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THE BIBLE, OUR TIME TABLE

When the railroad track is completed; the heavy rails bolted together and nailed down, over bridges and grades, through tunnels and cuts, around curves and into the terminal station, the construction work is said to be done. The engineer climbs up into his cab, sits down and hangs his time table near by and looks at his watch. He has a supply of fuel, oil and water. His main duty now is to keep his engine running on the schedule of his time table, and his eye on the track ahead. The dispatcher gives him a paper called his clearance - he pulls open the throttle and steams out for the first time over a new, untried road.

I have for twenty-five years been laying the track of your educational life. My work is this week to end. A new engineer will this week climb up into the cab to direct the engine of your life. No one else can do his work for him. His dispatcher, the Trustees, will on Tuesday March 2, 1937 place into his hands his clearance papers. I, as President of the College and founder of this school, would place into his hands and into the hands of the Faculty, their schedule, their time table of life, the Bible.

Take it, study it, master it and follow it closely. In so doing you will have courage to plunge into every fog of life. You will find strength to go through every trial and to overcome all difficulties. Above all you will, if you rightly study your Bible, learn to love, trust and serve the God of Heaven as a personal, ever present and true friend. You will believe in man, in his possibilities in Christ. You will find joy and pleasure in your tasks of life. And when your sun sets in splendour at the end of your earthly journey, you will ride your engine of life into the terminal station pulling along with you a train of friends and

loved ones who will be following your example.

I want to call your attention to this Bible, as your guide-- your time table.

The Bible is not being read today by church members, because they do not understand it. On its cover is printed Holy Bible. They half fear it. They open it and are disappointed in not finding what they expected to find. They come with a mind full of suppositions, some superstitions and many false standards. Little wonder that many find no pleasure and less profit in reading the Bible, because they do not know what the Bible is.

John Milton, writer of Paradise Lost said: "There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach."

Sir Walter Scott reminds the intellectuals that: "The most learned, acute and diligent student cannot, in the longest lifetime, obtain an entire knowledge of this Volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore."

One of our greatest statesmen, Daniel Webster was happy to say: "I have read the Bible through many times. I now make it a practice of going through it once a year. It is a book of all others for lawyers as well as for divines; and I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and rules of conduct."

I have read the Bible through once a year for over 40 years. It has kept me from the beginning on the right track. By the grace of God its precepts have been my guide. Its light has shone always on my path, revealing slippery places, dangerous precipices and hidden wild beasts couched to spring upon me. It has given me courage, strength, hope. It has taught me, how to love, how to

forgive, how to serve, how to run and not be weary, and by the Holy Spirit's leading it has revealed God's will to me day by day for these 40 years. It has under God's Spirit and hand led me and prepared me to be a friend of man. God's gentleness as revealed in His Word and by His Spirit has made it possible for me to find joy and contentment with all classes of people - with the cowboys sitting on the ground around their lonely fire, eating with their pocket knives, and with the socialites in banquet halls around tables of costly linen and more costly and perfect appointments. What I have learned from the Bible has helped me to make contacts of friendship with the great men and women of this generation. I could not have met all the varying classes of people with ease, great pleasure and profit had it not been for knowledge acquired from the Bible. What I have found the Bible to be and do in me, I want it to be and do in you my successors.

In the first place you must recognize and accept what the Bible is NOT.

The Bible is not the word of God in the sense that every word is dictated by God, is literally true and meets with God's approval. It contains the word of God, but is not the word of God as Dean Burgon of Oxford declared it to be when he said: "Every book of the Bible, every chapter of the Bible, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it is the direct utterance of the Most High." This is the strongest statement, from an educated man, of the Divine dictation of the Bible I have ever seen.

This has come and grown up out of man's longing for alliance to an infallible guide. In the centuries following Christ the church adhered to an infallible person, the Christ. Then came a neglect of God's Word and the loss of personal contact with Jesus of Galilee. We had an era known as the Dark Ages and gradually individual bishops were considered inerrant. The Reformation brought

part of the church back to an infallible person, the Christ, as revealed in the Bible. About 70 years ago a part of Christ's church proclaimed an infallible representation of Christ in the Pope of Rome.

In this last century the Bible has been held by some Protestants to be infallible in the sense stated above by Dr. Burgon--that every word is the word dictated by God and is literally true, as a guide in history, science and all things of life. Its statements, they say, are literally true. If you are intellectually honest you cannot accept that every statement is literally true. Take four examples of the many. The ascription of praise quoted by David in his lamentation over Saul and Jonathan--"They were swifter than eagles
They were stronger than lions."

Or, in Song of Songs 2:15-- "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom"--which is the poetical way of saying: "Kill all the great and little enemies and adverse circumstances which destroy love." or "Let the blossoming love of the soul be without injury or restraint."
Or when Jesus said in reference to Herod: "Go and say to that fox", it could not be taken literally that Herod was a fox. Again Jesus said: "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou canst see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Or again: "A bruised reed shall he not break
And smoking flax shall he not quench".

These are expressions of ideas in the spiritual world, not of physical facts.

The Bible is not history as we understand history. The historical books of the Bible only give a small part of the history of the men mentioned. Jeroboam II reigned nearly half a century and has only seven verses given to him. The historical books tell us that if we want to know the history of David read: "The history of Samuel, the Seer;" or "The history of Nathan, the Prophet"; or "The history

of God, the Seer." II Chronicles 10:29 says: "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the History of Nathan, the Prophet; and in the Prophecy of Ahijah, the Shilonite, and in the Visions of Iddo, the Seer?" The Bible does not claim to be history. Nevertheless the historical references of the Bible are amazingly accurate as revealed by the archaeologists in the uncovered ruins of ancient cities and by contemporaneous history.

The Bible is not science, as we know it. Science was unknown to any of the writers of the Bible. Science is the classification of uniformities. The Bible is a literature of Personal Relationships.

Let us, in the second place, consider what the Bible IS.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick says: "The Bible is the faithful record of the revelation of God to man as men are progressively able to understand God."

Dr. James E. Clark says: "The Bible is a record of God's revelation to man and of man's reaction thereto."

The Bible is composed of 66 books, written over a period of about 1500 years, by men of all classes, and of varying degrees and kinds of culture. It is essentially a book of religion, which gradually unfolds to us a person. It begins in the darkness of prehistoric days: "In the beginning God" and God said: "Let there be light." It ends, as a written revelation of that Person, in the brightness and fullness of Jesus, the Christ, announcing to all nations: "Whosoever will may come." May come to a better understanding of God, daily, may come to feel and know God as a personal Savior. The complete understanding of God's revelation is never reached. It is better understood as the content of our knowledge increases. All men who add anything worthy and true to the content of our knowledge in history, art, literature, science, a discovery of a continent or of an atom;

of a wave length or of a vitamin, are making it possible for us to understand God better.

The oneness of the Bible is not the oneness of theological doctrine, or dogma or history. Its oneness, its unity is that of a Person. "I and my Father are One" runs through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In the revelation of this Person is found the infallibility for our direction in faith and practice. The

Shorter catechism states it clearly: "The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." If you will remember that every statement in the Bible with reference to man and of man's reaction to God's revelation, may be a literal fact, may be a figure of speech, or may be an untruth stating the low nature of man; if you will remember also that each statement is a reflection of the age in which it was made; you will find that the Bible is the greatest book, the best book for your own spiritual development and that it is a true portrayal of God as a person, "infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." You will find it a true portrayal of man sipping the sweet from the flowers of God's garden and then in the strength of that nectar he rises to the heights of and above the clouds showing forth what God can do for man; or he turns his nose downward and wallows in the mire of sin defacing and defeating the revelation of God by his submission to his lower nature. You will find these two extremes often and repeatedly portrayed in the Bible.

You must remember always what Dr. James I. Vance clearly states: "The Bible is a literature of history, poetry, prophecy, philosophy, theology, oratory, humor, sarcasm, irony, music, drama, tragedy, strategy, love tales, war tales, travelogues, laws, jurisprudence, songs, sermons, warnings, prayers--all are there. Was there ever such a literature?"

The successes and failures of the same individual are told. Man's noble acts and his ugly deeds are related. His baseness and crimes are shown in their true light. Let me read of them and make sure to avoid their repetition in my own life. They are given as red lights along my pathway, showing me the dangerous ground over which I walk. When Nathan says to David, "Thou art the man," let me see my own peril and also let me see in David's confession, "I have sinned against Jehovah," that any wrong is primarily against the best friend I have, the God of Heaven, my friend and savior. It is my application of the truth to my life that counts, not the fact of David's wrong. The wrong is recorded not for the sake of history but that I may see the danger and avoid it.

In reading the terrible acts done in the name of God such as when Samuel orders Saul "to slay Amalek, both man and woman, infant and suckling," place yourself back there among a primitive people who could not possibly have understood Christ's injunction, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." It was to avoid the corruption and failure of Israel that Amalek had to be destroyed. I wonder if we really stop to consider the greater of the two losses, that of the loss of the soul by saving the physical body or the gaining of the soul by losing the physical? A primitive people could be made to see wrong only by the severest and shocking (to us) methods. Today such an act is revolting even though done by Italians in Ethiopia on apologetic grounds of reforming the Ethiopians. We, as Christians, now reform people by precepts not by the sword. The only method that appeals to the best people of all nations today is that of Saint Paul: "Flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord, out of a pure heart." II Timothy 2:22. Saul could not have grasped the meaning of Paul's injunction. Even the most advanced Christians do not today grasp

always the meaning of Christ's commands: "If thine eye be evil, pluck it out. If thy hand offend thee, cut it off." We are nevertheless far removed from Saul's day.

You will find things untrue stated in the Bible as: "There is no God" said by a fool. The serpent in Eden was the first to state a falsehood when it said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die."

You will find the pearls of God scattered among the broken shells of man's wrecked lives. The purity, stability and strength of a Joseph arises above the jealousy and malignancy of his brothers. The statesman Moses growing up out of and in spite of his slavery. The opening up of the waters of the sea to let Israel pass, when all hope of escape was gone.

You will see how a serious misunderstanding was righted by investigation of the supposed rebellion of the tribes across the Jordan in erecting a monument; how those who begin and do not continue to trust God are compelled to wander for 40 years in the wilderness and never enter the promised land.

You will learn from Daniel how to be firm in your religious standards; from Nehemiah, how to attempt a great work without friends and without means--only with God as your helper. You will learn the value of prayer in life from Samuel, the wisdom of unselfishness in a life choice from Ruth, the cost of consecrated Christian service from Paul, and the depth, the height, the breadth and the joy of a Mother's love from Mary, the mother of Jesus.

You as young people will see how gloriously beautiful marriage is when contracted between proper individuals, and how bitter and disappointingly ruinous it is with the ill matched, regardless of their social and economic standing. When you become parents you will see how Samuel withheld council to his sons and how they failed.

You will see in the life of Timothy the prolongation of his mother, Eunice's faith, and if you are wise you will teach your children the faith of the Christian.

And when you too, like Joshua, come to the evening of life of a well spent day you can say to your children: "This day I am going the way of all the earth and ye all know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which Jehovah your God spoke concerning you." All have been fulfilled. What a collection of books! With their guide posts at every parting of the ways of life; with their fortresses of safety, their sanctuaries for the renewal of our strength and their abodes for the weary to rest.

Remember, young people, that in these 66 books is the record of God's gradual, progressive revelation to man and of man's continual discovery of God; that, while the written word closed with John's Revelation of a new heaven and a new earth, that the better understanding of that written revelation is going on progressively as knowledge in the fear of God increases. Each generation understands God a little better than the previous generation.

There was a time when rugged individualism flourished at the expense and detriment of the welfare of others. We are still too much in the shackles of that age. We are emerging. The Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Henry Fords, and thousands of others to a less degree, whose special gifts were the amassing of great wealth--have recognized their obligation to all men, and are helping to make possible for all to enjoy life and its blessings.

We are now on the road to economic and social adjustments. The time when a Christian can keep a slave passed not only legally but morally in the lifetime of people still living.

The present method of governmental control of economic and social

life is a step in the right direction. The only method however leading to any degree of practicability is that laid down in the Bible-- the regeneration of the individual. I believe Christian standards put into practice by all regardless of his standing will eventually bring about a new social and economic world of contentment. This comes only by the regeneration and consecration of the individual. No federal law can do it. A government ruled by unconverted, selfish men can never establish justice and righteousness in the land.

I find that to understand the Bible we need to be led in its reading by the Holy Spirit. I pray the prayer of Psalm 119:18; "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" whenever I read the Bible.

I find that the scientific method operates in the spiritual world. It is the only way of approach. If we come to the Bible with an open mind, the same way the scientists go to their research laboratory, laying aside all presupposed theories and not injecting our own desires, dogmas and interpretations into the study of God's word--accepting the spiritual, scientific method of Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good;" and that laid down by Jesus: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23); and "If ye abide in my word, ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, his will my Father honor." (John 12:26) It is so simple--"Taste, take, follow, serve." This is the scientific method of Christ in the spiritual world. Simple and easy, so much so that many never try it. They are, in reading the Bible, looking too much not at finding out what is really there but by putting in what they think should be there. They see the horrible things, are frightened and quit reading the Bible.

The base things, the evil, the terrible things said and done by man and recorded in the Bible I use these as red lights telling me of the dangers to be avoided. The noble thoughts, the high ideals, the humble and exalted service of man, and the great victories for right, I try to incorporate these into my life and put them into practice. While I do not consider every expression in the Bible as coming from God, I do accept such as God's faithful record of man's struggle to know God.

You find no pleasure in recalling the evil you may have done but you do get great joy in realizing how God has served you from wrong. You derive no pleasure in reading how David slew Goliath, but you do rejoice in the fact that Christ has taught us a better way of overcoming our enemies - which method is praying for them, doing them good - even though we may not feel like doing it.

Mr. President elect, faculty and students of my college this is my last sermon to you. In this I have tried, as I have tried for 25 years to do, to show what I have found the Bible to be and what it will do for any one who reads it rightly.

Let me say in closing: I find increasingly more and more profit in my Bible reading and meditation. I see on its first pages the dim outline of a promise. Gradually there unfolds the character of a person. I see one "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53). I see a babe born in Bethlehem, sleeping in a manger. I hear the wonderful words of life from a man in his youth in the Sermon on the Mount. I hear his intercession for the sinner. I see him open the eyes of the blind, strengthen the legs of the paralytic and cure the leper. I hear his gracious words to a sinning soul,

"Woman, where are they?
Did no man condemn thee?
Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way;
from henceforth, sin no more."

I follow Him to Gethsemane where he alone, in the darkness of night, sweats as if it were drops of blood in prayer for me. I watch Him carry His cross up to Calvary and I hear the blows of hammers and feel with Him the pain and anguish of the cross. I see him laid in a tomb and I am surprised at his resurrection. I walk with him out of Jerusalem and am astounded when He is taken up into glory. Yes, I watch that sight of that Person on a cross between two thieves - I see Him as He ascends into the heavens, and I am convinced that He is the embodiment, in His person of all good, the solution of all our personal, social, economic, political and religious problems. Jesus is the only savior of our civilization and our only hope both in this life and in the life to come.

This is the real purpose of God running through the Bible - the revelation of a Person - Man's Savior - Jesus, the Christ, the son of God. "Until we all come into the full grown man, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In this the Bible is infallible as a guide leading us to our savior, Jesus, the Christ.