

THE IMPERISHABLE BOOK.

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WHILE many books have been written, perished, and been forgotten, one book has survived. While whole libraries of hundreds of thousands of volumes, containing the wisdom of the world which had been ages accumulating, have been consigned to the flames, and converted into smoke and ashes, one book has escaped the Vandal torch, and resisted the wasting hand of time. That book has come down to us from beyond all these destructions, and to-day is extant in more copies, and with wider circulation than any other book has, or ever had, and a prediction concerning it assures us it shall last through all future time, if not through the cycles of eternity.—“The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.” That book is the Bible. Three reasons assure us that the Bible is an imperishable book. Its origin involves its imperishable character. The Bible assumes to be a revelation from God, and it can not be accounted for on any other ground than its own assumption. If the Bible was not written by the persons and at the times and in the places and in the circumstances which it claims for itself, we have no account of its origin, and no one can tell by whom, when, and where it was written. Such a book could not have been written by any persons, at any time, in any place, and imposed upon the people, without the events which are interwoven with its history, and if these events did accompany its enunciation, it must be a revelation from God. It could not have been a fiction, written, concealed, and announced in an after age, as having occurred in former times. Such an introduction of such a book would have left a record, of which there is none. The only possible way in which such a book could obtain credence with after ages is to be found first in the hands of those who claimed to have received as described, and who believed it, and who handed it down through generations who have believed it, with collateral records. This is just the manner in which the Bible has come down to us, and this makes its claim good. We may instance the ten plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the giving of the law, the forty years’ miracle in the wilderness, the crossing of Jordan, and all the miracles of the New Testament, as some of the accompanying events.

The past history of the Bible assures us of its indestructibility. It is not the paper and the cover that is indestructible; many copies have been burned, but it is its living truth that can not be destroyed. Its past history is a pledge that it can not be destroyed. As it is the oldest record known, it is, from necessity, its own first historian. There is no older or contemporary record to contradict it. Its history covers more than four thousand years, and the first writer stood in the middle of this period, and commenced with the beginning of time, and wrote its history down to his own eventful life, and this is the only rational account we have of the origin of the universe, and of our race. It was written before all other books, or if there were contemporary books, they have all perished, while the Bible has escaped the Vandal torch, has resisted the ravages of time, and is undimmed by the mildew of ages, and is as bright to-day as when it first came from the immortal breath of Jehovah. It has not been by the sufferance of the world that the Bible has survived; a majority of the world has always been opposed to the Bible, and powerful special enemies have sought to destroy it, and still it has powerful foes, who employ the pen, the press, the pulpit, and the forum to overthrow it, and yet it lives, and has gathered strength under every assault and every blow that has been aimed at its life. Unnumbered generations have drifted down the stream of time, kingdoms have been overthrown, empires have risen and fallen, thrones have been demolished, earth has been strewn with the scattered fragments of dishonored royalty, and the world’s libraries have been burned up, and yet the Bible has come down through all these ruins, and to-day has a wider and stronger hold upon

the hearts of men than ever before. Such a book will live forever.

The contents of the Bible vouch for its imperishableness. The Bible treats of those subjects which are of equal importance to all people, of all lands, and of all ages, and hence it will never get out of date, never become inappropriate, and never get to be obsolete. Historians, politicians, lecturers, and newspaper writers are always talking of live and dead issues. The Bible presents a live issue for all ages, and all localities. The themes are God, his creative work, humanity, human duty, and human destiny, including the fall, redemption, with the conditions of salvation, and eternal retribution. Salvation is the one great subject treated in the Bible, and which is a living issue for every human being for every day of this whole life, and will be down to the last man that shall tread the sands of time.

Some books are written to meet local wants, and have but little interest elsewhere; the Bible is a book for all localities. Some books are written to meet the wants of the times that call them forth, and they pass away with change of times and issues; the Bible is a book for all times. Some books are professional and technical, as law books are for lawyers, medical books are for physicians, and agricultural books are for farmers; the Bible is for all classes, and demands the attention and obedience of all.

One peculiarity of the Bible distinguishes it from all other books, and which indicates its perpetuity. As a book of thoughts and truth, its depths have never been fully fathomed. It is very soon and easily comprehended, so far as is demanded by our present personal salvation; but there is room for growth and a depth beyond which none have sounded. A youth has a book containing the science of grammar put into his hand, and is told he must learn it, and he soon masters every principle and rule the book contains, and can apply them; but a man of the most profound abilities, after studying the Bible for sixty years, feels that he has but just begun to learn, and that there are yet rich mines of truth and grace which he has not fully opened.

The believer in the Bible has not yet lived who believed himself to have learned all that might be learned from the Bible. It is an inexhaustible source of truth, and the more we study it the more we realize its profound depths, and the deeper we fathom its fullness the more are we impressed with a sense of the length and breadth and height and depth of the unknown it yet contains. There can be but little doubt that it will furnish light and food for progressive minds through eternal years. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God’s Word shall not pass away.

The Bible! full of truth sublime,
A faithful record of the past,
And prophet for all future time,
Shall ever and forever last;
Though earth and heaven shall both decay,
God’s Word shall never pass away.
Let yon bright sun, a flame of fire,
Extinguished be in darkest night,
And moon and all the stars expire,
And perish all created light,
This Word shall fill celestial spheres,
And light the everlasting years.
The breath of God, immortal flame!
Breathed on and through the seers of yore,
Remaineth as from God it came,
And shall remain forevermore,
And light the saints still on their way,
Progressive through an endless day.