Donald Sinclair's

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY:

BEING

A Course of Lectures

DELIVERED IN

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, PAISLEY, ONT.,

BY

REV. H. D. STEELE,
Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

"Magna est veritas et prevalebit."

TORONTO:
HUNTER, ROSE & COMPANY.
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following Lectures were originally prepared as part of the Author's regular pulpit discourses, which will account for the style in which they appear. His object was to give to the public the results of modern research derivable from a study of ancient history, and from the recent discovery of monumental and hieroglyphic inscriptions, so far as these throw light upon ancient Scriptures corroborative of "the old, old story" told by the sacred writers. The Lectures are a compilation of facts from various sources, rather than an original idea of the author's mind. Although forming no part of the original design, the two concluding lectures on "Inspiration" and "Prophecy" have been added to give a more complete view of Christian Evidences. That this little pamphlet may reach many who have neither the opportunity nor the leisure for widely extended study; and that it may prove (with the Divine blessing) helpful in deepening their interest and strengthening their faith in "the oracles of God," is the sincere desire and earnest prayer of the Author.

PAISLEY, ONT.,
1st October, 1880.

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LECTURE I.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.—CREDIBILITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

Rom. xv. 4: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

THE Christian religion is exposed to assault from two different sources—from open, undisguised infidelity from without; and also from professed friends of the Bible, who, though believing historically in that Divine record, denude it of its value by false interpretations of Scripture, and also by presenting to the world the appearance of "a house divided against itself." While it would be a great point gained, were Christian people to discover a harmonious solution of their differences—so as to give to the world the appearance of *unity*—it is needful that, in the meantime, we do what in us lies to establish on a sound basis THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY; shewing our reasonable belief in the authenticity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, which are the only foundation of the Christian's faith. It is important for Christians themselves to be able, in these days of free thought and bold scepticism, to "give a reason for the hope that is in them with meekness and fear." The Bible is the sole rule of faith among Christians—as the sacred books called the Veda are the rule of faith among the Hindus, or the Koran among the followers of Mahomet. What superior claim has the Christian Bible above the so-called sacred books of other religious systems? What right have the advocates of Christianity to appeal

to Scripture as a final resort in all matters of controversy, with the announcement to their fellow-men: "Thus saith the Lord"? How can we feel assured that the sacred books of which the Old and New Testaments are composed, may not have been forged, or interpolated, and palmed upon the world as inspired, or authentic and genuine? Do the first five books called the Pentateuch contain a true historical narrative in regard to the creation, and the early history of the human race? And was Moses, the lawgiver of Israel, the writer of those five books?

While a full and exhaustive answer could not be given to these inquiries within the compass of a single discourse, we may indicate generally the grounds upon which we are fairly justified in receiving the Canon of Inspiration as the word of the living God. This may be established from the concurrent testimony of Jewish and Christian writers in past ages—from the confirmatory testimony of heathen writers of different nations and languages—from the recent discovery of ancient records made on stone or brick, by people who lived at different periods of the world's history, and in different parts of the old world—and, lastly, from the high moral tone of the authors of Holy Scripture; their claim to inspiration; and the fulfilment of prophecies uttered by them hundreds and even thousands of years before the events themselves took place. We should be perfectly justified in dealing with the sacred writings in the same way as we would deal with any mere human writing—such as Cæsar's Commentaries, or Macaulay's History of England—and receive their statements as historical facts worthy of credit unless contradicted by the nature of the case, or by other credible authorities who, at the time of their publication, called in question the truth of the Bible narrative. The time was when all ancient history, sacred or profane, was received in a spirit of humble acquiescence, without any critical examination into the truth of the facts. But all that has been changed, through modern historical criti-

cism. Christian people have no right to complain of this; but they *do* complain of that sceptical spirit which seeks to overturn the bulwarks of our faith, by insinuating doubts into the minds of the young, and those who are predisposed against a revelation from heaven. This line of attack began with the Old Testament scriptures, in which it was claimed that there was no historical basis for the facts narrated; and that much of it was founded on oral tradition, exaggerated by poetic fancy. It was not long till the same course of attack was pursued by infidel writers in regard to the New Testament itself; which, though written in an age of general enlightenment, and narrating facts which were known to the great mass of society, was nevertheless declared to be partly mythical, until Strauss and other continental writers have eliminated the Christ of history and reduced Him to the level of a mere man perfected by the refinement of the nineteenth century. In short, the individual history of Christ is denied by those sceptical writers, and a sort of dreamy spiritualistic Christ is substituted, called *Humanity*, in which the race of man develops into what is called the divinely-human life. As an example of this levelling process, the book of Esther is reduced to a mere poem, although written in the most matter-of-fact style; and as a history has always been received by the Church, both Jewish and Christian. Exception (*e.g.*) has been taken that the name of Deity does not once appear in the book, but God is in it all!

Another objection taken by sceptical writers is to the miracles of the Bible. It is contended that miracles are impossible; but the Bible itself is a miracle. It is the result of a special revelation from heaven, made known to men endued with power by the Holy Spirit not only to narrate the facts of history, but to foretell future events. And if miracles are impossible, although publicly performed in the eyes of multitudes, and attended by credible witnesses, as in those performed by Moses or Elijah, or by Christ and His apostles, then we should be precluded

from applying to the Bible the ordinary rules on which we should judge of the truthfulness of any historical book, or any religious system. If God created the universe, that was a miracle itself. The creation of a first man was also a miracle, more so than the resurrection of a dead man. And if we admit the possibility of one miracle, then we must conclude that by the same Divine power others could follow. In no one respect does Christianity differ from Mahomedanism more than in the number and conclusiveness of its miracles. The denial of miracles, or their possibility, implies a denial of the existence of God, who is "*above* all" nature, and "through all" history. And the result of this atheistic teaching would be to make us *children* without a *Father*, followers of a blind instinct, groping in the darkness of a fatal necessity, to be sooner or later laid in the grave uncheered by the hope of a resurrection or of a coming immortality.

In our investigation of the facts of Biblical history, we naturally start at the beginning, going back to old time, and following down the stream till we plant our feet on what is *present* and *visible* to our eyes. It will simplify our subject, if we divide past history into PERIODS, beginning with the earliest and oldest recorded in sacred history. We who believe in the inspiration of Scripture rest our testimony on the ground that all the facts narrated in the Bible are worthy of entire credence, because *inspired*. Christ Himself, as well as the whole line of prophets and apostles, rested their belief on an appeal to what Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Daniel said by the Holy Ghost. We will not press this view in our present investigation; but we are content to treat the sacred books, meanwhile, as we would treat any other merely human production—entitled to be judged by its merits.

What is called the Pentateuch embraces the first five books of Scripture, viz., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy; written (as we shall assume for the present) by Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. The first one of those five books carries us back into the dim vista of past ages, and

discourses about "things ancient." The other four present us with a history of the Hebrew race, as the true worshippers of God under the leadership of Moses. Now, the uniform testimony of the Jewish people is that the books called the Pentateuch were written by Moses, with the exception of the last chapter of Deuteronomy, which contains an account of his death, added, probably, by either Joshua or Samuel, to complete the memoir of the great Jewish lawgiver. The objections raised against Moses being the author of those books are of the most futile character, and such as might be urged against any production of the many writers of history, ancient and modern. We are told that Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt;" and we know that writing on papyrus, as well as hieroglyphic inscriptions on stone or brick, was common among the Egyptians at the period to which the Pentateuch belongs. And it is probable that long before the time of Moses, when Abraham went out from Ur of the Chaldees, "the father of the faithful" who was an Eastern prince, and the founder of the Hebrew nation, would transmit to his descendants the alphabet of the Chaldeans with which he was familiar in Mesopotamia. Every race of people, however savage, has had its traditions carefully handed down, and its inscriptions of events (however rude) on brick or stone.

But the testimony borne by the Jews to the authorship of the five books of Moses is corroborated by many ancient heathen writers—Egyptian, Chaldean, Grecian, and Roman—who all admit that he was the author of that written code of laws which distinguished the Hebrews from other nations. And, according to the testimony of Moses himself, the book of the law was by a Divine command placed in the ark, watched over jealously by the Levites, and read in the hearing of all the people once, at least, in every seven years, and sacredly guarded against all innovation by the most solemn sanctions.

The difficulties are somewhat increased when we come to the book of Genesis; for it is admitted on all

hands that Moses could not have been an eye-witness of the facts recorded in that book. His authority was *tradition* to a large extent. But when we consider that this was the only way in which history at that early period of the human race could be transmitted; when we consider, moreover, that Moses received a traditional account of most of the events which he records either at third hand, or at most at fifth hand—because the very long age of the patriarchs made only *three* or four stages or removes between Adam and Moses—our faith in the book of Genesis is not severely taxed. Moses, even on that low ground, is just as reliable an authority for most of the facts contained in Genesis, as many of the older historians extant, who give us not what they actually saw, but what they gathered from tradition and other reliable sources. It is very probable, however, that Moses, in compiling his history, had access to documents, monuments, or ancient records of the patriarchs, who would naturally wish to transmit to posterity a reliable account of early history, more especially of what concerned the creation, the fall, the deluge, and other leading events. The very *minuteness* with which the history of the patriarchs (for example) is given would indicate that some monuments or records had been kept. [We are now speaking altogether apart from the claim of inspiration.] And we may fairly conclude that Moses gathered the materials of his history, partly from tradition, but mainly from old family records or monumental inscriptions; and, in regard to the latter part of the book of Genesis, from written materials handed down from Abraham on papyrus or parchment.

It will be regarded as confirmatory of the book of Genesis, when we state that the historians of Egypt and Babylon which, if we may except Moses, were the oldest historians in the world, mention many of the same facts which he does; such as the deluge, the creation of man, and the formation of the world into land and water, in almost the identical language employed by Moses him-

self. One of those historians makes the period between the first man and the deluge to be just *ten* generations; so does Moses; and his account of the deluge is so strikingly similar to that of Moses in all its details concerning the ark, and the animals, and the dove, and the drying up of the waters, and the building of an altar, and the going forth of the occupants of the ark on the high table-land of Armenia, that one would almost conclude that the Chaldean historian must have borrowed his account of those things from the history of Moses. And yet they are quite independent witnesses, for the history of Berosus is from an entirely different source, was written in another language and in another part of the old world. As an instance of the authenticity of the book of Genesis Sir Henry Rawlinson has shewn that the tenth chapter of that book contains the only reliable account of the dispersion of the human family after the flood; and if we were to be guided in our search for the origin of the different languages which sprang up in the world, after the confusion of tongues at Babel, we should be led to the plains of Shinar as the focus from which they all originated. The interesting fact is now established, that the wonderful accuracy of the tenth chapter in regard to different tribes and nationalities, and the course which each of them took in spreading themselves over the old world, is confirmed by ancient monuments lately discovered among the ruins of Babylon.

In short, it could be shewn to any reasonable mind that the history written by Moses is corroborated by every branch of science—by Geology *e. g.* in establishing that man is the last created of the animals, and that the creation itself proceeded by æons or ages; by *Physiology,* which decides in favour of the unity of the human family, all proceeding from one common stock; and by *Ethnology,* which shews that the migrations of the human family, and the several types of races, whether European, American, African, or Asiatic, are all traceable to a common centre on the plains of Shinar. The result of modern investigation

and discovery goes to show that, with a little learning, men of a sceptical turn of mind may wander into the mazes of unbelief, and get bewildered as they lose the golden thread of sacred history; but by a larger acquaintance with science, and ancient history, and modern discovery, and comparative philology, they must come back again to the old foundations of the Christian faith. Witnesses, which have long been buried under the ruins of ancient cities, have risen up unexpectedly to silence the tongue of the sceptical scoffer; and to put to flight the flimsy arguments (or rather objections) which have been urged against the Christian's Bible, proving that it is "no cunningly devised fable," but a treasury of wisdom as well as a reliable book of history; and that in trying to discredit the books called the Pentateuch, men are acting the part of Jannes and Jambres of old by "resisting the truth;" and, in the words of our Lord Himself, "if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

We purpose, in continuing our subject, to carry forward our investigations to the other parts of Scripture, that we may be "able to give a reason for the hope that is in us." Meanwhile, we have a "sure word of prophecy" on which we may confidently rest our faith and hope—a revelation from heaven which, while it is borne out by external evidence, contains within it such high thoughts and noble aspirations, such views of the Deity, such discoveries of infinite wisdom, such glorious visions of a future world, as commend it to our *inner consciousness* as having been written by the finger of God—and that, in the words of an apostle, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." To the only wise God, therefore, be all the glory!

LECTURE II.

HISTORICAL TESTIMONY TO THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES FROM PROFANE SOURCES.

Luke xxiv. 44: "And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in *the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms*, concerning me."

IT has already been shown in the previous lecture that there is good ground for believing that the first five books of Scripture, usually called the Pentateuch, were written by Moses the Lawgiver of Israel—with the exception of the last chapter of Deuteronomy, which records the death of that distinguished prophet; and which appendix to Deuteronomy was probably added either by Joshua or Samuel to complete the narrative. It was the universal testimony of the Jewish Church that the book of the law, as the Pentateuch was called, was written by Moses—the prophets of a later date invariably quoted them as the books of Moses—and our Lord Himself, who was not likely to make mistakes, or to be deceived in regard to their authority, was in the habit of appealing to the Old Testament Scriptures under the threefold division of "*the law, the prophets, and the psalms.*"

In continuing our remarks on the authenticity of the books of the Old Testament, we take up that period of history which follows the narrative written by Moses, and which extends from the time of Joshua to that of King Solomon—when the Hebrew nation attained to a degree of prosperity and peace never enjoyed by that wonderful people either before or since.

Moses who was raised up by Providence to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and to lead them through the wilderness on the way to the promised land, died before they entered Canaan. He had done a mighty work in rescuing his countrymen from an idolatrous and oppressive bondage. For forty years he was their leader and lawgiver—combining many qualities in one person; for he was their military general—he was the prophet of Jehovah in giving to them laws from heaven; he was their chief civil ruler in perfecting a code of laws for their government as a nation; he was the mouth piece of God in arranging for the service of the tabernacle, which in so many particulars typified the priesthood of Christ, and also the more spiritual worship of the New Testament economy. And now, having reached the advanced age of one hundred and twenty years, he called all Israel together; and addressing them at great length upon the blessings and the curse, he appointed a successor in the person of Joshua, the son of Nun, who was to lead them into Canaan, when Moses went up by commmad of Jehovah to Mount Nebo, and died! Before his departure, he was privileged to obtain a Pisgah view of the land promised to Abraham and his seed, and in a spirit of prophecy he foretold the blessings that were in reserve for Judah and the other tribes of Israel.

The portion of history to which we have now come—and which is left on record in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Ruth, Kings, and Chronicles—covers a period of nearly 500 years; that is from the death of Moses down to the reign of King Solomon. During that period the Hebrew people had many reverses—and at one time it appeared as if the various tribes and nations whom they had to encounter would overcome and finally extinguish them as a people. But all of a sudden the tide of fortune turned in their favour; and out of a position of deep obscurity the kingdom of Judah rose, under the rule of King Solomon, to the highest pitch of prosperity and renown. In little over half a century, the people who

were compelled to "hide themselves in caves and pits,' for fear of their enemies, were all of a sudden exalted to national greatness; and, under the reign of King Solomon, (whose name in Hebrew indicates that he was King of Salem, and Prince of peace), the Hebrew people had acquired an empire which extended from the River Euphrates in the east to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

The book called Joshua, whether written by himself or not, was evidently written by an eyewitness—one who was familiar with the inner life of the Israelites and with their outward history—their contendings with enemies, the division of the land among the twelve tribes, and other details of a minor character, which none but an eye-witness could have recorded. The book was written by one who passed over Jordan and entered into the land of Canaan; by one who speaks (*e. g.*) of Hebron as being (when he wrote the history) still in possession of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. He refers to documents or records of events, such as the book of Jasher, from which he quotes in support of his narrative; and this is all the more probable when we come to examine the minuteness with which the writer records the boundaries of the territory allotted to each of the twelve tribes; which shows that the Hebrews must have kept *official records* or documents from which the subsequent writers drew their history of the nation.

The book of Judges is of a similar character, but covers a much larger period of Hebrew history—and from the fulness with which he narrates events, the writer evidently had access to records and documents of a reliable nature in writing his history. In respect to the other books, there is no reason to doubt the truth of the Jewish tradition—that they were written by Samuel, continued by Gad, and concluded by Nathan the prophet. There is, in one place, a reference made to those very names as the authority which the writer of the book of Chronicles had for making his statements! [1 Chron. xxix., 29 v.]. It is

impossible for us to conceive of those books otherwise than as *historical books*, containing the facts as they occurred, when we read the minuteness with which every event is recorded, the number of characters who figured in past history, and the apparent honesty for which the whole narrative is characterized. Neither should it be forgotten that just in proportion to the number of names mentioned—both of friends and enemies of the Jewish nation—and just in proportion to the minute details of the history, so were the writers of those books subjecting themselves to the criticism of adverse historians, who (if they could) would have destroyed, or at least weakened, the credibility of the sacred historians.

On the contrary, what do we find? When we come to examine contemporary history—written not from the stand point of the Hebrew nation, but written by profane authors—we find that many of the leading events of sacred history are mentioned by different writers, and are confirmed by inscriptions on marble found in the Phœnician language. It is only of late that a lengthy inscription has been discovered on a Moabite stone, partly defaced, however, by the Arabs; but so far as it goes, it confirms the narrative of the book of Kings in a most unexpected and remarkable manner. Here is a silent witness to the truth of the Old Testament, suddenly dug up from the ruins of ancient time—and when the records made by unfriendly hands (that is, unfriendly to the Hebrew people) are translated by competent scholars, they only confirm the history which was written centuries before Christ came into the world. So, we find a flood of light cast on Bible history by Egyptian and Assyrian records or monuments which those people preserved as a matter of history. Those testimonies are not so numerous as might be expected; but we must remember that a large portion of the Old World, where the events recorded in the Old Testament occurred, has been desolated by the Arab, the Moslem, and the Turk—who from 2,000 to 3,000 years have wasted the country, and thus rendered it next

to impossible to obtain any ancient records of the people who once inhabited those regions of country. It was with the utmost difficulty that what is called *the Moabite stone,* which has proved of such value in confirming the Jewish Scriptures, was saved from total destruction by the superstition of the Arabs.

When the Jews advanced from a position of obscurity to one of great splendour under King David, and more especially under King Solomon, then we find, as a matter of course, that the notice of them by profane authors was more full and distinct. Those heathen writers confirm the testimony (for example) of David's wars with Syria; and a partial reference is made to his victories over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Idumeans, and the Amalekites. It is, however, when the Phœnicians and Hebrews are thrown into a closer commercial union with each other; and when the power of the Hebrew nation was such that neighbouring kingdoms could not afford to lose their influence and friendship, that we find historians such as Homer referring to Tyre and Sidon as having existed from early times, and as carrying on a mutually advantageous trade with the Hebrews. More especially when we come down to the time of the building of Solomon's Temple, we find that the land of Tyre was dependent on Judea for its supply of corn and wine and oil; for which in return Hiram, King of Tyre, sent the timber down in floats to Joppa, and from thence overland to Jerusalem, to build the temple. And the magnificent marble stones that entered into the construction of that glorious edifice (which took seven years in the building) were all prepared on Mount Lebanon by Tyrian artificers, men skilled in masonry, who quarried the stones on the spot, and shaped them to occupy their proper place in the Temple; so that when they were conveyed down to Jerusalem the temple was reared "without sound of hammer, or axe, or any tool of iron!" All this is confirmed by contemporary historians such as Herodotus, and also by

Assyrian inscriptions found on monuments—which was their method of transmitting history to posterity.

Although with our modern ideas we might suppose the account given in the Bible of the prosperity of Solomon's kingdom, and the magnificence of the Temple and palace, to be fanciful and extravagant; yet it is tame compared with the descriptions given in profane writings regarding the display and wealth of Eastern nations—such as Persia, and other countries in Asia. But here again the Bible narrative is confirmed by heathen writers belonging to different nations, in regard to the great extent of Solomon's Empire, the magnificence of the Temple, and the sumptuous display of the royal palace. To this day, no European architecture or display can excel (even if it can at all vie with) the splendour and architecture of Oriental countries. Even the great wisdom of Solomon who (it is said) was pressed with "hard questions," and the visit of the Queen of Sheba to witness for herself all the wondrous things heard in her own country relating to the fame of Israel's King, are corroborated by the testimony of other historians who were either contemporary with Solomon, or flourished at a subsequent age. So the recent discoveries made by Layard at Nineveh and Babylon, as well as the accumulating evidence that comes upon us year after year, by men of research, acquainted with the original languages—confirm in a very striking manner the account given in the books of Kings and Chronicles regarding the great wealth and splendour of the Hebrew nation in King Solomon's time. In short, Homer among Greek authors, Menander among Phœnician historians, Manetho among Egyptian writers, and the ancient records found in the excavated ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, as well as old Phœnician coins—all concur in giving to Old Testament history the credit of being a truthful narrative by those who best knew what they were writing about; and who had no object in concealing the truth, or in perpetrating a falsehood; for in the most honest straightforward way they record what was humiliating

to them as a people, as well as what redounded to their credit and glory as a nation.

Without pressing, as we might fairly do, the argument drawn by Christians from *the inspiration of Scripture*—a doctrine in which all Christians fully believe —one to which our Lod and His disciples continually appealed—without, we say, pressing the argument from inspiration, we are entitled to regard the Jewish Scripture as a truthful narrative of the Hebrew nation, and of the Jewish Church, its reverses and successes—in its decline, and in its prosperity. Those writings are *internally consistent*, carrying upon their face the appearance of candour, honesty, and truthfulness; their style is not forced, but perfectly natural, even to a sublime simplicity —which is (in this respect) the very counterpart of those exaggerated statements which characterize the religious books of the Hindoos, or the Chinese, or the Koran of Mahomet. Besides being thus simple and without exaggeration, they are corroborated along the whole line of history, here and there, by proofs derived from foreign or outside sources. As we have already seen, the facts of Bible history have not only been confirmed by profane authors—who had no intention or wish to corroborate the sacred narrative—but, very unexpectedly, silent witnesses have risen up in our day from the tombs of ancient cities, and from the monumental records of ancient dynasties, to bear witness in open court to the harmony of Scripture with the concurrent testimony of profane history. It was this confidence in the integrity of the Hebrew Bible which led the first Christian martyr, Stephen, in view of death—when even a bad man would bear a willing testimony to what is true—to appeal to the recognised history of the Israelites from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to King Solomon's time, as worthy of credit; nay, more, the Bible has been secured from all mistake and fraud by the pen of inspired writers who were taught of the Spirit, and thus preserved from falling into error. In the same way, the great apostle of the Gentiles invariably appealed

in his public addresses before the Jews to the authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures; even as our Lord Himself *did*, and as we find in the 44th verse of the last chapter of St. Luke's Gospel He *does*, by quoting the Old Testament writings under the threefold division of "*the law, the prophets*, and *the psalms*."

In the good providence of God, there is no break in the historic chain which binds together the past with the present—the new covenant with the old—Christ with Moses—the true Israel of God's people with the Father of the faithful. Amid all the changes which passed over the Hebrew nation, the torch of Divine truth has been handed down uninterruptedly from prophet to prophet; and the result is, that, by an overruling Providence which was displayed among no other people so signally, and in no other way, what are called the Old Testament writings have been carefully preserved by the Jews, with an almost superstitious reverence; so that we may fairly keep company with the Jewish people in maintaining the integrity of those sacred writings to which our Lord and His apostles invariably appealed, and which by them was the foundation (so to speak) of the Christian faith.

When learned sceptics have sprung up in our day threatening to overturn the bulwarks of our religion, and refusing to yield their credence to a Revelation which has come from God, the very "stones" themselves are made to "cry out"—to bear their silent but most emphatic testimony to the truth asserted by an apostle that "no scripture is of private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

To God allwise be all the glory.

LECTURE III.

HISTORICAL TESTIMONY TO THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES FROM PROFANE SOURCES.

(Continued.)

I. Kings, 31-32 ;—"And he said to Jeroboam, take thee ten pieces ; for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee : (but he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel). "

IN following up our course of Lectures on the truth of Christianity, we have arrived at *the third stage* in the history of God's ancient people, viz., that which begins with the death of King Solomon (when the Hebrew monarchy had attained the height of its splendour), and which ends with the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. This will embrace a period into about 400 years. After the death of King Solomon, the Hebrew monarchy—which had been so peaceful and prosperous, first under King David, and then under his son,—was seriously weakened, owing to the separation into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, by the revolt of Jeroboam. From that time history records two continuous lines of Kings,—the one ruling over " the kingdom of Israel," which was by far the most numerous, because it embraced ten out of the twelve tribes ; and the other, though small, was "the Kingdom of Judah," embracing the little tribe of Benjamin. So far as the records enable us to speak with certainty, it may be safely

asserted that the setting up of those two Kingdoms—*i.e.* of Judah and Israel—on the ruins of Solomon's empire, occurred in the earlier half of the tenth century before Christ; while the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, occurred in the year 586 before Christ. Although events did not occur with nearly the same rapidity as in modern times, yet very many important changes affecting the destiny of the old world—and especially affecting the progress of the true religion—occurred during the interval of about 400 years. The growth and subsequent fall of the Assyrian empire, the sudden rise of Babylon—then of Media and Persia—the springing up of Greece—the founding of Carthage and Rome—and the spread of civilization by means of the Phœnician and Greek colonies—all are matters of history, which have raised the old world out of the cloud-land of fable into the sober reality of truth. Hence we now find the records of Old Testament Scripture confirmed by the contemporary history of heathen authors. And whereas, before the period to which we have come, the notices of the Hebrew people by heathen writers were comparatively few in number; we now find Egypt and Assyria, Babylon, Phœnicia and Greece—all lending their aid in furnishing us with proofs that the Hebrew Scriptures contain a reliable account of the fortunes of the Jewish nation, whether in adversity or prosperity.

Speaking of the Old Testament writings themselves, they were compiled (as we have already seen) from State papers, and from reliable public documents, in which the history of events as they concerned the Hebrew nation was transmitted to posterity. This was done by the prophets and seers, as appears from the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah,—in which reference is made to no less than *thirteen books*, or registers kept, such as those by Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and Iddo the Seer, as far down as the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. Any one who will take the pains to compare the historical entries made in the books of Kings and

Chronicles, with statements made in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah—must see at once the close agreement *as to facts;* and will conclude in the words of a German writer that, in general, "the same men who acted as prophets in holding forth the law of God to the people, acted also as the historians of the ancient Church, in composing and handing down the history of the Hebrew race." The objection made by certain sceptical writers—that the great mass of Hebrew records most likely perished with the overthrow of Jerusalem and Samaria, and therefore could not have been accessible to any authors who lived after the captivity; this objection has no force against the digested records kept by the prophets; and there is no more difficulty in regarding the records as authentic than there is in understanding how the prophecy of Isaiah and the rest of the sacred volume, written at an early age, were preserved from destruction. We know as a matter of fact, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after the time of the captivity, the "Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel" were still in existence, and were quoted from, and publicly appealed to, as books with which the great body of the people were more or less familiar. Let it be noticed here that the book of Kings, and the book of Chronicles are quite independent of each other; having been evidently written by different authors, each of whom tells his story in his own way, such as to convince any rational mind of the truth of Bible history. In addition to this, we find the different prophets—such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, &c.—referring incidentally, in passing, to the very same events which are narrated more fully in the two books of Kings, and the two books of Chronicles; thus, by a kind of evidence which in a court of justice would be regarded as highly corroborative, confirming the facts of Bible history. [Time and space will not permit us to enter into any detail on this part of the subject—shewing how remarkable is the agreement between the incidental references made by the prophets, and the recorded facts which

we have in the books of Kings and Chronicles]. As has been shewn by Christian writers, the notices of the Hebrew Prophets, though *only incidental,* are as confirmatory of the plain narrative given in Kings and Chronicles, as the Epistles of St. Paul have been shewn to illustrate and confirm the history called the Acts of the Apostles.

Having said thus much of the harmony that obtains between the different books of sacred history—and it is a harmony which is all the more striking because it is *incidental,* and comes under that high class of testimony called by Archdeacon Paley "undesigned coincidences"—let us show you, very briefly, how profane history goes to corroborate the truth of the Bible. Remember that we are now speaking independently of what is called the inspiration of Scripture. We Christians are persuaded firmly that the Bible is God's book—inspired by the Holy Ghost, who taught holy men what to say and what to write, so that they were kept from falling into error. And this on any matter of doubt is conclusive to us—for we are enabled to say, "Thus saith the Lord!" But in our present lectures we are taking lower ground—we are proceeding to examine the truth of the Bible, as if it were only written by men without the Divine guidance. We are treating the authors of the Bible as if they were ordinary witnesses called into court to give their testimony on matters which they profess to have seen, or heard on competent authority. And now we shall go further, and put heathen or profane writers into the witness box; to see how far their testimony confirms the evidence given by those good men, who were the worshippers of the one living and true God. And what is the story which those heathen writers—those profane historians tell us? It so happens that we have testimony of the highest possible character to prove that the sacred writers were honest, truthful men! Among the ruins of ancient Nineveh and Babylon have been discovered tablets containing inscriptions or records of events relating to their own nation, and also to the Hebrew nation; and when these are de-

ciphered and translated by competent scholars, we find that in so far as they refer to events recorded in holy Scripture, they supply a striking confirmation of the Bible narrative. They speak of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel—giving the names of kings reigning over each of the two kingdoms—recording the invasion made (*e.g.*) by Shishak, King of Egypt, who came up against Jerusalem "with twelve hundred chariots and three score thousand horsemen," besides footmen "without number," in the very language employed by the sacred historian! The same kind of evidence is given in regard to the Kingdom of Israel, as we have in relation to the Kingdom of Judah—the struggle for power; the conflicts with other nations such as the Egyptians, the Zidonians, or the Assyrians; the victories gained, or the defeats encountered; the repeated mention of campaigns; the kings who figured in them; the number of the army; and the final result of all those military engagements, until both Judah and Israel became tributary to the great Assyrian conqueror. It so happens that, at one period of the Hebrew history, mention is made of certain kings of Assyria carrying their arms into Palestine and playing an important part in the history of God's ancient people. The names of those kings are given as Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon (as you will find in your Bibles)—all mentioned apparently in an uninterrupted, unbroken line of descent. Now these were among the greatest kings that Assyria ever produced; and their records have been inscribed upon tablets carved by workmen employed by the State to hand down to posterity an account of their military exploits. With the exception of one or two slight chronological discrepancies—(and that Christian's faith must be very weak which would be shaken by such a discrepancy, and the change of a letter might cause such a discrepancy) —between the account given in Scripture and the account recorded on the Assyrian tablets,—these last go to confirm the sacred narrative in every important particular. It is

interesting to any one who has a love for antiquarian research, to compare the several accounts of the two hostile nations—on one side the narratives given of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel; and on the other the inscriptions written on stone by Assyrian engravers, whose object was to exalt their empire at the expense of, and for the purpose of humiliating, the now fading glory of the Hebrew Commonwealth. The account given particularly of Sennacherib's invasion, when Hezekiah was King of Judah, is *very full;* both on the Assyrian tablets, and in the book of Kings—and they afford one of the most striking confirmations of the truth of Bible history. We have a boastful account of the invasion, given from the Assyrian standpoint; while we have a no less true, though humiliating account furnished by the Hebrew historian. A second expedition by Sennacherib into Syria,—for the purpose of weakening the power of Egypt,—and which is the subject of one of Lord Byron's finest poetical pieces, beginning with: "*The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,*" resulted in the total destruction of Sennacherib's army at Jerusalem; and it forms a striking feature of sacred narrative. This, though not corroborated by the Assyrian inscriptions—for they never recorded either the death of their kings, or any great national defeat—is nevertheless confirmed by Herodotus, the Greek Historian, who doubtless got his account of the great defeat which the Assyrians then sustained from the Egyptian version of the matter. The Bible account of it is this:—"The angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians (at Libnah) a hundred, four score and five thousand and when they arose early in the morning, they were all dead corpses."

Assyria, soon after this event, disappears from the stage of history as the ruling empire; and is succeeded (after the death of Esarhaddon) by Babylon as the great conquering power in the old world. We shall therefore close our notice of this period of ancient history by showing the close agreement between Bible narrative, and the na-

tive Egyptian and Babylonian records, during the later period of the Hebrew monarchy.

We find in sacred history repeated references made to both Egypt and Babylon, and to the attempts made by those haughty and idolatrous empires to encroach upon the little territory of Judea. In short, Syria or Palestine seems often to have been a common battle ground as between the Hebrews and the Egyptians from the west, and between the Hebrews and the Assyrians or Babylonians from the East. We will not occupy time with going over the names of all the monarchs that figure in those national conflicts, nor need we enter at large upon the results flowing therefrom. Suffice it to say, that on the one hand the Egyptian annals fully bear out the sacred writers in regard to *four* distinct movements made by Egypt in the direction of Palestine; while at *two* other points in ancient history (during the period now under consideration) the Babylonian and Jewish history are brought into close contact. For example, in the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah, we learn, II Kings, xx.: that Merodach-Baladan, King of Babylon, sends letters and a present to that prince—partly because he heard he was sick, and partly to inquire concerning the strange wonder recorded in the Second Book of Chronicles that the shadow had gone back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. Now this story, which is regarded as incredible by some, is fully authenticated by the inscriptions lately found in Babylon—so far as the name of the reigning monarch is concerned—and they make the reign of Merodach-Baladan 720 years before Christ, the period when Hezekiah was King of Judah. While the message sent to Hezekiah receives additional confirmation by the fact that the Babylonians were noted for their study and skill in Astronomy, and would naturally inquire through their king concerning the astronomical wonder which is said to have occurred in Hezekiah's time.

Once more. Later on in the history of the old world, Babylon succeeds to the place and influence once occupied

by Assyria; and we read of several campaigns carried on by that new power against Palestine and the neighbouring regions. Those events are referred to by the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and are fully recorded in the historical book of Kings. And the fact of Nebuchadnezzar having destroyed the temple at Jerusalem, and carried away the Jews captive into the land of Babylon—is confirmed by Berosus the Chaldean historian. Thus, while we have a very full account of the sieges and campaigns by which Palestine and the Hebrew people were more or less disturbed,—either by the Egyptians to the left of them, or by the Assyrians and Chaldeans on the right.—when we come to examine the history of Egypt, as written by Maneltho; and the history of Babylon, as written by Berosus; and the inscriptions found on the tablets of the Assyrians; more especially those discovered by Layard, and Rawlinson, and Smith, and other eminent men—we regard it as nothing short of a special interposition of providence that, at this period of the world (when men of a sceptical turn of mind are trying to uproot the old foundations of our faith), suddenly and unexpectedly witnesses should rise up, some of them from under the ruins of ancient cities long since buried, to testify to the truth of sacred history, and thus confirm the authenticity of Revelation! Egypt and Tyre—Assyria, Babylon, and Greece—unite their historical contributions in confirming the Bible record at every stage. And while we have to depend on the Old Testament alone for many facts not mentioned in profane history—some of them bringing new light to bear upon the knotty points of man's antiquity, the unity of the races, and the true source from whence sprang all the different languages and dialects spoken on the face of the earth—a time may come when further discoveries will be made, such as have already been made, by which the whole narrative of God's word may receive that illustration and confirmation which is now confined only to a part, owing to the scanty records left by profane authors concerning that early period of the world's history.

These things ought surely to strengthen our faith, and call forth our admiration for the wisdom of that Being who has providentially watched over His Church, and guided His servants, and preserved them from falling into error, and given us the assurance of an Apostle that the sacred Scriptures "came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

LECTURE IV.

PERIOD OF THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY AND RETURN OF THE JEWS.

Psalm cxxxvii. v. 1: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."
Psalm cxxvi. v. 1: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

THE period of the Jewish captivity forms a memorable epoch in the history of the Israelites. It was the last striking judgment visited upon the ancient Church because of its defection, and especially for its connivance at idolatry. We purpose in the present lecture to deal with the period which begins with the captivity in Babylon, and ends with the restoration of the Jews to their native land. The Jewish records show a sad blank in regard to the former of those two events,—as if the national harp hung in silence, and refused to sound during that dismal period of national calamity. But this blank in the history between the book of Kings and that of Ezra—which is to be accounted for by the long exile in Babylon which continued for seventy years—is in a measure compensated for by the narrative given us in the book of Daniel, which embraces both *history* and *prophecy*.

That Daniel was a real person may be inferred from the fact that he is twice mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel—once as being noted for his wisdom. From Josephus, the Jewish historian, we learn that he was descended from one of the noblest families of Judah, if not of royal blood. His birthplace was probably Jerusalem; and he

was among the first Hebrew captives whom Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, carried away in the fourth year of Jehoiakim King of Judah. From the book of Daniel we learn that he was selected, with three other Hebrew youths, to be trained up in the language and customs of the Chaldeans, so as to be of service at the court of Babylon. We gather from the narrative that he lived under five of the monarchs who reigned over Babylon, commencing with Nebuchadnezzar, and ending with Darius and Cyrus; the last two being monarchs of the Medo-Persian Dynasty. From the positions of importance which he occupied during those several reigns, he became very familiar with the condition of his countrymen throughout the provinces of the Empire; and it was most likely through his influence at court that Cyrus, King of Persia, allowed the captive Hebrews to return at length to their own country. It is the common opinion among historians that Daniel did not himself return to Judea, along with his fellow-countrymen; but being far advanced in years, and of eminent service at the Persian court, that he remained in Babylon until his death. He was always ackknowledged by the Jewish Church as one of their prophets and sacred writers, until after the coming of the Saviour into the world;—and it was only when Christians began to appeal to his plain prophecies, in support of the Messiahship of Christ, that the Jews were led to disparage his testimony. As Jerome, one of the ablest of the early Christian fathers, has observed:—"None of the ancient prophets have spoken so clearly of Christ as the prophet Daniel; for he not only foretells His coming, but also fixes the time, and mentions the number of the years, and the signs of His appearance."

The book of Daniel was evidently composed by an eyewitness; and its being written partly in Hebrew, and partly in Chaldee, shows that it was composed during the period of the captivity. It was afterwards translated into the Greek language about 180 years before Christ; and its antiquity is farther proved by the fact that Daniel's

prophecies were shown to Alexander the Great on occasion of his conquests in the East, by the High Priest at Jerusalem in the year B. C. 332,—which circumstance inclined that Emperor to show the Jews special favour. As the eminent Professor Moses Stuart has shown, "there is nothing beyond the fact of miracles or prophecy to convince any enlightened mind that the book is not the genuine production of the prophet Daniel."

In regard to the main event narrated in the book of Daniel, viz.:—the Babylonish captivity—there is no room whatever for doubt. All history confirms it. We have the testimony of Josephus, who refers to Berosus, the Chaldean historian; and we have also the general record in the ancient monuments that such transfers of whole populations, such as that of the Jews to Babylon, were common in the East. But to establish the exact agreement that obtained between Scripture and profane sources, it may be mentioned that the period of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is put down by three historians at forty-three years. The inscriptions found on a clay tablet in Babylon speak of the forty-second year of that king; while Scripture is found to be in exact agreement with all those records, by fixing the date of the captivity in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, and the beginning of his son's reign—Evil-Merodach—as the thirty-seventh year of the captivity. Thus there is a remarkable confirmation of sacred history from two different sources, viz.: from the inscriptions on the Babylonian tablets, and from the records of contemporaneous history.

It is somewhat curious that in the inscriptions found in Babylon no mention is made of King Nebuchadnezzar's loss of reason; but as he was afterwards cured of his malady, and again "established in his kingdom," the Chaldeans would not wish to tarnish the national glory by any public record of such a calamity to their king. And yet we have an indirect proof of its truthfulness; for, as Sir Henry Rawlinson has shown, from their own annals, there was a considerable period of time during

which the Chaldean monarch "did not build high places, or lay up treasures, or keep up the public works" of the nation—in short, that owing to some unaccountable cause things were quite at a stand-still. And the only rational way of accounting for this total suspension of the public works, and the corresponding silence in the national records, is by the artless narrative furnished in the book of Daniel, that Nebuchadnezzar was deprived of his reason for a period of seven years. From the time of the king's recovery to the conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persians, —that is, for about a quarter of a century—the only fact mentioned in Scripture is the release from prison of Jehoiakim by the son and successor of King Nebuchadnezzar, who showed kindness to the captive King of Judea, and received him as a guest to his table. (See Jeremiah lii.) Here, again, profane history confirms the sacred narrative; and it also informs us (what Scripture does not state) that Evil-Merodach was the *son* of Nebuchadnezzar.

It will be remembered that the name given in Scripture of the last King of Babylon—that is, previous to the Medo-Persian dynasty—is Belshazzar. Some have tried to shake the faith of Christians in the credibility of the Bible, by showing that no such name is mentioned in the Chaldean records, or found on the inscriptions on the national tablets. Rationalists have been bold enough to declare that Daniel is even contradicted by Berosus, the Chaldean historian,—and that doubt is thus cast upon the authenticity of the whole book of Daniel. At one time it was not easy to answer these objections; and the difficulty was increased by an apparent contradiction between the Jewish and Chaldean historians in regard to the fall of Babylon. Some were driven, like Sir Isaac Newton, to the supposition that there must have been *two* falls, to escape the apparent discordance. But God in His Providence has enabled us, by a simple discovery made in the year 1854, through the labours of Sir Henry Rawlinson—from documents obtained at that ancient city, Ur of the Chaldees—to clear up the whole difficulty, and

thus to confirm again the truth of Bible history. It was found that Nabonadius, the last king mentioned in the Chaldean list, associated with him on the throne his son Bilsharuzur (the same mentioned in Scripture as Belshazzar), and allowed him the royal title. This was the Prince who conducted the defence of Babylon, who on the night of his impious feast saw the mysterious handwriting on the wall, which was interpreted by Daniel; and who was slain in the massacre which followed upon the capture of the city by Darius the Mede; while his father (as profane history mentions) was at that time in Borsippa, and taken prisoner, but treated with clemency. Thus we have the Bible narrative again confirmed in a remarkable manner.

We now approach the period of time when the captivity of Judah was about to end. Daniel perceiving from the prophecy given forth by Jeremiah that the seventy years fixed for the restoring of the Jews to their native land were drawing to a close, "set his face to seek by prayer and supplication, and fastings, and sackcloth and ashes," that God would "turn away his fury and anger from Jerusalem, and cause His face to shine on His sanctuary." There is here, again, a close agreement between Scripture dates and the time recorded in the Babylonish annals, which last make it sixty-eight years between King Nebuchadnezzar's first conquest of Judea and the fall of Babylon. Now Daniel speaks of making his prayer for the restoration of the Jews, "in the first year of Darius the Mede;" which, according to profane history was B.C. 738, that is sixty-eight years after the first conquest of Judea. This is sufficiently definite to allow of seventy years as being the full period of Jewish captivity, according to the prophetic reckoning.

From this time onward the Hebrew history is resumed, after the blank occasioned by the captivity; and we have a full account of the restoration of the Jews, and of their subsequent fortunes, in the three historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. This fact of history receives further illustration in the prophetic books of Zechariah,

Haggai, and Malachi,—which last book closes the canon of Old Testament Scripture. Ezra was the priest and "ready scribe" who recorded that period of Jewish history, in which the people returned to Judea and rebuilt the temple; while Nehemiah gives an account of the reforms brought about in the Hebrew nation during the same period, when he was Governor of Judah. In both books we have a register of all the families which came up from the captivity to Jerusalem; while we have also a register of the priests and Levites whose genealogy was established in the line of succession from Aaron. And those who could not trace their genealogy were put out of the office of the priesthood, "as polluted." Nehemiah mentions six generations from Joshua to Jeddua, which would bring down the history of the Jews to the latter half of the fourth century B. C.; and exactly at that period there lived the famous high priest of that name, who received Alexander the Great at Jerusalem, and showed him the prophecies of Daniel which pointed out that a Grecian prince should put an end to the Persian empire. There is, therefore, little doubt but that the Jeddua mentioned by Nehemiah is the same high priest who was contemporary with the Macedonian monarch and met him on his arrival at Jerusalem.

The book of Esther has been the subject of criticism more than almost any other book of the Old Testament. One objection is that the name of Deity is not once mentioned, which is at variance with the regard which the Jews paid to the name of Jehovah; but God is in it all! And the one fact that the Jews to this day observe religiously the feast of Purim, which is mentioned only in that book, and was designed to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's treachery, is sufficient proof of the regard paid by the nation to Esther as one of the sacred books. Mordecai the Jew, who was held in such esteem by the King of Persia, and through the influence of Queen Esther exalted to honour at the palace at Shushan, was most likely the author of the book entitled "Esther."

We conclude the present lecture by noticing the light which profane history has thrown upon the sacred narrative, and the further confirmation given to it by recent discoveries. Nothing strikes an intelligent student of Scripture more than the religious tone which (according to the book of Ezra) pervaded the decrees and proclamations of the Persian monarchs, so far as these related to the Jews. Cyrus is made to speak of "the Lord God of heaven;" and Darius in his decree recognises the "God of heaven." So also does Artaxerxes in his letter to Ezra the priest. When we come to examine the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, there is the same acknowledgement of a Supreme God who rules over the affairs of this earth. In the progress of rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem the Jews experienced opposition from the Samaritans, who "troubled them in building" during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses (known in Scripture as Ahasuerus). But the only instance wherein the work of rebuilding "the House of God" was interrupted, was in the time of Artaxerxes—the only king who for a time changed the friendly policy of the Persians towards the conquered Jews. And here again we obtain an unexpected confirmation of Scripture from the Persian records, which tell us that Darius (who succeeded Artaxerxes) "restored to the people the religious worship" and liberty of which they were deprived during the reign of the preceding monarch; and that under Darius the house of the Lord at Jerusalem was carried forward to completion.

The successor to Darius was Xerxes, his son, who appears to correspond with the Ahasuerus mentioned in the book of Esther. And the graphic description given therein of the Persian court, which to some may appear improbable, seems fully borne out by profane authors in their descriptions of that court before the decline of grandeur which followed on the death of Darius. This closes the period of Old Testament history. For nearly five hundred years the Jews had no inspired writer—that is, from the time of Malachi to that of the Apostles and Evangelists.

As to the books called Apocrypha, they form no part of the sacred canon, and are of no authority in matters of faith or practice. They were never received or acknowledged as such, either by the Jewish or by the early Christian Church.

Finally, the books of the Old Testament are entitled to be regarded as *authentic*, from the fact of their authors having been eyewitnesses of the events recorded, or from having received their statements on competent authority; while, as we have seen, both profane history and the monumental records of past ages—representing no less than five different nations as distinct sources of evidence, viz.: the Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, and Phœnician—go to confirm in a remarkable manner the truthfulness of God's word, which may now be regarded as safe against every assault. From Genesis to Malachi, we have a true historical record of events as seen from the Jewish standpoint—not romantic poems or mythological fables—but a sober narrative, written in an artless natural style, according to the age in which the different books appeared. The writers have testified to "that which they have heard, which they have seen with their eyes, which they have looked upon, and their hands have handled." We are naturally led to the conclusion stated by an Apostle, that the sacred writings "came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

LECTURE V.

TESTIMONY FROM ANCIENT MONUMENTS TO TRUTH OF REVELATION.

Isaiah xlii. 10: "Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no Godformed, neither shall there be after me."

IN these last days, when men of a sceptical turn of mind are pressing historical criticism beyond the limits of reason, witnesses have risen up from beneath the ruins of ancient cities to attest to the truth of Scripture. It is an interesting fact that, while the proof of Bible history may be somewhat obscured owing to the lapse of time, and by extending so far back into the dim cloud-land of past ages,—suddenly and unexpectedly there has sprung up in our day a new line of witnesses to rebuke the cold negations of rationalism, and to give fresh testimony to the truth of revelation.

We propose to devote a portion of our space to a consideration of some of the historical testimonies to the truth of Scripture drawn from sculptures, monuments, and inscriptions found on the remains of antiquity. One of the prominent events recorded in sacred history is the Deluge in Noah's time. Traditions of such a terrible catastrophe are to be found among most nations. We find reference made to it in the classic works of heathen authors, and in the sacred books of the most ancient people. Latterly, fresh evidence has been gathered to confirm the Bible narrative of a universal flood. Through

the enterprising labours of Layard, and other excavators of the ruins of the Nineveh, clay tablets have been dug up containing, in Assyrian characters, an interesting legend of the deluge in Noah's time. The record of this ancient story, which has been translated by competent scholars, was found at Nineveh; where it was apparently translated from the original Chaldean text into the vernacular or spoken language of the Assyrians, at the distance of seventeen hundred years before Christ; making this wonderful document to date somewhere in the neighbourhood of thirty-six centuries ago, if not much older! In all the main particulars, this Assyrian translation of an older Chaldean document confirms the narrative given by Moses in the book of Genesis. And the record asserts that the deluge was a punishment from heaven on account of the wickedness of the old world previous to the flood.

So, when we come to examine the records and pictures made on Egyptian tombs and temples, there is a minute agreement between the customs and manners of ancient Egypt and the statements made by the writer in Genesis. The story of Joseph in Egypt, for example, and the circumstance that Pharaoh took the ring from his own hand to put upon the hand of Joseph, has received a striking illustration from the discovery at Nineveh of a metallic signet-ring bearing the title of an Egyptian King. In the same way, the book of Exodus has been remarkably confirmed by the monuments, which represent the use of bricks made of straw and stubble as having been employed extensively for building purposes. At Thebes, a representation was discovered of a gang of slaves engaged in brick-making, which gives an exact description of the bondage of the Israelites under their Egyptian taskmasters.

If we pass from Egypt to Palestine, the same kind of testimony is borne to the truth of Old Testament history by the recent discoveries made in and around Jerusalem. The description given of the Temple of Solomon, in the

books of Kings and Chronicles, shews that it was a most imposing structure. It was seven years in building, and the total number of workmen employed upon it was considerably over one hundred and fifty thousand. The house which King Solomon occupied took thirteen years to finish; and we read of "great hewn stones and costly," all of which were prepared at a distance and conveyed down to Jerusalem from Mount Lebanon. Recently, explorations have been made among the ruins of ancient Jerusalem, which city has undergone many disastrous changes at the hands of the Roman, the Saracen, and the Turk; and from those explorations we get fresh evidence of the grandeur of Solomon's temple, and of the truth of Bible history. The whole area of ground covered by the temple was fifteen hundred feet long, by about nine hundred feet broad. The pinnacle of the temple was, including the depth of the Kedron valley, over four hundred feet! Huge stones, bearing the marks of ancient Tyrian masons, have been discovered at a depth of seventy or eighty feet beneath the rubbish and *debris* of the city. No stone-chippings or dressings have been discovered, an indication that the stones of the Temple were not prepared on the spot. The style of masonry is Phœnician, similar to what may be seen in the ruins of ancient Tyre. Some "foundation stones," which have never been disturbed, bearing the quarry marks of King Hiram's masons, contain letters in ancient characters—showing in what course the stones were to be laid. One stone found was thirty-eight feet and nine inches long. It is well known that a wall separated the Gentile foreigners from the Jewish worshippers, in the ancient temple; and one of the pillars sustaining this wall of separation has been discovered, containing in ancient Greek words of prohibition to strangers!

But one of the most interesting discoveries yet made relates to the "ascent" by which King Solomon "went up to the house of the Lord." This must mean the passage or viaduct from the palace to the temple, which

crossed the ravine that lay between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah; and which was so magnificent a structure as to call forth the admiration of the Queen of Sheba on her visit to King Solomon. That such a viaduct existed in the days of King Solomon is now left without a doubt. Through the exploratory labours of Captain Warren and others, there have been found jutting out from the western wall of the temple inclosure large stones, whose peculiar shape indicate that they were part of a colossal bridge that once spanned the ravine called by Josephus the Tyropoeon. The abutment is over fifty feet in width, and one of the stones twenty-four feet six inches long. The piers which supported that huge structure have been found at a great depth below the *debris*.

Not to speak of other discoveries in different parts of Palestine, which go to establish the literal correctness of the sacred historians, let us cross the Jordan and enter the land of Moab. This territory is often mentioned in Scripture, and at times there must have been considerable intercourse between the two countries. So late as the year 1868, a missionary clergyman in riding past the ancient Dibon came across what has since been known as the famous Moabite Stone, with ancient characters engraved upon it. These having been deciphered by competent scholars, the inscription proves it to have been a Moabitish monumental record, dating as far back as about 900 years before Christ. It contains a narrative of Mesha, king of Moab, who is mentioned in the second book of Kings; and so far as portions of the inscription have been preserved, from attempts made on the part of the Arabs to deface the record, it corroborates exactly the Bible history concerning the times of Elisha the prophet and Ahab, king of Israel. Besides giving an account of victories gained over Israel, it contains the names of thirteen places in the land of Moab, mentioned in Scripture. Thus, when tested by the records of a hostile nation, the statements of history contained in the second book of Kings are found to be trustworthy.

Equally interesting are the sculptured remains found embedded among the ruins of Nineveh, which have been opened up to view by the labours of Layard, Botta, Rawlinson, and other antiquarians. These recovered monuments carry us back twenty-five centuries ago; and on the Asyrian tablets we have another edition of the same story told by sacred historians in the Old Testament Scriptures. We find the names of Jehu, Omri, Hazael, Menahem, Tiglath-pileser, Shalmanezer—all inscribed upon Assyrian tablets, as having figured in ancient history in the conflicts between Assyria and Israel or Samaria. The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, as recorded in Bible history, together with a mention of King Hezekiah—have been found among the inscriptions on the tablets of Nineveh. And such is the close agreement between the two records that, when placed in parallel columns, no one can doubt the veracity of the sacred historian.

In regard to the overthrow of Nineveh, while we are justified in referring to its complete desolation as a proof of the literal fulfilment of prophecy,—we would call attention to the evidence arising from a view of its disentombed ruins. The prophet Nahum predicted its overthrow 114 years before the event, in language which indicated that fire and sword and flood would combine to bring about the threatened desolation. And he concludes his vivid picture, as though he were describing the past instead of the future: "Nineveh is laid waste"! Most of the ruins of that ancient city exhibit the traces of fire. Some of the large gypsum slabs were found reduced to lime by the action of intense heat, and when exposed to the air crumbled to pieces. Where the monumental records have been preserved, they corroborate the statements of Old Testament historians in respect to repeated invasions of Jewish territory by the Assyrian power. And the careful measurement of the city by Mr. Layard goes to confirm the accuracy of the Bible, in regard to the size and extent of Nineveh as a mighty city. The ala-

baster slabs now in the British Museum, brought at great expense from the scene of ancient destruction, after the lapse of 3,000 years, are powerful witnesses to the truth and accuracy of Bible history. These living witnesses confront the sceptic who would doubt the truth of Christianity; and they show that the sacred writers did not "follow cunningly devised fables"; that they recorded what they had "seen and heard;" and that no lapse of time can overturn the historical groundwork of the Christian's faith; because "the Scripture cannot be broken." And if the *facts* of the Bible are true, the *doctrines* which flow by necessary consequence from those facts are also true. If we are satisfied that the books of Scripture contain a truthful record, then we may rest assured that we "shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

LECTURE VI.

PERIOD OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY.—CREDIBILITY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

Matt: xviii. 16:—"But if he will not hear *thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

WE have now reached in our investigations the second portion of inspired narrative, known as the New Testament; which covers the period of history; extending from the birth of Christ to the death of the last suvivor of the twelve Apostles. A space of nearly five hundred years elapsed between Malachi, the last writer of the Old Testament, and the evangelists and apostles of the New Testament. During that interval the world was allowed to develope its various systems of philosophy; and the utter inability of the refinement of Greece and Rome to elevate the human race, in a moral point of view, and to satisfy the immortal yearnings of humanity, proved that when Christ appeared in the world it was "the fulness of time." The history of society just previous to the introduction of the Christian religion demonstrated the truth of St. Paul's statement to the Corinthians, that when "the world by its wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." In the world's greatest time of need, the historical fact that heathenism and idolatry were dethroned, to give place to a pure religion which could meet the wants of humanity, proves that the world hailed the arrival of Christianity as a boon from heaven to heal the festering sores of the body politic. In that "fulness

of time" God sent forth His Son into the world, "made of a woman, and made under the law." The birth of Christ took place in the year of Rome (A. U. C.) 749, corresponding to the year of the world 4000. With this event the New Testament begins; while the historic record of the progress of Christianity contained in the Acts of the Apostles ends with A. D. 58, in the fifth year of Nero, Emperor of Rome. Thus the formal history of the inception of Christianity covers a period of about sixty-two or sixty-three years. The whole period, however, covered by the sacred writers of the New Testament—including St. John, the author of the Apocalypse—extends onward to about A.D. 95 or 96, in the time of the Emperor Domitian. What are called the New Testament Scriptures, is a collection of twenty-seven documents, written by eight or nine different persons—evangelists and apostles—at separate times, and under varied circumstances. Four of those documents are biographies of Christ; one is a church history; one is a prophetical book, sketching in bold figures, and in highly metaphorical language the future condition of the Christian Church, from the close of the first century down to the end of the world; while twenty-one consist of letters apostolic written to different churches, individuals or people. Our present concern is mainly with the four gospel narratives—which record the incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For the truth of those four biographies, we have evidence of an authentic and satisfactory nature.

Sceptical writers, such as Strauss, who would disparage the testimony arising from a study of the sacred writings, pretend that we have no certainty that the four gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear; and that, beyond the assumption of the names of the several authors, we have no certainty that they were eye-witnesses of the facts recorded by them. In reply to such objections, the sole aim of which is to overturn the truth of Christianity by weakening (if possible) the evidence

for its Divine origin,—it may be stated that our authorized version of Holy Scripture is a literal translation from very ancient Greek manuscripts, including the titles borne by the several books; and these have descended to us from earliest times. There never was any doubt entertained as to the authorship of the historical books of the New Testament, until a very recent period, when men of a sceptical turn of mind have sought to overturn the foundations of Christianity. Those sacred writings have received the unanimous consent of ancient Fathers; and their genuineness and authenticity are supported by the concurrent testimony of the whole Christian Church in the earliest ages. Indeed, they come to us *better fortified* as to their authorship, than do the writings of almost any classical author. There is no instance of mere human or classical writings, having been quoted within a short period of their publication; but this was the case with the four gospels of the New Testament, and no doubt whatever was attempted to be cast on their genuineness or authenticity by authors of a contemporaneous period. On the contrary, we find such men as Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen—who flourished in the end of the second or beginning of the third century—appealing to the four gospels, and to the Acts, as authentic histories received by the Universal Church. Some who sat at the feet of the Apostles quote their writings; and, generally speaking, the four gospels were read publicly for instruction in the Christian Church. There is undoubted evidence that the person who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, was the author of the Gospel according to St. Luke; and, by the use of the first person, he identifies himself with the companion of St. Paul. In the case of St. John's Gospel, we have the distinct assertion that its author "*saw and bare record,* and his record is true." St. Matthew appears to have written mainly for the Hebrew people, soon after the ascension of our Lord; and he quotes largely from the Old Testament Scriptures The second gospel, written by St. Mark, was mainly in-

tended for the use of the Gentiles; and it was evidently composed before the destruction of Jerusalem. St. Luke's Gospel, which was composed by "the beloved physician," bears the stamp of a high degree of Greek culture. It was addressed to Theophilus, an Italian of some distinction, and intended for the higher ranks in society. It appeared much later than the two former gospels, viz: about A.D. 58—60; and it differs from both in the *order* of events, and in its *historical style.* The Gospel of St. John is supplemental to the other three, and deals mainly, not so much with facts or events, as with spiritual doctrine; concerning the Person and discourses of our Lord. It was called by the ancients the *Spiritual Gospel*, as differing from the mere *historical* gospels. The evidence for its canonical authority is undoubted; and the time and place of its publication was probably at Ephesus, about A.D. 78. There is such an array of testimony borne by early writers in support of St. John's Gospel, that critics have scarcely ventured to call its authorship in question. We consider it nothing short of a special interposition of Providence, that four distinct narratives regarding the Founder of Christianity have come down to us; and that so many "have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us."

The apparent discrepancies between some of the gospels, —and the silence of one evangelist on matters related by another,—so far from invalidating the testimony of inspiration, only go to establish the absence of all collusion or fraud between the different writers; while it stamps their credibility as distinct and independent witnesses. The discrepancies are only apparent; and, even were it otherwise, the substantial agreement on all the important events narrated concerning the life, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, would place the authors of the four gospels, and the writer of the Acts in the highest rank of historical authorities. Apart altogether from the question of verbal inspiration, in which the

Church Catholic fully believes, the Christian system rests on a historical basis which cannot be overturned, unless we adopt the bold alternative that the New Testament is a forgery from beginning to end, and that the first promulgators of the Christian religion were either dupes or impostors!

The facts narrated by the four evangelists are all admitted by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, as having occurred from the period "beginning with the baptism of John. until the day in which he was taken up;" and the truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead is established "by many infallible proofs,"—for "He showed himself alive after His passion," being seen of His disciples "forty days," in which He "spake of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." No fact of gospel history is more completely established than the resurrection of Christ. Nine or ten appearances are recorded (while many others no doubt took place that are *not* recorded): First to Mary Magdelene; then to the other women; afterwards to the Apostle Peter; on the same day, towards evening, to the two disciples who journeyed to Emmaus; again, in the midst of the disciples on the first Easter Sunday after His resurrection, on which occasion Thomas was absent; eight days thereafter He appeared to all the disciples, Thomas being present with them, who had his doubts dispelled by an ocular view of the Saviour's hands, and feet, and wounded side; thereafter, Jesus shewed himself to seven of the disciples by the Sea of Galilee, when the interesting episode occurred in which Simon Peter was gently reminded of his triple denial, by the question three times repeated: "Lovest thou me?" and when the destiny of the Apostle John was obscurely hinted at; subsequently he met "with above five hundred "brethren on the mount in Galilee, from which He gave commandment to the eleven Apostles to teach and baptize in His name, promising to be with His Church until the end of the world. After which time He once more met His disciples in Jerusalem, and led them out as far as

to Bethany, where (bidding them tarry at Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Spirit) He was parted from them, and "a cloud received Him out of their sight." Another appearance, not mentioned in the gospels, is alluded to by St. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians; where, in summing up the evidence in proof of the resurrection of our Lord, the apostle says: "*After that He was seen of James;* and last of all He appeared to me also, as of one born out of due time." In virtue of the power conferred on the Apostles, after the resurrection of our Lord, they performed miracles, spake in divers tongues, and accompanied their message by signs and wonders "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" which had the effect of gaining over multitudes of converts to the faith of Christianity.

The narrative contained in the Acts of the Apostles, which was written by St. Luke about A. D. 63, or two years after St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, is confirmed (as Archdeacon Paley has shown in his masterly work) by the "undesigned coincidences" which have been shown to exist between St. Luke's history and the epistles ascribed to St. Paul. After a thorough examination of those points of agreement, no unprejudiced mind can arrive at any other conclusion than that the persons mentioned and the transactions recorded in the Acts were real; and that the history was composed by one who had an intimate acquaintance with the Apostle who is the chief subject of the narrative. Besides the "undesigned coincidences" enumerated by Paley, there are others equally conclusive; one of which may be mentioned, viz., where the authors of the first and third gospels give a list of the twelve Apostles "in pairs," without assigning any reason for such an arrangement; while St. Mark (whose list is not in pairs) mentions that they were sent out "two and two." Such incidental points of harmony afford the highest probability of the truth of the gospel narratives.

When we examine the Pauline and other epistles, written by so many of the Apostles at different times and

places, and addressed to different individuals or Churches —all based upon the admitted facts of the gospels—we cannot resist the conclusion, that the authors of those several epistles challenged the world to a denial of the facts of Christianity. It was an age of history, rather than of mythological fable. At the very time when the documents composing the New Testament appeared, there appeared also a Jewish historian (Josephus) whose narrative of events was considered trustworthy. Upon what ground, therefore, can we reject the historical truth of the New Testament, except we ascribe it to imposture? Such an idea is totally at variance with the morality of the religion which it inculcates, and the sufferings endured by the first propagators of Christianity in its defence. Finally, the authors of those sacred writings wrote concerning what they knew, and testified of that which they had seen; and unless we violate the first principles of evidence, we are bound to accept their writings as at once genuine and authentic. "The foundation of God standeth sure;" and if men receive not the testimony of Christ, and that of His servants, the evangelists and Apostles, "neither will they be persuaded though should rise from the dead."

LECTURE VII.

CORROBORATIVE TESTIMONY FROM JEWISH AND PROFANE AUTHORS, AND CHRISTIAN FATHERS OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES—EVIDENCE FROM THE CATACOMBS.

2 Tim. ii. 2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

IN no respect does the New Testament differ from the Old more than in the prominence given to the Christ of history. The Jewish Scriptures are taken up mainly with a history of the Hebrew nation; whereas the inspired writers of the New Testament are occupied with the person of Christ—His life and doctrine. This will account for the scanty references made in contemporaneous history, by those writers whose principles led them to ignore the influence of the Christian system. They were not concerned about the propagation of the new faith; possibly they regarded it as a troublesome sect, which would soon pass out of public notice; hence they pursued a studied silence regarding the origin and growth of Christianity, which can only be explained on the ground of national pride, or policy, or a tenacious adherence to heathenism. And yet we find incidental allusions made to one "Jesus, who was called Christ," by Josephus, whose ill-concealed enmity to the prophet of Nazareth leads him to notice John the Baptist; while he virtually ignores Him "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Heathen writers also—such as Tacitus, Juvenal, Pliny, Trajan, Adrian, and others—writing soon after the inception of

the Christian religion, testify to the life and teaching of Christ; His execution under Pontius Pilate; the rapid spread of His doctrines; and the persecutions endured by His followers—who were noted for the morality of their lives, and their worship of Christ as God. Nothing but a blind prejudice can account for the studious ignoring of Christ on the part of Josephus at Jerusalem, or Seneca at Rome—for they were both contemporary with the introduction of Christianity, and must have been both familiar with the events which had drawn so many eyes towards Judea.

But from repeated allusions made by the Evangelists themselves to the civil history of the times of which they write, a complete harmony has been established between their statements and those of the profane historians. We have thus the strongest indirect testimony to the truth of the New Testament. The political position of Palestine affords an illustration of this harmony. There was for a time an admixture of native with Roman supremacy, which made the civil history of Judea perplexing to historians and others who did not fully understand the double system of Jewish ecclesiastical and Roman civil power that existed. Hence we find a double system of taxation in force, civil and ecclesiastical; two tribunals, two modes of capital punishment, two methods of marking time; a condition of things which came to an end within forty years of our Lord's crucifixion. This state of things is verified by Josephus and other writers, who thus become unconscious witnesses to the truth of the New Testament.

The same is true in regard to the civil history of the times covered by the New Testament writers. The names of the Roman emperors, of Jewish kings and princes, of the Roman governors or procurators, and the order in which they occur;—are fully borne out by contemporaneous history, both Jewish and Roman. As an instance of this, Josephus corroborates the whole narrative given by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, regarding "Herod

the King," (this was Herod Agrippa) whose persecution of the early Christians—for he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword—and whose miserable death (being "eaten of worms") are minutely recorded in sacred and profane history. So in regard to Herod Antipas, whose adultery with Philip's wife, as well as his execution of John the Baptist, are narrated by the Evangelists and corroborated by Josephus. Illustrations and examples of this kind could be multiplied indefinitely. It has been objected that the reference by St. Luke to the "decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed," is not borne out by civil history;—that no such taxing took place in the time of Augustus, nor until ten years later! The Evangelist asserts that "this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria;" and Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions the extension of the Roman census to Judea under Cyrenius. The apparent discrepancy between the two writers is easily reconciled by the fact of the decree having been issued, and the enrolment actually being made before our Lord's birth, with the view to the levying of a tax; whereas it was never *fully executed* until Cyrenius carried it through. This is the explanation given by Whiston and Prideaux, and fully meets the case. There is no reason why the statements of St. Luke, or any of the Evangelists, should not be considered as reliable as those of Josephus, who had to please his Roman masters, and who has shown himself prejudiced in favour of the Pharisees.

Having thus seen that the main facts constituting the basis of the Christian religion are corroborated both from profane and Jewish sources,—and that no serious discrepancy can be established between the sacred writers and other established witnesses,—we turn to another quarter from which to derive additional confirmation to the truth of the sacred records. We now call into court as witnesses early Christian writers, most of whom flourished in the period of time between the death of the last Apostle and the close of the second or beginning of the third

century. We shall also produce evidence from primitive Christian monuments, especially from the Catacombs of Rome—which furnish indubitable proofs of the faith, the sufferings, and the hopes of the early Christians.

It may be objected that the early Christian writers were biassed on the side of the religion they espoused; but this could not make them unworthy of belief, or render their testimony of less value than if they had continued heathens or Jews. Christ told the Pharisees, in replying to such an argument; "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." And if Justin Martyr, or any other of the early Christian fathers who embraced Christianity, had remained unconvinced of the truth of its claims, instead of renouncing all for Christ, there is no reason why, on this account, they should be deemed less worthy of credit. Indeed, so far from weakening their testimony, it would possess, in the estimation of all believers, a value far in excess of that given by enemies, whether heathen or Jews. And as the testimony multiplies from early Christian sources, it will be found to possess a strength which is impregnable. The message of the gospel did not find a reception solely from the humbler and more illiterate classes in society. Converts were gathered occasionally from among persons of distinction, including "honourable women not a few"; while there were converts to the faith of Jesus to be found under the shadow of the Emperor's palace, as well as many from among officers of state and men of wealth. The examples of St. Paul, the learned pupil of Gamaliel,—of the Treasurer of Queen Candace,—of Erastus, the Chamberlain,—of Sergius Paulus, the Roman Deputy—and of converts from "Cæsar's household,"—are enough to show that the Gospel message was embraced occasionally by the rich and the educated, as well as by the poor and the unlettered.

Among the early Christians of the first three centuries, a large number of able writers appeared as "Apologists" for the faith of Jesus; and these, in point of intellectual attainments, compare favourably with the best heathen

writers of the same period. The names of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Clement,—had they not been Christian Fathers—would have been ranked by the outside world as authors of eminence. These, and many other writers, who are to be regarded quite as trustworthy as either heathen or Jewish authors, bear ample testimony to the facts recorded in the historical books of the New Testament. A few specimens of such testimony may not be out of place, as tending to confirm the faith of Christian people.

One of the earliest documents, admitted on all hands to be genuine, is that of Clement of Rome, the "fellow-labourer" of St. Paul. His testimony is valuable from the fact of his having been an eye-witness of the earlier triumphs of the Gospel. The object of his epistle was to allay dissension in the Corinthian Church; and though its style is hortatory and didactic, occasional reference is made to the facts contained in the four Gospels, such as to the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Christ; and also to the labours and sufferings of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was martyred A. D. 107, left behind him several writings which are quoted by later Fathers of the Church and written in different languages, bearing similar testimony to that of Clement, Bishop of Rome.

Still later, we have an epistle in the original Greek by Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of St. John, who lived to a great age, and suffered martyrdom at the hands of heathen persecutors, A. D. 166. Polycarp, in his letter addressed to the Philippians, bears witness to all the leading facts of the Gospels: and we learn from an ancient Father that he used to relate his conversations with St. John, among which were mentioned the miracles of Christ. Polycarp was about twenty years of age when St. John died.

Among the many early writings of the first and second centuries, we have those of "The Shepherd of Hermas;"

an "Apology" by Quadratus (Bishop of Athens), presented to the Emperor Adrian about A, D. 122: a similar defence of Christianity by Justin Martyr, about A. D. 148; and another by the same author addressed to the Roman Senate, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Concerning the writings of this last named Father of the Church, it has been observed: "there might be collected from them a tolerably complete life of Christ, agreeing in all points with that which is delivered to us in Holy Scripture." It is enough to say that this writer enumerates all the events of Gospel history, beginning with the miraculous conception of Jesus—and ending with His resurrection, and the subsequent descent of the Holy Ghost, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the then known world.

While this kind of evidence might be multiplied by numerous quotations from Athenagoras, Tertullian, Irenæus, Origen, and other Fathers of the Church, who handed down to their successors an unbroken chain of testimony in support of the New Testament Scriptures; we shall now turn to the *monumental remains* of early times, which bring before our eyes the primitive Church as founded by Christ and His Apostles, together with the relics of martyrs and confessors who suffered for "the truth of God and the testimony of Jesus." As when we have examined the buried ruins of Herculaneum or Pompeii, and conclude therefrom that Pagan life existed in those ancient cities; so when we descend into the Catacombs of Rome, which are now admitted to belong to the earliest Christian ages, we have brought vividly before our minds a living world—a struggling persecuted community—which sought refuge from the hand of the oppressor "in dens and caves of the earth." From an examination of those Catacombs, extending beneath the ground over nine hundred miles, and reckoned to contain nearly seven million graves of departed Saints, we infer the rapid progress which Christianity must have made during the first three centuries, and the heavy persecutions to which its disciples were exposed. Tacitus, the

Roman historian, asserts that in the time of Nero the Christians were "a vast multitude"—and history has left on record that under the heathen persecutions vast numbers of Christians were massacred. In the inscriptions written upon the Catacombs, in Latin and Greek, the word "Martyr" is frequently found; and, where this is not the case, we find sentiments expressive of Christian trust or resignation, and hope in a future resurrection. He "sleeps"—he "rests"—she "sleeps in peace"—are among the common inscriptions on the tombs of this vast cemetery; while emblems such as the Anchor, the Cross, the Dove, the Phœnix, are of frequent occurrence as indicating a state of mind which the Christian religion alone can account for. Besides these, we have representations from Bible history, expressive of the faith held by those whose ashes repose in the subterranean vaults of the Catacombs. Such subjects as the Temptation, Noah and the Dove, Daniel among the Lions, the Adoration of the Wise Men, several of the miracles of our Lord, the Last Supper, &c.; are among the many artistic representations found in the Catacombs, from all which we infer that the belief of the early Christians was substantially the same with that of orthodox Christendom at the present day.

If it be said that the early converts were credulous in accepting the Christian religion—the certain knowledge of having to undergo a moral ostracism from the rest of society, and their continual exposure to obloquy and suffering and death, afford sufficient proof of their having "counted the cost." Men do not willingly run into danger with their eyes open, or accept a new religion which exposes them to obloquy and loss of worldly goods, unless they are influenced by high moral reasons, and are fully satisfied with the claims made upon their intelligent acceptance of the new faith. The grounds upon which the religion of Jesus made such progress in the world as to dethrone idolatry, and to uproot long-established systems, are to be found in the purity of the doctrines taught and in the morality of the lives of the early Christians; in

their intelligent belief of Gospel facts relating to Christ, the founder of the new religion; in the miracles wrought both by our Lord in His lifetime, and by His servants the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost; in the undoubted testimony borne to the truth of the Sacred Scriptures by Pagan writers, by cotemporaneous history both Jewish and heathen, and by the continuous chain of witnesses to the faith of Christ, whose sincerity was attested by worldly loss, imprisonment, and death. They sealed their testimony with their blood. Nearly all the first Apostles of our Lord passed through the bloody baptism of suffering and death; while myriads of their followers were martyred under one or other of the ten heathen persecutions. Several of the early Church defenders and historians suffered death on account of their religious principles. It is evident that they must have felt good reason for accepting the truth of Christianity before they would rank themselves on the side of a persecuted sect, and expose themselves to loss of worldly goods, to loss of social position, and encounter the risk of the scourge, the rack, the cross, the stake, or the wild beasts of the amphitheatre—to which multitudes actually submitted rather than deny their faith.

The evidence for the truth of Christianity may be summed up as follows:—The historical books of the New Testament are the productions of contemporaries and eyewitnesses; two, at least, of the authors of Christ's life were his intimate friends;—the history of the earliest Acts of the Apostles was written by a companion of the first missionaries of the cross; there are many striking coincidences between that history and the Epistles sent to different churches or individuals;—we have frequent notices by profane writers confirming the sacred story of the Gospels;—in the full belief of the truth of the New Testament Gospels, Christianity spread rapidly through the civilized world against many obstacles and in face of the direst persecution;—and, finally, the authentic character of the New Testament Scriptures has been handed down to

future generations by those who either witnessed the events recorded by them, or had them transmitted on competent authority. If the authors of the New Testament were good men, and honest men—and the character of their writings is sufficient proof of this—then we ought to accept their testimony as that of credible witnesses who "saw and heard" what they declare unto us. In the words of one of their number, "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

LECTURE VIII.

INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

Tim. iii. 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

HAVING established in the preceding lectures the genuineness and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, we now proceed to show that the writers of the sacred books composing the Old Testament were under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Considering that the men whose names they bear were fallible, "men of like passions with ourselves," we might reasonably infer that if the Divine Being saw fit to give any revelation of His will at all to the world, He would provide for transmitting it free from human infirmity. Any one who believes in a special providence, or in the possibility of miracles, can be at no loss in admitting the possibility of inspiration. By *revelation* we are to understand a direct communication from God to the world; and by *inspiration* we understand that the individuals through whom the revelation was given were under the influence of Divine guidance, so that they might be secure against the possibility of error.

When we come to examine the sacred writings, we find their authors claiming to have been under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Hence the use of such expressions as the following: "The Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, etc.;" "The burden of the Word of the Lord;" "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will hear his voice, etc;" and "Thus saith the Word of the

Lord." The Scriptures are called "the oracles of God;" and our Lord appealed to the general body of Scripture as containing "the words of eternal life." Generally speaking, from Moses to Malachi we find the Old Testament writers either delivering their messages in the name of Jehovah, or declaring that they spake by the Spirit of the Lord. The learned Apostle of the Gentiles in his Epistle to Timothy, a young minister of the Gospel at Ephesus, reminds him of his responsibility as having been religiously educated by his mother and grandmother in "the Holy Scriptures from a child;" and adds, in those memorable words so fraught with wisdom to the Church of Christ in every succeeding age, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." It is admitted that no part of the New Testament had then been published, or, that some of them were only in course of being published; and that St. Paul's emphatic declaration could therefore refer only to the Jewish sacred writings, in which young Timothy had been instructed. But if the inspiration of the Old Testament is established, that of the New will readily be conceded. For the authors of the New Testament claim inspiration, and manifestly place their writings on a level with those of the prophets. St. Paul, for example, tells us in the name of his brethren that they "have received the Spirit of God"—that he had "the mind of Christ"—and in respect of the doctrines taught and the messages delivered by him and his fellow-servants the Apostles, he declares: "which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

There is thus a clear distinction to be made between the sacred books and all human compositions. Were it not so, there would be no certainty as to the truth of revelation; and we should be thrown back upon the light of our own fallen reason to discover what was true or false. Neither can we suppose for a moment that only some portions of the sacred writings have been inspired, as for example,

what is the subject of prophecy; and that the rest was left to the natural faculties and the unassisted reason of the authors of the Bible. Nothing short of plenary or verbal inspiration, extending to the whole of sacred Scripture, by which the minds of prophets and apostles were under the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit, can meet the requirements of a special revelation from heaven. This did not hinder the free use of their reasoning faculties; neither does it imply that there are not degrees of inspiration. Where the authors of Scripture narrated facts or events, they were left to the ordinary use of their mental faculties; it was only necessary that they should be infallibly preserved from error. In other cases, they were under a Divine afflatus, by which their minds were elevated; so that they became the instruments of communicating doctrines or truths far surpassing man's ordinary ability, and which could not be known except by inspiration. When we reflect that some of the sacred writers were illiterate men, taken from the humbler walks of life; and yet that their sentiments are so dignified, and their representation of divine things so majestic, that, even in the style of thought and imagery, they are not excelled by the noblest flights of human genius; we cannot account for such a phenomenon except upon the hypothesis that they were under the influence of Divine inspiration. And this is just the claim put forth by the sacred writers themselves. They do not pretend to have arrived at a knowledge of "the deep things of the Spirit," by any stretch of human wisdom; but they attribute their discovery to a revelation given to them from above. St. Paul expressly declares that "the mystery which was hidden for ages was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" and in regard to "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," the same inspired writer declares: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." To use the words of an eminent English Bishop: "In some cases inspiration only produced correctness and accuracy in re-

lating past occurrences; in the other cases, it communicated ideas not only new and unknown before, but infinitely beyond the reach of unassisted human intellect; and sometimes inspired prophets delivered predictions for the use of future ages, which they did not themselves comprehend, aud which cannot be fully understood till they are accomplished."

The inspiration of the Scriptures may be also inferred from the sublimity of their style; the high spiritual or heavenly tone of the matters therein discussed; the efficacy of their doctrine in reforming society; the agreement of all the sacred writers on the general subject of Scripture; and the full discovery it makes of the way of salvation. It is a marvellous fact that, although from Genesis to Revelation a period of fifteen hundred years elapsed between Moses and St. John, a harmony of plan is apparent from beginning to end; which, considering the number of authors, and the different countries to which they belonged, and the different ages in which they wrote, can be accounted for only by the supposition that they were all guided by the one Spirit of infallible truth.

From all these considerations, we are entitled to regard the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. Men spoke and wrote, but it was the Divine Spirit that indited the record. The prophets and apostles and evangelists were only the amanuenses employed to convey to living men that revelation of the Divine Will which shews us "what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." We are not to understand by this, that all the sentiments recorded in the Bible are just, or the examples are worthy of imitation. We are not to endorse the utterances of Satan, or the sayings and actions of wicked men, which we find on record in Holy Scripture; but they are nevertheless true in fact, and have been written for our admonition either to warn us of danger, or encourage us in the prosecution of good. "All scripture," therefore, "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." We conclude in the

words of the Apostle Peter that "no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation," which means—not that we are to discard the right use of our reason and private judgment, since we are commanded to "search the scriptures," and we are exhorted to "try the spirits, whether they be of God"; but the Apostle means to declare that Scripture revelation is not the result merely of human sagacity; for "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And as the Spirit of inspiration was needed to indite the Holy Scriptures, so we require the Spirit of illumination fully to comprehend the truth therein revealed, so that it may prove in our experience to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." Amen.

LECTURE IX.

FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

2 Pet. ii. 21: "For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

THE Bible may be proved to be an inspired book from two distinct sources of evidence, viz., *miracles* and *prophecy*.

Miracles may be defined to be extraordinary acts out of the usual course of nature, by which the Divine Being, in a supernatural manner, indicates His power over nature. Miracles are the subject of ocular demonstration; and may be established in the same way as any other fact, by the testimony of competent witnesses. If an army of six hundred thousand people be led across the bed of a sea, whose waters divide and stand as a wall on either side, while their enemies in close pursuit are destroyed by the overflowing water; if that same army be fed in the wilderness for forty years with bread from heaven; if a dead man who has lain in the grave four days, by which time his body is turning to corruption, and through the power of *a word* is raised to life; if four thousand hungry people be fed on seven loaves of bread and a few small fishes, and yet there are taken up seven basketsful of fragments, —we call that a *miracle*, an act of Divine power, something out of the ordinary course of nature, which proves that God was with the men who could do such things.

Prophecy, on the other hand, which is one of the main pillars of Christianity, proving the Divine origin of the Holy Scriptures,—means the foretelling of future events

by men who were specially endowed by the Holy Ghost what to say and what to write. Now, if we are satisfied that good men, calling themselves prophets, predicted, hundreds or thousands of years before the events occurred —either the downfal of a nation, or the destruction of a city, or the rise, progress and fall of some civil or ecclesiastical power—then we must conclude that those men were inspired of God.

Much of the Old Testament is occupied with just such predictions as those referred to—prophecies regarding persons, families and nations, cities and empires. A very large prominence is given by nearly all the Old Testament writers to predictions regarding the Messiah, covering a period of not less than four thousand years, if we reckon from the first promise of a Saviour to the advent of Christ.

Now, the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures were preserved by the Jews with pious fidelity and care, almost with superstitious reverence, ought to satisfy any reasonable mind that the books containing those prophecies are genuine productions. That is, they were written by the men whose names they bear, or to whom they are usually ascribed. And the circumstance that our Lord and His apostles invariably appealed to the Old Testament as an authoritative standard on matters of faith, affords additional evidence that the books are genuine, and that they contain an authentic narrative of the facts recorded. Before we are at liberty to set aside the evidence arising from the genuineness and authenticity of Holy Scripture, we must convict its writers of deception and falsehood; we must convict the Saviour and His disciples of having been misled and deceived, or else that they attempted to mislead and deceive others. Nay more, we must convict the whole Jewish church and nation of having palmed off upon the world the most stupendous fraud that has ever been witnessed; that Moses plotted with David, and Samuel with Jeremiah, and Nehemiah with Nahum, and *all* with Christ and His apostles, in foisting on the world the Bible as a revelation from heaven!

The sacred writings which were preserved with such pious care by the Jews have been handed down to the Christian Church, and have now become the common property and inheritance of Christian people; who receive them, equally with the New Testament writings, as the word of God—the only infallible standard of faith and manners. While, however, the Jews acknowledge only the Old Testament writings; and while the Samaritans receive nothing more than the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses; Christian people acknowledge the Divine authority of both the Old and New Testament scriptures. These taken together form the rule of our faith, and our ultimate standard of appeal on all questions of doctrine and duty. In this respect Protestant Christians differ entirely from their Roman Catholic brethen, who take as their rule of faith the traditions of the Fathers and the voice of the Church—not as interpreting scripture, but as adding to it new dogmas given forth as the infallible utterances of the head of the Roman Church; whereas Protestants in general would express their views on the rule of faith in the following language employed by the framers of the Westminster Catechism: "The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the *only* rule given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." This brief statement was intended to meet the error of the Deists, who denied the necessity of any special revelation from heaven, as well as the error of the Romanist, who has added tradition to the Bible as the rule of faith.

Upon the subject of prophecy, it may be well to remark that as the Scriptures are the inalienable right of man, his birthright to stupy for himself; so it is his prerogative to study prophecy, that his faith may be an intelligent apprehension of Divine truth, and that he may obtain fresh confirmation of the truth of Christianity. Perhaps there is no more obscure book in the whole collection of sacred writings than the Book of Revelation, written by St. John, the last survivor of the twelve apostles. And

yet that mysterious volume opens with an encouragement to every Christian man and woman to study its contents, conveying the promise of a blessing to all who do so: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand."

Now, what is a prophet? And what are we to understand by prophecy? According to the best Hebrew lexicographers, the name "prophet" comes from a word signifying to "bubble forth," like a fountain or spring sending forth pure water from the bosom of the earth. This may mean, either that he is taught by a Divine influence what to say, or that he speaks authoritatively as the mouthpiece of God. Under the Jewish theocracy, there was a regular prophetical order of men, who were trained to instruct the people in religious things, and to give forth the will of God on matters pertaining to the welfare of the nation, or concerning the outside world. Schools or colleges of prophets were established as early as Samuel's time, and continued down to the close of the Jewish dispensation; and no doubt it was in imitation of that state of things among the Jews, that in the Apostolic Christian Church, there were officers duly ordained and set apart to the Gospel ministry. Some were apostles; others were prophets; more were evangelists; while the permanent office-bearers, who were to have the succession of the ministry, and to perpetuate the new state of things down to the second coming of Christ, were called "pastors and teachers." (See St. Paul to the Ephesians iv. 11.)

Under the Old Testament economy, there were many who belonged to the prophetical order who did not exercise the gift of prophecy. This was reserved to comparatively few; but the sixteen prophets whose writings find a place in Old Testament Scripture were, of course, endowed with the prophetic spirit. They are distinguished by the name of greater and lesser prophets; such as, Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, Hosea, Joel, and so forth. Those sixteen prophets were the instruments of communicating

God's will to man regarding future events, concerning persons, places, kingdoms, cities, empires, &c. More particularly they pointed out—most of them hundreds of years before the event occurred—all the circumstances relating to the incarnation of Christ, His life, death and resurrection, the time and place of His birth, and the great redemption to be accomplished for man in the fulness of time.

As this great Messianic prophecy is the central prophecy of Old Testament scripture, it may be well to observe that there are two ways in which we may present to you the truth of prophecy. In dealing with professed Christians, who acknowledge the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament writings, all that we need to do is to show that the truth of the evangelical story, and the statements of our Lord and His Apostles, are closely bound up with the truth of prophecy as given forth by the Jewish sacred writers. Because Christ Himself, as well as His servants the Apostles, invariably appealed to Old Testament scripture, and quoted its statements as authoritative and as being the inspired oracles of God. As an example of this, observe our Lord's language in St. Mark xii. 36: "For David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." So the Apostle Peter quotes from the Jewish scriptures to the same effect in Acts i. 16: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which *the Holy Ghost* by the mouth of David spake concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." So St. Paul, in addressing the Hebrews (iii. 7), says: "Wherefore as *the Holy Ghost saith*, To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, &c." And to give but one passage in which our Lord Himself acknowledges the Divine authority of the Old Testament, read Luke xxiv. 44: "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written *in the law of Moses*, and *in the prophets*, and *in the psalms*, concerning Me."

To say the least, our Lord and His apostles regarded the Old Testament scriptures as the word of God. They quoted from them as inspired writings, and therefore authoritative. What does St. Paul say to Timothy? Speaking of the Jewish scriptures, in which that young minister of the Gospel was taught from earliest infancy, he declares: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." To the same effect is the assertion of the Apostle Peter: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

While it is enough, therefore, to satisfy any believer in the inspiration of the New Testament that the statements of our Lord and His apostles are bound up with the truth of prophecy, we need to show to an unbeliever that the facts of prophecy have had a real fulfilment. *One* prediction would not be enough to convince a gainsayer, because a man of sagacity might possibly foretell an event, such as the downfall of a dynasty or nation; but the fulfilment of a great number of events, reaching into the distant future, and embracing in it a number of minor details which could not possibly be foreknown by any amount of human wisdom or foresight—this would constitute proof so overwhelming as fully to satisfy any reasonable mind of the truth of prophecy, and of the Divine guidance imparted to the men who did thus predict beforehand a long series of future events.

Now, if we examine carefully the Old Testament scriptures, we shall find no less than about *two hundred distinct prophecies* regarding persons or events, some of them given forth many hundreds and others thousands of years before their fulfilment. The testimony arising from the fulfilment of *prophecy* differs from the testimony of *miracles*. Miracles were intended to convince men during the age in which they were performed, and generally they were wrought at the commencement of a new era, such as on the introduction of the Mosaic testimony, or upon the in-

troduction of Christianity; the object of miracles being to strike conviction into the minds of unbelievers that God was with the author of those several dispensations, viz., Moses and Christ. But in regard to prophecy, the testimony borne by *it* is not confined to any one period of the Church, but was intended for all time coming; so that, as has been observed by one eminent writer, "the fulfilment of prophecy is a continuous or standing miracle;" and the evidence derivable from the continuous chain of prophecy, reaching from the fall of man to the advent of our Saviour, and from the birth of Christ onwards to the end of the world, is an ever-increasing or cumulative testimony. It ought, therefore, to produce in the mind of any reasonable person the conclusion that the Bible is not the word of man, but the word of the living God; indited by Him who alone could penetrate into the bosom of futurity. As no effect can possibly exist without a cause, so the men who framed the sacred writings must have been influenced by a power from above, else they could never have given forth predictions so long before their actual fulfilment.

Take, as one example of fulfilled prophecy, the prediction of Jacob given forth seventeen hundred years before the event took place! In those remarkable words which that early patriarch employed, he refers to Christ: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Here, the time and manner of Christ's coming into the world are predicted. And it is worthy of notice that in the year when Christ was born the legislative power began to depart from Judah, and was soon afterwards entirely taken away by the Romans. For at the period when Christ was born at Bethlehem "there went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus that *all the world* should be taxed;" and to comply with this decree, Mary the mother of Jesus, being then great with child, travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where (in fulfilment of Micah's prophecy, given forth five hundred years before) the child Jesus was born, who was to

to be the hope of Israel. Thus the kingdom of Judah was made subject to the Roman power by observing a heathen emperor's decree!

Not to refer to numerous prophecies regarding the Mesiah, we are now in a position to state that the prophecies regarding Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, Tyre and Sidon, Moab and Edom, have all been fulfilled to the letter. And in several remarkable instances the inscriptions found upon the monuments lately dug up from the buried ruins of those ancient cities or places have confirmed the statements made concerning them in Old Testament scripture. When we think of the length of time since those prophecies were given forth—some of them many hundreds of years, one of them fifteen hundred; when we consider the minute details often given in the predictions, and their exact fulfilment; the evidence arising from a study of prophecy amounts to a demonstration, proving that God was with the men who could thus foretell the distant future.

All prophecy concentrates, properly speaking, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; because it has all to do either with His spiritual kingdom on earth, or else with His mediatorial reign over the nations: "At what time I shall speak concerning a nation or kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against which I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The great burden of prophecy, therefore, relates to the person, work, character, or kingdom of the Messiah; and the promise given at the gate of Eden concerning the Hope of Israel was gradually unfolded or developed by patriarchs and prophets, until the prediction reached its culminating point. So clear are the marks pointed out in regard to the incarnation, life, character, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of the Messiah—as exemplified in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—that men of the mightiest intellect, such as Bacon, Newton, Jones, and other learned men, have been fully satisfied of the truth of scripture;

while many who were previously sceptics in religion (among whom may be mentioned the name of Lord Rochester, who took up the Bible in order to disprove it) have been won over to the side of truth by examining the sacred writings for themselves.

Among the numerous testimonies which may be given on this point is that of Bishop Hall, who says: "Nothing was done by Christ which was not foretold long before in prophecy; and nothing was foretold by those who prophesied concerning Christ, which did not come to pass." Thus we see how "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" which means that the witness borne to Christ by prophets and apostles is the great burden of prophetic scripture. All prophecy proceeds from Him, all prophecy points to Him, all prophecy concentrates and finds its fulfilment in Him. Hence, "no prophecy is of private interpretation; for it came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We conclude by giving one other testimony to the inspiration of the Bible from one of the most profound scholars that the world has ever witnessed. It is the testimony of Sir William Jones, who, in addition to his legal acumen and experience as a philosopher, was conversant with fourteen or fifteen different languages: "The scriptures (he says) contain, independently of their Divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected from all other books composed in any age, or in any language. The two parts of which the scriptures consist are connected by a chain of compositions which bears no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Roman, Judean, Persian or Arabian learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man doubts, and the unstrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine productions, and *consequently inspired.*"

In conclusion: let us feel thankful for that Word of Life which has been committed to our trust; which, while it can claim the homage of the most profound scholars, because it is a revelation from God, is yet so simple in its language that the most unlettered person can understand all that is needful for salvation. And when men who are the greatest scholars bow with profound reverence as they approach this temple of heavenly wisdom, it becomes those of humbler attainments to pause before rejecting in a spirit of incredulity what is manifestly a revelation from God. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

FINIS.