

CONCERNING THE PROPHECIES CONTAINED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

—Excerpts from *Christology* by Saint Nektarios—

The prophecies contained in the books of the Old Testament concerning the person of Jesus Christ are so clear that not even one of the events from His life remains hidden. Rather, the Savior's entire life upon the earth is described in great detail. The generation, the tribe, the home, the family, the relatives, and the person from whom this Savior would be born are delineated. The time of His appearance is designated, and the place where He would be born and raised is clearly indicated. His character, His works, His life, His teachings, His suffering, His death, the type of death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension into the heavens, and in addition to all these, many other events are also precisely described and vividly depicted. The most impressive of all, however, is that His rejection by the nation that received these oracles as an inheritance is expressly emphasized, as is the invitation of the Gentiles in its stead.

Is it possible to attribute these oracles to a deceitful mind? Would it ever have been possible for such strange deceit to remain unnoticed for so many centuries? Who would ever be convinced that such a wondrous event, so incomprehensible even after it was revealed, could be envisioned by the mind or conceived by the human intellect? Did perhaps mere chance unite these characteristics of the pre-announced Savior in the person of Jesus Christ? Is perhaps the completion and fulfillment of such numerous and various prophecies mere chance or some coincidence? The realization of so many typologies and symbolisms? The unfolding of the entire economy of the Law, whose true personification was found nowhere else other than in Jesus Christ? No! Ten thousand times no! The convergence of so many and such important coincidences would be much more remarkable than the divine apocalypse revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It would be easier for someone to accept that an omniscient and omnipotent God, Who guides events to a purposeful and logical outcome and end, accomplished His will, than to accept the purposeless concurrence of so many coincidences.

Nicholas Augustus says: "Our prophecies are such that they comprise the most brilliant proof of the divinity of Christianity, and they are the most peculiar miracle that has ever appeared to the human mind. They are ordered with such plentiful economy that we are able to state that if all the other proofs of Christianity eliminate every reason for unbelief, this one eliminates all pretexts."

Frayssinous eloquently states the following: "The prophecies announce future events many centuries prior to their fulfillment. There is no natural explanation for this; they are completely dependent upon God's free providence rather than intelligent creatures. Not only do they announce the events without doubt and reluctance, but they are so precisely detailed that it is impossible for someone not to discover within them the work of Him Whose eye controls everything. Limiting ourselves here to the prophecies concerning the Messiah, who else other than God would have been able to foresee many centuries beforehand that rulers from the tribe of Judah would successively reign until the arrival of the expectation of the nations? Who else other than God would have been able to reveal to Daniel the four great successive monarchies with such precision? Unable to deny the power of these prophecies in any other way, Porfyrios the philosopher supposed that they were written subsequent to the events. Who else other than God would have been able many centuries prior to describe in such detail the various circumstances surrounding the birth, life, death, and teaching of Jesus Christ, as well as the great revolution that His mission would bring about in the world? Someone may argue that all of these prophecies are the product of a clearly natural astuteness. But according to which natural cause is someone able to foresee several centuries beforehand events that are dependent upon the convergence of numerous uncontrolled and voluntary actions? Just as experience teaches us that in the physical world a man is incapable of carrying a house on his shoulders, similarly common sense teaches us that in the moral world such predictions surpass the natural sagacity of all logical creatures. Someone may contend that the perfect agreement between these predictions and the accordant events is a simple outcome of chance. This would have been plausible if we were speaking about two or three general and isolated predictions. However, who does not see how illogical this

supposition is when we are speaking about numerous predictions made by different prophets several centuries beforehand, and which describe in the finest detail completely free and independent future events? He who wishes to elevate chance to such a degree resembles a foolish man who would endorse that the magnificent paintings of Raphael and Rubens could have been produced by colors that were accidentally and randomly thrown on the canvas.”

The following discussion between the author A. Cook and a group of young men illustrates how the prophecies of the Old Testament serve as irrefutable testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. During a conversation with a group of young men concerning the question, “Is Jesus Christ the Messiah?”, Cook states that because these young men did not accept that the Holy Bible was God-inspired, he reminded them numerous times about the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, which were completely fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. One of them who was quite intelligent and realized the importance of this argument, responded that Jesus Christ, having decided to establish His religion, arranged His actions according to the prophecies about the Messiah, and therefore there is nothing remarkable about their fulfillment. “I then asked,” says Cook, “my young conversationalist to explain how Christ managed to be born in exactly the village that the prophet Micah writes about, and in exactly the family, and in exactly the time that the Scriptures had described. The young man responded that, since Jesus Christ happened to be born by chance in the village, to the family, and during the time that the Scriptures had written, He decided also to fulfill the rest of the prophecies, and thus to claim the title of the Messiah. Even so, said I. But how did Christ arrange to be crucified between two thieves (Isa. 53:12); and how did He manage to have Judas betray him for thirty pieces of silver, and to have the archpriests purchase the potter’s field with the silver in order for the prophecies to be fulfilled? Furthermore, how did Christ manage from the Cross that He was on, to persuade the Roman soldiers to part His garments and to cast lots for His vesture as was written in Psalm 21? Did even the spear, perhaps, which pierced His side, collude with Jesus for the prophecy to be fulfilled? The young man did not respond....”