

## **THE CREDIBILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES**

Extracts from an Address Delivered by Dr. J. H. Thomas before the "Liberal League" (an Infidel Society), of this City and published in the Restitution.

[We have selected these from among other able arguments, thinking they might be of interest to our readers, though probably most of them you are already familiar with. – ED.]

If then we believe those things that are unaccountable by law, and contrary to our experiences which are the discoveries, and works of men, why should we discredit those things that are the work of God, as evidenced by competent and creditable witnesses? Again I ask in the words of Paul, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"

We believe there was a time when man did not exist. We know he exists now. What has been, may be again; therefore, if man ceases to exist, he may exist again, which would not even be contrary to our experiences. I contend, therefore, that the Atheist and Infidel, in accordance with their own reasoning are bound to accept the testimony of the apostles that Jesus rose from the dead, whereby the divinity of the Scriptures is proved: for, if God raised Jesus from the dead he was divine; and as he acknowledged the authority of the old Scriptures, and they testified of him, they are divine.

Having noticed a few of the arguments that might be adduced under this head, I call your attention to the New Testament prediction of an apostacy and its fulfillment as another reason why I believe the Bible to be the word of God.

If the New Testament prediction be divine authority, there should be to-day not only an apostacy from the faith once delivered to

the saints, but there should be a dominant Christianity (at least so-called) political, tyrannical and corrupt. As proof of this we call your attention to the predictions.

Says Paul (Acts 20:28): Take heed to yourselves, and unto all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers; feed the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood; for I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock; also of your own selves, shall men arise and speak perverse things.

Again, writing to Timothy he says: The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

This is a plain prediction of a departure from the truth as proclaimed by Christ and his apostles; and before the apostles had finished their work this departure from the truth, or apostacy had commenced, and we find Paul writing to the Galatian believers, saying: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the favor of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

We see the predicted apostacy had commenced in Paul's day. This was to go on and grow into a political form and become in the world an ecclesiastical system supported by the sword. This is clearly predicted by Paul. The Thessalonian believers had become anxious about the return of Christ as an event about to happen, but Paul writes them, saying: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God."

Paul further says: "This wicked one the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming."

According to these predictions then, there ought to have been in the past an extensive departure from the faith, a corruption of Christianity, developing a pretender to divine authority, lording it over the kings, and governments of the earth.

I ask if this prediction has not been fulfilled – realized in every particular? What has been in the past, and what is to-day the most notable feature of European history? Is it not a man at the head of an ecclesiastical system exhibiting himself as an object of the highest homage upon earth, and in the name of Christ claiming the highest authority, and the right to lord it over the kings and governments of the earth?

I contend then that the developments of this apostacy – a prominent feature of which is a union of church and state – is an exact fulfillment of Paul's prediction, and is therefore a good and valid reason why we should believe the Bible to be the word of God. What human being unassisted by divine inspiration could have predicted 1800 years ago with such clearness of vision – such accuracy of detail an apostacy such as now exists, headed up in Rome and extending nearly, if not quite, to every inhabited part of the globe, and embracing every false system of religion – teaching **[R232 : page 3]** for doctrine the commandments of men, and which is fully ascribed in the apocalypse and symbolized by a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, upon whose forehead is written: "Mystery, Babylon the Great. The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

This is symbolical and expressive of all names and denominations of the great apostacy, from the church of Rome to the most extreme division of Protestantism who make void the truth by their traditions, and so fill up the measure of Paul's predictions, which

is evidence that Paul spoke not of himself but as he was instructed by the Holy Spirit.

We call your attention to the wonderful fulfillment of prophetic history in relation to the Jews, or Jewish nation, and their distinct racial existence at the present time as another reason why I believe the Bible to be the word of God.

That a race of people with no national organization, no centralized power, banished from their own land, scattered among every nation under heaven, despised, cast out as evil, down-trodden, robbed again and again of their wealth, should still exist as a distinct people is a remarkable thing, unaccountable from any human standpoint. A people massacred by tens of thousands, yea more; in A.D. 70, 1,300,000 perished at the destruction of their city and temple, and 97,000 were carried away captive. Sixty years after, in attempting to return, half a million were slaughtered. A.D. 135, the Emperor Adrian destroyed 50 castles, 800 cities, and slew 530,000. Under King John of England 1,500 were massacred at York in one day. Under Ferdinand and Isabella 800,000 by a single decree were forced out to sea in boats, and the most of them perished. And still they live.

Does the history of the world record another case like it? Over 3,000 years ago going down into Egypt a family of 70 persons and in 430 years coming out a great nation. They saw the proud Egyptian perish in the Red Sea. They witnessed the fall of great Babylon and the rise and fall of the mighty empire of Medo-Persia – in the words of another: "They out-lived the Caesars and the terrible visitation of the dark ages, and here they stand to-day as distinct as ever; occupying no country of their own, scattered through all lands; identified in their immemorial physiognomy, earth's men of destiny, before the venerableness of whose pedigree the proudest escutcheons of mankind are but trifles of yesterday."

We return to the works of creation; to the world of liberal-minded, to the Atheist, or Infidel for an explanation. Tell us how it is that such a remarkable race of Jewish people, in whose days nations have been born, kingdoms established, empires formed, great and magnificent cities builded, and passed away, leaving no sign of their glory, and scarcely a relic to show that they ever had an existence; while this people, persecuted, [R232 : page 4] banished from place to place, massacred, robbed, and cruelly deprived of their wealth by almost every government on the earth, still live a powerful people, distinct in their facial and racial peculiarities, and still hold the wealth of the world?

We read no answer in the Infidel's revelation – the works of nature – to such a question, and we contend that apart from the Bible – apart from a revelation from the Deity no answer can be given.

How different has been the course of the other people! What Englishman can say with a certainty to-day he is from Briton, Roman, Saxon or Norman stock? But find the Jew where you may, in Russia, Germany, England, or our own great republic where English, Irish, Germans and all nations amalgamate like metals in a furnace, and he is a Jew still claiming Abraham as their father, clinging to Moses, holding fast their traditions, looking toward Jerusalem, longing for their Messiah, as when their fathers trod the vine-clad hills of Judah's land – wandering for centuries, weary and foot-sore, in every land but their own; surviving the greatest persecutions ever inflicted upon a people; suffering enormous and almost incredible butchery again and again for over eighteen centuries, they have risen again as a great power among mankind. Holding the money power of Europe, among the foremost in science, literature, or government, you find the Jew the marvel of nations, the standing miracle of the world's history, which no human tongue untouched by spirit power has ever been able to explain apart from that book, the Bible – that book from whose

divinely inspired pages comes the solution of the mystery in the words of Jeremiah, the prophet:

"Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, neither be dismayed, O Israel, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee; though I make a full end of all nations, I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

Surely there are none so blind as not to see a solution of the mystery and the voice of God in this prophetic announcement:

"O Israel be not dismayed, for though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; for lo! the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it; for lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob (or Israel) shall return and be at rest, and none shall make him afraid."

From this book, the Bible, then, we learn why the Jews still exist, why they still retain a distinct racial identity, why they are a power among mankind, why they hold the wealth of the world! – because God hath said he will not make an end of them, but will deliver them from their captivity and bring them again to their own land, where they shall have rest.

I contend, then, that the Israelitish people are a living testimony of the divinity of the Bible – of the spoken word of God. Like the bush of Moses – ever burning yet never consumed – an unanswerable refutation of the blasphemous sophistry of that class of Atheists who, like Col. R. G. Ingersoll, dare to speak with solemn mockery of the word of God, and defy Yahweh the Elohim of Israel, who hath said again, by the same prophet:

"Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off: Say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.... I will say to the north give up, and to the south keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth (Isa. 43:6.), for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born."

Let me assure you that as certain as this prophecy has been fulfilled in the preservation of down-trodden Israel in all lands, so certain will it be fulfilled in their restoration to their own land. Even now the Jews number 30,000 in Jerusalem and vicinity, and every day increasing. I ask what better reason need we give for believing the Bible to be the word of God?

But no greater reason is the one I have just advanced than the one which follows why I believe the Bible to be the word of God. I refer to the prophecies in general and the wonderful and marvelous accuracy of their fulfillment.

How different from the vague, incoherent predictions of the Greek and Roman augurs, and the doubtful, hesitating utterances of diviners, soothsayers, psychologists, and false prophets of all ages. The latter, speaking from the inspiration of nature and an intuition common to an animal creation, there is no certainty of their predictions coming to pass; while the prophecies, being accurately fulfilled, compel us to believe that they spoke as they were moved by the spirit or inspiration of God.

The prophets, being inspired by Him who knoweth all things, and who hath said to the world by the prophet Isaiah: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Their predictions are always fulfilled. I contend that if we carefully consider the prophecies and their fulfillment the evidence of the divinity of the Scriptures is overwhelming.

Take for instance the prophecies concerning the Jews. It is admitted by Atheists and Infidels that the Jews are an ancient people, going back at least 3,000 years, that they have documents which they regard as those of Moses, and hold as divine.

We turn, then, to Moses and read what is written, and we find that God informs Moses that after he has brought Israel into the land, which he swore unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey, and when they shall have eaten and filled themselves and waxed fat, then will they turn unto other gods and serve them, and "provoke me, and break my covenant."

And Moses was required to write the words in a book as a witness against them, and tell the words to the people. Moses did so, and you will find them in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy, and Moses said to the people: "I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."

Then follows a prediction of the evils that should fall upon them in the latter days of the Mosaic constitution of things which was then being laid or founded. Some of the evils predicted **[R233 : page 4]** are as follows: "I will scatter you among the heathen, or nations, and will draw out a sword after you, and will bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance... and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst throughout all thy land: and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy

daughters ...in the siege, and in the straightness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee."

I ask you to read the history of the passing away of the Mosaic constitution of things at the destruction of Jerusalem, and you cannot help being awed by the accuracy of the fulfillment. The Roman eagles were planted upon her walls, and in the midst of the siege so great was the distress that women took their babes from their breasts and roasted them for food.

Every line and word of the prophecy by Moses was fulfilled with awful reality. One million three hundred thousand Jews perished and ninety-five thousand were carried away captive; and so the Jews were scattered among all nations. Jerusalem was laid in the dust, not one stone of their magnificent temple was left standing upon another, and to-day Jerusalem continues to be trodden down by the desecrating footsteps of the Mussulman and Turk. A marvelous fulfillment of that prophecy of Jesus when he stood and cried:

"These be the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Jerusalem to-day is a standing fulfillment of this prophecy.

Don't tell me this prophecy was written after the event, for the preponderance of evidence is against you. There is little if any doubt that this prophecy was written as early as A.D. 50. But it matters not when it was written, as it is testified by the apostles that it was spoken by Christ, and their testimony has never been impeached. Not only so, but the prophecy is in course of fulfillment before our eyes, and speaks for its own divinity; the Jews are still scattered, Jerusalem still trodden down. Why? Because the times of the Gentiles are not yet fulfilled.

But we turn to other prophecies equally remarkable. Of the city of Tyre, once the stronghold of the Phenicians, that stood a thirteen-years siege by land and water, and even then not conquered, it is said:

"Behold! I am against thee, O Tyre! and will cause many nations to come up against thee: and they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock, and it shall be a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken it."

History informs us that Alexander scraped the ruins from the site of the old city. The Infidel, Volney, states that it is a place where fishermen spread their nets. It is evident, then, that the prophecy was the voice of God, and not man.

Again the prophet says concerning Samaria: "I will make Samaria as an heap of the field and as a planting of a vineyard, and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof." Was this fulfilled? Says Dr. Keith: "The people of the country, in order to make room for their fields and gardens, have swept away the old houses and poured the stones down into the valley. The hill is left like the plantings of a vineyard. Every clause of the prophecy has been fulfilled with awful minuteness.

Do we need a better reason for believing the Bible is the word of God? Could a man whose lips were not touched with the inspiration of Deity have spoken with such unerring certainty? Every man of sense, of culture, of reason, must answer "No."

The same is true of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman kingdoms. Their rise and fall were accurate fulfillments of prophecy. Even the Roman empire to-day, in its divided state, fills the prophetic vision.

But for a moment we must call your attention to prophecies that relate to our own times; and what are they? I answer, it is declared in

the prophecies that "in the latter days" – mark, it says in the "latter days" – that the land of Israel shall be "brought back from the sword," and numbers of the Jews are to return, having been gathered out of the nations, and settle in agricultural colonies, dwelling in unwalled villages, dwelling safely, without bars or gates, possessing much wealth in cattle and goods, under the protection of a foreign power easily recognized as the British power. That the Ottoman or Turkish power must pass away. That it will be accomplished or brought about by Russia, in conjunction with other powers. That she will be led on with a view to take great spoils from the Jews. That she will plant her standards at Constantinople and take Egypt. That she will be opposed in her onward march by the British lions, who will say to her: "Hast thou come to take a spoil?" That it will result in all the nations of Europe being gathered together in the great battle of Armageddon. That the armies of the nations are overthrown, the kingdom of God established upon the mountains of Israel, the nations subdued, and a reign of righteousness and peace given to the world.

These are prophecies that relate to our own times. I ask what of the outlook? Are they being fulfilled as evidence that God has spoken? Most assuredly they are.

The Jews are slowly but surely turning their wandering feet toward Jerusalem. The Anglo-Turkish Convention opened the way for their return with a freedom that has never been granted before. England has thrown her protecting arm over Asiatic Turkey, which makes the British power, in fulfillment of the prophecy, the protectorate of the Jews.

When the protectorate was officially announced the Jewish Chronicle wrote thus: "There has dawned in the East – the cradle of our race – a light which deepens in effulgence as the day advances."

The Jewish World wrote: "This opens a great future for the Jews of the Holy Land." **[R233 : page 5]**

The result is, numerous schemes are being put forth to further the return of the Jews and establish them in agricultural colonies, which is an accurate fulfillment of the prophecy. Of these I may mention the great humanitarian scheme of the Sir Moses Montefiore Testimonial Fund, the object of which, says the Jewish World, is to better the condition of the Jews of Palestine by the introduction of industrial and agricultural pursuits. But lately, the Testimonial Fund Committee advanced L2,600 to a building society in Jerusalem, of which societies there are several. I may also refer to Mr. Oliphant's book which has just appeared advocating the formation of a Jewish settlement in the land of Gilead.

Of this work, the Jewish Chronicle writes:

"We are inundated with books and pamphlets on Palestine; the air is thick with schemes for colonizing the Holy Land once more, but none of the projectors are more enthusiastic, or more practical than Mr. Oliphant."

I ask what is this but the fulfillment of the prophecies before our eyes – the prophecies I have just referred to – an evidence that God has spoken?

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