



THE CANADIAN EPWORTH ERA

Vol. XVII

S. T. BARTLETT, Editor
WM. BRIGGS, Publisher

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1915

WESLEY BUILDINGS
TORONTO, ONTARIO

No. 2

The Book for the Inspiration of Life's Ideals

BERT H. FORD



DARE say the Bible has been less appreciated by our young people than it ought to be. Too many have considered it a book solely for religious people, written only for their spiritual inspiration and containing outside of that no element of value or real worth. I do not mean to undervalue the spiritual inspiration of the Bible or treat lightly the processes of divine grace wrought in the hearts and lives of men who read it for spiritual help—no, there is nothing to compare with the relation of a soul to its Maker.

But this does not exhaust the wonderful value of this great Book. Aside from this, the Bible contains treasures measured only by God's interests in the progress of the entire man. There are other books written rightfully commanding a passing attention and which have contained a large measure of particular worth; but there never has been a volume containing within its pages so much of vital interest to all mankind. Its superiority is recognized not only in one field of human interest, but in several branches of human wisdom it sets a high standard. From a literary viewpoint, no book equals it. Matthew Arnold, that grand old man of literature, says, "There is one English book, and one only, where, as in the 'Iliad' itself, perfect plainness of speech is allied with perfect nobleness, and that book is the Bible."

If we look at the Bible from the viewpoint of history, no book contains so much of historical excellence. Few histories have done justice to the fact that God has a direct interest in the world. Religion has been too much made a separate interest of humanity than the source of life's inspiration and right motives. We come from the reading of our average histories with the impression that men have lived and aspired, fought and toiled. Men have done this, God has had little place or even concern. Turn to the Bible and at the heart of all interests in men is God. The processes through which men pass travelling toward civilization are but the reflection of God's guiding Hand helping men in the progress to that "one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves." In history, therefore, the Bible is an ideal—God moving on the lives of men.

Again, if we study it for its wealth of moral and ethical teachings, we shall find no more profound treatises upon the fundamental principles of justice that underlie society. There is no profession or vocation that cannot be embellished and ennobled by the ethics of Jesus Christ, and more and more men in every walk of life must find their standard here. Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "I have always said and always will say that a studious perusal of

the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands."

But it is only when we look back over history to contemplate the moral qualities and virtues of time-honored men and begin to appreciate their confessed dependence on the Bible that we can reach any just estimate of its worth. It is the Book of books and above everything else it has been the most important factor in moulding the ethics, morals, and literary tastes of modern civilization. Had I no faith in an eternity; were I without that hope that exalts life and lifts man to that eminence where he can view all mankind with love and sympathy; were I to traverse the weary years of life as a common skeptic, I should still read the Bible for its great value as a human book.

Yet when we have acknowledged its literary supremacy, after we have recognized it as the corner stone of all fair ethics and morality, we would still greatly err if we should limit its value here or undertake to estimate its influence upon the world without recognizing it as a divine Book, inspired by God and conveying to the world the hope that makes life tolerable and society possible. It is the word of God that "quicken" the soul and its "entrance give" light." It is the Word of God that is able to "build up believers" and give them an "inheritance among them that are sanctified." Through the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word "believers are made partakers of the divine nature." If God's Word is so goodly and precious a thing as the Scriptures account it, no wonder they who know best its source could make it the subject of song through long periods of sorrow and trouble. No wonder that the psalmist's delight was in the law of the Lord.

There has been a disposition on the part of some young people to apologize for the Bible and in the presence of iniquity pander to evil leadership for the purpose of gaining favor. I can sympathize with such a one, for he is unmoved by the deepest laws of human nature and would work destruction to his own soul. If you would found your life on the impregnable rock and be moved by the motives that make men, do not think you can court the favor of him that is tainted with sin or adorn your life by grovelling in the mire. For whatever of iniquity and sin has degraded and abased a man, however, dishonorable he may be, in his soul he loves the righteous. There is but one safe course in life and that is in doing the will of our Heavenly Father, as revealed to a living conscience through the Book of life. The true progress of the world to-day rests upon men's fidelity to this great foundation truth. Government and society have only grown pure as this principle has been sacredly adhered to. If you would be a man among men, read the Bible. Study it, meditate upon it, and by it fashion your life.—*Epworth Herald*.