

THE BIBLE HAS HAD MANY ENEMIES

By R. G. Lee

Philosophers have tried to drown it in the muddy waters of their philosophy and ignorance. The archaeologist with his crowbar, the geologist with his hammer, the physicist with his battery—all these have fought against the Book. Some scientists and astronomers lifted up haughty mouths, “that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge” against the Book. The dissecting knives of theological anatomists have cut at its milk veins. Inexorable censors have sat, like Jehoiakim before the fireplace in his summer house, Bible on knee, penknife in hand, calmly mutilating the only reliable franchise of our Christian hopes. Snipers, some from behind pulpit stands, some behind college chairs, are accustomed to aim ill-grounded propositions against the Scriptures.

The open and avowed leaders of infidelity are gone. Bradlaugh of England and Ingersol of America were the last of the Old Guard. Now open warfare has given away to subtle strategy. The troops of Ulysses are no longer hurled against the walls of Troy. It is the enemy in the belly of the wooden horse that we must watch out for today. The Trojan horse, in some places, has been wheeled within the walls of the churches themselves. A body of militant critics, many of them wearing the sacred garb of theological professors and ministers of the gospel, have been attempting to draw the bolts of the citadel.

Diocletian tried to exterminate the Book in the third century. Celsus tried to undermine the message. The astute Porphyry hurled his venomous shafts. Hume, with rare subtlety, wielded cogent weapons. He said, “Methinks I see the twilight of Christianity!” He mistook the sunrise for the sunset. He mistook the time of day. What he thought was twilight deepening into midnight was sunshine growing into a dazzling noonday. Voltaire flung his arrows tipped with fire at the Book. Tom Paine tried to drown it in infidel ink. Ingersoll flung quiver full after quiver full of arrows of scorn and jeers and sneers at it.

But the Book lives on. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh* at those who think they destroy His Word and its triumphs. Voltaire cut not one twig from its great forests. Paine drowned not one page in infidel ink. Shortened not its life by one hour. Diocletian broke not one string on its harp of ten thousand strings. Agnostics who kindled their bonfires upon it burn not away one thread of its garments. Atheists have not been able to steal one flower from its gorgeous flower gardens. Unbelieving scientists, with microscope and telescope and test tube, have not been able to dilute one drop of its sweetness. Theological smoke-screeners who have tried to hide in clouds and thick darkness the Cross and the Blood and the empty tomb in Joseph’s garden, have not been able to invert its torch or to quench one ray of its light. Still it is our “pillar of fire” among all books. Not one jot or tittle of its moral code has perished in the last century. Isaac Newton said: “If all the great books of the world were given life and were brought together in convention, the other books would fall on their faces, as the gods of Philistia fell when the ark of God was brought into their presence in the temple of Dagon.”

Today the Bible, in the face of all enmity and hatred, all criticism and antagonism, is still the Book that opens with crystal waters for our thirst when we travel “the dry and dusty highways where no water is.” This Book has traveled and does travel, up and down more highways and bypaths, and knocks now at more doors and speaks to more people in their mother tongue than any book, having been translated into approximately one thousand different languages

Last eve I stood beside a blacksmith’s door,

And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then walking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn by beating years of time!

How many anvils have you had? said I,
To beat and shatter all these hammers so?
Just one, he said; then with twinkling eye:
The anvil wears the hammers out, you know!

And so I thought the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptic blows have rained upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone!

The Book a thousand times has proved itself indifferent to faint praise or violent denunciation—a Book which defies the critic, convinces the intellect, inspires awe, compels faith, demands worship. Though Nineveh with her pride is now a dirty doormat for irreverent feet—the Book lives on. Though Rome with her power is now a branchless tree dishonorable, fruitless—the Book lives on. Though Greece with her culture and art is now a crumb in history's rubbish heap—the Book lives on. Though Spain with her pomp is now a drowsy beggar watching a broken clock—the Book lives on. Though Egypt with her wealth is now a shabby sexton of splendid tombs—the Book lives on.

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