

THE INSPIRATION AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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Prophecies respecting Philistia.—Of the Philistines we read much in the Old Testament. They were among the most active, powerful, and successful of the enemies of Israel. They were governed by five princes, called lords of the Philistines. Their land lay along the Mediterranean shore, and their great and ancient cities were exceedingly strong by nature, fortified by art, and full of wealth and population, when God declared many hundred years beforehand, their utter ruin and desolation. So we read—“Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast.”—Ezek. xxv. 16. “The Lord will spoil the Philistines. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley.”—Jer. xvii. 4, 5. “For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; but I will send a fire on the walls of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof; and I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.”—Amos i. 6—8. “Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.”—Zeph. ii. 4—6. “The king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.”—Zech. ix. 5, 6.

It is here declared, to give the general meaning, that the land of the Philistines was to be destroyed; and it partakes of the general desolation common to it, with Judea and the region around. But whilst ruins are to be found over them all, they are particularly abundant along the sea coast, which formed on the south the realm of the Philistines. Here let me introduce the modern account of Volney, a French traveller. Being an infidel himself, he cannot be supposed to wish to support the authority of the Bible; but it may be said of him as of one of old, “he meant not so, neither did his heart think so.” He says, “In the plain between Ramla and Gaza,” (the very plain of the Philistines along the sea coast,) “we met with a number of villages, badly built of dried mud, and which, like the inhabitants, exhibit every mark of poverty and wretchedness. The houses, on a nearer view, are only so many huts; sometimes detached, at others ranged in the form of cells around a court yard, enclosed by a mud wall. In winter, they and their cattle may be said to live together, the part of the dwelling allotted to themselves being only raised two feet above that in which they lodge their beasts.” See how it is fulfilled—“Dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.” But he adds, “All the rest of the country is a desert, and abandoned to the Arabs, who feed their flocks upon it.” How literally is it fulfilled—“The remnant shall perish; the land of the Philistines shall be destroyed!” “The ruins of white marble found at Gaza, prove that it was formerly the abode of luxury and opulence. It has shared in the general destruction, and notwithstanding its proud title of capital of Palestine, it is now no more than a defenceless village, peopled by at most two thousand inhabitants.” Therefore, how true has it been said, “the king shall perish from Gaza; baldness shall come upon it.” The historian adds, “Its castle is nothing but a heap of rubbish;” and the prophet said many hundred years before the event took place, “I will send a fire on the walls of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof.” It has been further said, “I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod.”—Amongst the various successive ruins, those of Ashdod, so powerful under the Philistines, are now remarkable for their scorpions. This city, in latter ages, was also the see of a bishop, and in much earlier times withstood the largest siege recorded perhaps in history, one of twenty-nine years. Then it teemed with inhabitants, but now they are all cut off, and dangerous scorpions have taken possession of their halls, forts, and palaces. Another traveller says, “Ashkelon was one of the proudest satrapies of the lords of the Philistines; now there is not an inhabitant within its walls, and the prophecy of Zephariah is

fulfilled—“the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.”—When the prophecy was uttered, both cities were in an equally flourishing condition, and nothing but the prescience of heaven could pronounce on which of the two, and in what manner, the vial of its wrath should be poured out. Gaza is truly without a king. The lofty towers of Ashkelon lie scattered on the ground, and the ruins within its walls do not shelter a human being. How is the wrath of man made to praise his Creator? Hath he said it, and shall he not do it? The oracle was delivered by the mouth of the prophet more than five hundred years before the Christian era, and we behold its accomplishment eighteen hundred years after that event. With regard to Ekron, its very name is missing; nor is the spot certain on which it stood.—How perfectly fulfilled—“Ekron shall be rooted up,” saith the Lord.

Let us briefly notice the words of the Lord respecting Egypt. The Bible, as well as profane history, yield ample evidence of the wealth, wisdom, population, and power of this most ancient empire. Herodotus states the number of her cities and towns to be no less than twenty thousand. But walking, as she did, in pride and haughtiness, in sin and idolatry, God, many years beforehand, declared her terrible fall:—“It shall be a base kingdom.—It shall be the basest of kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more among the nations. The pride of her power shall come down. I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked; and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers. I the Lord have spoken it. There shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt. The sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.” Such, says Volney, a French infidel traveller, is the state of Egypt. “Deprived twenty-three centuries ago of her natural proprietors, she has seen her fertile fields successively a prey to the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Georgians, and at length the race of Tartars, distinguished by the name of Ottoman Turks. The Mamelukes, purchased as slaves, and introduced as soldiers, soon usurped the power, and elected a leader. If their first establishment was a singular event, their continuance is not less extraordinary. They are replaced by slaves brought from their original country. The system of oppression is methodical. Every thing the traveller sees or hears, reminds him he is in the country of slavery and tyranny.” In Egypt there is no middle class; neither nobility, clergy, merchants, nor landholders. Ignorance, diffused through every class, extends its effects to every species of moral and physical knowledge. “A more unjust and absurd constitution,” says Gibbon, another modern infidel, “cannot be devised, than that which condemns the natives of a country to perpetual servitude, under the arbitrary dominion of strangers and slaves. Yet, such has been the state of Egypt above five hundred years. The most illustrious Sultans of the Baharite and Borghite dynasties, were themselves promoted from the Tartar and Circassian bands; and the four-and-twenty Beys, or military chiefs, have ever been succeeded, not by their sons, but by their servants.” Well might the prophet say—“There shall not be a prince of the land of Egypt.” It has been laid waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of the strangers. It is a base kingdom, governed by strangers and slaves. The present Pasha is an oppressor, and a stranger; and the price paid for his authority and power, the whole property of the country being at the will of every succeeding Pasha, shows how it has literally been “sold into the hands of the wicked,” as the prophet foretold. Her extraordinary monuments are among the chief wonders of the world. But these stupendous temples and vast ruins, abounding with massy columns, covered with hieroglyphics, erected by mortals who had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things, seem chiefly destined to be an imperishable testimony to both the historic and prophetic word of the living God.

AN OPEN PROFESSION.

In almost all our congregations there are persons outside of the pale of the church, who not only cherish the hope and the belief, that they are true Christians, but who furnish to all around them satisfactory evidence that they are so, and yet treat a public profession of religion as a matter of no importance. They say, “Profession is nothing, but the possession

of religion is every thing—and after all, the best profession is a consistent course of living.” In this remark, which is so common, there is a degree of truth which often hides from view the error that is tacitly connected with it. While nothing is more certain than a mere profession of religion is of no avail, yet the truth is too often overlooked that the existence of vital religion in the heart will naturally lead to that public avowal of it which is enjoined by God's positive command, and which, on that account, becomes an act of acceptable obedience.

In reading the New Testament, nothing appears to be more evident than this, that our Lord has set forth the ordinances of his church as the proper means of expressing our allegiance unto him. They are the appointed signs of self-dedication to his service. In the Apostolic age all Christians were addressed as those who had received them, as a matter of course. And a matter of course it seemed to be when explicit commands were undisputed, when all understood the force of our Saviour's saying, “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” and when Paul could say to all the Christians of Galatia, “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

And then, it ought to be understood by every one who desires to be accounted a friend of true religion, either here or hereafter, that if he recoil from a profession of Christianity, the world will take him at his word and will reckon him on its own side. How can it be otherwise? He neglects a positive command. Profession of religion is not, to be sure, sufficient proof of possessing it, but deliberate non-profession will be regarded by the great majority as presumptive evidence that there is none to profess. For, it is the nature of love to a great and glorious object freely to express itself. Is love of country mute when our country's enemies are reviling or opposing, thwarting her plans, diminishing her influence, or boasting of their numbers?

Moreover the imperative obligation of this coming out from the world is enforced by the consideration of its benefits to the individual who performs this duty. These are manifold; but it is worthy of special notice that it strengthens all his moral purposes. Nothing is more obvious than that when any question is at issue, and strong feelings are enlisted on opposite sides, he, who, determining his own opinion, buries it in his own bosom and hesitates to avow it openly, must from the nature of the case, become deficient in moral energy, and cannot develop any great strength of character. His feelings will be languid, his purposes will be infirm, much of his influence will be wasted, and he will be of comparatively little worth to the cause to which he is attached. In the great controversy, therefore, which is now going on between truth and error, between God and men, those who are for Him, are called upon by the great Head of the Church, as were the Israelites in the days of Moses, to prove it by decisive action: “He that is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me.” And who does not perceive, that he who thinks that he has a heart loyal to the cause of Christ, and yet refuses to obey such a summons, if he be not deceiving himself, is thoughtlessly setting at naught his own duties and interests?

May all those to whom this subject has any relation, soberly consider it; for the hour hastens when all will wish not to be reckoned and ranked with the votaries of this perishing world. Its petty objects of interests may engross us now, its friendship, wealth, and pleasures may charm and fascinate us a while, but all this cannot last. The hour hastens when all its beauty, grace, and fashion shall have passed away, when its pomp and power shall have vanished like a night vision, when all its kindreds and tribes shall have been summoned before the judgment throne, when the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and ever freeman, who belongs to it, will cry for shelter from the presence and wrath of the final Judge. Then to be classed with those whom the Scriptures call “the world,” with those who serve and idolize, and honor it, with those who have their treasure and their portion in it, and their destinies linked to it, will be to have all evils concentrated in one. Then will all the weight and the worth of the truth which was of old the song of the church, “The Lord's portion is his people, and Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”—*Watchman & Reflector.*

Notwithstanding the Papal rescript, the new Colleges are to go into operation in Ireland.

Who has done most to Elevate the Poor?

I was going along the highroad, and saw before me a person walking with a bag of tools on his shoulder, whom I found I should overtake in a little time. I soon perceived that his dress and appearance was very different from my own. He would perhaps have called me a gentleman, and I him a working, or a poor man. He will be company for me, I thought; perhaps he will look on my coat, and think something more of me for it; but I shall not think the less of him for his! and why not? Because I cannot look at him, and forget the class to which the Lord of Glory belonged! The working classes—what is their rank? They are equals of my incarnate Lord! What is their order? Nobility? gentry? middle-class? The order of parchment titles and coats of arms? The order who carry their distinction in their purses? No; oh, no! It is the order of man—ungilded, unadorned man; and therefore the order of “the Son of Man.” “Verily,” as James says, “let the poor man rejoice in that he is exalted.” A peasant's garb—why should he not glory in it? Jesus wore it. A peasant's means—why should he be ashamed of them? Jesus lived on charity. The name workman—why feel lowered by it? Jesus was, and was called, the Carpenter's Son.—Nay, it is the name Idler, not Workman, that lowers the man. While I was thus meditating, he turned into a different road; there was only time for me to call to him and offer him the last number of “the Appeal,” which he evidently received with as much pleasure as I gave it; and we went on our several ways. Are we, thought I, ever to meet again on earth? Thou art my fellow-traveller in more senses than one. Which of us will finish our journey first? Shall we meet together in the happy presence of the Glorified “Carpenter's Son?” God grant it, of his grace, for thy sake and mine, my late fellow-traveller.

Again my thoughts reverted to the “Working Class”—the “Poorer Class,” and to the “great fact” of the world-long honour conferred upon it. It was Christ's chosen rank! But what if I mention these thoughts! “Fancifulism,” “wild-dreaming,” “ignorance of life and the world;” yes, I should be sure to bear this, be pointed to illiterate poor men, self-degraded poor men, and similar things, and asked what I could say for my honourable class. Say; why, that compare a hundred rich and a hundred poor, and I should find as many who did not like learning, though some of it had been forced into them, and as many self-degraded, in one class as the other. And again, I shall recur to the grand fact, that the Lord of Glory—he who made you all—he passed by the monarchs, the nobles, the wealthy, the “respectable.” He despised all this. He took up his abode with the peasant class. The deeds of many a conqueror, of many a warrior, of many a monarch, belong to other classes; but not the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. It was not a noble or a king who bid the winds and waves be still (what a vulgar thing to command an army when compared with this!),—not a noble who had the waters for his carpet (how mean comparatively the most splendid palace floor),—and it was not a noble who bid diseases depart, and life return to the dead,—bid evil spirits flee, and peace calm the raging bosom. It was not a noble who stood on earth the supreme Lord of all that was in it, and of legions of angels too. No; these were the deeds of a peasant, of a working man. Greatness of all sorts has been achieved by many; but the only true greatness of man,—the only instance of perfect human goodness, maintained, too, under the greatest difficulties—this was reserved to be achieved by the Son of a peasant. Nay, more, it was not noble blood (speaking after the manner of our nobility) which flowed on the Cross, the atonement for the sin of the world,—not a noble who ascended to heaven, and sits there enthroned as man's great Representative, and God's Head of all things. No; it is the blood of a Jewish peasant which alone can cleanse from all sin,—it is a glorified peasant through whom alone earth's greatest ones may find an equal acceptance with the millions whose class the Redeemer made his own. So thought I, and a thought or two more followed before I arrived at my destination.

No marvel if others forget what class Jesus deigned to honour; but why do the poor forget it? Why should they not hold it for their chief honour, that Jesus was one of them? And again, how can any of the poor refuse their greatest honour? Had the lord taken his earthly rank among the great, less wonderful would it be that the poor should suspect