

PUTTING THE BIBLE TO THE TEST

Introduction II Tim. 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

This claim to Divine Authorship is made throughout the Bible. Expressions such as "Thus saith the Lord" and "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken" are found over 2,000 times in the pages of Scripture. But the Bible does not ask us to believe these claims without supporting evidence.

I Thess. 5:20, 21: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

What kind of evidence would we expect to find in a book which claims God as its Author?

Robert Ingersoll, the famous American sceptic, once proposed this test: "If the Bible is the work of God, it should contain the sublimest truths; it should excel the works of man; it should contain the loftiest definitions of justice, the best conceptions of human liberty, the clearest outlines of duty, the tenderest and noblest thoughts. Upon every page should be found the luminous evidence of its divine origin. It should contain grander and more wonderful things than man has written."

Discussion Is this a fair test? Definitely. Our purpose in this lesson will be to see if the Bible meets this test. We will consider three evidences for its Divine authorship:

1.—THE PERMANENCE OF THE BIBLE

Consider first the Bible's claim to indestructible permanence. Isaiah said: "The Word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). Jesus said: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). He also said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

What does History answer? History testifies that the Bible has survived all efforts to destroy it. Consider these examples:

Diocletian, Roman Emperor of the 4th century, outlawed Christianity, confiscated all known copies of the Scriptures, and burned them. After years of ruthless persecution, he boasted that the very name of Christianity had been extinguished. Yet the Bible lived.

In the days before the Reformation of the 16th century, the Apostate Church suppressed the Bible and publicly burned it. Yet the Bible arose unharmed from the ashes, like the fabled Phoenix in days of old.

Thomas Paine, the notorious English Freethinker of the 18th century, fought the Bible with sarcasm and ridicule. In his best-known book, "The Age of Reason", Paine boasted: "I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie, and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow" (p 127). Paine was mistaken.

In spite of these and scores of other attempts to destroy it, the Bible has survived. During the past century it has broken all records in book production and distribution. It is now translated, in whole or in part, into over 1,300 languages. It is printed and distributed at the rate of 100 million copies every year. Yet this is the Book which was supposed to be dead long ago. Said a shrewd modern observer: "They say the Bible is dead. Yet it is astonishing how many people are still receiving help from the corpse, and asking for more!"

2.—THE PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE

Consider next the Bible's claim to be able to foretell the future. Isaiah said: "Declaring the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:9, 10).