

KNOX COLLEGE.

OPENING OF THE SESSION.

LECTURE BY REV. PROF. GREGG, M.A.

On Wednesday last, at noon, Knox College was opened for the winter session of 1876-7. There were present on the occasion Rev. Dr. Topp, Moderator of the General Assembly; Principal Caven, Professors Gregg and McLaren, Rev. Messrs. Fletcher, Hamilton; Breckenridge, Streetsville; Lang, Dundas; Anll, Ratho; Murray, Woodville; McPherson, Stratford; Grey, Orillia; McMillan, Mount Forest; Leiper (late from Scotland), and others.

Rev. Dr. Topp opened the proceedings with prayer, after which,

Rev. Prof. Caven, D.D., Principal of the college, made a brief address. In the course of his remarks Principal Caven referred to the past history of the institution. During its existence some 250 students had been trained in it for the work of the ministry, most of whom are still connected with the church. Reference was also made to the prosperous state of the building fund, towards which there had already been subscribed the sum of \$125,000. Principal Caven also referred to the sorrowful fact that since the close of the last session four of the students had been removed by death, viz.:—Messrs. Allison, McDermaid, McKay, and Meldrum. As regards the success of the institution on the score of educational training being accomplished, it may be added that the attendance is large, there being about forty students in the opening theological classes; while for preparatory literary training there are about fifty young men attending at the University and in the College.

At the close of Principal Caven's speech, Professor Gregg delivered the following

OPENING LECTURE:

GENTLEMEN,—I intend in this lecture to give some examples of a particular kind of evidence of the truth of Scripture history. The kind of evidence I propose to exemplify is akin to that employed in "Paley's Horses Pauline." In this work Paley has shown that there are certain coincidences between the letters of Paul and Luke's narrative in the Acts of the Apostles which could not have been the results of forgery, and which cannot be accounted for except on the supposition of the genuineness and authenticity both of the Acts and the Epistles. The force of the argument drawn from these undesigned coincidences is similar to that drawn from circumstantial evidence, which is the strongest kind of evidence. It is a common maxim that a witness may lie, but that circumstances cannot. In like manner the deliberate statements of forged writings may be so cautiously framed as to conceal or pervert the truth. On the other hand, it is a strong guarantee of the truthfulness of writings, in regard to the main facts they record, when coincidences are ascertained in regard to minute particulars and incidental allusions which would scarcely be noticed by one reader in a thousand, and which, therefore, could scarcely be supposed to have been designed to secure the confidence of the reader. The more obviously undesigned the coincidences are in minute particulars, the stronger is the conviction produced of the general truthfulness of the writings in which they are detected. This will be admitted by every one who has carefully and candidly examined the instances of undesigned coincidences given by Paley in his "Horse Pauline," and by other writers, such as Professor Blunt, who has furnished numerous and singularly striking illustrations, both from the Old and New Testament Scriptures. But the method of Paley admits of still more extensive application. There are obviously undesigned coincidences not merely between different parts of Scripture, when compared the one with the other, but also between incidental statements and allusions in the Scripture. On the one hand, and extra-Scriptural testimonies, documentary and monumental, on the other. Professor Blunt has shown this by a comparison of some statements in the Gospels with the writings of Josephus, and the few examples he has given are sufficient to prove with what force and effect the method of Paley may be more generally applied to a comparison of Scripture and extra-Scriptural testimonies. Now, it is my design in this lecture to present some illustrations of this kind of coincidence, and for the sake of definiteness, as well as of brevity, I shall confine myself to illustrations connected with the lives of the later Assyrian and Babylonian kings, as alluded to in Scripture, and referred to in profane history, or pointed to by the monuments of Nineveh and Babylon, which in recent times have been discovered and deciphered by Batta, Layard, Rawlinson, Hincks, Smith, and others.

Sargon.—The first example I shall give is connected with the name of Sargon, King of Assyria. This name occurs only once in the Scriptures. The place in which it occurs is Is. xx. 1, where it is said, "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him, and fought against Ashdod and took it." Here you will notice that the name of Sargon is introduced in a merely incidental way—in a mere parenthesis which is not necessary to the continuity of the narrative, but inserted simply to give greater precision to the date of a prophecy of Isaiah. Now, until lately, the mention of Sargon in this place was a source of great difficulty. No monarch was otherwise known of this name. It was therefore supposed by some that Sargon was another name for Salmannassar, while others supposed that it was another name for Sennacherib, or Esarhaddon. Light, however, has been shed on this difficulty by the ancient Assyrian monuments recently discovered and deciphered. Among these we have the annals of a monarch bearing this very name of Sargon. The annals have been preserved in a two-fold form—in a cylinder, and on the wall of the great hall of Khorabad. And it is remarkable that Sargon was the first king whose monuments were discovered through the researches of M. Batta and his assistants in 1843. It appears from the annals that Sargon was one of the most powerful kings and successful warriors of Assyria; that he

came to the throne the same year in which Merodach-baladan became King of Babylon, i.e., according to the Canon of Ptolemy, 721 B.C.; that he warred in the first year of his reign against Samaria, and carried away captive 27,280 persons; that he warred also against the King of Edom, against the King of Hamath, against the Armenians and Albanians, and also against the King of Egypt. But what I wish you particularly to notice is that in the annals of Sargon it is related that he took Ashdod. This might mean that he either took it personally or by some of his generals. Now it cannot be supposed that the allusion to Sargon by Isaiah was intended to tally with the inscription in Khorabad. Neither can the inscription be supposed to have been designed to tally with the allusion in Isaiah. Most obviously the coincidence is undesigned. There is thus furnished, not merely a solution of what was long felt as a serious difficulty, but at the same time a strong confirmation of the general historical accuracy of Isaiah's narrative. If he is found to be so accurate in a mere incidental allusion, it is not likely that he would be inaccurate in respect to the main facts which it is his main purpose to record.

Sennacherib.—The next example I shall give of undesigned coincidences between Scriptural and extra-Scriptural testimonies is connected with the accounts which have come to us of Sennacherib, the son and successor of Sargon, and who became King of Assyria in 704 B.C. There are many particulars regarding Sennacherib, recorded in the Scriptures, which are confirmed by extra-Scriptural testimony, and particularly by the inscriptions found in the palace at Kouyunjik. Here we have the annals of Sennacherib himself, in which he records his victories and successes. Particular mention is made of his treatment of Hezekiah, "whom (said he) I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage" . . . and on whom "there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me 80 talents of gold, and 800 talents of silver." The difference between the number of talents of silver here mentioned and that given in Scripture—800—may be accounted for by the supposition that Sennacherib added to the money sent the value of other gifts or exactions, or by the supposition, which an examination of weights and measures warrants, that the 800 Jewish were equivalent to 800 Assyrian talents of silver. The writings of Herodotus also, and the traditions of the Armenians, confirm—notwithstanding discrepancies—the accounts of the overthrow of Sennacherib's army in the neighborhood of Egypt (not before Jerusalem as is generally supposed), and his assassination by his sons, neither of which events, as might be expected, is noticed in the Assyrian records. Monarchs do not record their own defeats—and the death of no Assyrian king is recorded on the monuments. But passing by these and other great events—the particular fact to which I call your attention, as an example of undesigned coincidence, is connected with the manner in which the siege of Lachish by Sennacherib is referred to in the Scriptures—and in the ancient monuments. It appears from 2nd Kings, xviii chapter, that after receiving the gold and silver which Hezekiah had sent to pacify him, Sennacherib sent his Generals Rabshas and Rabsekak with a detachment of troops to take Jerusalem, while he himself, with the main body of the army, besieged the city of Lachish. No mention is made of his taking Lachish. On the contrary, it seems from 2nd Kings, xix. 8, that he was obliged to raise the siege, and he went from it to Libnah. It is not, indeed, distinctly stated that he failed to take Lachish, but this seems the legitimate inference from the brief notice in the passage just referred to. Now let us turn to the Assyrian records. In these we find no account of the capture of Lachish, which we might expect if the city had been captured, and especially as we know from other incidental notices that it was an important and strongly fortified city. The name of Lachish does not even occur in the annals of Sennacherib. There is, however, at present in the British Museum a bas-relief found at Kouyunjik representing the siege of the city with this inscription, "Sennacherib, the mighty King, King of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgement before the city of Lachish. I give permission for its slaughter." Here the fact of the siege is indicated, but still there is no indication of the capture of the city. In fact, the representation and inscription exactly tally with the Scriptural narrative. In neither is there a distinct indication of the capture of Lachish, while from both alike this seems to be the legitimate inference, and the coincidence is most obviously undesigned. It may here be added as confirmatory of the inference adverted to that we find from Jer. xxxiv. 7, that Lachish was one of the defended cities which remained of the cities of Judah in the time of Jeremiah.

Esarhaddon.—Sennacherib was succeeded on the throne of Assyria by his fourth son Esarhaddon, and in connection with his name I shall give the next example of undesigned coincidences between sacred history and extra-Scriptural testimonies. The name of Esarhaddon seldom occurs in Scripture—only in three places; 2 Kings, xix. 37; Is. xxxvii. 33; and Ezra, iv. 2. In the first two places it is simply stated that he reigned instead of his father Sennacherib. In the other place he is referred to as the King of Assur, by whom the inhabitants of Samaria had been settled there. Other passages, however, undoubtedly refer to him. Thus, we read in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, that in consequence of the great wickedness of Manasseh and his people, "The Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." That this King of Assyria was Esarhaddon may be inferred from the fact that Sennacherib, the father of Esarhaddon, was contemporary with Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh; it is likely that the two sons would reign at the same time, the one as King of Assyria and the other as King of Judah. This inference is confirmed by an inscription found in one of the palaces he erected, in which he mentions the names of 23 kings who furnished materials. Among them is the name

"Minael (Manasseh), King of Judah." It was then Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, who bound Manasseh in fetters, and brought him to Babylon. But the point to which I call your special attention is that it was to Babylon, the capital of Assyria, and not to Nineveh, that Esarhaddon, the King of Assyria, conducted the captive Manasseh. As Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, it would seem more natural that Esarhaddon should bring him to Nineveh rather than to Babylon. It has, however, been found that, while Babylon was usually governed by viceroys under the Assyrian monarchs, Esarhaddon built a palace for himself and reigned personally in Babylon. Bricks and a tablet have been found in Babylon bearing inscriptions which prove that Esarhaddon erected a palace and reigned there; and his name in a Greek form (Asaridinnus) is given by Ptolemy in the list of Babylonian kings. It appears, moreover, that Esarhaddon was the only Assyrian king who reigned at Babylon. This not only explains why Manasseh should be brought to Babylon, but, by the obviously undesigned manner in which the coincidence occurs, furnishes very strong confirmation of the minute accuracy of the Bible records. Had the name of Esarhaddon been given in the Book of Chronicles as the king who carried Manasseh to Babylon, the coincidence would have been remarkable, but yet not so obviously undesigned. But as it is, we only find by inference that Esarhaddon was the Assyrian king referred to in the Scripture narrative. This makes the coincidence more evidently undesigned, and gives greater force to the argument in favour of the historical accuracy of the Book of Chronicles.

Nebuchadnezzar.—I now pass from the Kings of Assyria to those of Babylonia, which secured its independence of Assyria in 625 B.C., and which maintained its position as a mighty empire for the period of 88 years, until the fall of Babylon in the year 539 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar is the first of the Babylonian kings of this period whose name is mentioned in the sacred records. Here, especially in the Book of Daniel, it occupies a prominent place; as it does also in the records of Babylon, of which he was king in 48 years, almost the half of the whole period of the duration of the great Babylonian Empire. The Scriptural accounts of Nebuchadnezzar are confirmed in several particulars by extra-Scriptural testimonies. But I confine myself to one instance of undesigned coincidence. This instance is found in connection with the accounts of the duration of this monarch's reign. According to the Canon of Ptolemy, Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne in 604, and died in 561 B.C., and thus reigned 43 years. This accords with the statement of Berossus (quoted by Josephus, Ap. I. 20), who says that "he departed this life when he had reigned 43 years, whereupon his son Evilmerodach received the kingdom." Mention is made also of the 42nd year of his reign in a clay tablet found among the Babylonian monuments. This shows the long duration of his reign, and accords with the statements of Berossus and Ptolemy that he reigned 43 years. Now, we have in the Scriptures no direct or explicit statement of the length of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, yet various particulars are mentioned, which, when compared, lead to a conclusion which precisely corresponds with the extra-Scriptural statements just referred to. We read in 2 Kings xxiv. 1 and 12, that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came against Jerusalem; that Jehoiakim, his mother, servants, princes, and officers went out against the King of Babylon, and that the King of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. Seven full years would thus have elapsed since Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne. We read also in 2 Kings, 25 and 27, that it was in the 37th year of Jehoiakim's captivity that Evilmerodach began to reign. Jehoiakim would then have been a captive 36 full years. These added to the seven full years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign which had expired before Jehoiakim's captivity, make up the exact period of 43 years of Berossus and Ptolemy. It is here to be noted that we do not find from the Scriptures that Evilmerodach was the successor of Nebuchadnezzar. This we learn from extra-Scriptural sources. The precise coincidence, therefore, is not only very remarkable, but most obviously undesigned.

Belshazzar.—The only other example of undesigned coincidence I shall at present give is connected with the name of Belshazzar. Several things are recorded of Belshazzar in the Book of Daniel. Thus, we have a particular account of a great feast which he made, of the mysterious writing on the wall of his palace, of the promise that the interpreter of it should be made third ruler of the kingdom, of Daniel's interpretation, and of the death of Belshazzar and the overthrow of Babylon. It would appear, so far as the Bible record informs us, that Belshazzar was the last King of Babylon. It appears, however, from Herodotus, and from Berossus, as quoted by Josephus (Ap. I. 20) that the last King of Babylon was Nabonadius or Nabonadius, that he was defeated in the open field by Cyrus, that he fled to Borsippa, that while he was there Babylon was taken by Cyrus, that Cyrus afterwards besieged Borsippa, that Nabonadius surrendered, and was treated kindly by Cyrus, who gave him Carmatia to live in, and that Nabonadius died there. This account seems to be irreconcilable with the Scripture narrative, and therefore it long caused great difficulty. The difficulty, however, has at last been solved. In the cylinders of Nabonadius found at Mesgehir an inscription has been discovered, from which it appears that Belshazzar, the son of Nabonadius, was associated with his father in the sovereignty of Babylon, and with the title of King. It would seem that Belshazzar (with the Queen's mother) was entrusted with the defence of Babylon. The statements of Berossus, Herodotus, and Daniel, are thus at once reconciled, and thus another confirmation is afforded of the truthfulness of Bible history. But the special point to which I call your attention, as an example of undesigned coincidence, is the promise made by Belshazzar that he would make the interpreter of his dream the third ruler in his kingdom. He evidently wished to bestow upon him the highest honours, as did Pharaoh upon the interpreter of his

dreams. But why does not Belshazzar promise to make the interpreter of the writing upon the wall the second ruler as Pharaoh made Joseph the second ruler as his kingdom? The answer is that Nabonadius, the father of Belshazzar, was still alive. Belshazzar could not make Daniel higher than the third ruler. He could not make him higher than himself or his father. How exactly does the narrative in Daniel thus correspond in this particular with the facts which have only recently been brought to light by the discovery and decipherment of ancient monuments. How obviously undesigned also. There is not the slightest ground for suspecting that Daniel intended to give a truth-like character to his narrative by making it coincide with facts which have only monumental evidences. I have thus given some illustrations of undesigned coincidences between Scriptural and extra-Scriptural testimonies in connection with the records which remain of the later Assyrian and Babylonian kings. Other remarkable coincidences might be found by an examination and comparison of the Scripture records of these monarchs, the writings of the ancient historians, and of the recently discovered and deciphered inscriptions of the Assyrian and Babylonian monuments. Still more numerous and more remarkable coincidences may be found from a comparison of other parts of the Old Testament records with the ancient historians, with ancient traditions, with the monuments of Egypt, of Moab, of Palestine, as well as of Nineveh and Babylon. The great attention recently given to the antiquities of Egypt, the labours recently devoted to the exploration of Palestine, the recent discovery and decipherment of the Moabite stone, in addition to the recent discoveries of Batta, Layard, Rawlinson, Smith, and others in the regions watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris, have furnished remarkable coincidences which serve to confirm the Scripture records respecting the Deluge and dispersion, respecting the Exodus from Egypt, respecting the exploits of Moses, of Joshua, and the Judges, and respecting the earlier as well as the later period of the Hebrew Monarchy. Similar remarks may be made respecting the New Testament records. These are verified, not merely by an examination of the internal marks of truthfulness found in them, but also by undesigned coincidences between their statement and extra-Scriptural testimonies. This is true even in regard to incidental statements which long caused great difficulties—such statements, for example, as those regarding the taxing in the time of Cyrenius the Governor of Syria, and the title of Seignius Paulus, the deputy or proconsul, whose conversion is recorded in the Acts. It is quite true that discrepancies have been discovered as well as coincidences between Scriptural and extra-Scriptural testimonies. Others, it must be admitted, seem incapable of being reconciled. How are we to deal with these irreconcilable testimonies? Are we to reject both the Scriptural and the extra-Scriptural? Or, if a choice is to be made between the two, which are we to prefer? There need be little hesitation in deciding what course we should adopt. The Scriptures carry on their face the strongest evidences of their truthfulness, and on this account are entitled to our highest confidence. When compared with extra-Scriptural testimonies it is easily seen that they are more reliable. Thus, for example, if we revert to the period of Assyrian and Babylonian history, from which examples have been given of undesigned coincidence, it is remarkable that in the Assyrian inscriptions there is no notice of the defeat of Sennacherib's army or of his assassination by his two sons, and that in the Babylonian records there is no distinct notice of the madness of Nebuchadnezzar, and that, as a general rule, the disasters and humiliations of Assyria and Babylon are concealed or disguised. It is otherwise with the sacred Scriptures. In these the crimes and follies of the kings and people of the Jews are narrated without disguise or concealment. The humiliating terms imposed on Hezekiah, and to which he submitted, the idolatries of Manasseh, the reckless policy of Jehoiakim, the wretched fate of Zedekiah, the sins of the people, as well as of the princes which provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies—all these are so frankly and candidly recorded as to contrast very strikingly with the reticence or evasions of the Assyrian and Babylonian annals. For this as well as for other reasons, we need not hesitate to prefer the Hebrew records in cases where they differ from extra-Scriptural testimonies. On the whole we have reason to feel thankful that the more thoroughly the Scriptures have been examined, and the more thoroughly they have been tested by historical investigation, and archeological research, the more satisfactorily have their claims been established to our confidence in their accuracy as records of facts. The only reason why infidels can, with apparent consistency, pretend to question their truthfulness, is that they contain records of miracles which, according to their general theory, have never been wrought. I do not now stop to remark upon the unreasonableness of this theory. If there be a God, as we cannot help believing there is, it is surely competent for Him to alter or reverse the course of nature, and there are cases in which it may be reasonably supposed that he might interfere. In the moral condition of man there is surely something abnormal—something wrong. Why should not God miraculously interfere to rectify the fell disorder? The Bible tells us that He has miraculously interfered to save us. In respect to every ordinary event which the Bible relates there is the best reason for relying upon its truthfulness. Why should we doubt its truthfulness when it records the miracles wrought in Egypt and the wilderness, or which accompanied and accredited the Incarnation and Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this, at least, is certain: If there be no God and no future state, yet, even then, it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than licentious, better to be true than false, better to be brave than to be a coward.—F. W. Robertson.

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