

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.

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“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.”