

Bible Study Lectures

declared that those who had traveled there bore witness to the truth of every point of it. Many explorers and excavators of recent years reported that it was impossible to get Arabs to remain on the site of that ancient city overnight. From Mignan's "Travels" it was shown that, though he was accompanied to that site by six Arabs fully armed, he could not induce them to remain after the sun began to set, "from apprehension of evil spirits."

Mr. Mitchell pointed out that the American who coined the word agnostic for himself, Thomas Huxley, after criticizing the Bible during the greater part of his life, saw some value in it towards the end of his life. A quotation from Huxley's "Science and Education," page 398, was read: "By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like them selves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities; and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil?"

DOMINANT FIGURE IN HISTORY

The well-known modern historian, H. G. Wells, was quoted, from writings he had published in the "American Magazine" of 1922, as saying: "Jesus of Nazareth is easily the dominant figure in history. Now it is interesting and significant, isn't it? that a historian setting forth in that spirit, without any theological bias whatever, should find that he simply cannot portray the progress of humanity honestly without giving the foremost place to a penniless Teacher from Nazareth. More than nineteen hundred years later, a historian like myself, who does not even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this simple, lovable Man.

"So the historian, disregarding the theological significance of His life, writes the name of Jesus of Nazareth at the top of the world's greatest characters."

Another prominent character quoted as testifying at least in a portion of his writings was W. H. L. Mencken, editor of the American Mercury, and author of a number of very modernly rationalistic books. From his book, published in 1930, "Treatise on the Gods," the following was read: "The historicity of Jesus is no longer questioned seriously by anyone, whether believer or unbeliever. The main facts about Him seem to be beyond dispute.

"The Bible is unquestionably the most beautiful book in the world. Allow everything you please—no other literature, old or new, can offer a match to it.

"Nearly all of it comes from the Jews, and their making of it constitutes one of the most astounding phenomena in human history. I incline to believe that the scene recounted in John 8:3-11 is the most poignant drama ever written in the world, as the Song of Solomon is unquestionably the most moving love song, and the twenty-third psalm the greatest of hymns.

"All these transcendent riches Christianity inherits from a tribe of sedentary bedouins, so obscure and unimportant that secular history scarcely knows them. No heritage of modern man is richer and none has made a more brilliant mark upon human thought, not even the legacy of the Greeks.

"The story of Jesus is touching beyond compare. It is indeed the most lovely story ever devised. Beside it the best that you will find in sacred literature of Moslem and Brahman, Parsee and Buddhist, seems flat, stale, and unprofitable."

Much more could be quoted from those two writers, Wells and Mencken, Mr. Mitchell stated, and they were men living today, who did not claim to be Christians, but gave their honest testimony to what they saw of value in the sacred writings of the Book we call the Holy Bible.

06. INFIDELITY CHALLENGED

Bible stakes claim to credence on prophetic accuracy.

A LECTURE delivered in the Naval Hall on Sunday night on the subject, "Infidelity Challenged and Refuted," was out of the ordinary in that some of the audience availed themselves of the opportunity of interjecting during the address, according to, the special privilege extended by the speaker in welcoming any question or statement relevant to the subject during the lecture.

In his opening remarks, Pastor Mitchell said. "I do not challenge infidelity or infidels; nor do I expect to refute infidels nor infidelity. Nevertheless doubters will be challenged and skepticism refuted, but not by me. The scoffers and unbelievers of today were challenged, and refuted, many hundreds of years ago, by One infinitely wiser than I. It will be my part to set before you certain facts. You will be given an

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opportunity to admit them, or invited to deny them if you can. Since every opportunity is granted to question the statements made, since you are freely invited, even urged, to interrupt the speaker at any time with inquiries or denials, your silence will be taken as assent to my statements. Is that fair?" A voice from the audience said, "Yes, that's fair enough."

Mr. Mitchell added: "I shall assume that we are all doubters." He then declared that he would be as fully anxious to receive help as to aid his audience. "This is far too serious a matter for us to dare risk remaining in error," he said. He then encouraged his listeners to look for flaws in his reasoning, and fearlessly point them out. "Failing to find any, I assume that you will as fearlessly accept the inevitable conclusion," he said. After questioning the audience for their approval of that procedure, someone responded, "That's fair, provided you keep to that agreement."

BIBLE INVITES SCRUTINY

Holding up a book, the speaker said: "Here is a book called the Bible. Unique claims are made for it. Millions have cheerfully suffered horrible deaths rather than deny it or disregard its teachings, and other millions are still ready to follow their example." He contended that such a book should be worthy of the most careful examination. It was also shown that the Bible invited scrutiny. "Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," was read from 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21. "How are we to test this Book? What part is most vulnerable? Wherein does it differ from other books?" the speaker asked. It was also pointed out that the most skeptical mind should admit the fairness of the invitation of Isaiah 1:18, "Come, let us reason together." Do the writers of the Bible especially invite us to test any particular part? And in answering it was shown that the Bible staked its whole claim to credence on the accuracy of its prophecies. It was claimed that Peter in his epistle considered prophetic evidence more certain than the audible demonstration of the presence of Jesus. 2 Peter 1:16-20.

CLARITY OF PROPHECY

A voice from the audience: "Is prophecy vague, or clear and definite?"

The answer given was that it was only vague to those who did not study it sufficiently. To illustrate, the speaker said: "When one takes up a text-book on geometry for the first time, and glances at some advanced theorem, it would be easy for one to defend his lack of understanding by declaring geometry to be vague; yet it is the most crystal clear of all sciences. So it was with prophecy." He claimed that prophecy was as rigidly demonstrable as geometry. Comparing prophecy with miracles, it was contended that while doubters, looking back through the mists of time, doubted the miracles that occurred nearly 2,000 years ago, Bible prophecy—the earliest given 3,300 years ago, and the latest 1,900 years ago—had been fulfilling all the time even to our day, and was verified by history, and as recognized by the skeptic Hume, Mr. Mitchell said, prophecy accurately fulfilled was the greatest of all miracles.

Mr. Mitchell added: "If the Bible claim to make genuine predictions is true, it is a miracle of foresight, far beyond the ability of human sagacity to discern, or to calculate, and is the highest evidence of the supernatural knowledge of the prophet." Further, he said, "human beings can as easily pluck the stars from the Milky Way as they can wrest from the future its secrets."

A voice from the audience asked whether it was possible to predict the results of the coming local government election. It was answered that that would not be known till the votes were counted.

GOD'S CHALLENGE TO SCEPTICS

From the Book of Isaiah it was asserted that God claimed to be the only one capable of predicting the future correctly. The challenge issued by God to skeptics to "Produce your cause, show the things that are to come—show us what shall happen," was also read from Isaiah 41. To accept this challenge the unbelievers must first disprove the prophecies of Scripture, and, secondly, produce another book filled with genuine prophecies.

A voice from the audience questioned regarding the accurate forecast of eclipses. In answer the speaker pointed out that that was simply the result of knowing the exact cycles in which the planetary bodies move. Another voice from the audience stated that that was evidence of the accuracy of the movements of the heavenly bodies, and signified a Creator. The speaker stated that he would say more about that next Sunday night when dealing with the question of creation compared with the evolution theory.

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Proceeding with the lecture, Mr. Mitchell contrasted the vast difference between forecasting eclipses and the prophecy concerning whole nations, cities, peoples. He asked: "Is there one here that claims that prophecies similar to those found in the Bible can be made by the ordinary man? Will anyone here attempt to do it? Is there a single soul who will point out a single instance in which Bible prophecy said that a people, a city, or nation would cease to exist, and that people, city, or nation is in existence today? Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon, Assyria, and scores of others are in the exact state the Bible said they would be. On the other hand," he said, "name a people, city, or nation that the Bible said would continue, that has ceased to exist."

PROPHETIC ACCURACY

Several "definite instances" of prophetic accuracy were cited. It was quoted from Ezekiel's prophecy that the city of Tyre would cease to exist, and that not even the ruins would remain, but would be cast into the sea. It was stated that Tyre was at the time of the prophecy the London of Asia, the maritime centre of Asia; but that the prophecy had been literally fulfilled by Alexander and his soldiers in their attack on Tyre in AD 332 on the island city half a mile from the mainland, the site of old Tyre (the ruins of which remained since the thirteen years' siege of the Babylonians), in search of materials to build a causeway to the island city the attackers not only used every particle of brick and timber of the ruins of Tyre, but even gathered up the earth, leaving the foundations of rock, exactly as predicted hundreds of years before, in Ezekiel, chapter 26.

The prophecies concerning Sidon, a city thirty miles from Tyre, were also given. It was stated that this city still remained, as the prophecy indicated, though besieged almost as often as Jerusalem. How was it that the prophet was exact in both cases? it was asked.

The city of Ashkelon was also cited, that it was to be desolate. A quotation from the Encyclopedia Britannica, fourteenth edition, Volume II, page 544, was read, referring to this city as "Now a desolate site on a seacoast twelve miles north of Gaza-the remnants of ruined buildings and broken walls bear ample testimony to a past magnificence."

EGYPT'S DEPARTED GLORY

Reference was made to Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Egypt as descending from its pinnacle of fame, boasting a longer unbroken line of kings than did any other nation, and at the time of Ezekiel's prophecy being the glory of the world, eminent in science, arts, luxury, magnificence, a leader in civilization, descending to the status of a base kingdom, ruled by strangers, but still existing, whereas Babylon and other powers were to cease to exist. It was claimed that Egypt was exactly as the prophecy of Ezekiel foretold, the present ruler and his ancestors for generations not being of Egyptian blood, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapter 30, "there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt."

The lecturer concluded with an illustration. He stated that Robert Ingersoll, the famous skeptic, and Henry Ward Beecher, the great preacher, were friends. Visiting the study of the famous minister, Ingersoll was seen turning and admiring an elaborate globe. "That is just what I want," he said. "Who made it?" "Who made it? do you ask, Colonel," repeated Beecher in mock astonishment. "Who made this globe? Why, nobody, of course. It just happened!"

Likewise it was declared that too often, while men must admit the recorded historical fulfillment of prophecy, yet when driven from one insufficient explanation to another, being loath to give God the glory, their final insufficient solution to this supernatural phenomena was that "it just happened," instead of accepting the inevitable conclusion that the Bible prophecies proved that they were from God.

The preacher received his inspiration for this sermon from the book, "John Emerson's Quandary," by E. A. Rowell, and urges that readers secure a copy; obtainable from publishers of this book.

07. ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Archeology as witness to accuracy; Reply to criticism.

"As prophecy proves the divine inspiration of the Bible, so archaeology proves its minute and accurate truthfulness," stated Pastor Mitchell in an address on Archeology and the Bible in the Naval Hall on Tuesday night. Luke 19:40 was read: "And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." It was stated that stones unearthed by the