

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS DONE FOR ALL CIVILIZATIONS

Dr. Kingsbury Writes More on the Book of Books, Containing More Wisdom Than all the Wisdom of the Ages.

I resume the consideration of the Book of books, which really contains more of wisdom than all the wisdom of the ages, and has really done more for man's temporal prosperity and eternal happiness than all the philosophies and all the religions of man's divines which have electrified the mental devotee, appealed to the ignorance and superstitions of unsanctified man, and thrown their beguiling, pernicious influences across the highway of nations. How has the Bible affected the world? Aside from the great appeals to man in behalf of his immortal soul, and the absorbing considerations of pure religion and a holy life, let us turn to how the Bible has affected the great interests of humanity on the worldly side, as seen in civilization and progress, and all the refinements of life.

Civilization, whatever it is of a genuine kind there exists, in modern times, owes its best estate to Christianity—to the positive direct influence of the Word of God. There is no civilization now worthy of the name anywhere, in any land, that is not derived from the Christian religion. No observant man, no true philosopher, no man of thought and candor, will gainsay this statement. The gracious, refining influences of Christianity have been so pronounced, so unmistakable, and are so vastly superior to those ever exerted by the philosophers and religions of the ancients—of Greece and Rome above all others—that the ablest sceptics have been compelled to admit the fact. Such a genius as Rousseau, and such a statesman as Jefferson, have acknowledged that Christianity in the sublimity and originality of its doctrines, and in the purity and elevation of its ethics, is immeasurably superior to any thing known among the thinkers and teachers and philosophers of the Portico.

There is no department of letters which has not been greatly influenced by the truths of the Bible. The thoughts of men have been so affected and the lives of men so regulated and directed by this influence as it has operated and ramified through the centuries, that even the science of jurisprudence in which all men and countries are interested, has shared largely in its multifarious, widely permeating benefits. The celebrated Blackstone has left invaluable testimony to the truth of this assertion in a passage of admirable force, but which is too long to be quoted in full. After describing the Law of Nature, this able jurist says:

"But further, in compassion to the frailty of the human reason, and the blindness of human reason, God hath been pleased, at sundry times and in divers manners, to discover and enforce his laws by immediate and direct revelation. The doctrines thus delivered, we call the revealed or divine Law, and they are to be found only in the Holy Scriptures. These precepts, when revealed, are found, upon comparison, to be really a part of the original law of nature," (which he says, God in the beginning laid down) "as they tend, in all their consequences, to man's felicity; but, though agreeable to right reason, reason, unaided and alone, could not make them known. Upon these two foundations, the law of nature, and the law of revelation, depend all human laws: that is to say, no human laws could contradict these."

This clear, explicit announcement on the part of the great law commentator in reference to the supreme authority of the Bible in legal science—that the laws of God lie at the very foundation of jurisprudence in all of its departments, embracing legal and equitable, civil and criminal, is really but the opinion of the most luminous and comprehensive understandings whose names add lustre and glory to legal profession both in England and America. The legal sceptics have been ordinarily small lawyers.

Between the study of the law and the study of the Bible, there is a much more intimate connection than is sometimes apprehended. Indeed, so close is the connection between legal and Bible lore, that we are specially informed by the learned Selden, that in the middle ages, the clergy were the greatest proficient in legal erudition. He says law was "taught by them in the monasteries, universities, and in the family of the principal nobility." The seclusion of the clergy gave time to the investigation of abstruse and learned subjects, and favored the law. The judges and inferior court officers were generally selected from their number. Hence is derived the now common term clerks—"clerical."

It is not claiming too much for the Bible to declare that it is at once the forerunner, supporter, and chief ally of genuine civilization. Strike out the influences which the teachings of that blessed Book have exerted upon the world—the human race: by some omnicif power, let all of the impressions made upon the human mind and heart and conscience by its supreme lessons of truth and wisdom, be forever erased, and the world will soon stagnate, sink into the darkest barbarism; a night of starless gloom will speedily settle upon the mind forever, and a cloud of despair will gather its dark folds about the soul, and shutting out the light of the Cross forevermore: then never again in man's sad vale of

tears shall the sweet, mellow song of Hope be heard to cheer the loneliness of man and make glad his heart, neither shall it assuage his sorrows, lighten his toil or cause the gladness of Heaven to fill his soul. So pervading, illuminating, ramifying is the glorious Book of God, that even those nations that are civilized but infidel or pagan, owe all that is genuine and admirable in their history to the permeating, healing, uplifting, transforming power of the principles, doctrines, truths of the Revelation of Jehovah to the world. If indeed the Sun of Righteousness could be shorn of its glory by some infidel force, or go down forever in a sea of darkness before the eyes of a gazing, astonished world, there would then be no luminosity of truth and wisdom and power to throw its effulgence over man's earthly pathway and fill with divine light the heaven of his hopes, and the time would soon come when our descendants would grope their way to death, and the savage orgies of our forefathers would be repeated as they danced in painted nakedness around some miserable idol, chanting their wild, incoherent nonsense. Even the sects and enemies of God share to some extent in the reflected glories of the Cross. It is because "the Bible has incorporated itself into the laws, languages, institutions and philosophy of Christendom," that all these hallowed, precious environments of freedom flourish, and the arts and sciences, with commerce and literature, have attained the eminence that distinguish them among leading nations. Even infidel Joseph Hume, the historian, ascribes the civil liberty of England to the Puritans, whilst the accomplished Sir James Macintosh affirms in his "History of England," that the great Bible doctrine of "Justification by Faith" is at once "the basis of all pure ethics, and the cement of the eternal alliance between morality and religion."

The Bible is the basis of governmental safety and lasting national prosperity. The influences of the Bible fill the civilized world, and the wealth and glory of nations are dependent upon the sacred, controlling, dominating principles that come from the Bible. Nations never stability of government, and no sense of security. From the days of Israel's wisest kings, whose reign was so marked by justice and judgment and humanity, and prosperity, down to the present era of England's greatness and America's coming passion for gain and conquest, there have been contentment and happiness and prosperity in proportion as there has been a feeling of security for life and property. And security has been felt in proportion as the correcting, purifying, controlling, elevating influences of the Bible have filled the arteries leading to the great national heart. There is danger now awaiting the United States. It is serious, and is found in the overturning of constitutional restraints and limitations, the wild hunt for commercialism, the barbarous zeal for money, the low standard in civic and business life; the awful wide-spread, almost universal corruption in municipal government throughout this mighty, so eager for change, and so ambitious for the conquest of other peoples, particularly if they are weak and defenceless.

But the Bible is great in its pervading influence in behalf of education. It is the main instrument in promoting a general system of education, and in diffusing useful knowledge among all the people at large. It is a common observation of all classes of discriminating travelers, that means the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible are generally received, education is more widespread, and consequently the baleful influences of superstition and ignorance are much less felt. So potential as an educational lever, has the Bible ever been found to be, that it is the concurrent testimony of all capable observers that the great mass of the people are ignorant or otherwise, as God's Revelation is easy or difficult of access. Wherever the Bible is shut out from the people, and the deadening authority for its exclusion prevails as in many lands in 1902, you will find ignorance and vice rampant, and the people an easy prey to every form of superstition and error. The minds and consciences of the people who are totally ignorant lie dormant. People whose minds are untrained have but little desire to learn the solemn truths of God as set forth in His Book. Hence the prevailing failure on the part of so many to understand the solemn and important verities of Jehovah. Some one has written of this ignorance that "relying on mere outward rites, Truth in all her majesty, beauty and her far reaching influences, seems hid from their view, and lost even to their wishes." In striking contrast, look at those countries or sections of countries or communities, in which the God of Life is carefully read in so many homes, and where its saving, hallowed truths have become familiar through the faithful, direct, plain, positive preaching of God's best consecrated ministers, and you will find enlightenment, zeal for God and His requirements, and a practical, wide-awake, intelligent, observing people.

The system of education may be and is faulty and insufficient, for often God's Book is ignored or excluded by un-Christian and foolish teachers, and while the mind is sought to be developed and disciplined, the moral nature is neglected, and the great primal, solemn truths of God are not enforced.

But again, a more healthful tone of public and private morals, a more enlarged system of Christian beneficence and kindness, and a purer spirit of gentleness and forbearance have been produced in society—among the people at large, wherever the doctrines of the Bible of the blessed Saviour, have been more generally known and embraced. It is difficult for informed, enlightened, elevated people who live at a period of comparatively advanced civilization, and who, from childhood have gradually become imbued with nobler sentiments and a finer, more elevating ethics than the wisest of the most cultivated and gifted ancients professed, to realize how vast, diffusive, penetrating have been their influence upon the habits, views, principles and conditions of the foremost nations of the earth. The stupefied Caffre in the impenetrable savage wilds of Africa, or the benighted Parias, crouching amid the dark, steaming jungles of India, stands out in forceful and violent contrast with the noble, commanding, exalted Caucasian, with capacious mind, purified affections and high morals. So transmitting is the power of Bible truth—so comforting and reforming—that we may well stand amazed at its tremendous, most marvelous results.

When you turn to the fearful description which the great Apostle Paul has given in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans, of the huge, brutal abominations and the devilish, disgusting sins of the heathen at that time—the Romans included, the great conquering power, and the most polished and famous at that period—and then in contrast, examine into the life and manners of any modern community or State possessing and obeying the Bible, and thoroughly conversant with its examples, its warnings, its lessons of wisdom and truth, you then behold what the blessed, faithful Book has done and can do for man.

Mere education can never change the heart or civilize and exalt a nation of savages. Wherever, in white or black, in yellow or red race, pernicious passion and unbridled lust hold sway, there can not be possibly any lovely, ennobling virtues, any gentle and winsome courtesies, any high-bred delicacy and refinement of feeling or sentiment, any chivalrous magnanimity, any of the graces and principles that throw a halo around redeemed humanity. Those graces only exist to any great extent where the Bible is read, taught, lived upon, and where its blessings are generally diffused. Whilst the Word of Life has transformed a continent, has made desolation wave with plenty and the solitary places blossom as the rose, has thrown a glorious light amid the natural darkness of remote islands, what spot on this earth—whether State or Kingdom, what island of sea or ocean, has been made happier or better by infidelity? It is after the Bible sheds its benignant light upon the moral gloom, that accused infidelity with its front of "brass stalks in with deceptive glare;" it is when the savage has been civilized and regenerated by the power of God and the truth of the Gospel of the Son of God, that the infidel begins his infernal work, seeking to pollute the very springs of his happiness, to poison his mind, and to cover up the beautiful panoply of salvation with the pall of despair. When the bright, beautiful star of evening takes its accustomed place in the heavens, and send forth its steady light, you will see its attendant stars begin to glimmer too. So when the Bible begins to shed its cheerful, benign rays abroad over any land, you will see its satellites, the churches, the Sabbath schools, the educational and benevolent institutions, soon begin to revolve in harmony and to unite a gracious, healthful and hopeful radiance.

The wonderful softening of the asperities of life; the kindling in the human heart of keen sympathy for another's woe; the instilling into the mind of the important, sympathetic, and noble lesson of forgiveness for wrongs and injuries inflicted, and the merciful displays which mark the progress of even the cruel sanguinary Moloch of war, are to be directly traced to the subduing and holy influences of the blessed Bible. Before the Evangel of Peace had spread its wings over modern nations, the cruelties enacted in war were worthy only of the diabolical spirit whose cunning machinations inspired them. Chancellor Kent tells us "That it is owing to Christianity that a decided reformation of manners and improvement of feeling has been effected in modern times." He says that the Bible "taught the duty of benevolence to strangers, of humanity to the vanquished, of the obligation of good faith—of the sin of murder, revenge and rapacity." However much in the great South and the North—the peaceful, philanthropic, and merciful spirit of the Bible may have been outraged and crucified by the inhuman monster, McNeill, in Missouri, or by the heartless Nero who laid in ashes beautiful Columbia and destroyed Atlanta, one William T. Sherman, or by that beast in human form, Ben. Butler, who so lorded it over prostrate and afflicted New Orleans, and held his saturnalia of crime and debauchery surrounded by his body-guard, or by that Vandalic Alaric who ravaged

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the enchanting Virginian Valley of Shenandoah and said he would so devastate the charming land that a crow flying over it would have to carry his own rations, a certain Gen. Phil. Sheridan—all fit and boon companions in crime—we may all "thank God and take courage" as did the great Apostle Paul on "his way to Rome for trial and rejoice that such barbaric plunderers are blots on humanity, and that when the Historic Muse shall record their awful crime with her ineffaceable stylus, it will be deeply graven that their memories are accursed by all right-thinking, just and human people, and are counted with an immortality of infamy.

But possibly the great power and authority exerted by the Book of books over the nations cannot be more distinctly traced than in our literature. That Book which has called forth the highest praise from the gifted minds of earth; which has furnished themes and bestowed inspiration upon the grandest singers of modern times; which so abounds in poetry of the sublimest character, eloquence of the most exalted and entrancing power, and pathos as tender as beautiful, has really done more in purifying and elevating the intellectual aspirations, and in directing the noble rivalry of authors than all other books combined.

It is indeed the great luminary which the Mighty God of the universe hung out in the intellectual heavens, that the highest created minds might bask in its light, and be influenced by its inspiring and purifying power. The influences of that wondrous Book, whose teachings are marked with the zeal of high divinity, and whose "every leaf is bedewed with drops of love," can no more be rejected or blotted out without changing the whole current and character of modern literature, and completely denuding it of its most princely apparel, than can the light of the material sun be dispensed with without enshrouding the earth in darkness. Whilst the regal minds of Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Tennyson, have delighted to draw their highest inspiration from this great and imperishable source, and the first two have made some of its most impressive teachings the themes of their noblest songs, men of less force and smaller intellectual mould have hissed their scoffing insults unto the face of its omniscient Author, and thrown their venomous vaporings and seductive slime upon its spotless pages. My space is more than exhausted, or I would draw contrasts and show how many authors are immoral, impure, corrupting in spite of the Book and its holy, inspiring influences. I would show how imperfect and low and grovelling are the objects of worship and the consequent geniuses of the Christian era. A gifted Baptist minister, Rev. C. R. Hendrickson, delivering a fine address before Wake Forest College, in June, 1850, said this:

"The objects of worship, with few exceptions, were monsters of depravity, unrelieved by a single virtue. Jupiter was a sensualist; Mercury was a thief; Bacchus was a drunkard; Mars was a savage; Venus was a courtesan, and Juno was a malicious hag. All were the friends and patrons of crime. Moral purity was a virtue of which none could boast. These were the divinities of that beautiful country, among the hills, and grottoes, and fountains of which, lived the most gifted philosophers and poets of mankind—where such as Homer sung in immortal verse—where Sophocles and Euripides gave character to the drama—where Socrates and Plato discoursed of philosophy and morals. The Mythologies of Egypt, of Rome, of Scandinavia, and

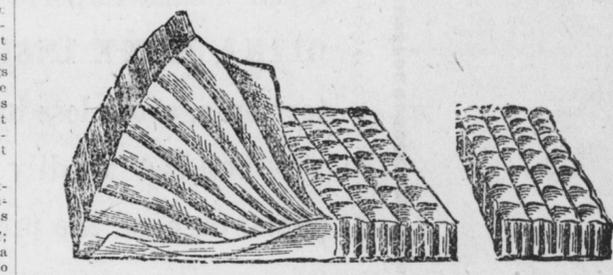
of India, present moral features no more attractive. The results were such as might have been anticipated. Cruelty should never go into eclipse because of neglect, opposition or interdiction of ripates or potentates. Spread the everlasting Truths of God, for they are a gotten. I close, leaving a part unwritten. The theme is well nigh exhausted, savor of life unto life, and are intended Next to the advent of the adorable son of God, the Saviour of to our feet and a light to our path." THEODORE BRYANT KINGSBURY. Wilmington, Nov. 19, 1902.

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