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A very long time ago a wise man said, "Of making many books there is no end." If that was true in his day, how obviously true it is in ours! The multiplication of books is one of the most marked features of modern times.

But books are made to die! They come from the press in their thousands every year, and engage our attention for a while, only to be thrust aside by other books that follow them and in a short time to be forgotten. Yet in the midst of this stream of books that are made, that live awhile and die, there is one book that has come down through the ages with the power of an endless life—the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

The Bible lives because there is life in it. It has the qualities that characterize all living things, namely, unity, continuity, adaptability and energy.

I. Living Unity

The Bible has a unity which is not superficial, but is organic, like that of a plant or a living creature. It is a unity of structure and of internal relations.

At first sight the Bible is marked by great diversity. It is composed of sixty-six books, written by some forty authors, who lived in different countries, and in different ages. It contains various kinds of literature, in both prose and poetry. The writers belonged to diverse conditions of social and individual life. Yet when their writings are put together in this one book, the result is something which stands before us as a living whole. In spite of the manifold variety of its contents, the Bible, from the beginning to the end, develops but one great theme, the revelation of God to man, the story of redemption.

Compare the beginning and the end of the Bible. In the beginning we have the creation of the heavens and the earth; and in the end we have the new heavens and the new earth. In the beginning we find Satan entering to deceive and destroy; in the end we behold Satan cast out where he

can deceive and destroy no more. In the beginning sin enters, bringing in its train sorrow and pain and death; in the end of the Bible we read that "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." In the beginning we have the curse coming into the world God had made and pronounced to be "very good." That curse drags its evil way through all the ages till we read in the end, "there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." In the beginning we have Paradise lost; in the end we have Paradise regained.

Then again the book displays its vital unity when we compare its two parts. The two Testaments are diverse, and yet they are related the one to the other as the bud is related to the flower. In the Old Testament, as Augustine pointed out long ago, the New Testament lies hidden, while in the New Testament the Old Testament lies open. In the Old Testament we have outward forms enveloping inward principles; in the New Testament we have inward principles developing outward forms. In the Old Testament we see God in Himself as supreme, and man in himself as sinner; in the New

Testament we see God in Christ as Redeemer and man in Christ as redeemed.

The Old Testament and the New thus fit together so closely that they must be organically connected. We see this when we proceed to trace the idea of redemption through from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Following upon the story of creation and the fall, we have the revelation of God's purpose of redemption, and His preparation for it in the choice and separation of Israel, and His dealings with them in their national history, all recorded for us in the historical books of the Old Testament. Then in the poetical books we have the human response to the divine purpose in the aspiration of devout souls in Israel; and in the prophetic books the expectation and assurance of its ultimate fulfilment. But the Old Testament closes, and the promised redemption has not yet appeared. The New Testament opens with the manifestation of the Redeemer in the Gospels, carries us into the Acts and Epistles, where redemption is realized in the history and experience of the church, and leads us at last to its consummation in the book of Revelation. Thus the whole Bible exhibits a consistent purpose from beginning

to end. It is a record of the Divine plan of redeeming the world through Jesus Christ.

Now how is this unity to be explained? Suppose forty men should come together from different places bringing sixty-six blocks of marble, carved in peculiar shapes, and lay them down one upon another, and there should arise the figure of a man finely chiselled, perfectly symmetrical. How should we explain such a result? The mind of a single artist planned that statue, and directed the work of each separate workman. And such is the only explanation of the unity of the Bible. Behind all its various writers there has been one living Mind. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and the book that they produced is the living message of the living God.

II. Living Continuity

Another characteristic of living things is continuity. Life is continuous; it persists. It has the power of pressing its way through opposition, and resisting forces that make for destruction. So it is with the Bible. It has shown power to resist attack. It has endured notwithstanding strong and persis-

tent opposition. It has pressed its living way continuously through the centuries in the face of many forces that have sought its destruction.

In the early days of Christianity the Roman Empire tried in vain to destroy the Bible. During the last and greatest of the ten Roman persecutions, begun by Diocletian, a special effort was made to destroy the Christian Scriptures. The heathen philosophers and rulers, had discovered that the peculiar strength of the Christian Church lay in its writings. All Christian books were to be burned. Those who had copies in their possession were to give them up on pain of death. For ten years this persecution raged throughout the empire, and when at last it died away the church rose out of it like a phoenix from its ashes with the living Word of God in its hand.

Then the Bible fell into the long neglect of the Middle Ages. For a thousand years it was unknown to the masses of the people. It was left in a dead or dying language, and buried away in monasteries or old libraries. In the days of the Reformation it was brought out into the light. Wycliffe had put it first into the language of the common

people in England. Now Luther did the same for Germany. Tyndale followed with that English translation which is the basis of our glorious Authorized or King James Version. By this time printing had been invented, and translations of the Bible rapidly appeared in other lands as well. By the end of the sixteenth century nearly every country in Europe had the Bible, or at least the New Testament, in its own tongue. So the church awoke out of its long sleep with the living Word of God again in its hand.

In modern times the Bible has met with another kind of opposition. It has been subjected to all sorts of attacks at the hands of English deism, French infidelity, and German rationalism. It has been exposed to the severest scrutiny of criticism, both friendly and unfriendly. We have had the Bible carved into pieces, reconstructed, and given back to us, not in the form of that unity it professes to have as God's revelation to man, but in the form of an evolution of man's thought about God. But the Bible simply refuses to take that form. The living Word asserts itself in the face of all efforts to reduce it to a merely human composition.

Is there not striking significance in the fact that the very period during which destructive criticism has been at work has been the period of world-wide Bible circulation! Since the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804 it has circulated 450,000,000 copies of the Scriptures in 675 languages. The stream of Holy Scripture going out now (1934) into all the world amounts to the grand total of 30,000,000 copies every year. Thus does the Word of God continue to go striding abroad in its own unique and supernatural unity and power.

III. Living Adaptability

The third mark of life which the Bible possesses is adaptability. Life has been defined as "continuous adjustment to environment." It seeks to adjust itself to its surroundings. Living organisms can do this, but dead, inert matter cannot. This book exhibits a similar property. It adapts itself to all sorts and conditions of men. It is read and loved by the young and the old, by the rich and the poor, by the scholar and the unlearned. It is welcomed in the palaces of kings and in the cottages of peasants. It has its message for prosperity and for ad-

versity, for those who suffer and also for those who rejoice. It meets the need of any human heart in any kind of circumstances.

Consider the remarkable way in which the Bible adapts itself to the languages of mankind. It has the property which no other book possesses of fitting into the mould of any tongue. It is absolutely unique in this particular that it can be translated into all languages without losing its majesty and tenderness. Books do not usually thrive in any other tongue than that in which they were written. But the Bible seems to fit every language into which it is rendered as though it had been made for it. It lives upon the tongues of all mankind.

When the British and Foreign Bible Society started out to translate the Bible into other languages there were only seventy-two versions of the Scripture in existence, and it was said that it would be utterly impossible to add many more to these. Today the Bible is printed in whole or in part in more than 900 languages, and the Bible Societies are capturing one new language every month for the Gospel. So mighty grows the Word of God and prevails. It is rapidly being put into all the languages of the world, and everywhere it goes home to

the hearts of the people in their mother tongue with the same living appeal which it carries home to our hearts in our tongue. Who ever thinks of our English Bible as being a translation? Its message has the same tenderness and spiritual force for us as if it had been written originally in English. The Scriptures live in the living speech of all mankind, because they speak the voice of the living God.

This property of the Bible is all the more remarkable when we think of the people from whom the book came. The Jews of the time were the narrowest people on the face of the earth. They have left no other literature worthy of the name. Yet they have given the world its one universal book. This ancient and oriental book that has come from one of the most exclusive races of men is the one book which in our modern day is making its way into the hearts and homes of all the nations of the world. It is speaking today in close to a thousand tongues.

IV. Living Energy

Lastly, the Bible possesses living energy. It is vitalizing. It has the power of transmitting moral and spiritual force.

Take this feature on its lowest level and consider its power to quicken thought. Emerson, who will not be suspected of any partiality to the Bible, declares that it is the most original book in the world and owes its place to the fact that it came out of a profounder depth of thought than any other book. De Quincey made the well-known division of literature into the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The Bible is pre-eminently the literature of power. We can never exhaust it by reading. The more we read it, the more profound we find it to be. George Muller said he had read the Bible through over one hundred times, and it was fresher to him each time he read it. Generations of thought have been given to the study of it, and thousands of volumes have been devoted to its exposition, but its depths have not yet been sounded or its riches exhausted.

There is a deeper aspect in which this feature of the Bible is to be seen. Its words have a strange power of living in the heart that receives them. There is something about them that will not die, but is ready to spring into life, like seed when the soil receives it. The annals of the Bible Societies

can tell of innumerable instances where some stray leaf or fragment of Scripture has brought light and life to an individual soul in the midst of the darkest heathenism.

This vitalizing quality of the Bible is manifested also in national life. Nations have grown strong or weak in times past according to their attitude to the Bible. It is interesting and significant to compare the history of England and of Spain in view of the attitude which each country took towards the Word of God at the time of the Reformation. Carlyle declared that "the period of the Reformation was a judgment day for Europe, when all the nations were presented with an open Bible and the emancipation of heart and intellect which an open Bible involves." Spain closed her doors at that time to the Bible in the vernacular, while Tyndale's New Testament found its way into England and prepared the English people to become what J. R. Green says they became "the people of a book and that book was the Bible." From that very period began both Spain's decline and England's greatness, and the world-wide opportunities that were Spain's then soon passed into the possession of Britain.

That which is true of the individual and of the nation is also true of the church. All true spiritual energy and vitality comes from the Bible. The church can deliver her message to the world and be efficient in her work only as she gives this book its true place in her preaching and her teaching as the living Word of God.

What the Bible really needs is fair play and an opportunity to speak for itself. It needs no defense. It will take care of itself if allowed to stand on its own feet. Let it be read in its own light. Let him who reads it give it time to speak to his mind and to his heart. Let it be taken into the home and the family circle. Let it have its own luminous exposition in the pulpits of the church. Then the Word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified. Then we shall have such a revival as will give us a new sense of God and prepare the way for the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.