

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

EXPLORATION AS VERIFYING REVELATION.

The Bible is not a revelation of abstract truth; it is mainly a record of God's dealings with, and instructions to, His people. In it we have a history, sometimes of families, sometimes of tribes and nations; and we observe that in instructing and guiding them God did not, as a rule, remove them from their ordinary homes and spheres of duty. When he did remove them, it was because of some pressing necessity, and because, humanly speaking, their moral training and influence on the world for good required it. Usually He dealt with men as they lived; and He was pleased to adapt His government and His instructions, whether providential or supernatural, to the circumstances in which they were placed for the time being.

Another marked characteristic of the Bible is the minuteness of its ethnological and geographical details, and the clearness of its historic statements. The division of the original human family into nations and tribes; the countries they colonized, their subsequent migrations; the cities they built, and the empires they founded, are given in the Book of Genesis with a circumstantiality which, considering the remote age of the document, is altogether unparalleled. That book, in fact, especially the tenth chapter, forms the basis of the science of ethnology; and the most recent and exhaustive researches in the languages, the monuments, and the records of antiquity tend to establish its accuracy.

Then, again, we have in the concluding chapters of Genesis, and in the beginning of Exodus, some very graphic sketches of nomad life in Canaan and settled life in Egypt; we have in the remaining books of the Pentateuch topographical notes on the peninsula of Sinai, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the old kingdoms of Sihon and Og east of the Jordan. The Book of Joshua is the Domesday Book of Palestine, not only describing, with the fulness of a government survey, the various tribal boundaries throughout the land, but containing long lists of the towns and villages allotted to each tribe, in the order, as recent research has shown, of their geographical position. In the records of King and Chronicles, and the parallel fragments of history in the writings of the several prophets, we are brought into contact with other ancient nations and peoples—the Phenicians, the Arameans (Syrians) of Damascus, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Chaldeans, the Medes, the Persians; and we have some vivid pictures of the power and conquests of their monarchs, and of the splendour of their courts. The Book of Daniel is a life sketch of the dazzling but transient glories of Babylon; while Esther is an invaluable monograph in the Persian court of Susa. In the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and some of St. Paul's Epistles, we observe the same geographical precision and strong local colouring. One can follow to this day, as the writer has done, the footsteps of Jesus over the mountains of Judah, along the banks of the Jordan, by the silent shores of the Sea of Galilee, marking, as he proceeds, those characteristics of each district, and of each class among the people, which suggested His beautiful parables and gave point to His illustrations and discourses. One can also follow the track of the great Apostle of the Gentiles from country to country, and from city to city, by land and by sea, and observe at every stage of his journey the clear topographical details and the thoughtful and profound delineations of national character which leave on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles the indelible stamp of authenticity and genuineness.

Hence, in considering the evidences of the Divine authority of the Bible, we ought never to forget that its fundamental doctrines are all, more or less, connected with and woven into the facts of history, and, in many instances, in such a way as that the proof of the reality of the facts recorded involves the truth of the doctrine. Nearly every great doctrine has been either developed in or illustrated by some historic event, upon which we can as fully and as safely exercise the powers of our mind in eliciting and testing truth, as we can upon the facts of science. The Bible, as a revelation of dogma, has in this way been subjected to the scrutiny of historical criticism. It has been subjected to it in every age since the completion of the canon, but more especially within the

past half century, and though assailed with every weapon which ingenuity could invent or an exhaustive scholarship rake up, it has uniformly come forth, in a judgment of impartial men, triumphant.

Then, again, the Bible contains a series of prophecies, clear, detailed, in many cases most startling in their nature, and in some cases altogether improbable—many would say incredible. The future history and final doom of nations, countries, and cities are portrayed with singular clearness. No amount of political sagacity could have foreseen what is predicted; no depth of philosophical speculation could have divined it; no breadth of research could have discovered—and yet time has converted all those strange and varied and astounding prophecies of Jewish seers into facts which historians have recorded and travellers have witnessed.

In Scripture, faith is enjoined as the great requisite the first duty of man. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." But it is not a credulous or blind faith. Faith is the fruit of knowledge, not the offspring of ignorant credulity. The doctrines of Scripture, which, in one sense, constitute the objects of our faith, are developed through the medium of facts which are exhibited openly before the eyes of men, coming within the range of observation and reason, and thus challenging investigation according to the principles of pure science. Faith and reason go hand in hand, because reason judges of the evidence on which faith rests. Every attempt made to undermine the basis of faith in the progressive development of all the forms and phases of human error, it is within the province and power of reason to meet and counteract.

Now, scepticism is progressive. In each succeeding age it assumes a new form; but it so happens that the evidence of the facts on which faith rests is also progressive, and keeps pace, as it were, with the advance of scepticism. It would almost seem as if it had been so ordered in the councils of the Eternal, that the new discoveries made in the fields of Biblical research should be exactly suited to meet and counteract the new errors and objections of each successive age.—*Dickinson's Theological Quarterly*

HOW TO BUILD.

In character, if a man builds high, he should build strong. Aspiration is a good word and a noble impulse; but it is also the sheerest weakness and the meanest pretence if not fortified by an unselfish purpose. Many people hold up their heads as if they were among the loftiest in principle, and utter their sentiments as if they were among the wisest of their fellows—are proud and lifted up by their personal attainments, or by the place in society to which their wealth or their fame has promoted them, who would not withstand the force of a more than ordinary temptation—who gleam in the sunshine, like the gilded ball upon some lofty spire, and stand erect so long as their sky is without a cloud, but whom the first blast of the tempest would overthrow. If character topples over and lies shattered, it is because it is made up of falsehood all the way, and because it is built on a foundation of lies; it has no real, enduring strength in itself; and it is based upon no steadfast, enduring principle.

In education, likewise, if a man builds high, he should build strong. Scientists who repudiate God, and try to prove from creation that there is no Creator, must fall, with their baseless theories, into oblivion. Lofty attainment is but a weak, tottering pinnacle, without the fear of God as a foundation on which to rest; and many reach it only to show how weak and worthless they are. That familiar word, "Excelsior," is often lugged by our boys and girls into their compositions with an amazing ignorance of its real meaning. It incites them to that emulation in which only one can win, and one or many must lose, and becomes only a selfish contest for superiority; and, as the result, self-sufficiency and vain glory, and all the elements of weakness enter into it. Whereas, it should be understood to mean, Rise constantly higher in truth and goodness and in the exercise of all noble qualities of mind and heart, for the sake of being more like God, and of reaching the perfection of your own nature.

So in religion, if one builds high he should build strong. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," is an injunction that involves this idea. All false pretension here is singularly out of

place. Religion is truth in its highest and purest form. It is also dependence; the confession of our weakness, and the looking of the soul to God for strength. It is also a new life wrought out of the Spirit of Christ in every one in whom that Spirit abides—the only life that is not in danger of being a failure and a wreck, and of involving other lives in its fall. If this life may be likened unto a steeple, it must be a steeple built of solid blocks of stone, and whose foundation is so deeply laid, and so remote from all disturbing forces, that even an earthquake could not move it. But it is rather like a tree, whose straight and stalwart trunk points heavenward, and is constantly growing in that direction, because its roots are drawing constant nourishment from the sources of its life. With every storm the roots strike deeper, spread wider, and imbibe new elements of strength. Pride is weakness here, because it is self-confidence; humility is resistless power, because it takes hold of Christ, and thus appropriates the security that Omnipotence alone can give. And now, after having said thus much, or thus little, we counsel our readers, young and old, to add to these illustrations, for themselves, such as will prove still more clearly that "they who build high should build strong."—*Lutheran Ob.*

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES.

We find in the "Herald and Presbyter" the following statistical table said to be compiled from the latest reports, exhibiting the numerical strength of the several religious bodies in the United States:

Adventists.....	10,000
Anti-Mission Baptists.....	40,000
Baptists.....	2,024,224
Church of God (Winebrethren).....	30,000
Congregationalists.....	365,658
Disciples (Campbellites).....	300,000
Episcopal, Protestant.....	268,534
Episcopal Reformed.....	15,000
Freewill Baptists.....	74,851
Friends.....	100,000
Lutherans.....	640,415
Mennonites.....	20,000
Methodist Episcopal*.....	1,573,287
Methodist Episcopal, South.....	722,346
Methodist Episcopal, African.....	214,806
Methodist Episcopal Zion, African.....	200,000
Methodist Episcopal, Colored.....	80,000
Methodist Evangelical Association.....	105,013
Methodists Free.....	19,232
Methodists Independent.....	12,000
Methodists, Primitive.....	3,332
Methodists, Protestant.....	113,405
Methodist Episcopal Union (Col.).....	2,500
Methodists, Wesleyan.....	25,000
Moravians.....	9,212
Presbyterian, Cumberland.....	100,250
Presbyterian, North.....	557,074
Presbyterian, Reformed.....	10,250
Presbyterian South.....	112,550
Presbyterian, United.....	77,014
Reformed, Dutch.....	78,831
Reformed, German.....	154,955
Roman Catholic†.....	5,000,000
Seventh-Day Baptists.....	7,336
Six Principle Baptists.....	2,000
Tunkers.....	50,000
United Brethren.....	143,841

\*Including 200,281 members on probation.  
†Entire Roman Catholic population.

From this it would appear that the Methodists of all names have the largest number, 3,080,971, the Baptists of all names next, 2,138,224. Next the Presbyterians of all names, 1,090,574. Then follow in order, the Congregationalists, 365,658; the Episcopalians 268,534. From the tone of the Anglicans or Anglo-Catholics, as they love to call themselves, one might be led to suppose, that they represented at least three-fourths of the Christian people of the country, instead of being 288,224 against near six and a half millions of evangelical Protestants, or in the proportion of about 1 to 22. It will be observed also that the actual church membership of the Methodists and Baptists outnumbers largely the entire Roman Catholic population of the country. This remarkable contrast between the statistical facts and the popular impression as to the comparative strength of the religious bodies shows the results of blowing one's own horn. Prelacy, whether Roman or Anglican, seems to have a special gift at performing on the horn.

LIFE being short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books; and valuable books should in a civilized country be within the reach of every one.—*Ruskin*.