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that *the works thereof are evil*" ([John 7:7](#)).

Again, the Bible is hated because it claims the right to exercise, and assumes to exercise, *authority over man*. It speaks as one *having authority*. It issues commands to all. It says, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." It does not simply advise or commend one course of action rather than another, as one would address an equal, but it directs men imperatively what they shall do, and what they shall not do. In this manner it addresses all ranks and conditions of men—kings and governors, parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, rich and poor, high and low, free and bond. In this, too, we have a characteristic of the Bible which distinguishes it from all other books. It is no respecter of

persons. But for this cause also it is hated; for men are becoming more and more impatient of all external authority. The principles of democracy, the essence of which is the supremacy (virtually the *divinity*) of man, has thoroughly leavened all society in the progressive nations of the earth. There is a sentiment abroad, which finds frequent expression and meets always with a sympathetic reception, to the effect that man has been shackled through the ages by narrow theological ideas whereof the Bible is the source, and that the time has arrived for him to throw off this bondage, to arise in his true might and majesty, and to do great things for himself.

It is a most impressive fact that, in all the visible universe, there is nothing that assumes authority over man, or that imposes laws upon him, *except the Bible*. Once thoroughly rid of that troublesome book, and man will be finally rid of all authority, and will have arrived at that state of lawlessness predicted in the New Testament prophecies; wherein society will be ready to accept the leadership of that "lawless one," whose coming is to be after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood, and with all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not a love of the truth that they might be saved. ([2 Thessalonians 2:7-10](#)).

This is perhaps the main purpose of the persistent attempts in our day, mostly in the name of scholarship and liberal theology, to break down the authority of Scripture; and we may see with our own eyes that the measure of success of this great apostasy is just what the Bible has foretold.

Other books arouse no hatred. There may be books which men dislike, and such they simply let alone. But the Bible is, and always has been, hated to the death. It is the *one book* that has been pursued from century to century, as men pursue a mortal foe. At first its destruction has been sought by violence. All human powers, political and ecclesiastical, have combined to put it out of existence. Death has been the penalty for possessing or reading a copy; and such copies as were found have been turned over to the public executioner to be treated as was the Incarnate Word. No expedient that human ingenuity could devise or human cruelty put into effect, has been omitted in the desperate attempt to put this detested book out of existence. But the concentrated power of man utterly failed in the attempt. Why? Here is one book among countless millions which is singled out for relentless hatred, and that fact alone is sufficient to provoke astonishment and invite the closest scrutiny to ascertain the explanation of the unique phenomenon. What characteristic is it that distinguishes this Book from all other books in so strange a fashion? Has its influence upon men been corrupting or otherwise evil? Does it teach doctrines dangerous to individuals or communities? Does it promote disorder, vice or crime? On the contrary, it will not be questioned that its influence, wherever it has gone, has been beneficial beyond that of all other books combined, and that the most fruitful human lives are those which have been molded by its teachings. One explanation alone will account for the astounding fact that such a Book should be the only one now or ever in existence to provoke active and persistent animosity among men who refuse to acknowledge it as from God; namely, that it declares man to be a *fallen* creature, and his whole career to be the mere outworking of his corrupt nature in the path of disobedience; and that it

predicts in plain language what the end of that path will be for all who do not accept God's method of deliverance out of it through Jesus Christ.

But, violence having failed to rid man of the Bible, other means have been resorted to in the persistent effort to accomplish that object. To this end the intellect and learning of man have been enlisted. The Book has been assailed from every side by men of the highest intelligence, culture and scholarship. Since the art of printing has been developed there has been in progress a continuous war of books. Many books against THE Book—man's books against God's Book. Its authority has been denied, and its veracity and even its morality have been impugned, its claims upon the consciences of men have been ridiculed; but all to no purpose, except to bring out more conspicuously the fact that the "Word of God is LIVING," and with an indestructible life.

Should any other book incur the hatred of man (which no other book ever has, seeing that all others are man's own productions) it would not be necessary to take measures for its destruction. A book produced by dying men need only be let alone to die of its own accord. The seeds of death are in it from the start. One Book alone has incurred man's hatred, because it is the one Book that is not his own. It is the only thing *in* the whole world that is hostile *to* the whole world-system. One Book only has man attempted to destroy; and yet, in this attempt, though in it all his powers and resources have been employed, he has most conspicuously and ignominiously failed. Why?

A little less than a century and a half ago a book made its appearance which attracted wide attention, particularly in the upper circles of intellect and culture. It was vauntingly entitled the "Age of Reason," and its author, Thomas Paine, was probably without superior in intelligence among his contemporaries. So confident was the author of this book that his reasoning's proved the untrustworthiness of Scripture, and destroyed its claim upon the consciences of men as the revelation of the living God, that he predicted that in fifty years the Bible would be practically out of print. But nearly thrice fifty years have passed since this boast was uttered. The boaster and his book have passed away; and their very names are well-nigh forgotten. But the Word of God has maintained its place, and not by human power. They who believe and cherish it are a feeble folk. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many high-born are among them. They have no might of their own to stand against the enemies of the Bible. The situation resembles a scene recorded in [1 Kings 20:27](#), where the Israelites went out against the Syrians, and we read that "The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country."

But notwithstanding such great odds, the victory is certain. The enemies of the Bible have indeed filled the country. Yet, they shall all pass away; but the Word of the Lord shall not pass away.

Again, in more recent times, a book of man was put forth, and was hailed as a work which would quickly destroy the credibility of Scripture and put an end to its authority and influence. This was Charles Darwin's "Descent of Man," a book whose influence has been greater, doubtless, than any other that has made its appearance during a century past. The main feature of this work was that it set forth an

explanation of the origin of living beings, including man, radically different from that of Genesis, and propounded a theory of propagation of living species directly contrary to the great and immutable law declared nine times over in the first chapter of the Bible in the brief but significant expression, "after his kind."

The delight which Darwin's book caused among the enemies of the Bible, and the spirit in which its appearance was welcomed, are well illustrated by the title bestowed upon it by the eminent naturalist Haeckel, who called it the "Anti-Genesis," declaring that by a single stroke Darwin had annihilated the dogma of Creation. But it was not because of its supposed contribution to truth that Darwin's book was so widely and cordially received, and his utterly unproved hypothesis so readily accepted as an "assured result of science." Its vogue was largely due to the fact that it struck at the very foundation of Scripture. It is useless to pretend that Darwin's theory might be true, and the Bible nevertheless entitled to respect. The Lord Jesus said to a learned man of His day, "If I have told you *earthly things*, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of *heavenly things?*" ([John 3:12](#)). If the Bible does not give us a truthful account of the events of the six days recorded in its first chapter, it is not to be trusted as to *any* of its statements.

But we have now the record of about half a century since the publication of Darwin's book; and, though the great movements of unbelief and apostasy are swiftly running their predicted course, there never was a time when the absolute and divine accuracy of Scripture from beginning to end, was more firmly grasped and tenaciously held by those who know it best, and never a time since "science" began to be looked to as an authority and instructor of men when there was less "scientific" basis for the prevalent questioning of the statements of the Bible.

There can be, of course, no real conflict between the Bible and any true discovery of science. Such conflicts as have been supposed to exist arose from hasty and incorrect conclusions, whose chief value in the eyes of many lay in the fact that they contradicted the Bible. As science has been compelled, however reluctantly, to correct her blunders, or to acknowledge that supposedly demonstrated truths were at best but unproved conjectures, the "conflicts" have died out; so that, at the present time, the assured teachings of "science" afford no weapons against the statements of the Bible. On the contrary, the investigations of men, in fields of geology, physics, and paleontology, have brought into view much information recorded ages ago in the Bible, information which, at the time the latter was written, was not in the knowledge of man. As has been already said, there is not a single assertion of the Bible that is in conflict with any demonstrated fact of science. All the investigations, of all the searchers, in all the various fields of search, have not availed to produce evidence sufficient in character and amount to convict Scripture of a single false statement.

But it is time to bring to a close our remarks under this heading, though they might be greatly extended.

We have called attention to the strange fact that, of all the millions of books that have existed, the Bible is the only one that has excited deep and persistent hatred, the only Book which men have sought to get rid of, and that by every conceivable means. We have further called attention to the still stranger fact that, in this attempt to destroy the Bible, the powers of state, of religion, and of learning, have all been enlisted, and that, nevertheless, the number of copies of the Bible goes on steadily increasing. How can these facts be explained except by the statement that "the Word of God is LIVING," and that the source of its life is beyond the reach of man—in the very Being of the Living God?

7. THE BIBLE IS A DISCERNER OF HEARTS

The power of discernment belongs only to an intelligent living being; and the power of discernment possessed by man does not go beneath the surface of things. Yet the passage in Hebrews, already quoted ([Hebrews 4:12](#)), asserts that the Word of God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

This is a very remarkable statement, yet it is true, and millions of men have felt and recognized the searching and discerning power of the Word of God. We go to it not so much to learn the thoughts of other men, as to learn our own thoughts. We go to other books to find what was in the hearts and minds of their authors; but we go to this Book to find what is in our own hearts and minds. To one who reads it with ever so little spiritual intelligence, there comes a perception of the fact that this Book understands and knows all about him. It lays bare the deepest secrets of his heart, and brings to the surface of his consciousness, out of the unfathomable depths and unexplorable recesses of his own being, "thoughts and intents" whose existence was unsuspected. It reveals man to himself in a way difficult to describe, and absolutely peculiar to itself. It is a faithful mirror which reflects us exactly as we are. It detects our motives, discerns our needs; and having truthfully discovered to us our true selves, it counsels, reproves, exhorts, guides, refreshes, strengthens, and illuminates.

It has been pointed out that the Greek word rendered "discerner" in [Hebrews 4:12](#), means literally "critic" (*kritikos*), and that this is its only occurrence in Scripture. How very significant is it that the designation "higher critics" has been assumed by that little coterie of men who claim to be able, by their own powers of literary discernment, to assign the dates of production of books and parts of books of Scripture, to detect spurious passages, alleged interpolations, and the like, and to split up books into fragments, assigning bits to one imaginary author and other bits to another; whereas as a matter of fact, it is the Bible itself that is the "Critic" of men.

This is in keeping with the subversive principles of this present evil age, wherein man is seeking to put himself in the place of God. This is "man's day." Man is now the critic of everything, and particularly of God's Word. Of that he is a "[higher](#) critic."

There is, however, no external evidence to support the higher critical views as to the late origin of the Pentateuch, Daniel, the latter part of Isaiah, etc.; *per contra* [not comparable to-Ed.] every pertinent discovery in the ruins of ancient cities corroborates the statements of Scripture. These theories rest entirely upon the alleged intuitive perceptions of sinful men, compassed about by infirmity, who claim to be able to pass infallibly upon the style and contents of each book of the Bible, to decide when it was written, by whom it could not have been written, and even to divide it up into various portions, assigning each to a different "source."

But high scholarship is not incompatible with belief in the full inspiration and accuracy of Scripture. Dean Burgon, one of the famous scholars of Oxford, says:

"I must be content with repudiating, in the most unqualified way, the notion that a mistake of any kind whatever is consistent with the texture of a narrative inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

"The Bible is none other but the Word of God, not some part of it more and some part of it less so, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme—'The witness of God which He hath testified of His Son.'"

The time is at hand when the haughtiness of man shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Then the Word of God shall judge the critics.

Meanwhile, the living Word shall continue to be the discerning companion of all who resort to it for the help which is not to be had elsewhere in this world of the dying. In going to the Bible we never think of ourselves as going *back* to a book of the distant past, to a thing of *antiquity*; but we go to it as to a book of the *present*—a living book. And so indeed it is, living in the power of an endless life, and able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. ([Acts 20:32](#)).

8. THE TRANSLATABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

The Word of God manifests itself as a living Word in the very unique property it has of adapting itself and its message to all peoples, and of speaking in all languages, tongues and dialects. The extreme mobility and adaptability of Scripture, as manifested in this way, is comparable only to the power which a living being has of making himself at home in different countries from that in which he was born.

We have here again a characteristic which distinguishes the Bible from all other books, as any one may, with a little attention, clearly perceive. It is a universal rule that a book does not thrive except in the language in which it was written. Men's books will not always bear translation; and the greater the literary value of a book the more it is likely to suffer loss in being translated from one language into another. Change of locality is, to the great majority of books, absolutely destructive.

But to this rule the Bible is a marvelous exception. It seems to run freely into the mould of every language, to adapt itself perfectly thereto, and to speak with equal directness, clearness and authority to all peoples and tribes and nations, in their mother tongue. It does not occur to us that, in reading our common English Bible, we are reading a translation of an Oriental book; and indeed, when an example of the purest and best English is desired, men go with one accord to the Bible.

Considered merely as a poem, there is nothing more exquisite in the English language than the Twenty-third Psalm [Psalm 23]; and it has been stated that in other languages besides English this Shepherd Psalm is a model of poetical excellence. It never occurs to one reading it that he is reading a translation from another and very different language.

Is not this indeed a very extraordinary fact, and the more so when we consider that the Bible, though a unit, is at the same time highly composite? It comprises specimens of every kind of literature, historical, poetical, biographical, didactic, prophetic, epistolary, etc.

Moreover, it is not the production of a single human being, clothed in a uniform literary style of dress. On the contrary, its several parts were penned by men in widely varying stations in life, from herdsmen and unlearned fishermen, to kings and statesmen; and its styles are as divergent as its writers.

Nor was it the product of one era or period, which would tend to impart some common characteristics, and to prevent wide divergences. As much as fifteen hundred years elapsed between the writing of its first and its last pages. Yet all parts and styles alike accommodate themselves to the change of language far more readily and perfectly than any human being is able to do when acquiring another tongue.

The property we are now considering is the more remarkable when we consider also the nation from which this unique volume has come. The Jews were anything but a literary people. They were not at all remarkable for culture, learning, art, or philosophy; and they were quite cut off by their peculiar customs, traditions, and religious institutions, from the progressive nations around them. There is no other Jewish literature that is worth talking about. Yet, from such a people has come a volume whose sixty-six books, now that we have them all together, evidently constitute one complete structure, unitary in design, yet which was fifteen centuries in attaining its completed state. This book; after the Jewish people were disintegrated and scattered,—even as that very book had distinctly foretold,—and had become the most despised and persecuted people on earth, has entered into the place of supremacy in every nation which has attained to any degree of civilization, and has held that place without a rival for eighteen centuries, during which period of time every *human* institution has been overturned, not once only, but again and again.

Why is it that the universal Book did not have its origin in the literature of Greece, or of ancient Rome, or in the Elizabethan epoch of English literature? Why is it that nations which have been famed for their

culture and literary genius have produced nothing comparable to the Bible? What collection of sixty-six books from the writings of about thirty authors of any nation could be made that would present any of the characteristics we have been noticing? Yet, it is certain that, if the Bible had a natural, instead of a supernatural origin, it would be far surpassed by the literary product of the literary nations of the earth.

This property of adaptability to all languages and peoples will impress us still more if we compare it in this respect with other Oriental books. The mere fact that it *is* an Oriental book makes its career among the Occidental nations still more miraculous. All attempts to domesticate other Oriental books, particularly sacred books, have been complete failures. Other Oriental books are sought by scholars only, or by others who have a special interest for inquiring into their contents.

Already the Bible, or portions of it, has been translated into upwards of four hundred languages and dialects; so that it is revealing the grace of God in the gift of His Son, to practically every nation, kindred, tongue and tribe, throughout the world, and is speaking to all peoples *in their own native tongues.*

Like a living person, the Bible has made its way into all lands, has adapted itself to all environments, entered into relations of the most intimate kind with all peoples, and has exerted upon them all its own unique influence. It makes no difference what the people are to whom it goes, how radically different all their customs and institutions from those of that very peculiar people Israel; the Bible makes itself perfectly at home, and takes its own place without delay. Can this, or anything remotely approaching it, be said of any other book? And if not, are we not compelled, if we would have an explanation of this extraordinary difference, to fall back upon the statement that the "Word of God is living"? No other explanation will account for any of the facts we have been considering. This explanation accounts for them all.

The fact we are here considering, that is to say, the career of the Bible among the peoples of the earth, is, indeed, a stupendous and continuing miracle. Why has this particular Book gone to the ends of the earth, and assumed everywhere, and maintained against all opposition, the place of supremacy? What has given to this collection of writings, coming from an insignificant, peculiar, narrow-minded and isolated people, its *universal* character? Why is it that all other books, or collections of books, including the productions of the mightiest intellects and embodying the most superb and lofty specimens of human thought, wisdom, learning and experience, have been narrowly circumscribed in their area of influence, both as to time and space? Why has this particular Book continued ever widening its sphere of influence as the centuries pass, while every other book, after its first vogue, steadily contracts and dwindles? Why does this Book increase while all others decrease?

There is no *natural* explanation for these remarkable facts. In this day, when a natural explanation is sought for all things, the wise men can advance no theory to account for these facts. We sometimes hear, from the enemies of the truth, the admission that the Bible is inspired, but coupled with the statement that other books are equally inspired. For example, a prominent preacher in New York city recently said in an article published in a popular magazine, "God spake to Abraham, and to Samuel

and to Isaiah. He has spoken to Henry Ward Beecher, to Tennyson, and to Ruskin." But neither this prominent preacher, nor any other man who is trying in like manner to put the Word of God on the same level as other books, is able to tell us why the writings of these other "inspired" men do not afford some indications of their divine origin similar to those characteristics of the Bible to which we are now calling attention.

The Apostle Paul in the last of his writings ([2 Timothy 2:8-9](#)), said, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel; wherein I suffer as an evil-doer even unto bonds; but the *word of God is not bound*."

In these words we have the sufficient and the only explanation of the extraordinary and unique career of the Bible. The human custodian of the Word of God may be bound, and may be treated as a malefactor for merely being the bearer of the message; but the living Word of the living God is not, and cannot be, bound. Jehovah Himself has said, "So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth. It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" ([Isaiah 55:11](#)).

But there is more to be noted under this heading. The Bible is the universal Book also in that it not only speaks to all peoples in their own mother tongue, but it addresses itself to all classes of society. Missionaries from every part of the world have reported how the most depraved, ignorant and vicious people will listen at once to the words of Scripture as to no other book, and will recognize them as "good words." Like God Himself His Word is no respecter of persons. Indeed, its sternest denunciations are addressed to persons of rank and of social, ecclesiastical, or political prominence. Its best promises are for the meek and lowly. It has a message for all men, and to the highest as well as the lowest it speaks "with authority," never exhorting from the standpoint merely of superior human wisdom and intelligence, but always as delivering the message of God.

The Bible adapts itself thus to successive generations of men, exhibiting to each individual human being an intimate knowledge of his characteristics, trials and needs. It seems to be waiting for an opportunity to become acquainted with each child of Adam, to direct the steps of his life-journey through this great and terrible wilderness, to warn him of dangers and pitfalls, and to be the man of his counsel to every one who wills not to reject its offer of fellowship. Does not this warrant us in saying that "the Word of God is LIVING"?

9. THE WORD EXHIBITS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF GROWTH

Growth is one of the characteristics of a living being. The Word of God lodges and grows in human hearts, for there is its real lodgment, rather than in the printed page. The Psalmist says, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart" ([Psalm 119:11](#)).

The book of Deuteronomy has much to say about the Word of God. In chapter thirty it declares ([Deuteronomy 30:14](#)) that "The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." This is repeated in [Romans 10:8](#), with the addition, "that is, the word of faith which we preach."

In [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Paul says to the Thessalonians, "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which *effectually worketh also in you that believe.*" The believing heart is its lodgment, and there it works to effect some definite results.

In [Colossians 3:16](#) we have the admonition, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." It is in the believing heart that the Word dwells richly.

The Lord Jesus, in explaining the parable of the sower, said, "The seed is the Word of God" ([Luke 8:11](#)); and again, "The sower soweth *the Word*" ([Mark 4:14](#)). (A seed, of course, is worthless except it have life in it). And He further explained that the seed which fell on good ground "are they which, *in an honest and good heart,* having heard the Word keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" ([Luke 8:15](#)).

To the unbelieving Jews the Lord said, "And ye have not His Word *abiding in you*, for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not" ([John 5:38](#)).

In [Colossians 1:5-6](#), Paul speaks of the "Word of the truth of the Gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit."

In these passages we have presented to us the thought of the Word as a living seed or germ, first finding lodgment in the heart of man, and then abiding and growing there.

The growth of the Word of God is specifically mentioned in several striking passages in the Acts of the Apostles. [Acts 6:7](#): "*And the Word of God increased;* and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly."

Here we are told specifically that the Word of God increased. We learn from this that the mere multiplication of copies of the Scriptures is in itself of no importance. It is of no avail to have the Book in the house, and on the shelf or table, if it be not taken into the heart. But when so received into the heart, the Word of God grows and increases. It is assimilated into the life of him who receives it, and henceforth is a part of himself.

It is important to note what stimulated this recorded increase of the Word of God. The Apostles, who were its custodians or depositories, had found themselves taken up with ministering to the material wants of the flock, and they brought this matter before the body of disciples saying, "It is not reason that we should leave the *Word of God* and serve tables" ([Act 6:2](#)), and they asked that suitable men be appointed for that service while they should give themselves continually "to prayer and the ministry of the Word" ([Act 6:4](#)).

The growth of the Word then, accompanied by a great multiplication of the number of disciples, was the result of faithful ministry of the Word—a ministry which was sustained by prayer.

This method of promoting the growth of the Word of God is highly important. Every believer, having the Word in his heart and in his mouth, may be and should be the means of its propagation; and the extent to which the Word has been spread abroad in this inconspicuous way will not be known until the time when all things shall be manifested. There are great multitudes who would never get the Word from the printed page, or from the spoken sermon or address. Hence the importance of these epistles of Christ written not with ink, but with the SPIRIT of the living God, not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshy tablets of the heart. ([2 Corinthians 3:3](#)). Such epistles are read by many who never read the printed page; and the eternal destiny of many souls may depend upon the distinctness and legibility of that writing. May our lives, as believers, be so transparent that the Word written in our hearts may be distinctly seen; and thus, as sons of God we shall shine "as lights in the world holding forth the Word of life" ([Philippians 2:15-16](#)).

The second passage which speaks expressly of the growth of the Word of God is [Acts 12:21-24](#). In this chapter are narrated the last episodes in the life of Herod Antipas. In the first part of the chapter we read how he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and finding this course to be popular with the Jews, he apprehended Peter also, and put him in custody, intending after the Passover to make this leader of the Apostles the object of a public demonstration, which doubtless would have strengthened Herod still further in the regard of the people. But Peter was delivered from prison by an angel of the Lord who was sent for that purpose.

The closing verses of the chapter tell of a disagreement between Herod and the citizens of Tyre and Sidon, some undescribed incident having occurred which caused the former to be highly displeased with the latter. But they, having gained the favor of King Herod's chamberlain, one Blastus, made overtures of peace and sent a delegation to the king. The reception of this embassy was made an occasion of much pomp and circumstance. Herod put on his royal apparel, sat upon his throne, received the delegation, "and made an oration unto them." This oration was received with extravagant demonstrations. "The people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."

Herod accepted this tribute, and no doubt was highly pleased therewith. But it is a dangerous thing for mortal and sinful man, however high his station, to accept glory which belongs to God alone. For immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. "But the word of God grew and multiplied."

There is a tremendous lesson here for the many who, in these closing days of the age, are participating in the various movements which, however diverse in appearance, have all the common object of putting man in the place of God, and the word of man in the place of the Word of God. Herod was not stricken down for persecuting the Church, for imprisoning Peter, or for putting James to death, nor yet for his previous murder of John the Baptist. He was smitten for permitting his word to be acclaimed as the Word of God. Herod had often heard the Word of the Lord, for he had listened attentively to the

preaching of the Baptist. He had heard of the ministry and miracles of the Lord Jesus, and had even seen Him on that dark betrayal night. He was, therefore, not smitten for something done in ignorance.

The angel of Jehovah had two ministries in that chapter. One was to deliver Peter, who, according to the word of his Lord, was to serve Him to old age ([John 21:18](#)). The other was to declare, by smiting the King, the difference between the Word of God and that of the most important man of the country. Doubtless that was a great oration which Herod delivered on that day. It contained most probably striking utterances, pregnant with wisdom and garbed in the attractions of human eloquence. It was, moreover, the King on his throne who spoke, and we know how the throngs gather to listen on such occasions.

On the other hand, and in striking contrast, the Word of God was in the charge of "unlearned and ignorant men" [[Acts 4:13](#)], a despised and persecuted company, whose Leader had but just suffered the ignominious death of a malefactor. What then has become of the words of King Herod? All have utterly perished, centuries ago, from the memory of men. He himself was eaten of worms, "But the Word of God grew and multiplied," and has continued so to do from that time to the present.

Not very long ago, at the convening of the American Congress, a message from the President was addressed to that body. Much comment was made on that message because of its great length. Some industrious person counted the words, and found them to be upwards of thirty thousand. They were serious words, too, and weighty, as human utterances go. They dealt with the most important affairs and interests of the nation that regards itself as the greatest on earth. But they were not "the words of eternal life." And for all that the occasion was so recent, and the subject matter so important, it is doubtful if any person can now recall a single sentence of that great message. Few, indeed, would care to do so, or would receive the slightest benefit there from, if they could.

The words of kings, and emperors, and presidents, are dying words. From the moment of their utterance they begin to perish; but "the Word of God is living." Being the utterance of the living God that Word can never pass away.

The last of the three passages which speaks of the growth of the Word of God is in [Acts 19](#); and again the context adds greatly to the impressiveness of the lesson taught by the passage.

The scene of the first of the three incidents was in Jerusalem, of the second in Caesarea, just west of Galilee, and of the third in Ephesus, a Gentile city. Thus there is special mention made of the growth of the Word of God in Judea, in Palestine outside of Judea, and in the Gentile regions beyond. This would seem to signify that the Word of God was not to be limited to territorial boundary, but was to spread and grow in every part of the earth.

The Apostle Paul had spent two years in Ephesus, preaching to such purpose that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." And God, moreover, "wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" ([Acts 19:10-11](#)).

One result of this ministry was that "many of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*" ([Acts 19:19-20](#)).

This is, indeed, a very notable event—a grand demonstration of the power and sufficiency of the Word of God. These books, intrinsically worth so great a sum as fifty thousand pieces of silver, became worse than worthless in the hands of their owners after the latter had received the Word of God. The books thus destroyed had been held in the highest estimation, because they were the manuals of necromancy, or occult arts. They instructed their readers in just such things as are coming into great favor in the present day. But when their owners "believed," they could no longer practice the "curious arts," or even retain the books that described them.

It is very easy to destroy the books of men. Great and mighty as are the powers of darkness which were back of the books burned at Ephesus, those evil powers are not comparable to that which has directed the career of the Word of God. Many have been the attempts to consume it in the flames, but in vain; for the Word of God is living.

This scene at Ephesus has been re-enacted in many a human life. When in quest of help, enlightenment, wisdom, guidance, and knowledge of the unseen, men turn to books; and though disappointed again and again, the inquiring mind, which has felt the need of a source of light external to itself, and has realized that there must be such a source somewhere, never shakes off the habit of seeking it in books. There appears to be a deep-seated consciousness that the desired help is to be found in some book. But men cannot impart to the books written by them what is not in themselves; and so they who gather many books gain little to compensate for their cost and labor. Conjectures and human opinions, philosophies and vain deceits, with all the obscurities and contradictions contained in them, do but leave the mind in perplexity and bewilderment concerning every matter of real importance. And, after all, if one cannot have certainties, but must put up with mere opinions, why should he not prefer his own to another man's, seeing that all are at the best but mere guesses, whereof one is as likely to be true as another? The "wise men" can tell us nothing, for "lo, they have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" ([Jeremiah 8:9](#)).

But when, to one who has undergone this weariness of a vain quest for something sure and satisfying in the books of men, the Word of God comes with the convincing power which it alone possesses, and with the restful assurance which it alone can impart, the books of men become worthless—mere rubbish, fit only to be food for flames. Conjectures are now exchanged for certainties, and profitless speculations for knowledge certified by the sure testimony of Him who knoweth and understandeth all things.

The writer lately heard a servant of Christ relate an incident in his own life which aptly illustrates what we have been saying. Speaking on the injunction of [Ephesians 6:10](#), "Be strong in the Lord," he said, "I well remember a section in my book-case long ago which contained a highly prized set of Emerson's works. One essay in particular I read and re-read, and had marked favorite passages in it, The burden of it was, 'Young man, be strong.' This phrase occurred again and again, and it thrilled and excited me. But it pointed me to no source of strength, for the writer knew of none. He never once said, 'Be strong in the Lord;' and the time came when, realizing the cruel mockery of the words, and the emptiness of this entire system of philosophy, I put the set of well-printed and choicely bound volumes into the flames." He discovered in the Bible the Source of all strength, and the Book displaced the entire set of man's philosophies and empty deceits. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." Happy is the man who has "received the Word of God" ([Acts 8:14](#); [Acts 11:1](#), etc.), who has made room for it in his life, and in whose heart and mind it has grown and prevailed.

10. A LIFE-GIVING WORD

We come now to something higher and deeper. The great mystery of a living thing is the power it possesses of propagating its kind. To trace the stream of life to its source is confessedly impossible to man, nor does any philosophic theory account for that stream. The attempt made in recent years to explain life as a mere property of atoms of non-living matter grouped in certain complex combinations, has been confessedly a failure. Professor Huxley, probably the ablest defender of this theory, and who at one time predicted that "protoplasm" (as he named the physical basis of life) might one day be produced in the laboratory, was constrained to admit, before his death, that there was no known link between the living and the non-living.

In the era of great scientific activity which marked the last half of the nineteenth century, many and persistent efforts were made to bring about spontaneous generation; that is to say, to demonstrate that life could be caused by human manipulation to spring up out of non-living matter, and apart from antecedent life. Great was the desire of unbelieving men of science to find a support for this theory, for if established it would flatly contradict the first chapter of the Bible, and thus discredit the statements of the latter upon a subject of the highest importance. In that chapter the first law of biology is enunciated in the words "after his kind;" and this law is applied both to the vegetable kingdom and to the animal—to grass, and herb, and fruit tree, to fowl and fishes, and creeping things, to wild beast and tame beast. Each was commanded to bring forth "after his kind;" and it is needless to say that each has strictly obeyed that Divine command.

The inspired account of Creation does not describe the method whereby God brought into existence the several species of living creatures, and gave to each the distinct characteristics which were to be

its perpetual and unvarying endowment. This matter, therefore, belongs to the realm of speculation, into which it is unprofitable to enter. What concerns us is the fact, distinctly stated, and manifestly deemed by the Spirit of God to be of great importance for our instruction in the truth, that God, in creating the numerous species of living creatures, vegetable and animal, put a permanent difference between them, rigidly confining each species to the reproduction of its own kind.

So important was this law in the mind of the Creator, and so careful was He to impress it upon the mind of man, that the formula is stated nine times in the first chapter of Genesis. There is an emphasis in this which has great significance in view of the theory of organic evolution, which, but a few years ago, was advanced as a "scientific" explanation of the origin of species of living beings, and was accepted as such by nearly all the wise and learned of this world.

After many years' investigation of the philosophy of evolution, an investigation carried on in full sympathy with the widest application of that captivating theory, I have yet to see proof of a single fact showing, or tending to show, the operation of the so-called "law" or "principle" of evolution in the world of Nature. No instance has ever been found of a living thing of one species coming from ancestors of another species; and there is not the slightest ground for the belief that such a thing ever happened. On the other hand, every one of the countless billions of reproductions of living creatures—the grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit—which occur every year, are in accordance with the divine command recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. Oak trees have never betrayed the slightest tendency to produce any fruit but acorns, nor acorns to produce any trees but oaks. The theory of organic evolution, promulgated by Darwin and Wallace, has nothing to commend it except that it offers an alternative to the acceptance of the account of the origin of species given in the Bible. The attempts made by the empiricists of the last century to bring about, or to demonstrate the possibility of, spontaneous generation of living organisms by human manipulation apart from pre-existing organisms of the same species, were at first thought to have been successful. Infusions of hay were prepared which, after being tightly sealed in suitable flasks, were heated to a temperature sufficiently high (as was supposed) to destroy all life within the flasks. These were then set aside for awhile, and kept under observation; and in the course of time they were found to contain minute living organisms. These "results of science" were heralded far and wide, and great was the rejoicing occasioned thereby.

But other men of science, among whom the most prominent was Liebig; went over the ground again, repeating the experiments more carefully; and their results showed that, in the earlier experiments, either the flasks had not been tightly sealed, or else the heat to which they were exposed had not been sufficiently great to destroy all the living organisms therein. So conclusive were these later experiments that the theory of spontaneous generation (or "abiogenesis") has had no standing whatever from that time to the present.

The following quotations will accurately inform the reader as to the best scientific opinion on this subject.

Lord Kelvin who, until his recent death, held the leading place among scientific men, used this positive language:

"Inanimate matter cannot become living except under the influence of matter already living. This is a fact in science which seems to me as well ascertained as the law of gravitation."

Again he said: "I am ready to accept as an article of faith in science, valid for all time and in all space, that *life is produced by life and only by life.*"

Professor Huxley, the advocate of the theory of "animal automatism," who at one time contended earnestly that vitality was merely a property of "protoplasm," (that is to say, the property of a particular chemical compound of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen) left this record before his death: "The present state of knowledge furnishes us with no link between the living and the not-living."

Professor Tyndall says: "Every attempt made in our day to generate life independent of antecedent life has utterly broken down."

Such has indeed been, and such must ever be, the result of all human attempts to start the flow of a stream of life, or to divert one which God has started, so as to change the form of manifestation which the Author and Giver of life has given to each species of living creatures.

We wish the reader to understand that we rest nothing whatever upon the outcome of the foregoing scientific controversy, nor upon the above quoted (or any other) statements of human opinion however high their source. Faith has no foundation other than the Word of God.

Men of science may be right or wrong in their deductions from the fragmentary information possessed by them. Generally they are wrong, as is clearly enough shown by the fact that a large part of the work of each generation of men of science consists in overturning or modifying the theories of their predecessors. The foregoing is given as an illustration of the utter futility of setting up the deductions of the human reason against the assertions of the Word of God, and as a caution to the reader, if he be a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, not to give the slightest credence to any statements made in the name of "science" or "scholarship" which call into question what is written in the inspired Scriptures.

We may ask then, Is the Word of God a living Word in this particular sense? Does it have the mysterious power of imparting life; and if so, is the life it imparts of the same sort as its own? Does it reproduce "after its kind"?

This brings up the great subject of spiritual conception and generation, concerning which the Scripture gives not a little information. Into this highly interesting but difficult subject we will not now enter. Even the beginning and maintenance of physical life in plants and animals (including man) are great and inscrutable mysteries. This is true in all stages of the process, particularly in the initial stage of germination, which is the beginning of a new individual existence by the quickening of a seed derived from a previously existing individual of the same species. How much more mysterious, then, must be the process of spiritual generation! The Lord Jesus, in His conversation with the learned and intellectual Pharisee, Nicodemus, indicated that the subject was a very mysterious one, by the words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born [or begotten] of the Spirit" ([John 3:8](#)).

Therefore, even after we have learned all that is given us to know concerning the beginning of physical life in the naturally begotten, and of spiritual life in the supernaturally begotten, the subject remains as mysterious as ever, since the Author of life has reserved it among the "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord our God" ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#)).

But the fact of natural generation cannot be questioned, though the process be involved in unfathomable mystery. The fact of spiritual generation is equally sure to all who believe the Word of God. The Bible plainly declares it, and those who believe on the Christ of God know also by experience the beginning of a new kind of life in their own souls.

For present purposes it is sufficient to point out that spiritual generation is analogous (as might be expected) to natural generation, being effected by means of a seed, which, having been deposited in a prepared place, is quickened by the Spirit of God, and becomes itself "spirit,"—that is to say a new nature which is spiritual in its character; for "that which is born [or begotten] of the Spirit is spirit" ([John 3:6](#)).

The fact of spiritual conception, and the nature of the seed whereby it is effected, are plainly declared in [1 Peter 1:23](#): "Being born [or having been begotten] again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by THE WORD OF GOD WHICH LIVETH and abideth for ever."

There is an immense amount of truth of the highest importance contained in this passage; but the statement which especially concerns us is that the seed of the new birth is from the living Word ("the Word which LIVETH"). This statement plainly teaches that the Word of God possesses the highest endowment of a living being, namely, that of imparting life. And with this agrees the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the parable of the sower, in the explanation of which He said, "The seed is the Word of God" ([Luke 8:11](#)).

In consequence of the transgression and fall of the first man, who was the original depository of the life of humanity ([Genesis 2:7](#)), the life in him, being "corruptible," became vitiated. Hence, by inexorable law, the seed of his generations also became corrupted. It follows that all men in their natural generation are begotten of corruptible (and corrupted) seed; and have received (and hence must impart to their succeeding generations) a corrupted life. What, therefore, was needed, in order to bring into existence

a human family answering to God's purpose in the creation of man ([Genesis 1:26](#)), was a new and *incorrputible seed*. This has been supplied in the Word of God. All who believe that Word are begotten again (or from above); not this time of corruptible seed, "but of incorruptible, by the Word of God *which liveth*." It is a living Word.

It is to be noted that this Scripture testifies that the seed of the living Word is not merely uncorrupted, but is "incorruptible." It partakes, therefore, of the nature of the "uncorruptible God" ([Romans 1:23](#)).

This is the guaranty to us that the Word of God is not subject to the corrupting influences of the corrupted and decaying world into which it is come. It is the *only thing* which has not succumbed to the forces of decay and death which reign universally in the earth. Indeed, it has not been affected in the slightest degree by those forces. This has been pointed out at length in the foregoing pages; but the grand truth comes to us with peculiar force in connection with the passage in 1 Peter. We need not be at all concerned as to whether the truth of God, embodied by Him in His word, has been corrupted, for it is incorruptible. And by that Word they who believe are begotten again through the operation of the Holy Spirit. To them "the Spirit is life" ([Romans 8:10](#)).

The same truth is declared in [James 1:18](#), in the words, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth." Such is the spiritual conception of the "sons of God." These are born, or begotten. In no other way is a "son" brought into existence save by being begotten of a father. The sons of God must be begotten of God. The Apostle John tells us that they are begotten, "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man" ([John 1:13](#)). The Apostle James tells us that "of His own will" they are begotten. Therefore, though the process be inscrutably mysterious, there can be no doubt as to the fact. When the Word of God is truly "heard" and thereby received into a prepared heart, that word becomes truly a seed, spiritual and incorruptible in nature, which, when quickened by the Spirit of God, becomes the life-germ of a new creature—a son of God.

The same truth is very clearly taught in our Lord's explanation of His parable of the sower, to which reference has already been made. Inasmuch as we have His own interpretation of this parable, we need be in no uncertainty as to its meaning. He says, "Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the Devil and taketh away *the Word out of their hearts*, lest they should believe and be saved" ([Luke 8:12](#)). And again: "But that on the good ground are they which, in *an honest and good heart*, having heard the Word keep it and bring forth fruit with patience" ([Luke 8:15](#)).

The method of spiritual conception set forth in these Scriptures, which is effected in a manner quite analogous to natural conception, furnishes the explanation of the connection between "believing" and "life" referred to in many passages of Scripture. One of the most familiar of these is [John 5:24](#) where the Lord Jesus states in the simplest language that the man who hears His Word and believes on Him who sent Him has everlasting life, and is passed out of death into life. Such a man receives the seed in his heart, and the seed is there quickened into life.

Indeed, the great purpose of the Written Word is to impart life—even eternal (that is to say divine) life—to those who are dead through trespasses and sins. The Gospel of John, which is devoted largely to

the great subject of eternal life, and from which a large part of our information concerning it is derived, was "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that *believing* ye might have *life* through his name" ([John 20:31](#)).

The same truth is declared in the familiar passage in [Romans 10:9](#), which sets forth very definitely the special truth which constitutes the substance and marrow of God's revelation in His Word, and which He calls upon men to believe and obey through the preaching of the Gospel, namely that Jesus Christ, who died for sinners, has been *raised from the dead*, and that He is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.

The main point to be apprehended in this connection is that a certain state of preparedness of heart is necessary in order that the "good seed" of the Word may germinate and grow there. Such a prepared heart is described in Scripture as a believing heart. That prepared state is manifested when a man believes God, as Abraham did ([Romans 4:17](#)); or, in other words, when a man is ready to receive the Word of God as the Word of God, as the Thessalonians did ([1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)).

When a man has been brought, by the operation of the Spirit of God, who is the "Spirit of LIFE in Christ Jesus" ([Romans 8:2, 10](#)), into this state of preparation, then the Word of God, being received into the heart, acts as a seed falling into good soil. Though it be (as we might say) but the tiniest portion of God's truth as revealed in His Word which is thus received by faith, yet it suffices through His power as the means whereby He may quicken a dead soul. For surely the life of the Word is in every part thereof. Such is the power of the *living* truth to impart life; and herein lies the difference between the truth which God has revealed in His Word, and truth which may be found elsewhere. For there is much truth which is not *living* truth. The multiplication table is truth; but it is not living truth. It has no quickening power. The theorems of geometry are truth; but they are not living truth. Never yet has any man been heard to testify that he had been the wretched and hopeless slave of sin, and had continued in spiritual darkness, fast bound in misery and vice until his eyes were opened by the great truth that two and two make four, or that three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; and that thereby his life had been transformed, his soul delivered from bondage, and his heart filled with joy and peace in believing. On the other hand, in the case of a true conversion, it may have been but the shortest and simplest statement of "the Word of the truth of the Gospel" ([Colossians 1:5](#)) that was heard and believed, such as that "Christ died for the ungodly" ([Romans 5:6](#)), yet it suffices, through the mighty power of Him who raised up Christ from among the dead, to quicken together with Christ a soul that previously was dead in trespasses and sins ([Ephesians 1:20](#); [Ephesians 2:5](#)). Thus the Word of truth becomes, in some inscrutable way, the vehicle for imparting that life of which the risen Christ, the Incarnate Word, is the only Source. Eternal life for the individual soul begins through believing "the testimony of God" ([1 Corinthians 1:2](#)), and the testimony of God which He has in grace given to perishing sinners that they may believe and be saved, is "*concerning His Son*" ([Romans 1:3](#); [1 John 5:10](#)). "And this is the record [or testimony], that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" ([1 John 5:11](#)). Therefore

it is written of those who experienced the new birth, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" ([Galatians 3:26](#)).

The teaching and preaching of the day are largely permeated by a notion to the effect that "science" is in some undefined way supplying to a greater or less extent new foundations for religious faith. We cannot, therefore, insist too strongly upon the [vital](#) difference (—for it [is](#) vital—being a difference upon which life depends) between truth revealed by God through His Word, and truth discovered by the investigations of man, and generally spoken of as "scientific" truth. Truth thus obtained has [no relation whatsoever](#) to faith and eternal life; and the effort to substitute it for, or to oppose it to, the truth revealed in God's Word as the basis of faith, must be ascribed to the activity of the "spirit of error."

Many unspiritual teachers in these last days, and many superficial readers of Scripture, deem it incredible that salvation, which is the beginning of the life of the risen Christ in the soul of a perishing man, should be wrought through an operation so apparently simple as that of receiving God's Word, through faith, into the heart.

The clear declarations of God's Word on this subject are indeed frequently ridiculed in pulpit utterances. But to such minds the germination of a seed by merely casting it into the ground would be equally incredible. These spiritually-blinded ones, wise in their own conceits, miss altogether the teaching of the Bible concerning the wonderful process of spiritual conception and generation, which, in view of the equally mysterious process of natural conception, should not be deemed "a thing incredible." "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" ([Romans 1:20](#)).

The passage in [1 Peter 1](#) sets forth, moreover, the fact that spiritual generation through the Word of God conforms to the great biological law stated with such emphatic iteration in the first chapter of Genesis, namely, that the life imparted is the same in kind as that of its source, all the characteristics of the latter being reproduced in it. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the seed is incorruptible, and that the Word, which is its source, is eternal. Moreover, as in John's Gospel, the new, incorruptible, and eternal life, which proceeds from spiritual conception by the Word of God, is put into direct contrast with the natural life or "flesh." "For," continues the Apostle Peter, "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of [man](#) as the flower of grass" ([1 Peter 1:24](#)). The prominent characteristic of grass is that it withereth, and of the flower of grass, or of plant life, is that it falleth away. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but"—in direct contrast with this—"the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." So it does, and so do all they who are begotten of the incorruptible seed of the Word.

The passage closes with the unmistakably plain statement, "And this is the Word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you" ([1 Peter 1:25](#)).

The result of spiritual generation is, of course, a Spiritual infant—a babe. Consequently the next words of the inspired Apostle are in full keeping with, and in confirmation of, the truth we have been considering. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil

speakings" (which are characteristics of the "old man") "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" ([1 Peter 2:1-2](#)). We all know that it is of the first importance that a babe should have appropriate nourishment in order that it may grow; but this belongs to the subject of spiritual nutrition, which will be considered later on.

Other Scriptures testify with equal clearness to the great and glorious truth that those who are begotten of the Spirit, through the incorruptible seed of the Word, receive a nature of the same sort as that of the Divine Source of their life. In the eighth chapter of Romans there is a section devoted to the "sons of God," in whom the Spirit dwells ([Romans 8:9-16](#)); and of these it is declared that God predestinated them "to be conformed *to the image of His Son*, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" ([Romans 8:29](#)).

Here the truth of likeness with the Son of God is broadly stated. Other passages declare specific features included in this general likeness. Thus [1 John 3:9](#) states that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or practice] sin; for His [God's] seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born [begotten] of God. In this the children of God are manifest." The new nature which characterizes the new creature is one that cannot sin; and hence, when this new nature begins to manifest itself in the quickened soul, there is a struggle between its desires and those of the old nature ("the flesh"); for the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires against the flesh, and these are directly opposed, the one to the other ([Galatians 5:17](#)). Every one who has been begotten from above knows from experience what this struggle means.

Again, in [1 John 3:2-3](#), it is stated that now, even at the present time, are we (believers) the sons of God, though we appear so little like it. What we shall be does not yet appear; but we know, upon the clear testimony of Scripture, that "when He shall appear we shall be *like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is."

These statements are so clear that it is not necessary to cite to those who believe the Word of God other passages which declare that spiritual procreation is according to the law repeated nine times in [Genesis 1](#), "after his kind." [[Genesis 1:11](#), [12](#), [21](#), [24](#), [25](#)].

In closing this important section of our subject (which might be greatly amplified if our purpose were to treat exhaustively the great truth of spiritual generation) it will be profitable to notice briefly the close relation between the Written Word and the Incarnate Word in the matter of the impartation of Spiritual life.

This truth brings before us the Son of God in His wonderful and unique character of the Source of Life to a world and to human beings, which had fallen under the power and dominion of death.

"Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed upon [lit. passed through to] all men" ([Romans 5:12](#)). Thus death entered and established its universal sovereignty over all men. Such expressions as "death reigned," "sin reigned unto death" ([Romans 5:14](#), [17](#), [21](#)), state a fact whereof the evidences meet our eye whichever way we look.

Therefore, after Adam's transgression and the ruin wrought by it, the most urgent need of the world was LIFE. To this end the Son of God became a partaker of flesh and blood, "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil" ([Hebrews 2:14](#)). "I am come," He said, "that they might have *life*" ([John 10:10](#)).

In the Gospel by John, the first thing asserted of Him, after setting forth His eternal Deity, and His mighty work as Creator, is the significant statement, "In Him was LIFE" ([John 1:4](#)). This is He who "cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world" ([John 6:33](#)).

We need not cite the many passages of Scripture which witness to Christ as the new Source of life to a world that had fallen under the power of death; but would call attention only to a few of those which connect Him directly with the wonderful process of spiritual generation.

The very first of all prophecies, that concerning the woman's "seed" ([Genesis 3:15](#)) is thus fulfilled in Him; and the designation "seed," thus at the very beginning applied to Him as coming in flesh and blood, carries with it the great promise of a new humanity which was to spring up from and out of Himself.

Again, as the "seed" of Abraham, He is the inheritor (for Himself and for His generations) of all the promises made "to Abraham and his seed." That we might not miss the meaning of this truth, so precious to those who, through faith, "are the children of Abraham" ([Galatians 3:6](#)), it is expressly stated as follows: "Now to Abraham *and his seed* were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of ONE, And to thy SEED, which is Christ" ([Galatians 3:16](#)).

Finally, as David's seed He is the rightful Heir to the kingdom, which he will establish on the earth in the coming age. In promise of this there are many passages such as these: "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom" ([1 Chronicles 17:11](#)). "Upon David, and upon his seed and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace forever from the Lord" ([1 Kings 2:33](#)). "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations" ([Psalm 89:3-4](#)). "His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me" ([Psalm 89:36](#)).

Thus Christ is set forth as the Seed of the woman, as the Seed of Abraham, and as the Seed of David.

But the great purpose of a seed, and its marvelous inherent power, is to reproduce its kind; and the designation "seed" as applied to the Son of Man has this significance also. He Himself takes up this great lesson when he refers to Himself as the kernel of wheat, saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn [kernel] of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" ([John 12:24](#)).

Thus the One who alone had a title to live as a man of flesh and blood, laid *that* life down, submitting voluntarily to the power of death, in order that, instead of dwelling forever "alone" (as man) He might bring forth "much fruit." These are His generations, the "many sons" which He brings into glory

([Hebrews 2:10](#)), the "children" of whom He speaks saying, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me" ([Hebrews 2:13](#)).

If we keep in mind the fact that the grains of wheat in the ear are all reproductions of the original seed, we shall see how forcibly and beautifully the parable of the "corn of wheat" teaches the lesson of spiritual generation. The life in those who have been quickened together with Christ ([Ephesians 2:5](#)) is truly *His* life reproduced in them by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and whose law sets us free from the law of sin and death ([Romans 8:2](#)). We may thus say, "Christ who is our life" ([Colossians 3:4](#)); and as this new life unfolds itself in the being of the believer, and manifests the characteristics of the One who is its source, the former is able also to say, "For me to live is Christ" ([Philippians 1:21](#)).

Whether, therefore, we are regarding the Written Word or the Incarnate Word, it is true (as has been well said) that "the Word" is the whole matter or substance of what God has revealed; but it is also true that any portion of that matter or substance which enters into a human heart, and which, as a seed, germinates and performs there the stupendous miracle of reproduction, is also the Word, imparting life "after his kind"—life incorruptible and everlasting as the Word itself.

Thus, in the highest sense of which we can take knowledge, the Word of God is a "Word of Life"—living and reproducing its kind; and thus is being fulfilled the promise to Him who died that we might live, of Whom it was said of old "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" ([Isaiah 53:10-11](#)).

The believer, too, may say with David, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" ([Psalm 17:15](#)). That will be glory for us; but, what is more important, it will be glory also for Him.

11. THE LIFE-SUSTAINING WORD

The life possessed by human beings is not only a derived life, that is, a life obtained from an external source, but it is a dependent life, requiring continual sustenance. It must be sustained by constant and suitable nutrition, received into the body at short intervals. Man's strength whereof he boasts, and indeed his very existence in the body, are dependent on food, and this food itself must be organic matter, that is to say, matter which has once been living. The fact of this dependence upon food, and upon food which man is utterly unable to make for himself out of inorganic matter, though all the materials are within his reach, should teach him a lesson in humility; but it seems not to have that effect.

We say that man is utterly unable to produce food-stuff though all the materials whereof it is composed are abundantly at hand. This is a pertinent and obvious fact, though one whereof little account is taken.

God has imparted to the lowly plant the ministry of supplying food to all the animal creation, and has taught to it, and to it alone, the marvelous secret of converting the minerals of the earth and air—inert, lifeless elements, utterly incapable of furnishing nourishment to animals or man into living tissue, endowed with the property of nourishing living creatures higher in the scale of life. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that *he may bring forth food out of the earth*" ([Psalm 104:14](#)).

The humble vegetable organism knows how to extract the nitrogen from the earth, and the carbon from the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and to combine these, in exactly the proper proportions, with the oxygen and hydrogen in water, and with traces of lime and other elements, forming with the aid of heat and light from the sun, living tissue, suitable and necessary for food. This wonderful operation of chemical synthesis is carried on by the modest vegetable so unostentatiously as to attract little notice; and though it has been under the observation of inquisitive and imitative man for thousands of years he has not the faintest notion of how it is done. All the learning and skill of all the chemists in the world, with the resources of all the laboratories in the world, could not produce an ounce of food, though the elements out of which it is made exist everywhere, and in the greatest abundance.

But God, having imparted physical life to His creatures, has also made ample provision for the maintenance of that life, by supplying through the inscrutable synthesis carried on unceasingly by the vegetable kingdom, abundant food, capable, when taken into the body and properly assimilated, of supplying the waste that is constantly in progress in every part of the body, and of maintaining the strength thereof.

Furthermore, if the conversion of minerals into food-stuff by the members of the vegetable kingdom is a process displaying the marvelous wisdom of God, the process of digestion and nutrition is not less so. Nothing could be more improbable than that food, taken into the body by way of the mouth, should, without any attention or supervision from the tenant of that body, be digested, the valuable parts separated from the worthless, the latter discharged from the body, the former converted into tissue, muscle, bone, sinew, nerve-cell, blood-corpuscle, hair, nails, etc., and distributed automatically throughout the body, each to the place requiring it, and all in due proportion.

In this we have again a process far transcending the comprehension of the most learned men, who must eat and be nourished like other men, and who are equally ignorant of the process whereby their lives are sustained, and whereby they gain the strength which they use to deny God and glorify man.

Men boast in these days of their "independence," and make much of "self reliance." But this is the height of presumptuous folly; for man is a most helplessly dependent creature, not even able, like the plant, to prepare his own food from the mineral elements, but dependent daily upon living creatures much lower than himself in the scale of being. And so far from having a basis for self-reliance, he does

not know how to conduct the simplest of the vital processes of his own body. If his Creator, of whom principally man loves to fancy himself independent, should turn over to him the operation of the least of those essential processes for the briefest time, the poor creature would miserably perish.

As with the physical life, so is it with the spiritual life of those who have been begotten again of the incorruptible seed of the Word. These spiritual beings require appropriate food; and God has abundantly provided for this need. In studying the important subject of spiritual nutrition we shall learn again the relation between Christ, the Incarnate Word, and the Written Word. Both are spoken of repeatedly as food for the children of God.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters of the Gospel by John treat of the imparting of eternal life as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to all who believe on Him; and the sixth chapter treats of spiritual nutrition. Therein, after feeding the multitude miraculously, thus showing Himself as the one by whose power food is multiplied in the earth, He reveals Himself as "the Bread of Life." Twice He says, "I am that bread of life" ([John 6:35](#), [48](#)) and in [John 6:33](#), "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." He Who gives the life is the One who also sustains it. Again He says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" ([John 6:51](#)). And of His words He says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" ([John 6:63](#)).

These sayings to the natural mind are, of course, meaningless; but they are addressed to faith. "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" is the question which the unbelieving heart asks. How Christ can impart Himself to sustain the "inner man" is a question to which no answer can now be had. The process is incomprehensible to man. But we have seen that the process of physical nutrition is equally beyond human comprehension and contrary to all *a priori* probabilities.

Looking more particularly at what is said in this connection concerning the written or spoken Word of God we find that the Word of God is "living" in the sense that, like other living substance, it has the property of furnishing nutrition, and thereby sustaining life. It is a life-sustaining Word. But here a notable difference attracts our attention. Physical food comes up out of the earth ([Psalm 104:14](#)), while spiritual food comes down out of heaven ([John 6:50](#)).

Reference has already been made to the fact that, after setting forth the great truth of spiritual conception and generation through the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, the Apostle Peter enjoins attention to spiritual nutrition. "Wherefore," he says, "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" ([1 Peter 2:1-2](#)). Evidently his Lord's threefold injunction, "Feed My sheep," "Feed My lambs," [[John 21:15-17](#)], had impressed upon him the importance of spiritual nutrition. But proper feeding requires appetite for wholesome food, and so he seeks to excite a desire in young Christians for that whereby they may grow. And he immediately connects the Word with Christ saying, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" [[1 Peter 2:3](#)].

The importance of nourishing and sustaining the new life received upon coming to Christ, and the unhappy consequences which always result from neglect of the appropriate diet, have been so often and so forcibly stated by the servants of Christ that it seems hardly necessary to dwell upon this matter. What our subject specially calls for is to note the correspondence between God's way of sustaining man's physical life by food derived from a living source, and His way of sustaining the believer's spiritual life by food from a living source, that is to say from the living Word.

The passages which present the Word of God as the food for His children are very familiar; and in bringing them to mind again we would impress it upon our readers that these statements are not to be taken as if they were poetical or figurative, but as very literal, practical and immensely important. In making man it was not God's plan that he should live by bread, or physical food alone, but "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" ([Deuteronomy 8:3](#)). The manna was given to His people in the wilderness to teach them this lesson, and that they might learn their dependence upon God. Hence, this passage was used by the Second Man in His combat with the devil in the wilderness, it being the purpose of the latter to inculcate in man the idea of independence of God. Thus did the Man Jesus Christ, with the Sword of the Spirit, strike sure and true at the central purpose of His great adversary.

It is by every word of God that man is to be fed. No part of the Bible can be neglected without loss and detriment; and it will be observed that there is, in the Bible, a variety of spiritual nutriment analogous to the variety of physical food which God has provided for the needs of the physical man. If there be milk for babes, there is also strong food for those who are mature. And there is the penalty of arrested growth paid by those who remain content with the relatively weak diet suitable for infants, who know, perhaps, only that their sins are forgiven; as the Apostle John says: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you" ([1 John 2:12](#)). But those who have to be fed on a milk diet, that is to say, the simplest elementary truths of the Gospel, are unskillful in the word of righteousness. Infants cannot do anything for themselves, much less can they prepare food, or render any service to others. Hence the Apostle Paul, writing to the Hebrews, upbraids some of them because, at a time when they ought to have been teachers, they had need to be taught again the first principles, and were become "such as have need of milk and not of strong food. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong food belongeth to them that are of full age" ([Hebrews 5:12-14](#)).

Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found and I did eat them" ([Jeremiah 15:16](#)). Thereby he found spiritual strength to sustain him in his most difficult and trying ministry, from which, because of his timid and sensitive disposition, he shrank back in agony of soul. To be a good and effective minister of Christ it is necessary that one be well nourished through partaking largely of the abundant spiritual food which the living Word supplies. Thus Paul admonished his child in the faith, Timothy, to whom he wrote, "If

thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, *nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine*" ([1 Timothy 4:6](#)).

One practical point with reference to the process of nutrition should be noted. While the living creature cannot comprehend the process, and has no part whatever in supervising it, or carrying it on, and while he is therefore not responsible for the results, the process cannot be carried on unless he takes the food into his being and properly masticates it. Therefore, up to the point of swallowing the food, the living being is responsible, and his volition is exercised. After that the process passes beyond his knowledge and control. Food may be of the best quality, and may be in greatest abundance, but it imparts no nourishment while it remains in the pantry, or on the table.

In like manner the responsibility is with the child of God to partake of the spiritual food so plentifully provided, and to meditate therein day and night ([Psalm 1:2](#)). Meditation upon what is read is to spiritual nutrition what mastication is to physical nutrition; and it takes time. The result, however, is ample compensation for time so occupied, for we read of him who observes this simple rule of spiritual dictation that "He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" ([Psalm 1:3](#)). It means a fruitful life, a vigorous and healthful life, and a prosperous life.

These results are just as sure to follow obedience to the laws of spiritual diet as physical nutrition is to follow attention to the proper reception of material food; and the contrary results are just as sure to follow neglect of those laws in the one case as in the other. The natural mind would be likely to demand an explanation; but faith does not require to know the process, it being sufficient to hear the command. If one refused to partake of his natural food until instructed as to the process of digestion he would starve. In each case the process is inscrutable, but the fact is certain.

12. THE LIFE-TRANSFORMING WORD

FEEDING upon the Word of God, the bread of life, must necessarily be beneficial to the whole man, including his intellectual and physical being as well as his spiritual.

Much deference is paid in these days to the "powers of the mind." Intellectual prowess is what wins the victories in the fierce commercial struggle of the times. Business men are, of course, keen to take advantage of this condition, as may be seen by the many and costly advertisements of "brain foods;" and many millions of dollars are annually acquired by the shrewd exploiters of these preparations. This, of course, could not be unless there were multitudes who give heed to the assurance that, by the use of the advertised article, it is possible to produce "a new set of brains."

The Bible does not speak of a new set of brains, but it does say to believers, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" ([Ephesians 4:23](#)), and, "Be not conformed to this world [or age], but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" ([Romans 12:2](#)). The new man requires a new mind, and provision is made to that end. The old mind, with all its habits of self-occupation (a sure breeder of unhappiness and discontent), its morbid tendencies, its craving for excitement and sensation, its imaginations, appetites, tastes, inclinations and desires, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, is to be displaced, and a new mind substituted; for godliness has the promise of the vigor of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

How, then, is this injunction to be carried out? It is of importance to millions of anxious souls to have a clear answer to this question. And it may be had. The every-day incidents and the atmosphere amid which the average man and woman spend their time are such as to produce mental disturbances and disorders to an extent which, if understood, and if anything could impress this thoughtless and excited age, would create wide-spread alarm. It was stated recently that there were twenty-eight thousand inmates of the insane asylums of New York State (a single state of the Union) prior to October, 1907, and that in six months following the industrial convulsion of that month the number of inmates was increased by three thousand. The startling increase in the number of suicides adds its forcible testimony; and the frequency with which one encounters cases of mental depression, insomnia, melancholia, and other nervous disorders, tells of wide-spread and insidious foes which attack the seat of reason, and which call for methods and means of defense and repair which are beyond the resources of medicine.

The writer knows by experience the indescribable horrors of depressed and morbid mental states, and knows, too, what a transformation is effected by the "renewing of the mind" according to the Biblical injunction. Full provision is made for this marvelous transformation, and the conditions wherein it is effected are plainly set forth and are accessible to every believer.

In this case the study of the word used in the command ("be transformed") will make us acquainted with the conditions essential to the transformation. The word in question seems to have been set apart by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of teaching the important and wonderful secret of the transformation of the believer, during his existence in the body, into the likeness of Christ; so that all believers might be able to say with Paul, "We have the mind of Christ" ([1 Corinthians 2:16](#)).

It will, therefore, surely repay the reader to note carefully the usages of this particular word. Its first occurrence is in the Gospel narratives of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ, and is in fact the very word there translated "transfigured" ([Matthew 17:2](#); [Mark 9:2](#)). The word is literally "metamorphosed." "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." This may well serve to teach the nature of the change contemplated. It is one that brings the radiance of heaven into the mind and tinges even the commonplace things with a glow of heavenly light.

The next occurrence of the word is, as we have already seen, in [Romans 12:2](#), where believers are enjoined to be not cut out on the pattern of this age, but to be metamorphosed or transfigured by the renewing of their minds.

The third and last occurrence of the word tells us plainly *how* this great transformation is brought about. For the Bible is a very practical book. It comes, moreover, from One Who understands perfectly the limitations of man, Who knows and declares that the latter is, in his natural state, "without strength," that is to say, utterly impotent ([Romans 5:6](#)). We may be sure, therefore, that when God calls upon the quickened soul to do a thing, He puts the means required for it within His reach. And so, in these plain words we read the conditions requisite for effecting the desired transformation: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)).

The word here translated "are changed" is the same word (metamorphosed or transfigured) used in the other passages cited; and these are the only occurrences of that word in the Bible.

The teaching is very clear. When the Jews read the Word of God a veil is over their hearts, their minds being blinded ([2 Corinthians 3:14](#)). Or, as stated in [Romans 11:25](#), "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Hence, they do not behold there Him of whom the Scriptures testify. But, for us who believe, the veil is done away in Christ, and consequently, all we beholding are transfigured into the same image by the Divine and irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit.

If, when we look into the Word of God, *we do not see Christ there*, we look to no purpose, for He is everywhere in the Book.

Let it be carefully noted that this transformation is not the work of the man who beholds Christ in the Word; for the process is carried on while the former is not occupied with himself at all, or with his transformation, but is absorbed in the contemplation of the glory of the Lord. The transformation is effected by the power of the Spirit of God; and we may learn from this passage the important lesson that occupation with, and concern about, the work of the Spirit in us can only hinder that work. Let it suffice us that He Who has begun a good work *in us* will perform it until the day of Christ ([Philippians 1:6](#)). Our part, and it should be also our delight, is to be continually beholding or contemplating the glory of the Lord; and while so doing we "*are changed*" into the same image, and all the faster if we are unconscious of ourselves.

Let it be also noted that the transformation is a gradual operation, calling for steadfastness in contemplating the object placed before us by the Holy Spirit. Little by little, as our gaze is fixed upon Him, the old traits and dispositions which are unlike Him are replaced by His own characteristics. Thus the work proceeds "from glory to glory." The conformation to His image, which is God's purpose for all the sons of God ([Romans 8:29](#)), is not accomplished, as some would have it, by an instantaneous transfiguration, a convulsive upheaval and displacement of the old nature, brought about by working

one's emotions into an ecstatic state; but is accomplished gradually while the believer is continually occupied with Christ ("beholding"). There is no hysterical short-cut to the desired result. For Christ must be known from the Written Word under the tuition of the Holy Spirit; and the process should continue during the whole term of the believer's existence in the body.

Thus the living Word becomes the regulator and transformer of the minds of those who diligently seek it. Under its potent influence confusion of thought, perplexities, depressed mental states, and other hurtful conditions are dissipated, and the serene tranquility and repose of the mind of Christ are reproduced in those who are redeemed by His precious blood.

We are passing through the domain of death, the country of the last enemy that is to be destroyed, and who has put all things in this scene under his feet ([1 Corinthians 15:26-27](#)). On every hand our eyes meet the unmistakable evidences of the supreme sovereignty of death. But in this domain of death there is a Living Word—a Living Word in a dying world. The forces of corruption and decay cannot fasten upon it, and it laughs at the attacks of its enemies.

But that Word is here, not merely to manifest life, but rather to impart life to those who are perishing, and to bring them into vital contact with the new Life-Source of humanity, the Son of God, the Second Man, the Lord from Heaven, Who liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive forevermore, and has the keys of death and of Hades ([1 Corinthians 15:47](#); [Revelation 1:18](#)). He, as Man, has crossed the gulf between the realm of death and that of life. To that end He became "a partaker of flesh and blood," not to improve flesh and blood, but in order that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" ([Hebrews 2:14-15](#)). Having Himself crossed that gulf He is the Way of life to all who believe on Him, who, having heard His Word—the Word of life—have likewise passed out of death into life ([John 5:24](#)).

This is the wonderful provision of God for the deliverance of dying men. In order that they might not die, and because God wills not that any should perish ([2 Peter 3:9](#)), He has sent into this dying world a Word of Life. For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living ([Matthew 22:32](#)).

In comparison with the provision of divine wisdom, power and grace, from the God who quickeneth the dead ([Romans 4:17](#)), how pitifully foolish and vain are all human schemes for the betterment, reform and cultivation of that old man who has fallen under the sovereignty of death! Men are very ingenious, but none has yet brought forward a scheme for abolishing or escaping death, or for raising the dead. Without that, of what avail are plans of improvement? And what end do they serve but to blind men's minds to the truth that they are dead, and so are beyond all but the power of a God who raises the dead? Surely these schemes are the most successful devices of "the god of this age."

What men need is not morality, but life; not to make death respectable, but to receive the gift of eternal life; not decent interment, but a pathway out of the realm of death. Many men have brought forward their schemes for the "uplift of humanity" (though the results thereof are not yet discernible); but there

is only One Man who makes, or ever made, the offer of eternal life. None other has ever said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die" ([John 11:25-26](#)). He only claims to be the "Fountain of Living Waters" ([Jeremiah 2:13](#); [John 4:14](#); [John 7:37](#)), and says to all who are suffering the thirst of death, "Come unto Me and drink".

Therefore, in concluding these reflections upon the Living Word, we obey the command, "Let him that heareth say, Come," and would lovingly repeat the last invitation of grace recorded in the Word of Life:

"Let Him That Is Athirst Come.

And Whosoever Will,

Let Him Take

The Water of Life

Freely."

([Revelation 22:17](#)).

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