

Bible Study Lectures

regard to the great Book, I have only this to say: It is the best gift which God has given to man.' It would appear like the echo from Abraham Lincoln's words, if we listen to one of his recent successors, Woodrow Wilson. He said: 'The Bible is the Word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves.'

Among other scriptures read from the Bible during the address was Psalm 119: 11: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." "The Bible," said the pastor, "is the non-conductor of sin. The Bible will keep you from sin if sin does not keep you from the Bible." In proof of this statement, several experiences, published and verified as true by the American branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, were cited. The following is one of the experiences, which was read under the caption, "The Borrowed Gospel." "Say, what's that book you got there?" asked a cowboy of his foreman, who was adding a sum on the back of an envelope supported by a little book held in his hand. 'Why, that's a Gospel of John,' absently replied the foreman. 'Let me see it a minute,' said the cowboy when the other was through with it. The book was handed over, and at that moment the foreman was summoned elsewhere. The cowboy also resumed his task, and did not again see his boss for several days. In the meantime he read the Book, and through its pages the Holy Spirit brought conviction and repentance to the heart of this carefree man of the plains. When the cowboy returned the Book, the following conversation took place: 'Boss, have you read it?' 'No, I have not.' 'Where do you reckon I could buy such a book?' 'I don't know; this one was given to me by a man I met at the supply store a couple of weeks ago.' 'Well, I'm going to buy one; and if I were you, I'd sure read that book. It's the best thing I ever read. If it wasn't so small, I'd sure say it was a Bible, because a man can't read that book without making him want to be better than he was.'

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It was pointed out that the Bible was the Book that made one's life safe on the once cannibal islands. There were men preaching the gospel who at one time sat at cannibal feasts. It was the Word of God that had changed their lives. Mr. Mitchell spoke of his personal contact with one of these natives of the South Seas, who at the time held in his hand an axe which he admits had killed many a man; "But I felt safe," said the speaker, "for in his other hand he held a Bible."

"The world's greatest men are great because of their contact with the Bible, the world's greatest book," was the concluding thought of the lecture. "Study it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy," was the final advice of the address.

02. VOLTAIRE'S FALSE PROPHECY; AND THE BIBLE RESURRECTION

Hear of the remarkable resurrection of the Bible, after Voltaire and Thomas Paine had passed the death sentence and read its obituary notice.

UNDER the caption, "Voltaire's False Prophecy and the Bible Resurrection," Pastor Mitchell, in the Naval Hall on Sunday night, graphically outlined the remarkable progress of the circulation of the Bible, and emphasized the fact that it had today become the common bond, that, more than any other one thing, had an influence that somehow bound man to man and kindred to kindred. The belief was expressed that if the Bible were to become the guiding star of life, and the inspiration of the motives and accomplishments of all men, of all nations, the result would be a calming of the troubled international seas, and the settling down of the dove of peace on the tranquil shores of prosperity the world over. At the present, though the Bible is not the moral rule of every citizen, even in so-called Christian nations, yet its influence is such that it may rightly be termed the common bond. The Savior of the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth, is the golden link, cherished and loved by all Christians, of every land and clime.

"The Bible," said Mr. Mitchell, "is the world's most remarkable literary phenomenon. The English Bible is the greatest literary classic of the English speaking people of the world. Its language tells the most in the fewest words. It contains the most remarkable powers of comfort and council of any known book. But perhaps the most outstanding marvel of all is its remarkable power to thrive on refutation, insult, and misrepresentation; to have been the book searched out and destroyed, burned and banned as no other book was through the ages, yet to be the most loved, respected and popular book of the world today."

Mr. Mitchell commented on the test of time, on the truth of the words of Isaiah 4:8: "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." "Apparently," said the speaker, "all

Bible Study Lectures

the genius and diabolical efforts of men and demons who have tried to obliterate the Word of God from the earth, has had no more effect than would the shooting of boiled peas affect the strongholds of the British fortress of Gibraltar.

OUTLIVES ITS FOES

“The Bible is the book which has been refuted, and apparently overthrown, and exploded more times than any other book you ever heard of. But it outlives its foes. I suppose if you could collect all the books written against the Bible, you could build a pyramid higher than the loftiest spire. When the Bible is refuted, the next day, or the next year, the arguments are proved to be false, and the critics have to do their work all over again. Infidels have been at work nearly two millenniums,” said Mr. Mitchell, “hammering away at the Bible. They have made as much impression on the Bible as the village boy has made on the smithy anvil with his toy hammer.”

It was pointed out that in Voltaire's time the critics thought that the Bible was completely demolished. Voltaire had apparently read the death sentence, and published the obituary notice of the Scriptures in advance. He had prophesied that in less than a hundred years, Christianity would be wiped from existence, and pass into history. It did appear so at the time, commented the speaker. Infidelity ran riot through France, red-handed and impious. But the century passed away. Voltaire has “passed into history,” but the Word of God “lives and abides forever.” Thomas Paine about the same time thought he had finished the Bible.

He thought he had demolished and finished it off completely. But what happened after he had crawled desperately into a dishonored grave in the year 1809? Asked Mr. Mitchell. Shall we now come to some vital statistics? Yes, living, pulsating with an energy divine. Up to the year 1800, from four to six million copies of the Scriptures, in some thirty different languages, comprised all that had ever been produced since the world began.

BIBLE STATISTICS

“What is the position today?” he asked. “A little over a week ago I wrote to the secretary of the Brisbane branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society to get the position of the Bible in the world today. I will let the secretary answer this question for us. As his letter is almost wholly statistics, I will read his letter in its entirety.

“Pastor Albert I. Mitchell, 89 Tooley Street, Maryborough

“Dear sir, Kindly accept our thanks for yours of the 13th instance in which you ask for facts and figures regarding the work of our society. These we have very much pleasure in giving you as under:

“Since its foundation in 1804 to 31st March, 1935, our society had circulated 464,374,879 copies of Scripture, made up as follows: 78,248,137 Bibles; 113,845,714 New Testaments; 272,281,028 portions; and has printed or circulated the Scriptures in over 700 languages. A new translation is added every four weeks. The annual circulation averages nearly eleven millions, the figures for the last five years being: 1931, 11,800,000; 1932, 10,500,000; 1933, 10,600,000, 1934, 10,900,000, 1935, 10,900,000. The largest circulation is in China, where the average is nearly four million copies per annum. A few figures for other countries are: Europe, 1,609,900; Korea 661,000; Japan, 506,000; Africa, 522,000; India and Ceylon, 1,119,000. The society employs over 1,000 colporteurs and Bible-women, and it is mainly through these that the Scriptures are distributed. Of the society's total circulation - 464,000,000, mentioned above - 120,000,000 have been in England.

“We are sending under separate cover a few leaflets and a copy of our last London report, which will give you much information concerning our work. We are not in a position to give the figures for other Bible societies with the exception of the American Bible Society, which last year distributed over seven million copies of the Scriptures. We have heard it said that the total annual distribution by all societies is in the vicinity of thirty millions, but we cannot give definite figures.

“Just at present we have no printed catalogue, but as soon as we change our headquarters, which we will be doing shortly, a new one will be prepared and copies sent to you for distribution. You can tell your people, however, that Bibles are available from 6 pence upwards, New Testaments from 3 pence, and Gospels at 1 pound each or 9 pence per dozen, and other portions from 1 pound each. We greatly appreciate your interest in our work, and look forward to having the pleasure of meeting you when it can be made possible. With Christian greetings; yours sincerely, J. L. Clark, acting secretary.”

Bible Study Lectures

“That is the information just as I have received it, friends,” said the speaker, who then asked, “Does that sound much like a dead book?-I should think not.”

A PROPHET

Continuing, Mr. Mitchell said that Robert G. Ingersoll in one of his lectures made the statement that in ten years the Bible would not be read, and in two decades it would be a forgotten book. What sort of a prophet was Colonel Ingersoll? He may be judged from the fact that in our day the Bible is selling at the rate of possibly thirty million copies a year. It was then pointed out that 2,000 copies of any book has always been considered a large edition. One hundred thousand is on a very large scale. The book “All Quiet on the Western Front” reached the astonishing total of 1,325,000 copies in seven months. But no book sells at thirty million copies a year apart from the Bible. No book has reached the sale of over 464,000,000 copies as has the Bible, and in nearly 1,000 languages.

Mr. Mitchell closed his address with two illustrations read from “The Common Bond,” which he had just received from the Brisbane office of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and which was published in London last year. He read as follows:-

“Passing through one of the suburbs of Alexandria a colporteur met a group of men to whom he tried to sell his books. ‘I am a Frenchman,’ one of them said, and he was handed a book of the Bible in French. ‘I am an Englishman,’ another exclaimed, and he was given a book in English. ‘I am a Greek,’ remarked a third, and for him was produced a Gospel in Greek. ‘I am an Italian,’ explained a fourth, and he found himself in possession of a book in Italian. ‘I am a Jew,’ observed yet another, and a book in Hebrew was placed in his hands. ‘You are like a conjurer!’ exclaimed one of them. ‘You produce every kind that is asked for!’”

THE PASS WAS GRANTED

The closing illustration as read from “The Common Bond” was from Eritrea:-

“In the town of Has sala I called at the office of the police commandant for a local pass to enter Eritrea. After reading my letter of application he looked at me keenly. ‘Are you going to sell Bibles?’ he asked. ‘Yes, sir,’ I replied. ‘Can you speak Italian?’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘Well, Abyssinian?’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘Then what are you going to do there if you cannot speak the language of the people?’ he asked in amazement. ‘It may seem strange to you, sir,’ I responded, ‘but the Bibles I carry speak the languages of nearly 1,000 races, and among them are the two you mentioned.’ The pass was granted.”

Mr. Mitchell commented on the splendid work of the British and Foreign Bible Society, stating that it sold many of the Scriptures and Scripture portions at less than cost price. It depended to a great extent upon legacies of the dead and gifts from the living. If you have money you do not know what to do with, you cannot give it to a better organization. If you are troubled about how to leave that fortune you have, write to the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Brisbane, he said.

03. THE BIBLE; ITS DIVINE INSPIRATION

SPEAKING on the subject of the divine inspiration of the Bible in the Naval Hall on Sunday night, Pastor Mitchell said that inasmuch as the claim to its being the inspired Word of God was in evidence from the beginning to the end of its writings, because of this extraordinary claim the Bible must of necessity be viewed differently from other good books, which, though good, made no claim to their being divinely inspired.

Continuing, he said, “Many will say, ‘Oh, yes, the Bible is a very good book, but there are other good books. Some will say,’ said Mr. Mitchell, ‘-Yes, the Bible was inspired, and so was Shakespeare, or John Bunyan, or Milton, Plato, and Socrates, so is the almanac.’ It is useless to waste time on false issues. When I open a masterpiece of Shakespeare, I know the literary value of it. In my collegian days I memorized one hundred lines of Shakespeare’s writings for a quarterly examination on one occasion, and was disappointed by not getting one question on it in the examination. But to be sure I have never read, ‘Thus said the Lord God of hosts,’ as an introduction to any of Shakespeare’s writings.

“If I turn to Plato’s writings I do not read, ‘The word of the Lord came unto me,’ or when I turn for information to the almanac, I do not read, ‘Hear you the word of the Lord.’ But over and over again while reading the Bible I am reminded that the message is from God.

Bible Study Lectures

“Now the message of the Bible is the word of the Lord, or it is not,” said Mr. Mitchell. “If it is not what it professes to be, it would not be even a good book. How are we to regard it? Is it the best book in the world, as even those who deny its divine inspiration usually admit, or are its claims to be inspired of God false? If it is not the best book in the world, then because of what it claims to be it must be the worst. It claims to be the word of God; if it is not, it is a lie, a deception, a swindle, a humbug, a fraud.”

WONDERFUL AUTHORSHIP

Dealing with the authorship of the Bible, the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 were read: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” It was stated that the Greek rendering suggests the thought, “All Scripture is God breathed.” 2 Peter 1:21 was also cited: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

“What a conglomeration of ideas would exist in a book written by some thirty or forty men were it not for this fact ‘holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’” said the speaker. “The authorship of this Book is remarkable. Here are books written by men in various walks of life, from the humble herdsman, and fisherman, to the prime minister, and king. Among its authors we find the very rich and the very poor, the preacher, the tax-gatherer, the exile, legislator, and judge, the man of brilliant education, and the upright yet poorly educated. Men of various classes are represented by this wonderful volume, which is a veritable library filled with history, astronomy, physiology, genealogy, prophecy, poetry, law, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy and perfect rules for the conduct of personal and social life. What a distortion of ideas if there were not one great Source of all the knowledge which inspired the whole Book!”

It was pointed out that 1,500 years were covered in the writing of the Bible. The first writer had no communication with the last. How did those men writing independently and living under the environment of different ages, produce a book that has the same breath of harmony running from beginning to end? It was asked. It was stated that ordinary books got out of date very often in ten or twenty years. But this Book over a thousand years old before it was nearly completed, lives on through the ages, keeping abreast of the mightiest thought and intellect of the age, and is more up to date than the daily newspapers. How could such a remarkable literary phenomenon come into existence? It was asked.

MARKS OF DIVINE AUTHORSHIP

The effect of the Bible upon the individual who reads and studies it was cited as another evidence of its divine authorship. “There are men in the world over who study language, astronomy, geology, mathematics, and the other sciences, but,” said Mr. Mitchell, “in the words of H. L. Hastings, I ask, ‘Did you ever hear a man say, I was an outcast, a wretched inebriate, a disgrace to my race, and a nuisance in the world, until I began to study mathematics, and learned the multiplication table, and then turned my attention to geology, got me a little hammer, and knocked off the corners of the rocks and studied the formation of the earth, and since that time I have been happy as the day is long; I feel like singing all the time; my soul is full of triumph and peace; and health and blessing have come to my desolate home once more? Did you ever hear a man ascribe his redemption and salvation from intemperance and sin and vice to the multiplication table or the science of mathematics or geology?’”

“The answer to this question,” said Mr. Mitchell, “must of course be in the negative. Some of the most brilliantly educated in the sciences are moral scoundrels, and many are to be found behind the bars. But from my association with thousands of people, I know that large numbers could testify: ‘I was a wretched sinner the clutches of wickedness held me like a vice; I broke my poor mother’s heart; I disgraced my family; my wife was heart-stricken and forlorn; my children fled from the sound of my footsteps; I was ruined, hopeless, helpless, homeless, friendless, until I heard the words of that Book.’”

“When we look at these facts,” concluded the speaker, “our very intelligence tells us that the Bible is no man’s book. When Columbus saw the River Orinoco, someone suggested that he had discovered an island. But the sagacious Columbus replied, ‘No such river as that flows from an island. That mighty torrent must drain the waters of a continent.’ So this Book, the Bible, with its miraculous power to change hearts and communities, comes not from the empty hearts of impostors, liars, and deceivers; it springs from the eternal depths of divine wisdom, love, and grace. It is the transcript of the divine mind, the unfolding of the divine purpose, the revelation of the divine will.”