

IS THE BIBLE TRUE?



R. ROBERTS

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BY

ROBERT ROBERTS

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PREFACE

In 1890, the late Robert Roberts commenced publication of a monthly Magazine that he entitled *Good Company*. It was not all original. His objective was to provide a selection of articles "on various topics, ancient and modern as contemplated from a Bible point of view". Among the articles was a series entitled *Is The Bible True?* They were simply written, clear and logical, and in the opinion of some, were among the best of his personal contributions to the Magazine.

We have been asked to reproduce them in book form for the benefit of those who have not access to these articles today. It is a timely suggestion. We live in an age of increasing disrespect for the things of God, and particularly the Bible. Where once it was esteemed as the Word of God, it is now rejected; where once the principles and precepts set forth therein were respected, they are now derided. Frequently, today, in preaching the Truth, one has to establish the authority of the Bible as Divine revelation before it is accepted as authoritative.

Those who advocate the Evolution theory, as well as others who are uncomfortable when faced with the restrictions of God's way, have done much

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to influence Educationers and even Religious Leaders of the churches against acceptance of the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God. Unfortunately they have succeeded to the point that few today are prepared to accept it as such.

The result has been the lowering of standards of morality; and the increase of blasphemy. Restraints previously accepted have been cast away, so that even those of tender years become impatient of discipline. As a counter to this among our own community there is a need to elevate the Word as true. That is what the author of this book does, and in a very convincing and entertaining fashion. His reasoning and exposition are not involved, and will appeal to those of all ages. Paul declared: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (1 Tim. 3:16). The phrase, "given by inspiration of God" is one word in the Greek: *theopneustos*, "God breathed". As God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became "a living soul" (Gen. 2:8), so by the God-breathed word of Scripture a believer becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus, manifesting a spiritual life that can lead to immortality in the Kingdom of God. How important, therefore, to elevate the authority of Scripture. In the face of attack upon the Word of God, the question of the Psalmist is relevant: "If the foundations be destroyed; what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3). The answer is: Strengthen their faith in Yahweh's Word. That is what this book is designed to do. We hope that it performs that service.

H. P. Mansfield
March, 1983

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IS THE BIBLE TRUE ?

Chapter I

A MOOT QUESTION WITH "YES" WAITING

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I apologize for introducing this topic—I am ashamed to do so—ashamed for my own sake, ashamed for you, and ashamed for the age which should create a feeling that an apology is necessary. Why should I apologize? Is it because it is of no moment whether the Bible be true or not? Is it because it is a settled question that the Bible cannot possibly be true? You must be well aware it is neither one nor the other.

On the first point, the very least acquaintance with the Bible must shew you that nothing could so vitally affect our well-being as the truth of what is written in the Bible. Nothing else on earth comes near it. All other books, schemes, or topics are "done with" for us when we have filled up the threescore years and ten that we have to spend in the present state; but this Book deals with matters which, if true

take us forward into futurity, and give us connection with things and ages that will have no end.

On the second point you must be aware that so far from being a settled question in the negative sense, it is the mootest question in the intellectual realm, with a tendency more and more to settle itself in a powerful affirmative. Jean Paul Richter called the Bible "the problem of authorship." You know what a problem is—a puzzle, a mystery, a thing hard to settle. Such a penetrating metaphysical thinker as Richter would not have ranked the question as a "problem" if it was quite so plainly a closed question as thousands of shallow minds in our day regard it. But he not only regarded it as "a problem," but as "The problem of authorship," that is, of all authorship: as much as to say, "Here is a book outside the range and category of all ordinary literary activity; what are we to make of it?" Every mind of intellectual power must share Richter's feeling, which is the result of ability to make a due comparison between the ordinary literary efforts of man, and this weather-beaten volume which comes to us from hoary antiquity, dwarfing all human books by its majesty and purity, and refusing classification with ordinary feats of authorship, withstanding all the endeavours of hostility, however ingenious and diligent and learned.

Carlyle, too, you must be aware, is very cautious in his attitude towards this Book—Carlyle, hater of shams, and the volcanic thunderer against all kinds of quackery and imposture. Do you think he would have spared it if it had been quite the priestly imposture which some people find it so easy to think it, or at least profess to regard it? On the contrary, he called it the truest book that had ever been written, or something to that effect. (*Mis. Essays.*) No,

my friends, the question is far from being the closed question which some of you may be tempted to think it. In an important sense, it may be said to be a reopened question: a question insisting more and more: a question settling more and more in the direction of a powerful and confident "YES." A new element has come into its consideration. A new discovery has been made that has given the question a new and powerful impetus, and put a new face upon the whole controversy. Heretofore it has been taken for granted that the theology of the churches is the theology of the Bible. On this a new light has dawned which greatly simplifies and strengthens the contention for the Bible being what it professes to be.

Apology for introducing the topic is, in reality, out of place. At most it is but a concession to the taste and habit of the times, which perhaps are traceable to the rancorous days of ecclesiastical strife and persecution. Doubtless strong feelings are liable to be enlisted. This is due to the stupendous character of the issues involved. That all acerbity should be avoided and all sweetness cultivated is desirable; but that a vital question should be ignored for the sake of peace is not according to reason or good example. But peace need not be broken. We may have something more to say by-and-bye.

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* i speech
or manner

of a resuscitation of life upon the earth, and a renewal of all its activities and joys under better circumstances, and in a better nature than we now possess : and it tells us that life so renewed will never come to an end. If the Bible is true, we can lie down in death without dismay. If it is not true, there is no hope, and the prospect of death is a terror. Nothing more is needed to shew the importance of the question.

Why should its truth be a matter of question at all ? It is in the world as a true Book. It declares itself to be true : and not only is there no reason for doubting its claim, but every consideration that is capable of being brought to bear in the determination of its claim is in harmony with the idea of its truth. You may be aware that Mr. Gladstone has recently expressed an opinion to this effect. He says that the Bible “ though long assailed by camp, battery, and mine,” stands upon a Rock impregnable, and that “ the weapon has yet to be forged that can interfere with its position.” He thinks, “ It is like to wear out the storms and sunshine, and all the wayward aberrations of humanity.” Mr. Gladstone’s acquaintance with human affairs, and especially in the department of Greek antiquity, will give weight to his judgment in this matter—not that it is conclusive, but it will naturally be felt to be a fact of some consideration in the case.

I would like to make myself intelligible in a remark of greater depth than may be apparent at first sight. It is this : If the Bible is only true in the most ordinary sense we allow to common histories, its Divinity follows ; for all its doctrines are so interwoven with its history, that the truth of the one follows from the truth of the other. There is very much

Chapter 2

THE BIBLE’S OWN TESTIMONY: WHY SHOULD IT BE QUESTIONED?

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I introduce this subject again.

You will pardon me, I am sure. My words were few last time, and I shall not trouble you at great length this time. Few words are sometimes more forcible than many.

The subject is of great importance to us,—how important, it is worth stopping to realize. You and I, in the course of a few years (how very few it may be) must vanish from the circle where we now move, and be known no more. For some reasons, we may not regret this. But surely there are many more reasons why it should be a sorrow. We cannot think of our friends ; of thousand-fold fellow-mankind ; of the beautiful earth abroad ; of the glorious sun, and the magnificent universe all around us ; without feeling a great and overwhelming heart-shadow at the prospect of closing our eyes and leaving all. Now, if there is any alleviation for this depressing prospect, it is to be found in the Bible, and in the Bible only, so far as we know. The Bible holds out the prospect

history in it. In fact the Bible is mainly historic, and it differs from all other histories in this, that it is either wholly true or wholly false. You cannot separate one part from another without destroying all. You cannot remove the Divine element without losing the explanation of the human. In the case of Mahometanism, or any other historic imposture, you can separate the legends (such as Mahomet's journey to heaven, etc.) from the historic facts (of Mahomet's birth and family quarrels and tribal wars), without in the least degree interfering with the intelligibility and consistency of the history of the movement as a whole. But if you attempt to remove the miraculous from Bible narrative, you will find the whole narrative will crumble to nothing. The Operative Cause and explanation of all its events will have vanished.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I would recommend you to try this interesting experiment yourselves. Set yourselves seriously to the task of reading the Bible itself—the whole of it—instead of reading so much *about it*. Try to conceive how such a book could come to be written if it were not true. Judge of it by your own reading, of its own self, and do not come to an adverse conclusion till you have read it all, and read it several times. I have read of an unbeliever who was uninfluenced by arguments till he read the Bible all through for himself. He was convinced by the time he got to the end of the first reading.

There is more in this historic test than you may imagine. On some future occasion, if I do not tire you, I may follow this vein in a brief *sententious* way, for the purpose of illustrating how impossible the Bible histories are, unless they are simply and frankly true as they stand. *putting on an air of wisdom*

Chapter 3

ITS HISTORIC BACKBONE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Here we are again. I hope not without a disposition to be reasonable. Reason is greatly needed in the consideration of our topic. I undertook to say something about what we may call the self-evidence of the truth of the Bible histories. Evidence appeals to reason,

Let me begin with what no man will question—that there is a backbone of historic fact in Bible narrative. We have to deal with facts, not myths.

The land of Palestine yonder was nationally occupied by the Jewish race. It was so occupied, for a certain length of time. The occupation began in a certain way: was marked by events taking a certain shape, and ended from definite causes. Will any of you deny this much ?

Very well, what is the history of the matter ? It must have been a very palpable matter: for it has given us our national religion. It has given us

Christ as our leading tradition. It has given us our brightest historical characters. We have the Jews in our midst—The Bible in our hand—as pledges of the historic reality. Again, the question is,—What is the history of the matter? Ladies and Gentlemen, you ought not to be satisfied till you have attained to some rational theory of this—some theory founded on evidence, and rational in character. The matters involved are too momentous to allow of uncertainty. What I ask you to do is, to address your minds to the problem. Study it up. Do not rest till you are able to say—“The history of it is this: the history of it is that.” Do not be content till you are able to say, “It is a wonderfully successful fable, and I can shew you how,” or “It is a terribly serious and truthful story.”

In carrying out your study, you must begin with the Bible. Here is a history of the matter. It is written by Jews—admittedly. Who so likely to know the facts about the Jews, as Jews. Would you expect their enemies to know more? It was written by the best of the Jews. Who but the best would contend against evil and submit to death in consequence? Who greater than Moses and the Prophets? Who better than Christ, who equipped and sent the Apostles to speak and write? A history written by Jews, and the best of the Jews, must be worth studying in trying to master the problem of the history of the Jews: especially a history that has withstood the ravages of the time, and the hostility of evil men for centuries; and has floated through all the storms of time, and come safely down to our own age. There must be something intrinsically excellent in a book that has achieved such a commanding position, too, amongst nations, and that receives the commenda-

tions of such minds as Gladstone, and Carlyle, Milton and Shakespeare. I say that, in asking you to hear the Bible before you decide the problem of Jewish history, I am asking you to concede the simplest claim of reason, and that to leave the Bible out of account would be to violate the most elementary principles of common sense.

Now then, my proposition is this: that as you read, you cannot help feeling that you are listening to the evidence of a true witness. There is a natural difference between truth and falsehood. There is something in the manner of a man who speaks the truth that you might not be able to describe, but which convinces you on natural principles that he is speaking the truth. So with a man who is romancing. There is the same difference between books, though it is necessarily not so easy to discern as in living witnesses. The style of the Bible is the style of truth. Read and see if it is not so. This is a very important point. It would matter very little in a book narrating things of no moment, such as details of travel, but in the case of the things recorded in the Bible, it is of the very first consequence to settle whether the tone of the record is the tone of truth, because the matters recorded are of a kind in which the truthfulness of the recorder is a guarantee of the truth of the things recorded. You will find yourself unable, on this head, to suggest any reason for supposing the things stated are not true. The only reason its enemies can allege is, the incredible character of many of the things recorded. But this in itself is an unsound reason: for, if manifestly truthful men tell you something that they allege on their own knowledge to be true, you are called upon to consider well before you allow the wonderfulness of the things they narrate

to be a reason for disbelieving what they say. When I first heard that the tramp of a fly's foot could be heard by the microphone at a mile's distance, I acted on the incredibility of the thing, and disbelieved, on the supposition that my informant had been imposed upon. But I afterwards found out that my informant was right, and that I, the unbeliever, was the fool in the case.

*take up in
adventures*

The self-manifest truthfulness of the Bible is a reason why you should treat with the greatest consideration the things it records. The wonderfulness of these things is certainly not a reason for their rejection. What else could we expect but wonderfulness in a book professing to record the doings of God? If the Bible came before us as a human book describing human performances, there might be some ground for objecting to the superhuman transactions with which it abounds: but, coming before us as a book written by the ordinance of God, and the inspiration of God, to record the sayings and doings of God "in sundry times and divers manners in times past," the absence of wonderfulness would itself be a wonder, and a reason for doubting if it possessed the character it professed.

If there is no reason in the wonderfulness of Bible contents for doubting the Bible's truthfulness, it will be hard to discover a reason in anything else. I will go further, Ladies and Gentlemen, and say, that a study of the Bible's historical structure will shew that it cannot be otherwise than true. I will hope next time we meet, to try and make a beginning to shew you what I mean, in a line of argument that is not very common, but that is very obvious and powerful when thorough acquaintance imparts discernment.

Chapter 4

TAKING ITS HISTORY TO PIECES: ABRAHAM

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I am now to take the Bible histories to pieces in a simple sort of way, for the purpose of shewing that they are histories whose rationality and cohesion depend upon the truth of their representations as to the part God took in them, and that if you take that part out, they would crumble to nothing, and become impossibilities as matters of narrative.

You have all heard of Abraham's migration from Chaldea to the land of Canaan. This we might call the root of Jewish history. So simple an incident as this comes within the category of what I have said. Abraham must have had a strong reason for leaving kith and kin and fatherland. Where shall we find it? There was no inducement in Canaan. The land was small, and occupied from north to south in every inch by powerful tribes. When he arrived, he found himself a portionless stranger. During all the time he stayed, which was to the end of his life,

(lasting over 100 years), he was "a stranger and sojourner"—(Gen. xxiii. 4). No natural object was served. If you say he was perhaps fond of change, a hundred years of stable settlement in the land is against you. If you say perhaps he had heard tempting reports of prospects in the land, and was disappointed, you indulge in a mere guess, which you cannot reconcile with the fact of his remaining in the land. Because, if he was disappointed, he would be sure to want to go back to his native Chaldea. He had the opportunity to return, and did not go (Heb. xi. 15). And he warned his steward when he sent him to his kindred to get a wife for his son Isaac: "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again." (Gen. xxiv. 6).

Take the Bible account, and everything falls into its place. "God said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and come into a land that I will shew thee." If God commanded Abraham to go, we understand his going; we understand his staying; and we understand his care that his son Isaac should not go back to his country.

The words, then, are natural that we read: viz.: "The Lord God of heaven, which *took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred*, and that spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. xxiv. 7).

If Abraham left his native country because God ordered him to do so, then a good many other things are explained, which, on any other view, are inexplicable. It cannot be denied that Abraham became a great nation. It cannot be denied that, in the line of his posterity, mankind has already attained the greatest

blessings they enjoy in the civilization springing from the influence of Christianity,—to put it no higher. And it cannot be denied that when Abraham came into the land, one of the first things said to him was, "I will make of thee a great nation, and in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed." How is it that this foreshadowing has been so signally realized? Take God out of it, and there is no explanation. Leave God in it, and all is clear. You cannot take God out of the narrative without destroying it, and as for getting rid of it, that you cannot do. The proverbial ostrich, sticking his head in the sand, does not get rid of the foes which it only conceals from its own sight.

Then take the offering of Isaac. The narrative is perfectly intelligible as it stands. To prove Abraham, God commanded him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. xxii. 2). Abraham does as commanded, and at the last moment, is arrested in the act of slaying Isaac. This we can understand; but take God out of it, what have we? Abraham going against every natural instinct without a reason. If you say he took it into his head that he ought to do this thing: or that he did it in imitation of the idolatrous people around him in the land, how do you account for his stopping short in the act? The vagary that would have led him to Mount Moriah, would certainly have led him to complete the business he went for. How could it be a vagary? Vagary would have been much more likely to take the opposite form. He loved Isaac: it is so written: and is it not according to your experience that a father would

ent. in
- proverb
- well-known
- obvious

A capricious
Act or idea
or fluctuating

love his son? Not only did he love him, but he looked to him as his hope of posterity. Whichever way you may account for it, you are obliged to admit that he expected to become a nation through Isaac. Would not such love and such expectation have tended to stop the way against all ideas of sacrifice? Yet here he goes a three days' journey to do this very thing, in violation of all a father's affection towards an only son, and in violation of all the expectations he had formed concerning the future. How do you explain it? You cannot explain it if you take God out of it. If you try to explain it without God in it, the story crumbles to pieces. It cannot hold together. With God in it, all is light, clear, rational, and intelligible. God is in it—you cannot take Him out. Everything is in harmony with it. Isaac became the channel of Abraham's posterity; and Abraham's character, which would degenerate to that of an impulsive fanatic with the No-God view, rises in the stature and dignity of that reasonable man of faith, which the Bible declares he was, and his whole history shews.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—If God was in the history of Abraham, the Bible is true, and true throughout. Prove one part, you prove all.

Chapter 5

TAKING ITS HISTORY TO PIECES: JOSEPH

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Last time I submitted some thoughts about Abraham. I invite you now to consider the history of Joseph. Like Abraham's, the story will not hold together if you take God out of it. Joseph was the beloved of his father Jacob, and the hated of his own brothers. There may not be much in this by itself. Consider, however, the fact of its being written that Joseph's brethren hated him. What motive could inspire this record except its truth? Would not historians, writing for the credit of their nation, have suppressed this at least, even if they had not gone so far as to represent that they loved him? If true that they hated him, we have to consider the reason. Jacob's special love of him doubtless contributes something of a reason; but it is not the whole recorded reason, nor a sufficient explanation by itself, of what they did to him. Joseph had dreams of coming supremacy, which he told in his simplicity. Not

only his brothers, but Jacob himself, was hurt by these dreams. "His father rebuked him, . . . Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen. xxxvii. 10). We may be sure it would never have been written that "his father rebuked him" if it was not so, and the fact being so, we have to consider the fact of the dreams in the light of the sequel. What that sequel was all the world knows. Joseph was promoted to the highest position in the mightiest country then upon the earth—Egypt; and his father and brothers did indeed come and bow themselves to him. This would be strong as a fulfilment of prophetic dreams, which would require God's interposition to account for them. But this is only a comparatively weak corollary to what I am driving at.

Please, Ladies and Gentlemen, fix your minds on Joseph's exaltation in Egypt. The fact is of world-wide notoriety. Even the recent decipherment of the hieroglyphs of Egyptian antiquities has confirmed it. You have to account for that fact, for it is an extraordinary one. A Hebrew lad is sold a slave in Egypt; is imprisoned under the foulest of false charges, and after languishing in a hopeless dungeon, suddenly flames out in public life as the lord of Egypt, to whom the entire population is commanded by Pharaoh to "Bow the knee." What is the explanation of such an unnatural somersault of fortune? The Bible gives it to us. Consider the account. God is in it, and so long as you leave Him there, the story coheres in majestic strength and reason. But take Him out, and it evaporates to nothing, and you are unable to give a rational account of one of the most undoubted events of history.

What is the story? That two of Pharaoh's officials

offending, are confined in the prison where Joseph was; that each has a dream, which troubles him; that Joseph interprets for them their dreams, and that they experience the truth of the interpretation immediately, for one is restored to favour and the other hanged. If this had been all, there might not have been much to press on your attention; it is the climax that shines with brilliant light. After two years or so of neglect, Joseph is hurriedly sent for, on the suggestion of the restored official, to interpret a dream of Pharaoh's, which the wise men of Egypt can make nothing of. The interpretation relates to instantly-coming public events out of human control, and must, from the nature of things, involve him in disgrace if it is otherwise than true. He tells Pharaoh there are coming seven years of plenty, to be followed by seven years of famine, and he recommends provision to be made during the years of plenty for the years of famine. He disowns the credit of the prophecy. He says it is no faculty of his, but the revelation of God to Pharaoh. And the prophecy is of that character as to offer a crucial test of its truthfulness, unlike the vague and incoherent utterances of the famed Delphic oracles of the Greeks, which were purposely made elastic to suit any issue of events. The years of plenty came, and then the years of famine, which established Joseph in paramount authority, and brought Jacob and his sons to Egypt, in the obeisant attitude that Joseph's own dreams had foreshadowed.

Ladies and Gentlemen—All this has the solid and symmetrical strength of pure reason. If God was in it, every step and link in the development is accounted for. But if you exclude Him, you cannot account for Joseph's promotion from a dungeon to a

throne. Joseph could not of himself know that years of plenty and years of famine were coming, and had he not made known their approach, the reason of his elevation is wanting. And had not his words been fulfilled, the famine that brought Jacob and his other sons into Egypt to buy bread would not have been operative.

Consider the matter well. The story is there. As a story it is perfect. In its surroundings it is impregnable. It is supported by the solid, unique, grave, wise, extraordinary character of the Bible throughout, of which it is a part; and by a long line of subsequent attestations, culminating in the appearance of Christ in the earth about 1,600 years afterwards. Can you take God out of it? You cannot, without destroying it; and destroy, or not destroy, you cannot take God out without wrenching many unwrenchable things from their place. You cannot do it without having also to impute a lying character to a Book which carries the evidence of its truthfulness on its face; and you would have to deny a history that cannot be contradicted, and that fulfilled a prophecy which cannot be blotted out, however much it may be ignored.

Chapter 6

MOSES AND THE EXODUS

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Last month we had the case of Joseph. I now invite you to the history of Moses. I will not insult you by supposing you will doubt that there was such a man as Moses. There is no man of antiquity whose historic reality is so unquestionable as that of Moses. A whole nation, and a whole literature extant upon earth at the present moment, are the undeniable monuments of his existence—buttressed in the most massive manner by the history of 3,000 years. A question might be raised as to Confucius or Brahma: but the case of Moses is not debatable. He is one of the inexpugnable things of the earth.

That Moses became the leader of Israel—that he brought them out of Egypt—and that he gave them a law to which they acknowledge allegiance to this day, are elementary facts in the consideration of his case. The question which I submit to your attention this month is—How came he to occupy this position

and perform this work? We have the Bible account. That account is endorsed by all the prophets and by Christ whom they foretold. If that account is true, God was the direct and visible Author of the work of Moses, and therefore the whole Bible is true; for prove God in one part, and you prove it in all. If that account is not true, Moses is a liar, and the prophets and Christ are impostors. Ladies and Gentlemen, to which of these hypotheses will you give your sanction? There is no middle ground, as you must be persuaded on a full study of the case.

I propose briefly to indicate inherent evidences that the account is true, and that no other process than one in which God took visible part can account for the national origin of the Jews and the ascendancy which Moses acquired among them. Take legend out of history, and the history is left. Take God out of the story of Moses, and the story would be gone. You would require another story, and you would have to invent it. You could not construct it out of the materials supplied in the Bible narrative.

First of all, Moses flees Egypt on slaying an Egyptian. He leaves not only in disgrace but in danger. Such a thing must have happened before it could come to be recorded, for no motive but the truth of it could lead to such a record. What led Moses to do this deed? Sympathy for the Hebrews; for the Egyptian was murderously assaulting a Hebrew. But why should he sympathize with the Hebrew? You may say, Because he was one himself. This is not a sufficient explanation. It is not human nature for a courtier, elevated from a slave race, to identify himself with that race on merely racial grounds. Paul's explanation of his action is that "he chose rather to suffer affliction with the

people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25): and Stephen's, that "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand would deliver them" (Acts vii. 25); an explanation which the whole subsequent career of Moses agrees with. This explanation looks back to the promises that God had made that He would deliver Israel from Egypt.

Fleeing from Egypt, Moses takes employment as a flock-master in Midian, and remains away for forty years, during which Israel is sorely oppressed, as is now the case in Russia. Now, some strong circumstances must have transpired to bring about such a change as confessedly took place in the position of Moses after this. From a quiet pastoral life, he is placed at the head of a nation, whom he brings victoriously out of Egypt. What is the connecting link between the two points? Did Moses plan the rescue of his people? There is not only no record of this: there is the record that he refused to undertake their deliverance when the angel appeared to him in the flaming bush, and only yielded in the presence of the Divine anger (Ex. iv. 13, 14). Consider this: if true, God is in it. If not, how in the world came it to be written to the discredit of Moses that he was unwilling to undertake the deliverance of his people? Ladies and Gentlemen, it is incredible on any hypothesis. Again, did Moses organize Israel into an army and victoriously fight the Egyptians? This would have been the human way of rescuing an oppressed race from their oppressors. The Israelites were rescued: was it not in this way? If so, there is no record of it, and surely there would have been a record if such a thing had happened: for afterwards when Israel approached the land of

promise, we have the record of battles between Moses and certain kings of the Amorities. Why not a record of battles in Egypt if there were any? If it was the military prowess of Moses that delivered Israel from Pharaoh, and if the Bible history is a merely human history, would it not have been so represented? Instead of this, both the circumstances and the record preclude such having taken place. The Hebrews were a slave race. They were under task masters. They could not be organized as an army. There was no opportunity for Moses to organize them, and even if such had been possible, they had no heart for it. Their burdens were aggravated as the result of Moses's advent on the scene. "They hearkened not to (the assurances of) Moses for anguish of spirit." They said, "Let us alone than we may serve the Egyptians" (Ex. vi. 9; xiv. 12).

How came a helpless slave race to be extricated from such a position? There is an account of how it was done: and I strongly submit, Ladies and Gentlemen, that you can neither reject the account nor take God out of it without doing violence to reason. The account is that Moses, with his brother Aaron, having presented himself at the Court of Pharaoh, with this message: "The God of the Hebrews hath met us. . . . Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness;" informed him that his refusal would be visited by devastating plagues that would break his power and force Israel out of his hands. The account further is that Pharaoh did refuse, and that the plagues were sent one after another, and that on the occurrence of the last, the death of the first born in every house in Egypt,

Pharaoh not only consented to their departure, but hurried them out of the country; and that, after an interval, in which he recovered his spirits, he pursued them, and was overwhelmed in the Red Sea into which he had followed them through an opening miraculously made in the waters for their escape.

This is the only account we have of Israel's national advent on the historic scene. It is an official account. It is the account of Moses, as authenticated by Christ and by every generation of Israelites from the days of Moses to the present. You cannot reject it without in effect declaring that Moses was a liar. You cannot reject it with any reason stronger than your private opinion that it could not be true. You cannot remove the Divine and the miraculous from it without destroying the story altogether, and you cannot supply us in its place with any rational explanation of the undoubted historic fact that the nation that has given us Christ and the Bible, marched out of Egypt a rabble of slaves under a flock-master in the teeth of the armed resistance of the most powerful military monarchy of the world.

I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, that you are bound to receive this account: that you cannot really get out of it: that its mere existence as a story, in all the surrounding circumstances of the case, is an evidence of its truth, which it only requires logical capacity and a full information to perceive.

reduce the number by nineteen-twentieths (mind you, I don't admit the need: I suggest it merely to meet you—suppose you reduce the number to nineteen-twentieths), you would then have 100,000 people on the march. The march was in a sterile country. It is there for you to go and see. Professor Palmer went over the ground at the time of the British conquest of Arabi, and found it as represented. A small company, if they did not take supplies with them, would soon be in straits. How must it have been with a vast congregation? The congregation at the end of three days were without water, and without food. It is written so. It must have been so. The point is, the thing that is represented as having happened under the circumstances. "The people murmured against Moses, and against Aaron: saying, Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Here you have a problem well worth considering. Were the Israelitish people in this fix? Did they murmur? Did they survive the stress, and years afterwards enter the land under Moses? Careful consideration will shew you that the facts compel a "Yes" to each question. A large body of people could not leave Egypt by the Red Sea, without getting into difficulty for want of supplies, as soon as they found themselves on the barren route that leads to Sinai. That an unenlightened people, such as the Israelites were (Ezek. xx. 1-8) should murmur against their leaders under such circumstances, is according to nature as we find it. That it should be written in their national records that they murmured, is proof that they did, for on no other rational principle could we account for such a record being made. Consider, then, that forty years

Chapter 7

THE JOURNEY IN THE WILDERNESS

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

The case of Moses engaged our attention last month. There is much more in his case than can be displayed in these fifteen minutes' speeches. I ask you to consider some features of the journey in the wilderness, that go to support the conclusion yielded by the opening incidents of the Exodus—viz.: that the story cannot be otherwise than true.

After a three days' march, water failed the congregation. How large the congregation was, you may not be prepared to concede. But you must allow it must have been a considerable assembly. Forty years afterwards, they made a conquest of Canaan; and however you may look upon that conquest, it could not be done by a handful of people. The statement of Moses is that they numbered 600,000 fighting men, besides women and children—that would mean two millions. That is not tremendously large for a nation. But suppose you say you cannot swallow so big a number on the travel—suppose you

afterwards we find them emerging from the wilderness as a thoroughly organized and belligerent host in the successful invasion of Canaan. The problem to be solved is this: By what means did a large assembly of people subsist so long in such a region, where no harvests could be raised, and no food or water could be procured? By what means did they subsist even for a week under such circumstances? Moses tells us how it was done; and Christ confirms his words as true (John v. 46, 47). Moses says, that the Lord said to him, "I will rain bread from heaven for you: and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day. . . . I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, your God."

Moses further informs us that the thing promised was done. "It came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is this? And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. . . . This is the thing that the Lord commandeth. Fill an omer of it, to be kept for your generations: that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan."

Now, if this is what happened, we can understand how an immense congregation of people were able to live for a number of years in a region destitute of the means of subsistence. In that case, it was God that brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, and not any merely human leadership, for no human leadership could work such a miracle. In that case, the Bible is true throughout, for establish one part, and you establish all. God, in that case, spoke by Moses, by the prophets, and last of all by Christ and the apostles, as Paul declares in Heb. i. and ii. 2-4. If you say this is not what happened, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have two impossibilities on hand. You have to account for the preservation of a nation in a desert without miracle; and you have to maintain—either that Moses did not write these things, or that Moses wrote lies, and that in either case, Christ was the victim of error in accepting the writing as that of Moses; or second, in accepting as true the record of the miracle of the manna.

Fairly confront these difficulties, and you will find them insuperable. You cannot deny Israel's exodus from Egypt. You cannot deny their presence in the wilderness, during their transition from Egypt to Canaan. You cannot deny their advent on the frontiers of Moab at the end of forty years, as a strong and Moses-believing nation. You cannot explain their sustenance during that time on natural principles.

Some of you may think you can get over these difficulties. If you do so, it is because you accept a so-called "learned" tradition on the subject, and not because you have faced the facts through for yourselves. The dictum of the "learned" world is by no means the weighty thing that it is usually

taken for. You should read Mr. Gladstone's articles in *Good Words* on this point. He shews that the critics both change and contradict one another. His opinion may weigh with you, where a little common sense may seem a poor article.

But whatever you may do with this impossibility of accounting on natural principles for Israel's sustenance during their sojourn in the wilderness, you will find yourselves helpless in any attempt to maintain the falsity of the testimony of Moses. The authenticity of his testimony rests on the consent of a hundred generations. The probity of his testimony is proved by its inherent character and complexion. And both its authenticity, probity, and authority are confirmed by Christ, whose title to speak is—first, His character: second, His miracles: third, His resurrection.

Lastly, Ladies and Gentlemen, there is no reason why the testimony should be refused, except the opinion that such things as Moses testifies could not happen. Are you prepared to take up such a position as this? Do you think it reasonable that mere opinion should be set up against demonstrated truth? Is not "opinion" in such a case the merest prejudice, and nothing else? I implore you to open your minds to the power of evidence, and to receive the most blessed fact of human history, that God has taken part in human affairs, with a view to a purpose, which opens up a future of hope and glory.

Chapter 8

ISRAEL'S CHRONIC MUTINIES

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

We have all heard of the "higher criticism." The line of reflection I am submitting to you I consider the higher demonstration. It is unconnected with, and independent of, all far-off or external questions of authenticity, or credibility, or historic accuracy, and such like. It proceeds on very solid and simple ground. It takes the Book as the current fact we know it to be. It ponders its narrative, and shews that its truth is a necessary conclusion from what it is in itself, without reference to the obscure investigations with which it is popularly supposed to be associated. You understand, the object is not to disparage other lines of demonstration. Far from it; every argument has its own weight. Beauty and strength are everywhere in this important matter. Every line of study converges in demonstration. But some lines are both less obvious and more easily

grasped than others. Such is the one to which I solicit your renewed attention.

You will pardon me if I detain you for some time with the case of Moses, whose work is the basis of the entire system of Divine revelation upon the earth. I have already spoken of his successful extrication of Israel from Egyptian bondage without military means, and of the subsistence of their large assembly in a region destitute of supplies, as involving the necessary co-operation of extra-natural power. I ask you now to consider the chronic mutinies that agitated the congregation, as proving both the truth of the narrative, and the presence of a super-human regulation in the camp.

The Israelites are no sooner out of Egypt, encamped by the Red Sea, before the crossing, than they say to Moses (on hearing of Pharaoh's approach), "Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exo. xiv. 11).

They are no sooner across the Sea than, finding themselves in a desert land, they say, "Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (xvi. 3).

They had no sooner got over this difficulty through the supply of manna and quails than, finding water scarce, they again broke out, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me" (xvii. 3, 4).

This difficulty being solved by the supply of water from the rock, they camp before Sinai, and in the absence of Moses in the mount for forty days, they weary of their position, and say, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (xxxii. 1).

Then they tire of the manna and weep for vexation, saying, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Num. xi. 1-6).

Then when, afterwards, the spies, who were sent to search the Land of Promise, brought back a good report of the character of the land, but a discouraging report of the difficulties in the way of a successful invasion: "All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron . . . and they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt; . . . and all the congregation bade stone them with stones" (Num. xiii. 32, 33; xiv. 1-10).

Then, at a later stage, we have the revolt against Moses on the part of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. and 250 princes of the assembly, with whom the whole congregation took part, saying to Moses and Aaron, "Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? . . . Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them" (Num. xvi. 1-13).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, there may not appear

to you to be much in this exhibition of constant perversity on the part of the Jews in their very earliest writings. In fact you may, on the whole, feel it to be rather a tiresome story. But consider: how came such a story to be written? There it is. Somebody wrote it: and somebody wrote it long, long ago. And whoever wrote it, had a reason for writing it, for history is never written without a reason. Either it was written because it was true—in which there would be an all-sufficient reason; or it was written because, not being true, it was desired to please the Jews by an invented history.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Excuse me for apparently insulting you by asking you not to evade this issue. Face the problem, and make your choice. The problem is there. It is not a fanciful one. The story is in the hands of Christendom. It must have an origin. It did not write itself. There was an object in writing it: either to tell the truth, or to please. You see I am debating the matter on very low ground. I am treating the writings of Moses as a merely human production, for the sake of argument.

What do you say? Can you think it was written to please? Is it possible that such a story *could* please? What generation of Jews could ever be gratified, to be told that their fathers were such a stiff-necked, unbelieving, and disobedient people that “it went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips:” and that “. . . therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against them, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance and gave them into the hand of the heathen?” (Psa. cvi. 32, 33, 40).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have Jewish writers

and Jewish histories written from the merely natural Jewish point of view. Do you find them at all pitched in this unflattering key? Do they not, like all natural historians, try to glorify their ancestors by attributing great and excellent qualities to them? Yet Moses, and every Bible writer, speaks in the disparaging way illustrated in these extracts.

No, Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot, on a calm consideration of the matter, come to the conclusion that the Bible history of the Exodus was written to please. The character of the history forbids it, while Christ's endorsement of the history excludes it.

You may say it does not matter much whether it is true or not. You may say it is lugubrious at the best, and that, if it is true, so much the worse for the unhappy race whose murmurs and discontents it preserves on the page of immortal history.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—There is an entirely different face to put on that point which, with your permission, I shall try to exhibit at our next meeting.

Chapter 9

WHAT THE RECORD
OF THE MURMURINGS PROVE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I called your attention last month to the record of the repeated murmurings and mutinies of the children of Israel on their way from Egypt to Canaan. I asked you to consider whether the simple fact of their being recorded was not an evidence of their having occurred, since it would be impossible to imagine any other reason for such a record. You were inclined, I think to accord some weight to the argument. But some of you did not seem to think there was much in it, even if true. You seemed to think that the most it proved was that the Hebrews were a discontented cantankerous race. I ask you now to see much more in it than that: to see in it, in fact, a proof of God having revealed Himself to Israel, and therefore of the whole Bible being true. This may surprise you as an extreme and illogical contention. Let us see.

All I want conceding at this moment is, that Israel murmured and mutinied. Don't go away from that, and we shall see what large conclusions come out of it. We have simply to ask why they murmured in each case, to see where the conclusions come from. Why did they murmur just after they left Egypt, and before they crossed over the Red Sea into the wilderness? Why did they say, "Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt? It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians." Here is the answer: "*They were sore afraid.*" Why? "They lifted up their eyes, and behold, *the Egyptians marched after them,*" "and Pharaoh's army overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon." Here was cause for fear and a natural provocative of murmur: a helpless mass of men, women, and children jammed in between the sea in front and an approaching army behind. The murmuring proves the existence of the peril. And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Israel's arrival afterwards on the borders of Canaan proves they escaped it. The question you have to consider is, How did they escape? Did they escape by fighting and repulsing the Egyptians? How could a mob of working people, burdened with wives and families, fight a trained army? And if by some extraordinary turn of circumstances, such an incredible thing happened as the defeat of an army of trained soldiers by a frightened mob, would not the occurrence have been recorded? Israel's battles afterwards are duly recorded as Israel's battles. If Israel had a battle now, would it not have been recorded? The fighting of such a battle would have been to their credit: it would have been to the credit of Moses; and if this history is a mere human history,

as the suggestion assumes, is it conceivable that a circumstance yielding so much human satisfaction, would have been left out?

You see, Ladies and Gentlemen, the naturalist theory is full of difficulty. We have only to discard the naturalist theory to get rid of all the difficulty. Let us accept the narrative, and we instantly have straight sailing in smooth water. Why not? You accept the narrative in the matter of the murmuring. Why should you object to it in the matter of the escape from the danger that caused the murmuring? "The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, and chariots, and horsemen . . . and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Ex. xiv. 21, 27).

If the children of Israel escaped in this way, then God was working with them, and the Divinity of the whole scheme of Hebrew history and Hebrew teaching is established; for it cannot be imagined that God would leave His work unfinished.

If they did not escape in this way, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, where are we? If it was a natural escape, then, of course, the Egyptians had the same chance; and why did not they escape also? Why were they drowned? If you suggest they were not drowned, then how did Israel get away? Every road of travel practicable to an irregular multitude, would be still more practicable to a disciplined host.

Are you disposed to adopt the complacent "learned" suggestion that it was an accidental affair—that by a coincidence of natural movements, the sea retired by geological subsidence just at the moment Israel wanted to get away, and having got over on the dried sea-bottom, it happened to come back by remote "seismic" elevation of the sea basin, just as the Egyptians were following them across? This would be rather wonderful, wouldn't it? Rather different from how things happen now-a-days. A rather more fishy-looking and really more childish story than the genuine Mosaic original, isn't it?

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, don't imagine you would be out of your difficulties by adopting this highly "learned" view. You would still have to explain how a prodigious assembly of Jew serfs came to be in such a dilemma; how they came to be in such an out-of-the-way place; how they managed to get away from Egypt at all, and what earthly object Moses could have in leading them out of a land of plenty into a region of danger and starvation.

If you say, "We admit the exodus was by Divine authority," are you not bound to admit that the journey afterwards would be Divine, too? Would God begin a work and leave it unfinished? Would He break Egypt's power for the deliverance of His people, and not open the sea to let them escape from Egypt's army? Do you think the opening of the sea would be too difficult for Him? Now, come, what reason *can* you urge for refusing belief?

You cannot refuse belief without involving yourselves in endless difficulties in other directions. You will have to give the lie to Moses, who was a proved man of integrity, and who records these things; or if you contradict the evidence and say Moses did not

write it, you will have to give the lie to Christ, who endorsed the writings of Moses as such. And you will have to give the lie to David in all the Psalms, and the Prophets, who occasionally in their writings allege these things. The matter is built into the history of Israel for a thousand years; and that history is declared a work Divine by Jesus and the Apostles. You will have to attribute error, imposture, and untruthfulness to a book, and to men, and to a work which is pre-eminent above all books and works on earth for holiness, and righteousness, and truth. And all because of what, Ladies and Gentlemen? Simply because our generation has had no experience of sea-openings or other direct and wonderful works of God. Is this a sound reason? Consider! Consider!!

If it were a mere tale, standing by itself, scepticism might be excusable; but it is far, far from that. It stands related to a serious history. It lies at the foundation of a grave and wise system of law. It belongs to actual operations in the earth that have influenced the condition of mankind in the most important regions of the earth to the present day, and of which the constant feature has been open Divine interposition from the flood of Noah down to the resurrection of Christ. It is not skillfully or reasonably treated if it is discussed as an isolated incident alone. It must be taken in its wide and solid connections.

But even when taken alone, it cannot be got rid of. You have the Bible. You cannot get rid of that. You have got the murmuring recorded there: you cannot get rid of that: and out of the murmuring comes the evidence of Israel's danger, and out of this, Israel's deliverance. Ladies and Gentlemen, this

most unattractive feature (as you may think it), of Israel's murmuring, is one of the strongest evidences that the Bible is true, as I hope to shew you further in the other cases mentioned last month.

natural that this want should arise; for they were a vast multitude: and they were in a desert region.

The argument I would submit to you is this: The record of the murmuring proves that the murmuring occurred; for on no other principle could we understand the record being made. And the occurring of the murmuring proves the pressure of want: for it is not supposable that the people would have murmured if they had had plenty. And the occurring of the want proves more than one thing: it proves that the whole enterprise of the Exodus was not a human enterprise: for what sane leader would have taken a body of people without supplies into a wilderness where none were to be had? (and Moses gets credit for the highest wisdom, even at the hands of unbelievers, as well he might, if they imagine the wonderful law was his invention). But the more immediate significance of the occurring of the want arises from the fact that they got over it. Israel's invasion of Canaan afterwards, under Joshua, is proof of that. The question is, How did they get over it? How could they have got over it if only human resources were available? Think of 600,000 fighting men, besides women and children; or, if you think it might be only 100,000, think of the number of mouths demanding food every day, in a place where there was none.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Face the problem “fair and square.” Don't run from it. Don't pull your caps over your eyes. Look and think. There is something to look at. You are not asked to look into empty space. It is not imagination. The Bible is there: the murmuring is there: the scarcity is there: a famishing mob is there, in a barren wilderness: and they survived it forty years. You

Chapter 10

THE WANT OF FOOD IN THE WILDERNESS: THE MANNA SUPPLY

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Excuse me for holding you to the subject of the murmurings. The current is setting in so universally against the Bible that we have to hold fast by our moorings. The moorings are stronger than any current, even if the current should become as powerful as the Falls of Niagara. Still, if we don't fasten our boats by the moorings, the strength of the moorings will not prevent our boats from being swept away.

The record is, that six weeks after Israel's departure from Egypt, the travelling assembly arrived and encamped “between Elim and Sinai,” and while there, “*the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron.*” The cause of the murmuring was want of food: “Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Ex. xvi. 3). It must strike us as very

positively cannot get rid of a single element in the situation. What do you say is the explanation? How were the Israelites relieved? How did a vast congregation subsist for years in a barren land? Must they not have perished, if some extraordinary mode of supply had not arisen? They did not perish. Supplies came from somewhere. Do the circumstances admit of any other possible source than the one alleged in the narrative? "Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day. . . . And it came to pass . . . in the morning, the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is this? for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. . . . And the house of Israel called the name thereof, Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white: and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. . . . And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan" (Ex. xvi. 4, 13-15, 31, 35).

Accept this, and the whole case is intelligible. Deny it, and you have to go to work and do violence to many things that will not bend to violence. First of all you have to do violence to Christ. You will have to get Him out of the way: for He said, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness" (John vi. 49). Get Him out of the way you cannot. His name and His principles are the greatest of

contemporary realities, rooted in all the countries of civilization, in a way that nothing but His resurrection and His miracles can account for, as you will discover, if you study the circumstances under which Christianity was first planted in the earth. You will have to do violence to the Bible. You will have to say the Bible is a book of lies; and in this you will have to go against reason, for the one feature distinguishing the Bible from all other books is its merciless truthfulness, as in its record of the condemnation of Moses, and the crime of David, the sin of Peter. As Carlyle said, "The Bible is the truest of all books." You will have to do violence to Moses: for he alleges these things. You will have to say he wrote what was not true, in face of God's endorsement of him as a faithful man (Num. xii. 7, 8), and Christ's command to men to "hear" him (Luke xvi. 29). Or you will have to say that Moses did not write these things, and then you come into collision with Christ, who says he did (John v. 46, 47), and with the whole testimony of a nation's history: for the Jews from the beginning are the witnesses to Moses as their leader and law-giver, just as the Mahometans are historical witnesses to Mahomet's part in the establishment of their system and the authorship of the Koran.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—The way is absolutely barred. Retreat is hopelessly cut off. There is nothing for it but surrender to the fact that Israel were miraculously fed with manna in the wilderness. Do not be so simple as to clutch at the suggestions of some travellers that possibly the nutriment in the case was a glutinous food to be found on some desert shrubs, which some call manna. Is it possible that the scanty supply of such an article,

barely sufficient to save a party of half-a-dozen from starvation, would suffice for an assembly of thousands? And if the source of supply was of any such natural character, how would you explain the fact that there was no downfall on the Sabbath? and that there was a double supply on what we call Saturday? On the Sabbath, said Moses, "Ye shall not find it in the field," "Jehovah has given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days" (Ex. xvi. 25, 29). And how would you explain this command from God to Moses: "Fill an omer of it, to be kept for your generations: that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt" (verse 32).

Again the way is barred. There is no rational escape from the testimony of Moses, confirmed by Christ, that Israel was miraculously supplied with manna on the occasion of their complaint that Moses had brought them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger. Historical, moral, and economical necessity compels the acceptance of it. And what is there against it? Nothing but an indisposition on various mistaken grounds to believe in so unusual a thing. This is the mere insubordination of the ignorance, with which, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will not insult you by supposing you sympathize.

I need not point out that if God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, the whole scheme of Divine revelation is proved, and the whole Bible is established; for it is not conceivable that God would begin a work and leave it unfinished, or that the work He performs would be performed imperfectly.

Chapter 11

FAILURE OF THE WATER SUPPLY: THE SIN OF MOSES

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Perhaps I am wearying you with my monotonous argument on the Jewish murmurings. The immense importance of the matter at issue is my apology for insistence. Perhaps a sense of this may lead you to endure it. For if the Bible be true, what an unspeakable mistake to turn our backs upon it. Intelligence will never forgive itself making such an irremediable mistake, when the actual state of the case becomes self-manifest in the visible resumption of the work of which the Bible is what we may call the half-finished record.

I directed your attention last month to the fact of Israel's murmuring at the want of food in the wilderness. We next have the water supply failing, which was natural in such a place with such a large collection of people. If there is anything will make people more mutinous than the lack of food, it is the lack of water, especially in a hot climate, such as in the main prevails in the Sinaitic peninsula.

Moses had brought them there; therefore against him their complaints are directed: "Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do to these people, for they be almost ready to stone me?" So it is written (Exo. xvii. 3, 4). The point lies in the fact of its being written. Why was it so written? Here we are not dealing with theory or fancy or plausible myth. Do, Ladies and Gentlemen, forgive me for earnestly asking you to open your eyes and face this matter of fact. The record is in your hand. The murmuring is there. How came it to be written there? If the history is any way fictitious, can you suggest any explanation of such a fiction being invented—that the Israelites, under Moses, of whom they make their boast in all generations, were discontented and mutinous against their leader on the subject of water at the very beginning of their national existence? Your knowledge of human nature, and of the ways of man in the compiling of natural archives, must forbid you to imagine any other explanation than this, that Israel is exhibited in this unloving attitude at the beginning, because it was the attitude they actually took; and that Moses wrote these things because, and only because, they happened (leaving the question of inspiration out of account for the time being for the sake of argument). Now, if they actually happened, what follows? If they murmured for want of water, was it not because there was an absence of water? And if there was an absence of water, what explanation is there of this, that Israel survived the want of water, and came out of the Wilderness a whole and sound assembly forty years afterwards? Was it by natural

supply? If so, how could the murmuring have arisen? and would not a history that truly recorded the murmuring, have truly recorded the occurrence of a natural supply, as it does in all other matters where natural supply provided what they required?

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Mosaic record furnishes a complete answer. It tells us that Moses, in his distress applied to God to know what to do in such circumstances of practical urgency. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and *there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.* And Moses DID SO in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what are you to do with this account? You cannot ignore it. It is there. It was there ages before we were born. Are you going to say it is not true? How can you? Every door of reason is closed against such a view. If you took such a position, you would have to maintain either that Moses did not write this account, or that Moses wrote what he knew to be untrue. You cannot maintain the former without contradicting the testimony of a whole nation for 3,000 years, and accusing Christ of error: and you cannot maintain the latter without contradicting the whole character of the Bible, and the whole career of Moses. You would have to involve yourselves in the absurd, the incongruous, the morally impossible. If you do not say the story is untrue, if you admit that Moses wrote it, and wrote it in all sincerity—what then? Are we not shut up to the conclusion that it was a

Divine interposition that relieved Israel from the terrible dilemma of a water famine in a thirsty wilderness ?

Here I would like to call your attention to the peculiar guarantee of veracity which we possess in the case of a second occurrence of this nature, that happened later during Israel's wanderings (you will find the two separate occasions indicated in the itinerary of Israel's journeyings contained in Num. xxxiii. see verses 14 and 36, compared with Num. xx. 1). In the first case, Moses smote the rock as commanded, and an abundant and welcome water supply came forth to man and beast. In the second case, Moses was commanded to "Speak to the rock," with the assurance that the water would come; but when "Moses and Aaron gathered together the congregation before the rock," Moses said (in the exasperation caused by their long-continued and unreasonable insubordination), "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock ?" And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice and the water came out abundantly. In this case, Moses exceeded his commission (smiting instead of speaking to the rock): and he obscured the glory of God, in taking the credit of the performance to himself.

Where the guarantee comes in that I referred to is here: the record adds, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." To this Moses himself referred in the most pathetic manner in the rehearsal of events delivered by him to Israel on the plains of Moab, at the end of the wanderings, just

before the entrance into the land. In the course of his magnificent address, as recorded in Deuteronomy, he said (chap. iii. 23): "I besought the Lord at that time saying, O Lord God, . . . I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter." The reason alleged for this refusal is explicitly set forth in the closing passage of the life of Moses: "Get thee up into this Mount Abiram, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. Thou shalt not go into it, because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the desert of Zin; and because ye sanctified Me not in the midst of the children of Israel" (Num. xxvii. 12; Deut. xxxii. 49-52).

Ladies and Gentlemen, with an imperative voice, as of rousing thunder, reason demands the consideration of this most singular passage of history—a passage so absolutely incapable of being accounted for on any hypothesis but one. Here is Moses, in the very history of Israel's deliverance, proclaimed an offender against Divine law as the reason of his death before the completion of the work in hand. Can you imagine such a representation creeping into Israel's history on any principle but that of truth ? Could you imagine such a representation being invented ? What possible reason could there be for such an invention ? Could it be to glorify the memory of Moses ? It tarnishes it for ever. Could it be to

clear Israel's character from any imputation arising from the premature death of the national leader? It has the reverse effect. It indelibly fixes upon Israel's perversity the responsibility of the mistake that prevented Moses from seeing the triumph of the work. It is impossible to suggest any motive for such a record of the close of the life of Moses. Try your hand at it and see. You must fail, where every one has failed before you.

There remains but one explanation, namely, that Moses is exhibited in the light of a transgressor at the end of his days, simply because he acted the part recorded. If so, *God brought water miraculously out of the rock for Israel's supply in the wilderness:* for this was the only occasion and explanation of the attitude of Moses that constituted his offence in the case. Take this away, and there was no offence or occasion for it. Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot take it away. It is fixed and staked in the ground, and buttressed by surrounding supports, in a way that defies the utmost violence to uproot it from the history of man.

Chapter 12

THE WORSHIP OF THE GOLDEN CALF

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I hope my wordiness may not have the effect of hiding the thread of my argument; and I hope you will not tire of a process that may seem to have a good deal of repetition in it. My argument is very simple, but may be obscured by its details. Yet without the details, it could not be carried home. My argument is that the mere existence of the record of some features in the Mosaic narrative, is of itself proof of the divinity of the whole, because the record of these could not conceivably be written by any class of scribe whatsoever except for the reason of their truth, and the truth of these could not arise except for the truth of the whole of which they are a part. That is the argument in the general—amplified in the details I am submitting. There are some matters of record you might conceive to have been possibly invented, such as the killing of Goliath, or the opening of the Red Sea. They are gratifying to

national pride. But the matters I am calling your attention to are of another character altogether. They are such as to defy the supposition of invention, and if they are not invention, but truth, then they involve the truth of co-related matters which establish the whole Bible. That is the argument.

I have spoken of the murmurings. Look now at the incident of the golden calf. All the world has heard of it. You remember the particulars no doubt. In the absence of Moses on Mount Sinai for several weeks, the congregation became weary, and came to Aaron, the brother of Moses, and demanded of him to make them the idol (to which they had been accustomed in Egypt) "for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Aaron gives way to their wanton mood and makes them the golden calf in the worship of which, they appoint and hold a riotous feast of the idolatrous order. In the midst of their revellings, Moses arrives. Moses, meek man though he was, is roused to such a pitch of anger that he throws down the tables of stone on which the ten commandments were inscribed, which he had brought with him from the Mount; and the tables of stone are broken. He advances to the midst of the camp. The people are abashed: Aaron cowers with shame, but tries to excuse himself. "Oh, let not the anger of my lord wax hot. Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief." Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And Moses said to them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp,

and slay every man his brother." The result is the slaughter of about 3,000 of the people. Furthermore, "the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf" (Exo. xxxii.). Then Moses, after upbraiding the people with their great crime, says he will go up to God, and "peradventure make an atonement for them."

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, consider the argument: Is this a true story? If you doubt it, can you imagine a reason for its being told? Here it is. You are bound to account for its existence. Stories don't write themselves. Can you imagine a motive for writing and preserving in the national archives a narrative which exhibits the Hebrews that came out of Egypt, as a generation of fools; Aaron, as a weak time-serving man; and Moses, as capable of such a towering anger as to fling the very tables of the Law from him to the ground. Are they not all of them incidents of such a nature as a tampering or concocting scribe would suppress? Are they at all of such a character as he would imagine or invent? Is it according to our experience of human nature that such a portrayal of incidents could find its way into a solid serious national record in any way, except on the principle that they happened? Nothing will impress you more deeply with this feeling than the attempt to account for the writing down of such things if they did not happen. (This is leaving inspiration out of account for the sake of argument.) Try the experiment, Ladies and Gentlemen. Try to suggest any reason for the story being written other than its simple truth.

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, if it is a true story, what follows? Why was Moses so bold as to kill 3,000 men after coming down from the Mount

with a command, "Thou shalt not kill?" Where did he get the tables of stone from, that he broke in his anger? Why did he go into the Mount, and stay away so long? You see, the story has ramifications. You cannot cut it away from its surroundings. You cannot refuse its inferences and implications.

It proves that Israel was in the Wilderness of Sinai. What took a nation into such a barren solitude? If God led them thither for His divine purpose, all is plain. If He did not, there is an absolute lack of explanation of a fact of history, for no human objects could be served by such an expedition, nor could such an enterprise have been effectuated by any human arrangements, as the transport and maintenance of an immense multitude of human beings in a mountainous desert.

It proves that Moses went up to Mount Sinai; for it shews him in the act of coming down. It, therefore, provokes the question: Why did he go up there? Can any human theory of his case suggest an answer that shall be in harmony with all the facts? Did he go up for the sake of effect? Was Moses, then a charlatan—a deceiver—in a word, an impostor—pretending to receive communication that he did not receive, for the sake of creating an authority for his law, which it would not have had if advanced on his own responsibility? Such things have happened among other nations we know, but they have been since the time of Moses. In the history of the Greek republics or in the case of Mahomet, we have instances of such a character. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is shallow reasoning surely to conclude that because there are weak imitations, there was no sturdy original. I will not imagine you capable of such shallowness. Reason requires the reverse conclusion altogether—

that there is a genuine effective somewhere when you see puerile imitations in the street.

Mahomet, mystifying Greek law givers, and oracles, are self-evident impostures when you look at them all round. But an all-round look of Moses brings the opposite conviction. You cannot reconcile his case throughout with a view that would attribute to any part of his proceedings a deceptive character. The man who would retire to a mountain top to create an impression is not the man who would say "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes;" "Not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart dost thou go to possess the land. . . . From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt until ye came into this place ye have been rebellious against the Lord;" "I am not able to bear the burden of all this people;" "Who am I, that ye murmur against me?" "I have not done these things of mine own mind." And so in many other cases.

Moses stands the test of genuineness on every head. If the story of the golden calf could not be written except for its truth (which I strongly submit, Ladies and Gentlemen), then that story brings with it Mount Sinai, and all that is involved in that mountain's name of world-wide notoriety. Some of the considerations involved in this suggestion, I will hope to bring before you the next time we meet.

yet which is inconsistent with the most elementary facts of the case. Those facts pressed home upon the average unbeliever find him incapable of dealing with them, but he finds refuge in the plea of his own ignorance of the subject, and the confidence he feels in the so-called "authorities" in the various walks of literature. Ladies and Gentlemen, with all respect I would urge you to be not content in so stupendous a matter with second-hand conclusions; but to look at the facts for yourselves and see whether they do not warrant the comfort of faith where the blight of unbelief prevails.

I have dwelt on some features of the Mosaic record that can only be accounted for on the hypothesis of their truth. Such features are numerous throughout the whole Bible, as we may have occasion to see should the opportunity for these meetings continue. At present, it is the case of Moses that is still before us.

Last month, it was the relapse of the congregation into idolatry at the very foot of Sinai, and the severe measures that resulted. By and bye, the congregation became submissive under the hand of Moses, and provided the materials for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture and its court. When this was finished, there came the ceremony of dedication which lasted seven days. The particulars will be found in the eighth chapter of Leviticus. At the close of that ceremony, an incident occurred which is of the character of those already passed in review; that is, the recording of it is unintelligible if it did not happen (and if it did happen the Divinity of the whole matter is proved).

The incident was this: That two of Aaron's sons deviated from the instructions given for the ceremonial,

Chapter 13

STRUCK DEAD ON THE SPOT

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I implore your consideration of the commonsense reflections I am submitting to you. They are powerful and they are much needed. A great deal is taken for granted against the Bible that has no true foundation. A few bold clever men of cultured diction have ventured hostile arguments under the more or less honest idea that modern discoveries having discredited theology, have discredited the Bible, which they supposed to be the source of the theology. Their arguments have been telling, in a certain way, with men of general intelligence who have not themselves mastered the elements of the subject; and from these, in various forms of literature, the arguments have passed into currency almost with the power of indisputable traditions; so that the atmosphere of public opinion is everywhere infected with a virus of scepticism that is difficult to dispel, and

and were struck dead on the spot. The instructions directed that they should kindle their censers at the altar, on which fire was already burning. Instead of this, Nadab and Abihu "took either of them his censer, and put fire thereon and offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. x. 1, 2). This is not the reckless flourish of a romance, as the added details shew. These affect Aaron and his two remaining sons who were engaged about the tabernacle at the time. Moses, having directed the removal of the dead bodies of Nadab and Abihu, implores their father and two surviving brothers not to shew grief at the calamity. "Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die and lest wrath come upon all the people." They were inclined, under the circumstances, to leave the tabernacle. Moses forbid: "Ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die; for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you; and they did according to the word of Moses" (verse 7). So the dedication ceremony went on. Then comes in a confirmatory "touch of nature." It was the duty of Aaron and his sons, in the course of the service, to have eaten in the holy place the flesh of the goat that had been offered for a sin-offering; but with lumps in their throats at the death of their two brothers, they could not do it; so instead of eating the flesh, they burnt it. When Moses discovered this, he was angry. He "diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and behold it was burnt, and he was angry with Eleazer and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left alive, saying, Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the

holy place? Ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded. And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold this day such things have befallen me, if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord? And when Moses heard that, he was content" (x. 16-20).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, here is a problem for you that will yield considerable results if properly worked out. Here is a story that has been on record for nigh 4,000 years—written, not in a private document, but in a nation's official documents—written by Moses on the testimony of Christ (Jno. v. 47), and by the consent of a hundred generations of Jews, public and private. Is it a true story, or an untrue one? If you say it is an untrue one, would you kindly suggest why it was written? Did Moses write it for his own honour? It exhibits him in a state of anger at a circumstance that natural feeling might have excused. Did he write it for the honour of Aaron, as the first of the high priests? How could a story honour Aaron which shews him remiss in his duty through the power of feeling? Did he write it for the honour of Aaron's sons in exhibiting two of them as destroyed rebels, and the other two as uncertain servants? Could such a man as Moses be conceived as writing for any time-serving purpose whatsoever? Would a time-serving man have told the whole congregation, "From the day that thou didst depart out of Egypt until ye came unto this place (the frontiers of Moab), ye have been rebellious against the Lord. . . . Ye have been rebellious against the Lord since the day that I knew you" (Deut. ix. 7, 24). Would such a man have said to them: "I know thy rebellion

and thy stiff neck: behold while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?" (xxx. 27).

Romancing? Ladies and Gentlemen, the romancing is all on one side. The man who can attribute a lying record, or even a coloured, or an accommodated record to a man such as everything shews Moses to have been, is either an ignorant man, or a reckless and unprincipled man. That such a preposterous suggestion should, without any proof, be launched and sent round and accepted in the face of a thousand facts in the Bible that contradict it, is one of many symptoms of the unhappy age of un-reason which now prevails upon the earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, will you lend yourselves to such an outrage? or will you lend yourselves to the scarcely less reprehensible manoeuvre of calling in question the Mosaic authorship of the story? Oh, perpetrate not so extreme a folly; for then you array yourselves against Christ who declared both in explicit terms and by the whole attitude of his life that these were the writings of Moses; and you array yourselves against the spirit of God in the apostles, who declared their faith in the Scriptures of Moses (Acts xxvi. 22; xv. 21; xxviii. 23). And all for what? With what warrant, or on what ground, or by what authority, or by what sound reason does unbelief offer such an opposition? When men with eyes open try to formulate an answer to this question, they discover the hollowness of the antagonism to the Bible that has become so fashionable.

No, Ladies and Gentlemen; if you choose to indulge in a little intellectual romancing, there is no one to interfere with your liberty till the day of Christ; but

the facts remain. The story is there, confronting us on the Mosaic page; and defying the utmost ingenuity of hostility to account for its existence on any principle short of its truth. And now, suppose the story is true—the story of Nadab and Abihu's destruction in the tabernacle for offering strange fire,—what is there that does not follow from it? It not only follows that the Divine presence was in the tabernacle, but it follows that the whole work of Moses was divine; therefore, that the promises to the fathers, out of which it grew, are from God; therefore, that the prophets that afterwards appeared in Israel were His messengers: therefore, that Christ, who appeared in fulfilment of their foreshadowings, was truly the Son of God; therefore, that the apostolic work was "the ministration of the Holy Spirit" in "signs and wonders and mighty deeds;" therefore, that the whole Scriptures are the work of inspiration; therefore, that the revealed purpose of God will be accomplished; resurrection will take place; the kingdom of God will come; immortality chase evil from the face of the earth, and establish endless ages of blessing.

the tabernacle, and established the service connected with it, the assembly, just a little over twelve months after their departure from Egypt, received orders to march for the land of promise. Arrived on the frontiers it is proposed that before entering the land they should send spies in inspect the land, and report. The proposal is favoured by Moses, and receives the endorsement of God, who commands that the spies should be sent. The principal man of each tribe is chosen, and they set off on their journey. It takes them over a month to complete their tour of inspection. At the end of forty days they present themselves before Moses and the assembly with their report. It is not a unanimous report. All are agreed that it is a most desirable land, but ten out of the twelve are of opinion that it is too strongly fortified for Israel to think of invading it. "The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. . . . We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." The other two admitted the strength of the Canaanites, but contended that as God was on Israel's side, their success was certain and in this they were supported by Moses. The assembly having heard the arguments, decided in favour of the view taken by the ten, and gave way to a panic of despair. Tears and crying prevailed among the tents all night, and in the morning a revolt was planned. Monster meeting: unanimous resolution, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Agreed: but we must away with Moses first: "Stone him." Also agreed and would have been done, but "the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." The congregation quailed at the sight. Moses is

Chapter 14

A DOOMED GENERATION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Have you considered the story of the spies in the special light in which I have been asking you to look at these things, namely, as to how such things could have come to be written unless they were true? I would press it earnestly on your attention. It is an extraordinary episode. I defy criticism to place it in any category of human literature except that of historic narrative. It certainly is not a poem. It is not a fable with a moral, such as Æsop was given to composing; it is not a patriotic panegyric; it is not a pleasing national reminiscence. It is a plain, ungarnished, and grim record of the most painful character, concerning which you have to consider first, how it could come to be written except it were a true story (whether at first hand or by tradition), and, second, whether, being a true story, it does not involve the truth of the entire scheme of Divine revelation, as unfolded in the Scriptures.

Having received the law at Sinai, constructed the

summoned: the people in fear look on and listen while this brief but terrible speech is delivered in their hearing: "How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Moses entreated the Lord to turn from His anger and to forgive the people on the ground that if He destroyed them it will be reported through the earth that God was not able to place His people in the land of promise, though He had liberated them from Egypt. "They (the Canaanites)," said Moses, "have heard that thou, Lord, art amongst this people: that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy clouds standeth over them: and that thou goest before them by the day-time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night." The prayer of Moses (urged in further words) is heard, "I have pardoned according to thy word:" but the crime of the people, though not visited as it deserved, would be punished: "Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers. . . . Say unto them, as truly as I live, saith the Lord, As ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do unto you. Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness. . . . Your children shall wander in this wilderness forty years . . . until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year. . . . In this wilderness shall they be consumed, and there shall they die . . . and your little ones

which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised" (Num. xiv.). To emphasize this terrible message, the ten spies were struck dead.

Never were people the subject of a greater revulsion of feeling than that which the congregation now underwent. They were in a consternation, but they were not exercised in an enlightened way. They went from one extreme of rebellion to another. "They rose up early in the morning.—(Yes, there would not be much sleep in the camp that night)—and gat them unto the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised, for we have sinned." It was too late. Moses forbade them, "Go not up; the Lord is not among you." But the people persisted. "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper." Moses and the Ark remained in the camp while the people marched out by their thousands and attacked the nearest force of the enemy. The engagement was a rout for Israel. "The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them and discomfited them even to Hormah." After this the people submitted themselves peaceably to the hand of Moses, and marched back into the wilderness, where they remained for thirty-eight years.

Such, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the story. What can you make of it? How came it to be written? Is it creditable to Israel? Is it in any way agreeable to human feeling? You may think me tedious in these questions. It may strike you that there is a deal of sameness and repetition in the argument; but the conclusion to which I am inviting you is so stupendous that nothing can be too tedious that may

be a help. Without meaning to be pugnacious, I defy you to suggest a reasonable theory of this story having been written and preserved, apart from the simple fact that it is true. Try it, Ladies and Gentlemen, try it. Here it is: It is a fact in our hands—I mean a literary fact. It has been in the hands of Christendom for centuries and centuries. We are not dealing with a rumour or a shadow. We are dealing with an actual written piece of literature of greater antiquity than any current human book. The simple question is, How comes it to be in existence? With what motive could it have been written except one—that with all its painfulness—with all its disgrace for Israel—with all its improbability as an episode in a Divine transaction—it is simply a true story; a plain account of what actually happened, and written that man might afterwards know the work of God in the earth.

In that case, you know what follows: that God was in the Israelitish exodus, and that all the connections of that stupendous event, before and after, are matters of historic fact, and not myth or legend at all: that therefore the Bible is true: Divine revelation a glorious fact: hope of immortality a sober verity: responsibility to Divine law a stern truth: and a prospect of a perfect state of things upon the earth when Christ has returned and become supreme, no dream of fanaticism, of illusion, of poetic fervour, but the sober eventuality of coming history.

Chapter 15

ENVY AT HEADQUARTERS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I next direct your attention to the record of Aaron's mutiny against Moses, in conjunction with Miriam, the sister of both of them. The ostensible cause was the fact of Moses having married the daughter of Jethro, "an Ethiopian woman," a circumstance arising from Jethro's hospitality to Moses during his forty years' exile from Egypt, and not from any disregard of his own people. While the ostensible cause was so apparently respectable a scruple on the part of Aaron and Miriam, the real cause was the hurt of personal feeling caused to them by the towering importance of Moses in the congregation, which completely eclipsed their respectable but little personalities. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" These were the words in which the real nature of their animus was displayed.

What important fruit might have sprung from this root of bitterness it is impossible to tell. The congregation might have been influenced by the

disaffection and led into ways of destruction; but the mischief was nipped in the bud by prompt action. And that not on the part of Moses. "The Lord spoke suddenly unto Moses and unto Aaron and unto Miriam: Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation." The three stepped out as commanded. When they arrived at the tabernacle the cloud-symbol of the Divine presence descended, and from the midst of the cloud, the Yahweh-voice commanded Aaron and Miriam to stand forth. Aaron and Miriam stood forth. Yahweh then spoke to them. . . . "Wherefore are ye not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?" "He is faithful in all mine house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, not in dark speeches." The words were spoken in anger, and ceased. Then the cloud moving from the tabernacle revealed Miriam a leper "as white as snow." In this way was the Divine reproof emphasized. Aaron, in completest humility, begs pardon, and appeals to Moses on behalf of Miriam. Moses, in response, cries to God, to heal Miriam. His prayer is granted, but God commands Miriam to be shut out of the camp seven days in token of her disgrace. We are told "the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again:" and afterwards the people removed from Hazeroth and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I strongly submit that this story bears the stamp of truth. The man who sat down to write it for the first time could have had no object in writing it but to record a matter of fact. Naturally speaking, he would have much reason for withholding the record altogether; for it was not a record that could reflect much credit on the national authorities one way or other. The high priest was

the most sacred functionary in the Jewish nation, and one around whom Jewish tradition has always laboured to throw a halo of holy mystery. But here is Aaron, the first high priest, and the father of all high priests, exhibited in the light of an envious murmurer, and held up to all subsequent posterity as one whom God rebuked in anger,—as one who was ready to lift his hand against God's most faithful servant. It is true that Moses is vindicated, but even he appears in the transaction as an apparent offender against the law in having married a strange woman, instead of one of his own nation. And if he is vindicated, it is only as one whom the Lord honours for his faithfulness to Him and not because of any excellence in himself. There is no human glorification in the story. There is human disgrace; nothing to lead a national historian to desire to publish; something to lead him to suppress: Who does not in such a connection wish to hush down all report of domestic sedition? Who does not wish to hide scandal when affecting one's own circle? Here is scandal and sedition officially trumpeted to the ends of the earth. Why, Ladies and Gentlemen, why? That is the question. Examine the matter for yourselves, in the light of common sense. You yourselves know something of the workings of human nature. Judge how such a story could come to have been written, if not true. You must come to the conclusion that the truth of the story is the only explanation of its existence.

And if the story be true, how much results from it. The fact of Divine revelation is the familiar element in it. Aaron and Miriam begrudge the elevation of Moses on the ground of the commonness of this fact: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken *only by Moses*?"

Hath he not *spoken also by us ?*" Moses made no mystery of the matter. He did not pretend, like an impostor, to be the exclusive repository of Divine communication. It was true that Aaron and Miriam had been employed in the transition of Divine direction to Israel. Moses had no jealous feelings on the subject. When Joshua on one occasion suggested it, the answer of Moses shews his modest and rational temper: "Enviest thou for my sake ? would God all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers xi. 29). But if Moses had no jealous feelings, Aaron and Miriam had, and this very envy proves the main factor of the whole case—namely, that God spoke to Moses, and that the whole work by Him in the exodus of Israel was a Divine work and not a human work at all.

These reflections grow out of what might be called the inferior elements of the story—the manifestly human element—the envious feelings of Aaron and Miriam. The existence of these feelings proves the existence of their cause—the special honour conferred on Moses by God as the chief channel of communication. Take away this, and the cause for the envy is taken away. The envy cannot be taken away. There it is—on imperishable record. You must explain it, Ladies and Gentlemen; for envy never works without a cause. How are you to explain it if God did not speak by Moses, as Aaron and Miriam both alleged ? You are bound to admit this cause, or—or, what ? or dismiss the story as a fiction. But you cannot do this, Ladies and Gentlemen; for then you would have to explain the writing of such a fiction, which is far more difficult than the acceptance of the narrative in its simple majesty as it stands.

If the inferior elements of the story yield such results, what are we to say to the Divine summons of the three from the camp, "suddenly ?" What are we to say to the cloud descending to the door of the tabernacle on their arrival ? What are we to say to the indignant condemnation of an intrigue which as yet was confined to the knowledge of Aaron and Miriam ? And what are we to say to the instant infliction of the plague of leprosy as a punishment; and its instant removal at the intercession of Moses ? What but that we are in the presence of a transaction in which God, by His angel, is an open participator ? If so, everything for the Bible is proved; for if God be proved in any part of the work which the Bible records, His connection is established with the whole; for it is one work throughout. If God spake by Moses, then spake He also by Christ, whom Moses foretold from the knowledge God had given him; and who, when he appeared, recognized, and affirmed the divinity of the work and writings of Moses in the most direct, express and unambiguous manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I beg of you to look into this matter. Do not leave the question till you settle it. It is too important to be left undecided. Take it in hand directly for yourselves in the exercise of commonsense. Do not trust to specialists. Their knowledge is not so deep nor their judgment so sound as you give them credit for. If you take their verdict instead of looking into the evidence for yourselves, you expose yourselves to the consequences of a mistake from which you will not be able to shield yourselves by any transfer of responsibility; while it is not acting the part of rational beings to leave a matter of such stupendous consequence to second hands.

Chapter 16

WHOLESALE REVOLT

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I have to direct your attention to a passage in the history of Israel's journey from Egypt—better known, perhaps, than some we have been looking at for present purposes, though not more valuable. It is popular among Sunday scholars for its dramatic impressiveness. It is treasured among the upholders of law and order as a warning against rebellion. I now ask you to consider its narrative existence as a proof of the historic reality of the whole series of transactions of which it forms a part.

The record is (Num. xvi.) that certain leading men in the congregation raised a revolt against Moses and against Aaron, and were backed up by "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." The cry raised was that Moses and Aaron "took too much upon them" in "lifting themselves above the congregation of the Lord." The contention was that "all the congregation were holy, every one of them, as the Lord was among them." Moses humbled himself

before such a formidable opposition, and proposed to them to submit the dispute to God, by all presenting themselves before the tabernacle with their censers, and allowing God to declare whom He chose to minister to Him in the priesthood. "What is Aaron," said Moses, "that ye murmur against him? Ye are gathered together against the Lord." Korah and his company were willing to come to the test. But Dathan and Abiram said, "We will not come up. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself a prince altogether over us?" Moses was angered at this unreasonable attitude, and said to God, "Respect not thou their offering. I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them."

At the time appointed, Korah and his company came to the test. They not only brought a great company of priests, every man with his censer in his hand: but he "gathered *all the congregation* against Moses and Aaron" at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. The revolt reached a threatening height. It seemed likely that Moses and Aaron would be swept away before it, but at the critical moment "the glory of the Lord" shone blindingly from the tabernacle; and the voice of God commanded Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation that He might destroy them. Moses implored that the people might not be held responsible for the sin of the revolters. God heard his request, and gave the people permission to separate themselves from the revolters if they chose. Moses then went through the camp, followed by the faithful elders, commanding the people as they wished to be exempt from the destruction impending over Korah,

Dathan and Abiram, to get away from these men and touch nothing that was theirs. "Hereby," said Moses, "ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, . . . then the Lord hath not sent me." The people got away on all sides from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, with brazen countenance, stood at their tent doors with a laugh on their face. Then the ground clave asunder under them, and into the horrid chasm, the scornful crew was precipitated. A cry of terror rose. Suddenly, the rent closed up again, and all was quiet. The leaders of the revolt had perished. At the same moment a lightning flash from the Divine presence struck the whole insurrectionary phalanx of 250 censer-bearers dead on the spot where they stood in their imposing array. The congregation were struck with terror, but their sympathies with the revolters were not extinguished. Next day, murmurs again broke out. They attributed the calamities that had occurred to Moses and Aaron: "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Again they gathered threateningly against Moses and Aaron. Again the fiat of the Lord went forth against them. The plague raged among the people, and only at the intercession of Aaron was its ravages arrested, and not till 14,700 of the people had perished.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what have you to say to such a narrative? Is it not at the same time very natural and very superhuman? Can any conceive it written by a fictionist? If you can, can you imagine the set of feelings that would lead him to invent such a fiction? The way to test the matter is to try and put yourselves in the position of the

narrator. Suppose yourselves acting the part of a serious historian of your own people: What could lead you to record such damaging things? It could not be gratifying to your own sense of patriotism: and you could not expect it to be pleasing to readers. It would minister to no taste of fancy or poetry. Only its truth could afford a sufficient motive to put such a story on record.

You must remember that it is only one of many such episodes: and you must remember that one and all of them stand related to great and serious and righteous and holy matters. They do not belong to amusing literature. They are not disconnected stories thrown in. They belong to the most prosaic book in the world. They relate to a people the most innocent of what is understood by taste and imagination among all peoples. They are but parts of a narrative woven into the most serious movement ever carried out upon the earth. They belong to the history of a nation still extant, and scattered among the nations exactly as foretold 3,000 years ago. They have the support of him who called himself the Light of the World and who has proved himself such even already by the light that has followed the dissemination of his name—the crucified and resurrected one who has given his name to the best part of mankind.

The whole connection and environment of the thing compels calm reason to recognize its truth. What other than a true history would represent the people of Israel accusing Moses and Aaron of "Slaying the people of the Lord" in the face of the manifest interposition of Divine power? It is human nature to the life as we find it: it is not human nature to imagine such a thing in a work of fiction. The whole narrative is disgraceful to Israel. Such a narrative

is never by a lying pen. If written by a pen of truth, then Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled, and were backed up by the whole congregation, and you have then to consider how it was possible that such a revolt could be quelled apart from superhuman means. Moses and Aaron had no soldiers. They had no power of any kind to withstand such a powerful uprising of men who had been made desperate by sentence of exile in the wilderness till death. They must have been carried away helplessly before it if some power superior to the rabble had not interposed. They were not carried away: they emerged at the head of the host at the end of the wilderness sojourn. How did two helpless men manage to withstand, to outride, the chronic rebellion of a reckless congregation. The narrative supplies an answer. Again and again Divine power came to their rescue. This is a reasonable answer, and accounts for everything that came after. Take it away, and you are unable to give a reasonable solution to a genuine historic problem. But it cannot be taken away. It is built into such a massive structure that it cannot be removed. It is so hard in its inherent substance that bits cannot even be chipped off it by the hardest unbelieving hammer.

The answer being true—that God defended Moses and Aaron from the insurrectionary tumults of a perverse race of people brought out of Egypt—then the whole Bible is necessarily true; for the work, in that case, was His, and He would not leave it till it was finished. It must be His, through all its stages, even onwards to that terrible culmination when all mankind will shrink like worms into their holes in the presence of the re-manifested power of God in all the earth.

Chapter 17

DISTRESSED LEADER AND PLAGUED PEOPLE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

We have not yet done with the history of the exodus. There are other features in the narrative of a like character with those already passed under review—in this respect, namely, that their record cannot be accounted for, except on the supposition that the things recorded really happened. There are always some things which men might write, whether true or not, such as those that glorify a writer's party or nation, or tell against an adversary; but there are things in which there is no scope for such a motive: where the motive is all for silence, rather: and where the making of a record can only be the result of truth.

What other reason could possibly have influenced the writers of Numbers to write down that Moses was so afflicted with the murmurs and discontents of the people as to ask God to kill him. "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand . . . let me not see my

wretchedness. Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me. . . . Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom? . . . They weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. . . . Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?" (Num. xi. 15, 11, etc.). No human motive, such, I mean, as would create fiction, could inspire these sentences. They reflect discredit on the Israelites in shewing them in the light of provokers of Moses, and they do not help to exhibit Moses in the aspect of the meekest and most long-suffering of men. If they are true, we can understand them having been written. If they are not true, it will baffle the most fertile imagination to suggest a reason for their having been written. And if they are true, see then what they prove: that Moses and Israel were in the wilderness; and then consider the questions that rise: Whatever brought them into such a place? And however did they get out? To both these questions the Bible answer is complete and rational. Answer: That God brought them out of Egypt, and took them into the wilderness of Sinai, *via* the Red Sea, through a watery passage which closed on the Egyptians and drowned them; and that God sustained them in the wilderness, by a supply of manna for forty years, and then brought them into the land under Joshua.

If God did not do this, where is the rational answer? If it was not a work of God, then, of course, it was a human performance dictated by the policy of Moses and the elders; and how, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, do you account for the success of such a mad expedition as taking a host of people

into a region of country where it was impossible for them to live a month, and keeping them there alive for forty years, and bringing them out at the end in a condition fit to subjugate the fortified country of Canaan? You cannot get away from the urgency of these questions except by acting the irrational part of shutting your eyes, and shelving the obligation to interpret the facts that are before you. The Bible is a fact: you cannot get away from it. The presence of these painful narratives is a fact. They must have come there by some motive operative in the writer. As soon as you seriously try to imagine any other motive than truth, you will find how hopeless a task you attempt: and if the motive was truth, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, the things happened, and all the inferences they yield are established, even if we did not have the overwhelming confirmation of Christ's appearance 1850 years ago, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the existence of the Jews at the present day.

Consider, next, their approach to the land of promise, at the end of the forty years' sojourn in the wilderness. Emerging from the wilderness, they found themselves to the north of the gulf of Akaba, on the frontiers of Edom, on the south of the promised land. Through Edom is the nearest and the easiest way. To go round, eastward, will take them through a dreadful country. So the record is (Num. xx. 14) that "Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom," with this request: "Let us pass through thy country," offering at the same time to keep to the highway, and to pay for everything they might get. The answer was, "Thou shalt not go through." So Israel turned away and marched eastwards to Mount Hor to make a circuit, "and

they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to compass the land of Edom: *and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way*" (Num. xxi. 4).

Can you imagine invention at work here? Is it not all very prosaic and painful, and natural? Very well, take the sequel; "And the people spake against God and against Moses." Did they? If they didn't, what in the world led the recording scribe to write such a thing? If he had said, "And the people behaved with sublime resignation in the midst of all their difficulties. Not a murmur was to be heard anywhere. Even the children said, 'We must be patient under all these troubles, because we are marching to the promised land,'" we might have suspected some gloss or colouring, or even invention. We could at all events have recognized a motive for fictitious narrative; but "*the people spake against God and against Moses.*" If an Egyptian had written this, or an Assyrian, or a Roman, we might have recognized a desire to belittle Israel's reputation—true or not true—but written by an Israelite in the national records, is there any motive adequate to the explanation of such a record except the simple one of truth?

Now, if true, you cannot refuse the associated incidents: "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." You say, "Well, what of that? Very likely serpents would plague any company of people in such a rocky region: and that would be Israel's way of explaining it." If the matter had stopped just there, there would not have been the forcible argument that presently arises out of it. It does not stop there. "And Moses prayed for the

people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. xxi. 8, 9).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, what have you to say? Do you join the fashionable critic of modern times, and say that the story of the serpent of brass is a legendary incrustation upon the serpent-biting experience? If you say this, it must be for some good reasons, presumably, Ladies and Gentlemen. What are they? It cannot be because you *know* the story is legendary, because you were not born till ages after the occurrence. It cannot be that you know anyone who was present at the time, and who can assure you that the story is untrue, because the episode is over 3,000 years old, and the men who witnessed it have been in their dust of death for ages. It cannot be that you rely on some other document than the writings of Moses, which gives you a full, true, reliable and scientific account as to these transactions, and contradicting Moses in all these particulars, because there is no other documentary record approaching it in antiquity or authority. There are a few sneers by Berosus and Manetho who lived 1,500 years after the event, and who are effectually disposed of by Josephus in his argument against them.

I fear, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have no reasons that will stand a moment's consideration. Nay, there is nothing but the persistent intellectual prejudice of inexperience. I know it is so, if you will pardon the presumption. Because the moderns see none of these things and find Nature changeless and immobile,

therefore, say they, these works of power are impossible. Most illogical argument! No mortal experience can be the standard of the past in any department. Evidence—not our theories of the possible—is the only rule of faith in what has been. With the evidence we are dealing in the existence of a narrative that cannot be accounted for on any principle but its truth. This evidence is buttressed laterally in a powerful way. Christ, whose name fills the world, has identified himself with this particular bit of history in a special manner. “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*” (Jno. iii. 14, 15). If you cry “legend” you condemn Christ as an errorist, who mistook legend for history. Nay, you pit yourself against common history, for it is on record in 2 Kings xviii. 4, that Hezekiah, a righteous king of Judah, “*brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made (about 800 years before)—for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan (a piece of brass).*”

Ladies and Gentlemen,—As educated people, guided by evidence, you are bound to accept the account of the brazen serpent as truth, and no legend. If so, realize what follows: that God was in the midst of Israel, working His purpose out among them by the hand of Moses; and that the work of Christ is the continuation and consummation of that work, out of which will yet come hope and salvation, where science has none to offer.

Chapter 18

BALAAAM'S JOURNEY

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

We have nearly done with the writings of Moses, so far as the special line of argument which I have been unfolding is concerned. There remains one or two other features yielding the same drift of thought.

The story of Balaam is, I submit, impossible as a work of fiction, in view of the objects with which such works are invariably written. It could not be written to please a book-buying public at a time there was no such public. It could not be written to indulge the literary whims of a private author, seeing it is not a private production, but an integral portion of the public archives of the Jews, compiled by Moses and other eminent Jewish leaders. In these archives it has had a place from the first moment such archives have been known, as shewn by the public reference to it in the writings of the Apostles and in the messages of Christ to John in Patmos; not to speak of Josephus' quotations in his version of Jewish

history. It could not be written to flatter the Jews, for though there might be something flattering in the idea of a heathen prophet's curse being turned to a blessing, there was something entirely the reverse in the finish of the thing in Israel having surrendered to the seductions of Moabite idolatry through Balaam's wiles, and having to suffer the judicial slaughter of thousands in punishment of their sin. There remains but one other alternative view, that it was written because the things recorded really happened, and were profitable to be put on record.

A consideration of the narrative itself is calculated to fix this conviction immovably in the mind. Balak, King of Moab, hears of Israel's arrival out of the wilderness, their triumph over Sihon and Og, and of their encampment on his frontier, and he is naturally afraid and distressed (Num. xxii. 2, 3). Distrusting his own prowess against a foe of whom he has heard formidable things, he falls back on the resources of sorcery, in the belief that the curse of Balaam will be effectual against them. He sends this message to Balaam: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee. Curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me. Peradventure, I shall prevail that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land" (verse 6). The message was sent by the hands of princely messengers, accompanied by presents. Balaam was gratified by the visit, and the prospect of reward, and, left to himself, would have gone. But the angel of God forbade him: "Thou shalt not go with these men. Thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed" (verse 12). Accordingly, Balaam reluctantly sent the men away.

The men departed, and took the report of Balaam's refusal to Balak.

But Balak would not take a refusal, and sent other messengers of higher rank with greater inducements. Balaam's answer was good if he had acted on it. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." But he applied to God again on the chance of getting release. Such an application was an insult to God, but God gave him leave, and next morning Balaam set off with alacrity, for, as the apostle tells us, "He loved the wages of righteousness." But the permission was in anger, and with the intention of confounding the intrigue at the last moment, and it was accompanied by an angry complication of Balaam's journey. "The angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him," and plagued him by obstructing his path without letting him see the obstruction, while the eyes of the beast he rode were fully opened to the brightness. The mouth of the beast having been made use of to condemn his course, Balaam, with cringing obsequiousness, wanted to go back at once: but the angel ordered him to go forward, but to speak only the words that should be put in his mouth.

Arrived at Balak's, Balak chided him for his backwardness. "Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" Balaam knew well that Balak could promote him to honour, and had his eye mainly on the fact, but he felt he was helpless and confessed it: "Have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Balak could but hope that the word put in Balaam's mouth would be according to his mind, and made

arrangements for hearing it next day. He took Balaam to the highest elevation, from which he could get a full view of Israel's camp; and there he listened for what Balaam would have to say. It was very little what he desired:

"Balak, the King of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, who the Lord had not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. . . . Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" At these words, Balak was greatly alarmed. "What hast thou done?" he exclaimed to Balaam. "I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether."

Balaam apologized; and Balak took him to another position, apparently on the hint that a change of place might bring a change in the inspiring vein. The next utterance was equally emphatic: "God is not a man that he should lie: neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. . . . Surely, there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink of the blood of the slain."

A third attempt only intensified the language of blessing: and Balak lost patience at last. . . .

"Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place. I thought to promote thee unto great honour: but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour." Balaam apologetically reminded Balak of his helplessness in the matter, but, as we learn from subsequent allusion (Num. xxxi. 16; xxv. 18; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Rev. ii. 14), suggested to him a means of bringing the Divine curse on Israel, and that was, by the enticements of women, to lure them into the idolatrous rites of the Moabites. Moab adopted the plan: Israel was ensnared: and though his main purpose could not be changed, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people—(that is, the leading men)—and hang them up before the Lord against the sun." In addition to this, plague was let loose, "and those that died with the plague were twenty and four thousand" (Num. xxv. 9).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I submit that this story, on the face of it, carries evidence that it is neither a fictitious story nor even a humanly-written story; but just such a story as the apostles declare the whole Scriptures to have been—a Divinely inspired narrative of facts that actually occurred, "written for our learning," that we might know the ways of God, and be profited thereby (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; 2 Pet. i. 21; Rom. xv. 4; Acts xx. 32; 1 Pet. i. 23-25; 2 Pet. i. 21). If you are not impressed with the obviousness of this conclusion, I would suggest that the best way of bringing it home to your perceptions is for you to try to attempt in a serious and rational way to account

for the writing of the story on any ordinary, human literary hypothesis. When you are prepared with a well thought-out theory on this point, I shall be happy to examine it, but I tell you beforehand my conviction that it will be impossible for you to frame such a theory of which you will not see cause to be ashamed when it is thoroughly analysed.

Chapter 19

THE SPEECHES OF MOSES

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I hope I am not boring you. The matter is old, but not stale. It is extensive but not bewildering. It is antique, yet ever pressing in its modern significances. How much that is momentous depends upon it. I invite you to take the problem of the Bible's truth in hand as the most important than can engage the human intellect; and to persevere with it till you arrive at a definite solution one way or other. It is one that will become clearer and easier to you the longer you apply your mind to it. There is nothing will convince you so much as the study of the Bible itself.

If there is one thing in the Bible that cannot be brought into the category of fictitious writing, or forged writing, or idle writing, or legendary writing, or false writing, it is the speeches of Moses. There has been much employment and learned ingenuity to try and make out that Moses did not write them, but that they were produced at a very late

age after him. Learned ingenuity on this side has naturally great weight with most people who do not study the matter for themselves. Ladies and Gentlemen, there is every reason for asking you to dismiss this learned ingenuity entirely from your minds; for there is quite as much learnedness on the side of the Mosaic authorship as there is against, and therefore as far as that goes it is a drawn battle. It was not without good grounds that Mr. Gladstone the other day, in a published letter, advised his correspondent to reserve his judgment on the so-called "higher criticism" till it had spoken its last word.

Ladies and Gentlemen, read the speeches. Read the book of Deuteronomy. I submit that the mere reading of this book in a deliberate and attentive way is calculated to impress you with the conviction, that the only rational explanation of the existence of such speeches is the fact that they were by Moses, and recorded by him, as Christ bears record (John v. 46; Luke xxiv. 44). I submit, in the exercise of a calm judgment, it is impossible to conceive of a literary concocter of any kind whatever writing such things. Try the experiment, Ladies and Gentlemen. You have got your Bibles. Turn to Deuteronomy. Some one wrote it, and wrote for a reason. Can you imagine any class of writer, except a writer of truth, and writing for truth's sake, penning such a passage as this, as part of a speech addressed by Moses to his own people on emerging from the wilderness upon the borders of the land of promise? "Hear, O Israel, Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven. . . . Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee *not* this good land to possess

it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people. Remember and forget not how thou provokest the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord. Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath so that the Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you . . . and at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the Lord to wrath. Likewise, when the Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you, then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice. Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (ix. 1, 6, 8, 22, 24).

If Moses did not say these things, it is impossible to imagine any writer representing him as saying them. Some things a fictitious writer *might* represent Moses as saying, such as that they were a credit to their ancestors, and that they had bravely borne all the fatigues of the way, and had set a pattern to posterity in their docile submission to the law of God, given by his hand, but *could* you imagine him inventing and putting into the mouth of Moses statements like these—so altogether offensive to the national credit, and to the feelings that would naturally inspire a fictitious writer, writing to produce some pleasing effect or other? You cannot account for the writing and preservation of such disagreeable statements in Israel's national literature, except on the supposition that Moses really uttered them; and if he uttered them, they are true, for he could have no other object in uttering them—except that they were true—could he? If you think he could have some other motive, try and imagine what

his motive could be. You will fail. And if these statements were true (that Israel had been rebellious against the Lord from the beginning of their journey out of Egypt), then consider what follows: that God was with them in their coming out, and guiding and directing them in all their way.

You will find that this feature is a very common one throughout the whole of these sublime addresses. I have cited one passage only as a sample of the rest. If you will only think it out thoroughly, you will find this one point of itself is an irresistible proof of the genuineness and truth of the writings of Moses. It is very easy for elegant criticism to launch plausible suggestions: they all run clear of the real facts. It is like an enemy in a balloon, looking down upon a fortress, and capturing it in imagination. He will find it different work if he come down to *terra-firma*. The practical facts of the case, treated in a common-sense way, are invulnerable to attack from either earth or air. The existence of the stories as stories and the speeches as speeches, is unaccountable on any supposition that denies the actual historic occurrence of the things done and said.

If this is the case with the merely uncomplimentary features of the speeches of Moses, consider how much stronger is the argument arising from the judicial and prophetic elements of these speeches of Moses. It is not only that Moses delivers such a splendid law (the true splendour of which can only be adequately appreciated in our day when looked at against the background of barbaric heathenism, Egyptian and Chaldean, of the age that saw its birth), but he takes a position with regard to the result of the obedience or disobedience of that law, that is absolutely inconceivable and inexplicable on the

supposition of the law being his own as ordinary laws are the authorship of human law-givers: "It shall come to pass, *if thou wilt not hearken* unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day, that *all these curses shall come upon thee* and overtake thee: cursed shalt thou be in the city: and cursed shalt thou be in the field: cursed shalt be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, and the increase of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon these curses, vexation, and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand to: pestilence shall cleave unto thee: the rain of thy land shall become powder and dust," etc. What human law ever enacted penalties like these? They are all beyond human control. Moses could not carry them out. How are we to understand him threatening such consequences? If God sent Moses and gave the law through him, it is all plain. If Moses contrived the law out of his own head, how came he to attach penalties that no man could inflict? Consider this problem, Ladies and Gentlemen. You will find it insoluble, except in one way.

But the strongest point is to come: The consequence of disobedience was not only to be trouble in the land: it would go further: it would end in conquest by their enemies, and dispersion among all nations: "The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them, and *shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*. Thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways, and

thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. . . . The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other . . . and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind," etc. (Deut. xxviii. 15-20, 25, 64, 65).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, seriously face this fact: Israel has been disobedient to the law of Moses, and *these humanly-uncontrollable curses have all been experienced by them down to this very day*. They suffered many evils through physical derangements affecting their land; they were invaded and subdued by hostile nations, and for ages the people brought out of Egypt by Moses have been scattered among all people, and "among these nations they find no ease," but are "only oppressed and spoiled evermore." Here is an actual proof before our eyes of the truth of the superhuman penalties attached to the law of Moses. They have come to pass exactly as specified. How can you account for this if Moses contrived the law out of his own head? The supposition is utterly inadmissible. Moses disavows the authorship of the law (Num. xvi. 28). Had he been the author, it would have been both human nature and simple honesty for him to have claimed the authorship. Shall you stultify reason by contradicting him and attributing to him an impossibility in order that you may get away from that self-evident Divinity of the performance which is its only true value?

Chapter 20

AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL ANTHEM

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I now direct *your* attention to what I think you must allow to be one of the most extraordinary pieces of literature under the sun—consider it in what way you will. It is the parting gift of Moses to Israel in the shape of a national anthem or song. The contention of my argument will be the impossibility of accounting for the existence of such a piece of literature on any hypothesis short of the truth of the narrative with which it is associated.

We all know what national anthems and patriotic songs are like. They glorify nations or kings, e.g., "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," "Rule Britannia; Britons never shall be slaves," "God save our gracious Queen."* Or they deprecate the tyranny and invoke the fall of oppressors like the "Marsellaise." They are human compositions, and they reflect the thoughts and passions of men, and are

* *Written in 1892.*

consequently highly popular. But here is a national song that directly condemns the nation into whose mouth it is put, and portrays a tragic future that subsequent history has fulfilled to the letter.

Consider first the avowed object of its composition. "Write ye this song and teach it the children of Israel: Put it into their mouths *that it may be a witness for me AGAINST the children of Israel.*" So God says to Moses. If it be asked why there should be any need for a song to witness against Israel of the coming generations, there is an answer of the most explicit character, lifting the narrative and the composition far out of the category of fanatical freak with which some histories have since made us familiar. Here is the preface to the song: "The Lord said unto Moses, Behold the days approach that thou must die. . . . Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people . . . will *forsake me, and break my covenant* which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and *they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles* shall befall them, so that they shall say in that day,—(reproachfully against God)—Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that *this song shall testify against them* as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" (Deut. xxxi. 14, 10-21).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, consider such a prologue as that, to a national composition. It must be evident that it was not a man-pleaser that wrote it, for it is the most displeasing piece of writing it is possible to imagine to those for whom it was written.

It foretells a disgraceful future; it alleges this disgraceful future as the reason of writing the song. The disgraceful future has come; and the people affected by it carry this song about with them in all their weary wanderings in the lands of their enemies, and read it in their synagogues in every land under the sun, as it comes in its turn. The song has proved a true song; it has not departed out of Israel's mouth in all the ages that have lapsed since its writing, although it is the most defamatory piece of composition it would be possible to write against them.

These are facts, Ladies and Gentlemen, whatever you may think of them. I mean they are facts that cannot be put aside by the most audacious unbelief. I implore you to consider them. They call for explanation. The song is there: the nation is there. What account can you give of them? If you say that the song is not of the Divine authorship alleged by Moses, or that some one after Moses wrote it, you put yourselves under the obligation of reasonably accounting for an inventor inventing such a nation-damning story, and you will also have to explain how it is that the things foretold in a song 3,000 years old have all come to pass down to this very day. Any attempt on your part to do either of these things must make you feel the futility of all such ideas. It must make you feel that we are hopelessly shut up to the conclusion that the story is true; and that this is the only solution harmonizing all the elements of this actual and palpable problem. Do not put it lightly aside. Do not be content to leave an issue undecided that involves such incalculable issues for human life: for if God spoke by Moses, then is Christ a reality, and the whole future of the earth the glorious thing of Divine promise and prophecy.

If these considerations are powerful in connection with what we have called the prologue of the song—meaning what is not strictly a prologue in the technical language of the drama, but rather the introductory incidents with which the song is associated with the record—how strong must they appear when we consider the song itself. It occupies nearly the whole of the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy. It is as unlike the patriotic compositions of all nations as can be imagined.

It opens (verses 3, 4), by ascribing greatness to God. As to Israel (verse 5), "*They have corrupted themselves; they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?*" Recounting (verses 7-14), what God had done for them, it proceeds to narrate (verse 15), that Israel "*waxed fat and kicked: he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. . . . Of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*" The consequences are set forth: "*When the Lord saw it, He abhorred them. He said, I will hide my face from them. They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. . . . They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. A fire is kindled in mine anger, I will heap mischiefs upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heart, and with bitter destruction. . . . The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries*

should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." And then the song proceeds (36-43) to foretell their deliverance at the last, when they shall have recognized God who has afflicted them (37-39).

These are but extracts. Ponder them. The song is a sublime composition, but it is not as a composition that I commend it to your consideration. It is as unlike human poetry as the stars are unlike gas illuminations. It differs not so much in language as in themes and moods, though even its language is of incomparable loftiness. There is a calm, under-rating of the Jews from beginning to end; an ignoring of human prowess of any kind; a majestic and vaulting assertion of the claims and rights of God only; a clear and accurate forecasting of the course of the afflicted Jewish history. It appears in the hands of Moses as he takes sad farewell of Israel in the knowledge of his impending demise. "Gather unto me," says he to the head of the congregation, "all the elders of your tribes and officers that I may speak these words in your ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For 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" (Deut. xxxi. 28, 29).

Then he proceeds to rehearse the song. I do not wish to be dogmatic, or to appear fanatical, Ladies and Gentlemen; but I do feel that I am within the bounds of literal truth and logical propriety when I assert (in view of the considerations I have briefly laid before you) that this single piece of literature, which is in every man's house where there is the Bible,

is of itself demonstrative proof of God having spoken by Moses; and if by Moses, Ladies and Gentlemen, then by all who form links in the chain of revelation coming after, for the Divinity of the work done by Moses involves the Divinity of the whole work to its finish in the coming triumph of Christ on the earth: for it cannot be imagined that God would begin a work and not finish it: that God would promise final blessedness through Abraham and his seed and not fulfil His promise: that God by Moses would promise Israel a Prophet like to Moses, but with the words of God in his mouth, to whom they would finally listen as they did not to Moses, and not send that Prophet! No, Ladies and Gentlemen, the whole scheme is so interlaced together that the establishment of one part involves the establishment of all. I, therefore, beseech you to study the extraordinary national anthem of the Jewish race, and see in it the hand and voice of God, with happy augury for the future of groaning and afflicted mankind.

Chapter 21

A REPULSED ATTACK

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Earnestly commending to your consideration the suggestions thrown out the last time we were together on the subject of the parting gift of Moses to Israel in the shape of a national song impeaching the national character, I now draw your attention to a military incident that occurred shortly afterwards, as affording confirmatory evidence of the conclusion I am aiming to establish. It may not at first sight seem to bear much promise in this respect, but second thoughts may throw a different light on it.

Moses having died, and Israel having crossed the Jordan, and successfully commenced the invasion of the land at Jericho, Joshua sent spies to reconnoitre the position at Ai, and to report. The men came back and said the place was of no great size or strength, and that it would be unnecessary for the whole army to be employed in its capture—that a

comparatively small force would be sufficient. "Let not all the people labour thither; let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai." So three thousand men were told out for the work, and marched to the attack. Ai was about fourteen miles distant from the camp. In no great space of time, the 3,000 men rushed back pell-mell into the camp in a state of consternation. They had been repulsed by the defenders of Ai, and pursued, with a loss of thirty-six men. Their arrival in the camp caused a panic. "The hearts of the people melted and became as water." They had just crossed the Jordan and commenced the invasion of the land, and they now apprehended that the effect of this defeat would so inspirit the Canaanites that they would assemble *en masse* and overwhelm the feeble host of the Israelites.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—This is the simple and unadorned narrative as it stands in the 7th chapter of Joshua. What would have caused the writing of it, except its truth? Do men chronicle reverses against themselves that never happened? Do they not rather try to suppress them or at least make them out to have been victorious? But here is acknowledged defeat in the course of a Divinely-conducted campaign, which the account, if a legendary one, would have represented as an unbroken tide of triumph, as a matter of course. I ask you whether the account of this defeat, written by those who were defeated, is not positive proof of its having occurred?

If so, you must take it in its completeness, and see what it involves. Joshua shares the consternation of the people on the return of the defeated three thousand. He throws himself on his face before God, who had said to him at the start, "There shall

not be any man able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." He laments in view of this defeat that they had not been content to remain on the eastern side of the Jordan, "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs to their enemies?" Consider the answer: "Get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus on thy face? Israel hath sinned. They have taken of the accursed thing, and stolen and dissembled also, and have put it among their own stuff. . . . Up, sanctify the people and say, . . . Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. In the morning, therefore, ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be that the tribe the Lord taketh shall come according to the families thereof: and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households: and the households shall come man by man."

This process is gone through with the result that the final lot falls on Achan, whom Joshua abjures to disclose the crime of which he has been guilty: "Tell me now what thou hast done." Achan confesses that from the consecrated spoils of Jericho, he had abstracted a costly garment, a wedge of gold, and a quantity of silver—all of which he had hidden under his tent. Joshua sends messengers to Achan's tent, who find the hidden goods and bring them to Joshua. Achan's confession thus confirmed, Joshua chides him: "Why hast thou troubled us? God shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—You must take this along

with the acknowledgment of defeat. What does it prove? It proves the Divine presence and oversight in the camp, for how otherwise the explanation of the defeat, and the discovery of its cause? But it proves more than this; it looks back upon Jericho, and proves what happened there; for if truth is at work with the Ai defeat, truth would be at work with the Jericho victory as well; or, to put it conversely, if the Jericho victory were legend, we should have had legend at work with Ai also, representing onward and miraculous victory at every step, of course. Achan's crime originated in the Jericho incident. Under ordinary circumstances, it would not have been criminal to have appropriated part of the spoils, but in this case the people were forbidden to touch anything, because the capture of the city was not their work: "All the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated to the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

Thus Ai proves Jericho: and what is the record of the work at Jericho? Why, that the people by command marched round the place once a day for six days, and on the seventh day, the priests blew rams' horns seven times, when the massive walls fell down by Divine power, and Israel had nothing to do but to march forward and slaughter the wicked inhabitants. You cannot dissociate this account from the record of the Ai defeat. If the one is true, the other must be; and if you are tempted to say neither is true, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have to explain the writing of the history of the Ai defeat. Because there it is on the page before you. And it has been there ever since the Bible was written. And whoever wrote it there, must have had an object in writing it. If he was a true writer, employed by the

Spirit of God, there is no difficulty, of course: but if he was not a true writer, but a writer with a false motive, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have to explain how he came to invent the story of a defeat that never happened. Think it out. You will find the knot will only untwist in one way.

Gibeon make alliance with him by means of a ruse (Josh. ix.), and five kings mustering to the siege of Gibeon for this piece of perfidy, attacked and routed by Joshua, and their capital cities captured afterwards by the Israelites in detail. Then we see a coalition formed against Joshua in the north of the land under the leadership of Jabin, king of Hazor, who summons to his aid the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph; also "the kings on the north of the mountains (of Lebanon), and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley and on the borders of Dor on the west, and the Canaanite in the east and west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and Perizzite and the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh." Hearing of their mustering hosts, at the waters of Merom, Joshua makes a forced march, and attacks them unexpectedly, and defeats and disperses them with great slaughter, after which he invades and subdues the several countries of the allies, one after the other, until the whole land is in his possession.

It may seem strange to you at first that the natural character of these proceedings should be put forward as yielding any inference as to the truth of the supernatural operations with which they are associated. But consider for a moment; recall the nature of the supernatural operations in question; the passage of the Red Sea; the sustenance of the whole congregation in the wilderness for forty years with manna; the opening of the Jordan at the season of overflow to let Israel over into Canaan in the absence of boats or bridges of any kind, and the falling of the walls of Jericho by the children of Israel marching round the city once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh. What has modern unbelief to say

Chapter 22

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

There are some other features of the Mosaic record that stand in the same category as those already passed under review: that is, as regards the impossibility of accounting rationally for their existence except on the principle of their being true. I pray you to excuse my prolixity in calling your attention to them. The day we live in is so distinguished by activity and diligence and ingenuity on the part of those who would undermine the truth of the Bible, that some countermining on the part of those who would defend it is both necessary and excusable.

I would ask you first of all to give a moment's reflection to the natural character of Joshua's campaigns from the fall of Jericho onwards. We have seen his repulsed attack with a small force on Ai. We next see him resort to strategy to draw out the defenders of Ai into the plain where he overthrows them and takes possession of the city. Then we see

to these things? Oh, they never happened. What have they to say to the written account of them, then? "Oh, they are the legends invented by a people vain of their history. They liked to represent God on their side so, of course, seas and rivers opened and cities fell down." Very well, if that is the true account of the matter, it would be natural to expect the whole narrative to be of that character. When romancing once gets to work, it goes ahead and does not stop. It would not open the Jordan miraculously and throw down the walls of Jericho by Divine power, and then invent a defeat at Ai, happening because of sin, and a victory following by good generalship, and then a successful campaign of sheer hard fighting for several years. We know what Jewish legend is when it gets to work, and if this history of the invasion of Canaan by Joshua had been an affair of Jewish legend, we should have had cities surrendering to one of Joshua's gloves, and armies dissolving into thin air at the sound of a Jewish trumpet, and whole districts bursting into flames at the flash of a Jewish soldier's sword. Instead of that, it is all hard military work, calling for incessant courage and skill, and sometimes striking fear into Joshua's heart, against which he had to be Divinely supported (Josh. vii. 6; xi. 6).

How are we to account for this except on the principle that the whole is true? "Oh, very likely the prosaic part is true enough," says the objector. "It is not all legend; part is true enough. No doubt, Joshua fought his way into Canaan in the ordinary manner." But, my good friend, if the prosaic part of the narrative is true, how can you object to the crossing of the Jordan, and the fall of Jericho's walls at the blowing of rams' horns? If miracle was

falsely represented in connection with these events, would it not have been falsely represented throughout the campaign? "Perhaps not," says our clever quibbler. "The writer might put in a little bit of spice here and there without making it all spice." Upon which we turn upon our quibbler and ask, "Was the Bible written for spice, then?" If so, why does it lower Israel on every page, and declare man to be worthless, and exalt the glory of God everywhere?" Our quibbler does not understand this argument, and turns it off with a listless, "Oh, I don't know." But his escape is not so neat as he thinks. He unwittingly falls into a deep pit in admitting that the prosaic part of the history may be true, for then comes the question, Where did Israel come from? Where were they before their eruption on the Canaanites? What led them to invade the land? And how came they to be so successful? The answer to these questions, in any serious and rational manner, brings before us Israel in the wilderness, Israel under Moses, Israel breaking the power of Egypt—as problems that are absolutely insoluble, apart from the Divine element in the situation—granting which, all is intelligible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—As you value light in the darkness, and sure guidance in a slippery way, I beseech you to address your minds earnestly to all these considerations which from time to time I have been permitted to press on your attention. They contain the clue that many of you must desire for some solid standing ground in the quagmire of public uncertainties. They lay hold of tangible fact. They are not in the nature of a guess theory, as Theosophy; or a phantom possibility like Spiritualism; or the fog-clouds of a vague sentimentality like poetry or orthodox religion.

They put you in touch with the hither end of a chain of verity whose links go backwards, upwards, and forwards in actual discoverable ramifications of knowledge and truth and hope. The Bible is an actual fact in your day. The fact earnestly looked into and logically estimated will not only enable but compel you to accept the joyful alternative of faith in God and confidence in the glorious work He is working out upon the earth.

Chapter 23

THE EXTERMINATION OF THE CANAANITES

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I have been directing your attention to certain features of the history of the invasion of Canaan by Israel under Joshua by way of suggesting and contending that the history cannot but be a true one. Let me now ask you to take a larger view, and to realize two aspects of the matter which are absolutely irreconcilable one with the other if the story is fictitious, or if the enterprize it describes was a human one; but which are not only consistent, but the natural complements of each other, if the story is true and the work a Divine one.

You are, of course, acquainted with the current, and as I might almost call it, the fashionable view of the case, which I will submit is a most shadowy and untenable view. It is taken for granted that Israel did in some form undertake and perform the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, but that the achievement was a purely human performance on their part,

instigated by the desire to possess a good country, and carried out with the most reckless disregard to the rights of the original owners, whom they butchered in vast multitudes, and, in fact, exterminated from the face of the earth so far as it was in their power to do so, on the false plea of a Divine authorization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—If this is a true representation of the case, then Israel was an unprincipled body of marauding freebooters, influenced only by lust of plunder knowing no law but the might of their own right hands, which they were prepared to steep, and did steep, deeply in the blood of all who came between them and their objects, and that, too, on the most hypocritical pretences. That they did destroy whole communities of the Canaanites is granted. Their commission was to “leave nothing alive that breatheth, but to slay utterly old and young,” and they acted liberally up to it throughout the length and breadth of the land. The question is, the origin and the meaning of this wholesale butchery. It may seem to you there ought to be no difficulty about this. It has of course been no uncommon thing in the course of history for one race to invade the country of another. We have all read of the Saxons and Danes coming over into England and exterminating the Britons; and if there was nothing else in the case of Israel’s invasion of Canaan than the extermination of the Canaanities, it would be natural and easy to place it in the category of those dismal racial irruptions that have from time to time disfigured the history of mankind.

But there is much more than this in connection with it. We have a very full and precise account of the interior economy and animating principles of the Jewish system, and it is this aspect of the case that

makes it impossible to class the conquest of Canaan with the robber enterprises of other nations. If the Danes and Saxons laid waste the smiling countries of England east and south and destroyed the population that they had ostensibly come to befriend, we know that they acted in harmony with their own lawless character, which there was no pretence of concealing. But in the case of Israel we have a totally different state of things. They were organized on the basis of a law which imposed the utmost restraint on themselves and prescribed the utmost holiness and justice and kindness, not only in their own dealings, but in their dealings with the stranger. The authority of God was not only alleged for the invasion of Canaan and the destruction of the Canaanites, but for many other things, which a rapacious and unprincipled people could not be conceived as enacting.

Take the obligation to observe the whole law of Moses: “It shall be when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee unto the land which He sware unto thy fathers . . . ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his testimonies and his statutes which he hath commanded thee. And *thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord* that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to cast out all thine enemies from before thee” (Deut. x. 10, 17), “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments and his judgments and his statutes, which I command thee this day . . . Thou shalt consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God *chasteneth thee*” (viii. 11, 5).

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, even if we did not

know what the "Commandments and Statutes" were that are thus referred to, there would be something in this injunction that would distinguish the people recognizing and placing themselves under it from ordinary invaders. It places them under a standard of action exterior to themselves and above their own devices. They were entering the land, that they might as a nation obey a Divine system of law with the object of pleasing God and securing His blessing, and under a threat that if they were disobedient they would perish from the land and become fugitives among the nations (Deut. xxviii., whole chapter). You cannot reconcile this with their being a nation of murderers and robbers.

When we come to consider the commandments themselves, the case becomes stronger and stronger. They were such as to mark off the Jewish law from all contemporary systems, and such indeed as to constitute it to this day the highest standard of justice and equity, and the highest form of spiritual life ever conceived among men. Take the very first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy might." A nation of God-lovers would not be a nation of mankillers, *per se*. It matters not to the argument that the nation were disobedient to their law. The law was the picture of what they were to be; and those who gave them the law were the directors of the conquest, and therefore the argument from the character of the law to the character of the invasion remains in full force. If a nation with such a law killed, it must have been for a reason compatible with the love of God, which it prescribed. The command of God to do it because of the unrighteousness of the people, would be such a reason. What was their

first institution? Sacrifice. Sacrifice morning and evening by rote: sacrifice for every case of personal offence: a day of atonement by sacrifice once a year for the whole nation (Lev. xvi. 34; xxiii. 27-30). What was the reason of this? A reason is given. Ponder it: "Ye shall be holy unto me: for I, the Lord, am holy and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine" (Lev. xx. 26). This also was given as a reason for scrupulosity as to sanitary arrangement and as to what they should eat. "The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp: therefore shall thy camp be holy that he see no unclean thing in thee and turn away from thee" (Deut. xxiii. 14).

Then consider the laws regulating

1.—*Their dealings*: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin shall ye have. I am the Lord your God which brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. xix. 35).

2.—*Their attitude to the stranger*. "If a stranger sojourn with you in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you; and thou shalt love him as thyself" (ver. 33).

3.—*Deportment to the aged*. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honour the face of the old man and fear thy God: I am the Lord" (ver. 32).

4.—*Dealings with neighbours*. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning."

5.—*As to property, veracity, and law*. "Ye

shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."

6.—*Behaviour to the unfortunate.* "Thou shalt not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord."

And so in many other matters, Ladies and Gentlemen; you must have all these things in view in judging of the conquest of Canaan. The question is, How came a people animated by such principles to destroy and plunder their neighbours' property and take away their neighbours' lives? If you say it was merely from lust of spoil, you then have to ask, How came a people animated by lust and spoil to have established among them such a merciful and just and holy and spiritual law? How came they to be so very particular about eating, about separateness, about cleansing the conscience by sacrifice in a hundred commonplace circumstances of life? If God spoke to them by Moses and gave them their law, you have a complete explanation both of the excellence of their law, and of their failure to keep it, and of their invasion of Canaan and the destruction of its inhabitants; for the same law that enjoins mercy on the strangers by God's command, enjoins also the slaughter of the Canaanites for their iniquity, by the same command. There is nothing inconsistent between one part of the law and another in that case, for the authority of God covers all and explains all. The Divine injunction to destroy the Canaanites for their wickedness would be an intelligible ground for such a procedure and a complete explanation of it. But if you take this away, you have an insoluble

problem on hand. You cannot explain how a people acting under the most beneficial law the world has ever seen came to perpetrate the most shocking barbarity of which history has any record, against whole districts and entire multitudes of people who were civilized in their way, and numbered thousands of helpless children and infirm old men and women. The case stands square and solid on its own foundation. In no other way can you make it stand. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bible is true.

The commission under which Joshua and Israel invaded the land, doomed the seven nations of Canaan to destruction, and forbade Israel to enter into any treaty or make any terms with them. They were "utterly to destroy them," man, woman, and child. They might enter into treaty with nations on the frontiers, not forming part of the seven doomed peoples; but as regards the seven nations, they were to "save nothing alive that breathed." Among these were the Hivites, whose capital city was Gibeon, and who occupied the adjacent district and several smaller cities (Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim). Among them were evidently shrewd men. "When they heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they did work wilily." They got up a sham travelling company of ambassadors, provided with due accoutrement of worn-out shoes and faded garments, mouldy bread, and old and rent wine leathern bottles, as if they had come from a great distance, and been a long time on their journey. These they despatched to Joshua's camp, with the pretence that they represented a far distant nation that had heard of the fame of Israel's achievements, and were anxious to enter into treaty alliance with them. The pseudo-ambassadors were introduced to Joshua, who questioned them. They said, "From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the Lord thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt. . . . Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us saying, Take victuals with you for the journey and go to meet them, and say unto them, we are your servants: therefore now make a league with us."

Joshua seeing no reason to doubt the men's word, and feeling at liberty under the permission they had

Chapter 24

A SUCCESSFUL RUSE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Among the many recorded incidents whose existence as records is evidence of their truth, and whose truth involves the truth of higher things, a distinct place must be given to the ruse of the Gibeonites by which they averted from themselves the destruction that overtook the seven nations of Canaan. When the facts are before you as related, I think you will agree that no motive of national self-satisfaction, or any other motive but the desire to place a fact on record, could be imagined to have been at work on the part of the first writer of them. They exhibit the princes of Israel in the light of men outwitted; Joshua as making a censurable mistake; and the congregation as in a state of murmuring discontent at not being allowed to lay hands on a cluster of cities originally included in the decree of extermination, but saved by a bit of sharp practice in which the Gibeonite ambassadors got the advantage of the wise men of Israel.

to make treaty with distant nations, "made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation, concurring with him, swore unto them." It is noted as a fault of omission that "they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." In three days, it transpired that the men represented the Gibeonites, one of the doomed communities. There then arose an outcry among the people against Joshua and the princes. There were excited conferences over the matter. The princes recognized the fault that had been made, and were disposed to make it good as far as their plighted word allowed. They said to the congregation, "We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel. Now, therefore we may not touch them. This will we do to them . . . let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation of Israel," and Joshua called them, and said, "Wherefore have ye beguiled us? . . . Now, therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." Accordingly in this drudgery were the Gibeonites ever afterwards employed, as the Nethinims (or servants) or burden-bearers of the temple service.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Consider the matter. What could have brought this story into the account of Israel's wars against Canaan except the fact of the incident having happened? Picture the man, sitting with his pen to parchment or papyrus who wrote this the first time. What could lead him to write it? Credit or vain-glory, pride of race or pride of country, might presumably invent an embellishing incident, as has often occurred in other histories; but what is there in this to make it an embellishing

incident? What is there in this Gibeonite incident to please the people or gratify the leaders? Would not human satisfaction have led rather to the suppression of a story that makes the natives get the better of renowned invaders, and brings the leaders into question for want of astuteness, and the people of Israel into a bootless anger against a small section of Canaanites, whom they are restrained from destroying—by what? By a covenant. Why should a covenant, extorted by false representations, have such binding force with men out of love of the covenant? Does not this shew the presence of law above them—not only above the people, but above the princes and above Joshua? Joshua and the princes had it in their power to put the arrangement aside if they were only making war on their own motion and by their own power. But they hold their hands in the presence of a covenant? This is intelligible with God in their midst, as Mosaicly exhibited. If God was not so in their midst—if their whole movement was a human enterprise—if they were a law unto themselves, as modern criticism suggests,—here is a scrupulosity that cannot be accounted for on the part of men not only capable but anxious to imbrue their hands in the blood of the people in question.

It is recorded that Joshua and the princes "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." Here is a something they could have done—a something they were in the habit of doing with results of very express direction in previous cases of emergency (Num. xv. 32-36; Lev. xxiv. 12; Num. ix. 8-14), but a something they did not think it necessary to do in this case, because they imagined themselves quite capable of judging the case. What was this, Ladies and

Gentlemen? Consider it. It is all plain sailing if God brought Israel out of Egypt by His power, and tabernacled in their midst by the angel of His presence in the sanctuary, as alleged and illustrated to us throughout this entire narrative. But if this were not so, here is an ingredient in the narrative that you cannot put into a rational position: viz., that the leaders on this occasion stumbled and blundered because they did not do a thing which according to modern views it was not in their power to do. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bible is full of this peculiarity, that you cannot understand it unless you accept its own representation of how and why things happened.

And now, consider what is involved in the Gibeonite motive in this misadventure? Why were they so desperately anxious to steal a treaty from Israel by stealth? Their answer to Joshua's interrogatory exhibits them to view as witnesses and contemporaries of the exodus in its Divine character. First of all, there is what they said when they arrived in camp: "We have heard of the fame of the Lord thy God and of *all that he did in Egypt.*" Then to Joshua they said, "It was certainly told thy servants how that *the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land* from before you. Therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing" (Josh. ix. 9, 24). That the Gibeonites heard this report is proved by their action, which was according to nature: but how came they to hear such a report? Could such a report get abroad if there was no Moses and Israel at work in the wilderness, as a destroying storm approaching from Egypt? It is according to common experience of the working of things among men that such events

as characterized the departure of Israel from Egypt and their sojourn in the wilderness should be reported in neighbouring countries, especially the threatened countries: but that such rumours should arise without the actual contemporary presence of a God-directed Moses and a miraculously sustained Israel in the wilderness is inconceivable. The record of the Gibeonite incident, when worked out in all its logical issues, is a literary monument and memento of the fact that, forgotten though it be by the world at large, God brought Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan by His power: that the Bible is true, and that therefore the days will come when His work with them will be resumed, and when "the nations shall again see and be confounded at all their might and shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth, and shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee" (Micah vii. 18).

requested Moses that they might be allowed to settle in these territories, instead of finding their inheritance on the Canaanitish side of the Jordan. After momentary demur, Moses consented to their request on condition that their armed men should accompany the other tribes across the Jordan and remain with them, and help them, till the whole land should be subdued. In accordance with this covenant, the men of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed the Jordan with the other tribes, and fought with them against the Canaanites till the end of the war, which occupied five years. At the end of the war Joshua dismissed them to go to their cities and their families on the eastern side of the Jordan, saying, "Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God. And now the Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore, now return ye and get you unto your tents and unto the land of your possessions which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you, on the other side Jordan."

The Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites, who had been encamped at Shiloh during the interesting ceremony of dividing the conquered land, then struck their tents, and marched towards Jordan. Arrived there, they bethought themselves of the possibility in days to come of the river proving a barrier between their descendants and the descendants of their brethren on the west side of the Jordan and leading the latter to disown the former. Holding conference on the matter, they resolved to erect and leave behind them on the western side of the river some memento of their connection with the western tribes. They decided that this memento should take the shape of

Chapter 25

A FRIENDLY EPISODE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I now call your attention to an episode in which you might not expect to find particular evidence of the truth of the Bible, and yet which may be found, in that respect, as full of suggestion as anything we have looked at. There is no miracle in it, and nothing specially dramatic: yet its bare existence as a matter of record calls for explanation that may bring with it mighty conclusions. I refer to that passage in Israel's history set forth in the 22nd chapter of Joshua.

You may recollect that before the crossing of the Jordan, Moses made war upon and overcame the two kings of the eastern, or Trans-Jordanic section of the Holy Land—Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites. Their territories, Gilead and Bashan, were so specially suitable for the rearing of cattle, that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, who had much cattle,

a facsimile of the great altar that stood in front of the tabernacle at Shiloh, inside the court. Such a monument they thought would be indisputable evidence of their connection. This altar they accordingly built on the bank of the Jordan at the spot where they made the passage over the fords of the river.

Rumours of what they had done reached the other tribes at Shiloh, who, not knowing its object, imagined it was an act of rebellion and separation, and holding hasty conference, resolved to make war on the two-and-a-half tribes, if it should prove that it was as they suspected. They first sent a deputation to them, consisting of Phineas, son of the high priest, and ten chief princes of the tribes, demanding an explanation of their action. "What trespass is this," said they, "that ye have committed against the God of Israel to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that ye have builded you an altar that ye might rebel this day against the Lord?"

The two-and-a-half tribes soon explained matters: "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord and turn this day from following the Lord to build an altar for burnt offerings . . . besides the altar of the Lord our God that is before His tabernacle." We have done it "for fear of this thing; in time to come, your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? . . . Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness between us and you and our generations after us that we might do the service of the Lord before him."

The explanation completely disarmed the resentment of the deputation who returned to the congregation at Shiloh and caused great gratification by their

report. "The thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God." Instead of making war, they agreed that the altar should be recognized for the purpose designed by the two-and-a-half tribes, and should be called *Ed* or *Witness*.

Such are the facts of this simple and touching transaction. And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, the question to consider is one that I have frequently submitted to you in the course of this argument. How came such a narrative to be written? Here it is: and here it has been as long as ever these Jewish writings have had existence. There must have been an object in the writing of it. The man who first took pen in hand to write it had a motive in making the record. The object was either to record facts or to produce an effect. What effect could such a narrative produce? There is no miracle in it. There is no prodigy in it. There is nothing sensational in it—nothing to gratify patriotism—nothing to cause Israel to appear great—nothing that could serve any conceivable human purpose whatever. If you think there was, or could be, try and suggest it. You must necessarily fail. Yet here it is; you must account for its existence, for records do not come into existence without a cause. Is it possible to account for it on any other principle than the simple one that the thing happened, and was recorded as a matter of fact? You cannot rank it with exaggerated narrative, or with legends that arise from the colouring of plain occurrences. It is too simple for that. There is no clothing about it of any kind, it is absolutely literal and colourless. What more simple or commonplace than a bit of prudent foresight, and a misunderstanding, and a deputation, and an explanation?

Ladies and Gentlemen,—the incident happened. The existence of the record is proof of it, for in no other way could the record have come into existence. Now if this be so, consider what the occurrence of the incident proves. It proves many things outside of itself. What made the congregation at Shiloh so sensitive with regard to the altar-building of the two-and-a-half tribes? Some of the details of their message not yet quoted shew us. It was previous experience that made them so hot as to threaten war. It was fear of the Divine anger. "It will be," said they, "seeing ye rebel to-day against the Lord that *to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.*" Why should they be so apprehensive on this score? Because they had had heavy experience of what the Lord's anger meant. This is the reason they give. "Is the iniquity of Peor (the trespass in the matter of Balaam's counsel) too little for us *from which we are not cleansed until this day* although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord? . . . Did not Achan, the son of Zarah, commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and *wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel?* and that man perished not alone in his iniquity." Here is a reference to two incidents only five or six years old at the time; so that the challenge of the Jordan-altar brings with it proof of the overthrow of Jericho (when Achan trespassed) and the plague-punishment of the congregation for trespass with the daughters of Moab; and with the proof of these comes the proof of God's miraculous co-operation with Israel, without which neither the one incident nor the other could have happened.

The circle of inferential proof goes far wider than that. There is the altar itself with a history: the

existence of the tabernacle in Israel's midst; the fact of Canaan's overthrow by an unmilitary nation from Egypt under Moses; these and many other things come into view as we contemplate the witness-altar on the bank of the Jordan: and all of them bring God with them: none of them are possibly susceptible of a rational account apart from the fact of God working with Moses; and if God worked with Moses the whole Bible is proved, for it is inconceivable that God would begin a work that He would not finish and carry forward to its appointed completion.

in a multitude of names and particulars, of no interest to a general reader, in thirty-three verses. Then you have "the names of the children of Israel that came into Egypt," with their family ramifications, running through seventeen verses of chapter xlvi. (8-25). Then in Exodus vi. 14-25, you have full particulars of the family descent of Moses and Aaron from Levi. In Numbers i., ii., and iii., over three long chapters, you have minute details of "all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls" (chap. i. 2).

Consider also the particulars in Num. vii. 9, "The princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of their tribes," who each man made a present to the service of the tabernacle "on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and had sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them and sanctified them" (Num. vii. 1). Also the particulars of the second numbering, "All the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and upward throughout their father's house, all that are able to go to war in Israel" (Num. xxvi. 2-64).

Then you have the full enumeration of the camping stations of the children of Israel from the night they left Egypt till the day they pitched in the plains of Moab, on the east side of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. This nearly fills a chapter of fifty-six verses (Num. xxxiii.) It is a dry and objectless piece of writing, apart from the fact that it records the actual journey of a numerous assembly.

Then, when the Jordan is crossed and the land subdued in the wars of the next five years, you have

Chapter 26

AN UNSUSPECTED WITNESS

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Have you ever thought of the genealogies and other name-lists as affording evidence of the truth of the Bible? I do not mean the two genealogies of Christ in the New Testament, nor to the early line of descent from Adam, supplied in Genesis, but to the detailed genealogies afterwards which form so prominent a feature of the Israelitish records. With regard to the genealogies of Christ and the early line of descent from Adam, it might be felt that there was a powerful reason for possible manufacture in the desire for symmetry and completeness of narrative, and that therefore no great stress could be laid on them one way or another. But the case is different with regard to the frequent and extensive genealogies throughout the Bible.

They begin with Genesis xxxvi., where we have "the generations of Esau," son of Jacob, traced

the extensive series of topographical specifications in Joshua, as the basis of the division of the land among its conquerors. Here you have not only hundreds of names of places but of families and persons, running through nine or ten chapters (Joshua xii.-xxi.) of no earthly interest to any reader or any people, except as the record of actual transactions in land among actual people.

In I Chronicles, you have the largest illustration of dry, statistical writing. There are whole chapters of genealogical particulars, and family and personal details, and extensive lists of the names of persons, tracing pedigrees back to the sons of Jacob, and describing the family ramifications of the priesthood and the city allotments to the priestly families in their distribution throughout the rest of the tribes; also the organization of the Levitical orders in the service of the temple. There are no fewer than *sixteen chapters* devoted to these particulars (chapters i. to xi. and xxiii. to xxvii. inclusive).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I would read you specimens of these things, but that you would think me tedious. I would recommend you to read the various chapters in full to which I have referred. You will then be prepared to appreciate the force of the argument which I would found upon them. That argument you will probably anticipate after what has gone before. What more uninteresting than strings of names, of persons or places? How came these uninteresting statistical documents to be written? Imagine yourselves the writers: this is the way to test the theory of mythical or legendary writing. You might possibly write a sensational untrue story, illustrating national prowess or suggesting individual credit in some way; but is it conceivable that you

or any other writer would or could, apart from truth, write this sort of thing? :—

Sample of Genealogy.

“And the sons of Eliezer, Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. Of the sons of Izhar, Shelomith, the chief. Of the sons of Hebron, Jeriah, the first; Amariah, the second; Jahaziel, the third; and Jekameam, the fourth. Of the sons of Uzziel, Micah the first, and Jesiah, the second. The sons of Merari, Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli, Eleazar and Kish. And Eleazar died and had no sons but daughters; and their brethren, the sons of Kish, took them” (1 Chron. xxiii. 17-22); or

Sample of Topographical Specification.

“And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah that lieth before Shechem, and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah. Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah, on the border of Manasseh, belonged to the children of Ephraim. And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river. These cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh; the coast of Manasseh was also on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea. Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea is his border, and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east. And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher, Bethshean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns,” etc. (Joshua xvii. 7-11); or

Sample of journey-narrative.

“And they removed from Marah and came unto Elim, and in Elim were twelve fountains of water and threescore and ten palm trees, and they pitched there. And they removed from Elim and encamped by the Red Sea. And they removed from the Red Sea and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin and encamped in Dophkah, and they departed from Dophkah and encamped in Alush. And they removed from Alush and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink” (Num. xxxiii. 9-14); or

Sample of Land Distribution.

“And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites, and the children of Aaron, the priest, which were of the Levites had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities. . . . Hebron with her suburbs to be a city of refuge for the slayer, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs, and Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs, and Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs,” etc. (Josh. xxi. 4-6, 13-16).

* * *

The existence of such writing, especially in the elaborateness in which it is found in the Bible, can only be accounted for on one principle. It was written down in the first instance because of facts—prosaic but important facts—which it was felt

desirable to preserve a record of. Ladies and Gentlemen, if you imagine anything else about it, you have only to put your imagination to the test by trying to write such things as an effort of fancy for any purpose whatever, or by consulting your own knowledge of human nature in its various literary manifestations. Such documents you never find except in parish work where lists of ratepayers have to be made, or in a surveyor's office, where land has to be described with a view to a new railway or some other real work. Such documents are the product of facts only. They could not in the nature of things be produced from fancy or a desire to entertain or be entertained. The bare existence of these documents in the Bible is proof of the very substantial substratum of facts to which the Bible relates—facts of land and people, and authentic transactions.

And when you come to look into the facts to which these documents relate, you find much more involved than is apparent on the surface. You find Israel's arrival from Egypt proved, and a number of other things:—Their sojourn for forty years in a sterile wilderness; their coming out of Egypt from the grip of a powerful military nation; the work of Moses; the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, in general, the whole Divine foundation on which the Bible stands; for none of these things are open to reasonable explanation apart from the fact of God's co-operation throughout as recorded.

Chapter 27

AN EXTRAORDINARY MILITARY EXPEDITION

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Am I wearying you with my prolixity? I hope not. The subject is of unutterable importance. This must be my excuse.

I have rehearsed a variety of considerations that will not be lightly dismissed by earnest and logical minds. The single force of any one of them is very great; their united force is irresistible. They prove that the mere existence of certain narratives in the Bible as narratives (quite apart from all questions of erudition) is an evidence of the truth of the things narrated, and that the truth of the things involves the truth of all the other things with which they are associated, which may not singly be susceptible of the same demonstration. The category of such cases is not yet exhausted. I invite your attention to the story of Gideon. It extends over the 6th, 7th and 8th chapters of Judges.

There is, first of all, the preface to the story. It tells us that after the judgeship of Deborah, "the children of Israel *did evil* in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Midian. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel." Why should such a fact as this be stated except it were true? Is it like a historical romancer to incriminate his own people? A romancer never puts pen to paper in this style. Why should he? What object could be served? If it be answered that it was to give a background to some complimentary picture about to be exhibited, the answer is inapplicable, for the sequel is the reverse of complimentary or satisfactory from every human point of view. Having described Israel's sufferings at the hands of the Midianites (Jud. vi. 3-6), the narrative proceeds to say that "the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, and it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel." Was the prophet sent to deliver them? Nay: to chide them. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians and out of the hands of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. But ye *have not obeyed my voice.*" Ladies and Gentlemen, consider this. If this was not true; if this did not happen, why was it written? Could you imagine an object? When a man sits down to record a professed matter of fact, it is either to write what is true, because it is true; or to write a story,

because it is pleasing; or to produce a writing that will get him credit or advantage in some way. Try and imagine under which of these heads this writing was written, and you must find yourselves incapable, in the exercise of honest and impartial judgment, of coming to any other conclusion than that such a narrative could only be written because the thing was true.

This feeling increases at every stage of the narrative. Gideon was threshing wheat in a mountain recess "to hide it from the Midianites" (verse 11). An angel appeared to him, whom at first he took to be a human visitor. The angel salutes him in comforting style. "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." We all know how congratulatory words grate upon the ear in circumstances of misery. Gideon felt in this way at this time. "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and *where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of*, saying, Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt? But now *the Lord hath forsaken us*, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Here is a recognition of THE ABSENCE OF MIRACLE and the presence of great adversity at this stage of Israel's history: if the history were a romancing history, would such a feature arise? Would a romancer of miraculous deliverance from Egypt have romantically exhibited Israel as left helpless afterwards under the heel of oppression because of their sins? And miracles no more? This is contrary to the habit of romancing. It is inconsistent with its character. Romance keeps up the glory and the shine all the way through as in the "Arabian Nights." Such a thing as romancing about God and about disobedience and about punishment is unknown to literature.

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is a confessed allegory and not a professed history. Had romance been at work with the opening of the Red Sea, we should not have had romance shewing us Gideon cowering in concealment from the Midianites, and asking where the Egyptian miracles were. We should have had a triumphant and miracle-supported Israel all the way through.

The angel informs Gideon that he (Gideon) will deliver Israel from the Midianites. He gives him evidence of his angelic character and disappears (verse 21), which fills Gideon with fear (verse 22). If truth, this was natural. If not true, why was it invented? Fictitious narratives shew us the hero brave and undoubting. Gideon is directed what measures to take, and takes them; but he is afraid his senses may have deceived him, and that God is not in the enterprize. He consequently asks confirmation, modestly, even humbly. He will leave a fleece of wool on the ground all night; if God is with him, let the fleece be wet with the dew and the ground dry in the morning. "And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out the fleece, a bowl full of water." But he evidently considers on reflection that this is not conclusive. Perhaps someone knew of his request and dipped the fleece in water: or, perhaps the dew had dried off the ground and left the fleece wet, because of its holding a greater quantity. He will ask this time that the ground be wet, and the fleece dry. But he is afraid to ask: "Let not Thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once. Let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, and upon all the ground let

there be dew." And God complied, upon which, Gideon went forward with courage.

Consider, Ladies and Gentlemen: this is no artificial picture. Romance, national or individual, does not conceive of a national hero as timid and distrustful. Here Gideon is both, which was natural after a long experience of adversity. Only truth can account for such a narrative.

How strong is this reflection at the next phase. Gideon assembles a multitude to carry out the proposed deliverance. "He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him, and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulon, and unto Naphtali: and they came up." About 32,000 men responded to his call. He marshals them at Harod, in sight of the hill Moreh where the Midianites are encamped. While he contemplated measures, the narrative tells us that "The Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, MINE OWN HAND HATH SAVED ME." Upon the back of this, there is a thinning down of Gideon's forces, first by the sending home of all who were afraid (22,000), and then by dismissing all who being brought to a water brook and ordered to drink, drank in a particular way (9,700). Only 300 were left; "and the Lord said unto Gideon, By the 300 men that lapped will I save you."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Strongly consider. Is it according to any known characteristic of human nature that an Israelitish historian should untruthfully describe a military action for the express purpose of keeping away the credit of the victory from his countrymen? There is no more race-glorifying people than the Jews

to this day; yet here is a national writing representing a national victory as in no way due to their prowess, and as, indeed, achieved expressly in such a way as to prevent them glorying in it. Can you account for such a narrative on any principle except its truth? Try if you can, and you will find imagination baffled. The narrative is there. God is in it. It is not in romancing man to give God this position. What other conclusion is reasonable, even confining our view to this single narrative, than that the reason of this representation of the matter having been made is simply that the thing happened so? If so, how much it proves beside: for if God was with Israel at that stage, He was with them at the Egyptian stage before, and at the prophetic and Christian stage afterwards, and in the writing of the Bible by His own inspiration, as is declared. In fact, Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot escape the conclusion that the Bible is true, for this is the only hypothesis that rationally accounts for the peculiarity of its narratives as they actually exist in our hands.

Chapter 28

A CALAMITOUS EPISODE

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I call your attention to another episode in Israel's history—painful, tragic, and humiliating—which cannot be accounted for except on the supposition of its truth. I mean that the writing of it, or the telling of it, or the rumouring of it, could not be imagined apart from the fact of its occurrence. And if it occurred, it proves Israel in the land shortly after Joshua's time, and the activity of the Divine presence in their midst.

A traveller at night passing through a lonely village of the tribe of Benjamites has his wife outraged and murdered by lewd and wanton fellows. The traveller, finding his wife dead on the door-step in the morning, carries her home on the back of his beast, and cuts her up into twelve parts, and sends the pieces round among the tribes with a report of what had happened. A great sensation is caused, and a gathering to the tabernacle at Mizpeh, to consider the matter. About 400,000 men assemble, and the traveller, who was a Levite from Mount Ephraim, rehearses the facts before them. Then the assembly are

called on to speak their minds. It is agreed that "there was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt." The question is, What is to be done? It is agreed to call upon the tribe of Benjamin to disavow the crime that had been committed, and to deliver up to death the men who had been guilty of it. This demand is presented to the Benjamites. "The Benjamites refuse to hearken to the voice of their brethren," and assemble 26,000 men to resist. Among them are "700 chosen men, left-handed, every one of whom could sling stones at an hair breadth and not miss."

The other tribes are distressed at the attitude of Benjamin. They "ask counsel of God, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?" And the Lord answers, "Judah first," and the men of Israel attack Gibeah. But the Benjamites repulse the attack with great slaughter,—about 22,000 men are slain. The Israelites are appalled and pause. They assemble before the tabernacle and weep, and ask, "Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother?" The answer is, "Go up against him," and they renew the attack. Again they are repulsed with a loss of 18,000 men. Again they go up to the house of God and weep, and sit and fast there till the evening, and again with agony of mind enquire, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother, or shall I cease?" The answer, "Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them up into thy hand."

On the third day, the renewed attack is successful, but the Benjamites are exterminated with the exception of 600 men. The wives and children of

the whole tribe are slain, and the cities burnt. When the stress is over, then an excess of grief ensues. The triumph is more painful than their defeat. They assemble broken-hearted at the tabernacle, and "lift up their voices and weep sore till the evening." They say, "O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel"? The 600 of the Benjamites that escaped flee to the wilderness and take refuge among the rocks. The other tribes had vowed in the heat of their first feelings that they would not give wives to these survivors. In the course of time their anger subsides, and sentiments of pity begin to stir towards the fugitives. But they had been taught the terrible solemnity of a vow or covenant and dare not go back from their word. So they look round for, and fall upon, other ways of supplying the matrimonial needs of the 600, to whom at last they send peaceable proposals and bring out of their hiding, to re-occupy their desolate towns and villages. Ever afterwards, the tribe, so thoroughly reduced in numbers, is known as "Little Benjamin" (Psa. lxxviii. 27).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—This is either a true narrative or an invented one, or the literary embodiment of traditions handed down. You will not hesitate to reject decisively the suggestion of pure invention; for it is not in human nature to place on official record in a nation's archives, a mythical story reflecting disgrace on the nation. Even a true story of such a character would be suppressed in the usual practice of men: an invented story would have no chance at all. Therefore this is not an invented story. On the face of it, it cannot be, for it serves none of the ordinary purposes of invention. It reflects no honour and gratifies no national vanity, either as

regards the parties in the transaction or their successors. A brutal outrage is followed by an apparent miscarriage of justice in the defeat of the avenging forces; and the final triumph is a calamity that fills the land with mourning and woe.

The invention of such an episode is contrary to everything we know of either literary or patriotic invention. If not an invention, then you must allow it to be true—in one or two degrees: either it is simply and wholly true, and occurred just as written, or it is a little true with the enlargements and garnishings incidental to oral transmission. I expect, Ladies and Gentlemen, you would incline in harmony with the temper of the age, to adopt the latter view. I hope not: but if you do, I must ask you to think again. On reflection you may perceive that the admission of its being a little true will lead to the conclusion that it must be wholly true, for the narrative is of that simple character that it has no "enlargements"—no "garnishings." It is all naked structure. It is not like modern stories—a drawn-out affair, admitting of curtailments that do not alter the plan of the narrative. The outrage either happened or not: it could not happen a little. The tribes consulted or they did not: they made war or they did not: they were defeated or they were not: they wept or they did not. The story will dissolve entirely if you leave out any of the elements. If there was no outrage, there was nothing to consult. If there was no consultation, there could have been no collective action resulting in war. If there was no war, there could be no defeat and no weeping, and if no final triumph over Benjamin, "little Benjamin," no stratagem to find the remnant wives. A little truth will involve the whole truth.

Then besides, Ladies and Gentlemen, consider that this national tradition—this disgraceful national tradition—is preserved in the national Scriptures on which Christ set the seal of his approval, and with which are incorporated all the reproofing messages of God to Israel by the prophets. This of itself is decisive on the question of its truth. The idea of fable or exaggeration is inconsistent with every sensible consideration of the case, while the idea of its truth is not only buttressed, but walled in by the high fortress of its own character, and its association with writings which even Thomas Carlyle recognizes as earnest and true as no other writings have ever been.

All this being so, you have then to consider all that is involved in this statement, "The ark of the covenant of God was there in those days; and Phineas, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron stood before it." You must demand a rational answer to these questions: How came such a humanly useless thing as the ark to be made? How came a turbulent people like the Jews to be so deferential to it? How came "enquiring of the Lord" to be associated with it in the common recognition? How came Phineas to be in the position of High Priest? How came the land to clear of its military inhabitants, and the peaceful tabernacle to be safely pitched at Mizpeh, and the tribes of Israel at liberty to travel safely thither for consultation? When all these questions are rationally answered, you will find yourselves compelled to recognize Israel's miraculous deliverance, and their miraculous organization in the wilderness by the hand of Moses; and thus you will have the whole Divinity of the whole case logically springing from the existence of a narrative which apparently tells us nothing but of Israelish anarchy to disgrace.

Chapter 29

VICTORY WITHOUT JOY

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

What can you say to the story of Jephthah? There are features about it that you may feel to be unpleasing, and even shocking; but what is there about it to suggest that it is not true? Reflection must certainly reveal to you that it is on a par with all the other narratives we have passed under notice as regards its unintelligibility on any supposition of its having been invented, and as regards its truth, being the only rational explanation of its preservation in the solemn archives of the scattered nation.

Take its prologue, first of all: "The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . and forsook the Lord and served him not. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into hands of the children of Ammon." Consider this is written in the children of Israel's own history. Is it conceivable that a nation would thus give away its

own character in sport or fiction? If true, and if the record is a Divinely-superintended one, we can understand it. If not true, it is unintelligible.

The narrative proceeds to inform us that "the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight against Israel," so that Israel was sore distressed," and that in their distress, Israel cried to the Lord to save them, and that God addressed this message to them: "Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorities, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? . . . Ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods. . . . Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—For what purpose could such a posture of affairs have been invented, or imagined? It bears the impress in every line of terrible earnestness and truth. It is preserved by Jewish hands in Jewish records, to Jewish discredit in every way. Can you account for such a thing if it is not true? Try; I think you will lamentably fail. It is all very easy to theorise in the general that these ancient documents are the products of legendary growth, so long as you skim over the surface of things, and run your fingers through the leaves, as it were, in a mechanical kind of way; you may honestly reconcile your mind to such a thought as affording a plausible explanation. But when you fairly face the details in a thorough manner, you are made to feel how impossible it is to attribute these narratives to romance or vanity or fiction of any kind. Everything bears the impress of the mould it has come out of; and if these things were the product of rumour or imagination, they would shew the character

of their origin in the nature of the narrative, as all such things do, but which these are the very furthest from doing, imaginable. They are the sturdy, thick-set, prickly plants of a real natural earnest vegetation, not shewing the least trace of artificiality or buckram.

Then we read that Israel acknowledged their sin, and put away the strange gods, and that the Lord "was grieved for the misery of Israel." Then the people of Gilead, whose district was the first to be affected by the invasion of the Ammonites, concerted measures of resistance, and looked round for a man fit to lead them. Their choice fell on Jephthah, who was a man of the requisite capacity; but Jephthah demurred on account of the treatment he had received among his people years before. He was the son of a Manassite father, by a harlot; and when he was grown, his father's other sons "thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house, for thou art the son of a strange woman." And now that they said, "Come and be our captain that we may fight with the children of Ammon," he said, "Did ye not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" However they made it up, and Jephthah accepted the command, and placed himself at the head of the considerable Israelitish forces that had collected at Mizpeh.

The first thing was the despatch of messengers to the Ammonites, to enquire what they had come for. The answer of the King of the Ammonites was: "Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok and unto Jordan; now, therefore, restore those lands again peaceably." Jephthah's rejoinder is set out at

length. It is chiefly valuable for the evidence it contains of the knowledge then existing of the arrival of Israel from Egypt three hundred years previously, in the way described by Moses. "When Israel came up from Egypt," says Jephthah, "and walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh, then they went along through the wilderness and compassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab and came by the east side of the land of Moab. . . . And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them; so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites. . . . So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldst thou possess it? . . . While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns and in Arder and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coast of Arnon, three hundred years, why did ye not recover them within that time? Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: The Lord, the Judge, be Judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon" (Judges xi. 12-27).

No peaceable answer came back to this remonstrance. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over . . . unto the children of Ammon," to make onset against them. Before attacking, "he vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt, without fail, deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whosoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." He then went on with his work, and overthrew the Ammonite host

with a very great slaughter, and chased a miserable remnant out of the country.

On his return from the overthrow of the Ammonites, Jephthah found a section of Israel (the Ephraimites) in a state of high dudgeon, because they had not shared in an enterprize that had turned out so well. They were angry with the anger of envious unreasonable men. They had, in fact, been invited by Jephthah, but had refused. Jephthah reminded them of this, but they were not to be pacified. Nothing would satisfy them but an attack on Jephthah, which they commenced with great bitterness. Jephthah got the better of them and they fled to escape over the Jordan, but Jephthah got possession of the fords before them, and slew every Ephraimite. How they knew the Ephraimites in this operation was by the way they pronounced "Shibboleth," which has given a proverb to the word ever since.

A sadder incident than this followed the victory. Jephthah's only daughter and only child "came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances. When he saw her, he rent his clothes and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low. . . . I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she said to him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And it came to pass at the end of two months that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to the vow which he vowed. . . . And it

was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in a year."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—This story you perceive finishes in a very tragic and painful manner; but it is not upon this that I desire to lay stress. I ask you to believe that such a story in all its surroundings could not be invented by the people to whom it relates, and if it had been invented by anyone else, it could not have obtained place in the State records of the people affected. I ask you to believe that the simple explanation of its existence is the fact that the things narrated happened just as they are narrated. Any other view will tax your ingenuity to the utmost, and will leave you finally confronted with the inexplicable circumstances that such a story, if not true, should be incorporated in a righteous book with the sanction of generations of the best of men, concluding with the Lord Jesus, who said the Scripture could not be broken.

If a true narrative, then see how powerfully it involves the collateral facts upon which the whole scheme of Divine revelation rests. See how it proves that Israel had been in the land of Canaan 300 years prior to the days of Jephthah (B.C. 1160). See how it proves that as a matter of common knowledge in these days, with the Ammonites as well as with Israel, Israel at the beginning of that period, had come out of Egypt and had passed through the wilderness on the way. With this proved, the whole question of the exodus and the subsistence of a multitude for years in a sterile region is forced upon you as a problem calling for solution—a problem, Ladies and Gentlemen, which I make bold to affirm can rationally be solved one way only, and that is, that these

things happened through Divine co-operation with Moses, as Moses relates. As an unaided natural operation, the exodus and the wilderness sojourn are inexplicable. As a Divine operation, they bring us the pledge of God and all He has said and done since that time, from Samuel down to the apostles of the Lord Jesus.

and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the God of Israel saith Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold the days come that I will cut off thine arm and the arm of thy father's house that there shall not be an old man in thy father's house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation" (1 Sam. iii. 29).

How Eli received this message we are not told, but we are admitted to a very close view of his bearing in another similar incident which shortly ensued. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days (*in this sense*): THERE WAS NO OPEN VISION." There was no response in the holiest—no answer from God—in a time of such lawlessness. Mark how artlessly the narrative notes the absence of revelation when there was none. A romancing narrative would have no use for such intervals.

At such a barren time as this a message came to the child Samuel, "I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged for ever." Eli asked earnestly what the message was. Samuel would feel no desire to be communicative on such a subject. But Eli knew there had been a message, from the child Samuel running to him when he heard his name called, not knowing it was the Lord's call, and supposing it was Eli's. As everyone knows, the call was several times repeated, with the result in each case that Samuel came to Eli thinking Eli was

Chapter 30

A CORRUPT PRIESTHOOD

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Have you ever thought of the story of Eli, as regards the evidence its mere existence as a story affords of the truth and therefore Divinity of the Bible? How could a fiction writer, writing from whatever motive, write such a story as this? :—The mother of Samuel brings her little boy, in fulfilment of a vow, to minister in the service of the Tabernacle at Shiloh, under Eli the priest. "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." They violated the women that came to sacrifice, and they used force in getting for themselves the best of the sacrifices, without regard to the prescriptions of the law on the subject. "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Eli mildly expostulated with his sons, but took no steps to interfere with their wicked ways. So there came a message from God to him by a prophet: "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering which I have commanded in my habitation,

calling, till "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child," and directed him next time to say, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth," for "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord as yet revealed unto him" (verse 7).

Samuel having received the message, lay still, "fearing to shew Eli the vision." In the morning Eli said to him, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me." And Samuel "told him every whit, hiding nothing."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Is the existence of such a story accountable for on any principle except its truth? Who would invent it and what for? Try to suggest a conceivable motive, and you will feel how strong the case is, especially taken in connection with the sequel. The Philistines invade the land. Israel goes out to fight them. In their first encounter, Israel experiences a reverse, but not an overthrow. They hold a council of war, and resolve to send for the ark to Shiloh, to where Eli and the child Samuel were. The two sons of Eli (Hophni and Phinehas) accompany the ark to the camp of Israel. On its arrival in the camp, the Israelites gave a shout of triumph that made the earth ring. The Philistines, hearing the shout, enquired the cause, and hearing that the ark had arrived, they were afraid, and said, "Woe unto us. Who shall deliver us from these mighty Gods which smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness?" Notwithstanding their well-grounded fears, they encouraged each other, and advanced to the attack and overthrew the Israelites with great slaughter, capturing the ark and killing the two sons of Eli, as had been foretold in the message. Eli, an old man, hearing the news, falls off his seat and dies.

All these particulars, so damaging to the credit of Israel and apparently reflecting on the power of their God, as conceived from a merely human point of view, are frankly and modestly set forth in the historic archives of the nation. Could the presence of such a narrative there be accounted for if it were not true?

The triumph of the Philistines is followed by a season of adversity and darkness as foretold, and then Samuel emerges upon the field of public life. Note the character in which he appears; not as a hero aiming at self-elevation, but as a modest Judge and Prophet, seeking to bring the nation to God, and rebuking their sins. "Return unto the Lord with all your hearts; put away the strange gods; prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only." He prays for them. The Philistines are discomfited and driven out of the land and Samuel judges them for a period. Then they weary of the service of the law. They desire a human head like the nations around them. They ask Samuel to appoint them a king. Samuel is heavily displeased and submits the matter to God. God says: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other gods; so do they also unto thee.*"

Samuel convenes the people: "Ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations. . . . Now, therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord and he

shall send thunder and rain, that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord in asking you a king."

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Is it possible to imagine such things could have been written if they were not true? Fables we can understand; flattering stories we can understand; legends and traditions and myths we can understand. I mean we can understand the human tastes, motives, and aims that could bring such things into literary existence. But, can you understand a solemn record of sin where there was none; rebuke invented where none was administered or needed; dishonours and disgrace imagined without a object; disaster as a punishment where every natural instinct would rather lead writers to smooth away and white-wash the national experience?

This, you perceive, is no question of manuscripts or authenticity or anything requiring or involving learning. It is a question of the meaning of a simple matter of fact. The story is here, no one can contradict. The question is, How came such a story to be written? Whatever other questions may be raised, this is a question that no man can burke, and that no man can fail to see the issue of as a matter of common-sense. The story cannot be accounted for, on any rational supposition, but the one simple fact of its truth.

And, if true in these sombre particulars, the truth of all the adjuncts is involved: the existence of the tabernacle and the priesthood and the law; and the occurrence of Divine revelation to Samuel, and the consequent truth of a thousand other things in the Bible, ending with the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the first century.

Chapter 31

THE STORY OF DAVID

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

You are well acquainted with the story of David. Perhaps you think there is nothing in the nature of that story to afford the kind of argument that I have employed in the cases already submitted to your attention. Let us see. I think we shall find it even richer in the materials and the kind of argument in question, and all the more cogent from the world-wide notoriety of such a case.

The argument will be that it is impossible to account for the existence of such a story as a story except on the principle that the things narrated did really happen; that none of the ordinary feelings, motives, or impressions that lead men to write untrue stories, could by any moral possibility operate to the production of this story: that, therefore, it is a true story, and that being a true story, it collaterally involves the truth of other

things that bring with them the truth of the entire scheme of revelation as embodied in the Bible.

First of all, you have Samuel sent to Bethlehem to anoint David in the room of Saul, who was rejected because of his imperfect compliances with the will of God. Samuel did not know David. He went to Bethlehem to find the house of Jesse, under the general assurance from God, "I have provided me a king among his sons" (1 Sam. xvi. 1). When he found the place and the man, he arranged for a muster of the family, which consisted of seven sons. Samuel did not know which of the sons was the chosen one. When he looked at the eldest (tall and handsome), Eliab, he said to himself, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." Samuel had before his mind the precedent of the choice of Saul, who was "head and shoulders above all the people," and evidently expected a similar sort of man to be chosen on this occasion. "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the Lord seeth not as man seeth*; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). Here we have to note a divergence of Divine and human rules of judgment, and a discrepancy between Samuel's impressions and God's intentions, which could not have become manifest in a recital of human conceptions. Samuel is exhibited as in ignorance of the matter, which a fictitious story would have been sure to have avoided. Then Jesse calls the next—Abinadab. The word of God to Samuel was, "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." The third was called, with a similar result. The whole seven are passed in review with a like negative result. Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord hath not chosen

these." Samuel is nonplussed. God had said there was a future king of Israel among Jesse's sons, and here, apparently, were the whole of them rejected. "And Samuel said to Jesse, Are here all thy children?" The fact was, the youngest had not been called on account of his youth and insignificance. Jesse said there was one more, but he was with the sheep in the field. Samuel demanded his instant attendance. He was sent for. As he entered the room—(ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance)—the Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Thus the youngest is chosen, and this in opposition to Samuel's prepossessions, and on the declared ground that "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Ladies and Gentlemen, any dealings you may have had with men must show you that such a feature as this could not be a human invention.

Then you have the treatment that David afterwards received at the hands of Saul, whose envy at his popularity compelled David to seek safety in flight. After a time, Saul follows him with a considerable body of soldiers, and tries in vain to find him in various parts of the land. David has to shift from place to place of concealment. Saul's vigilance increasing, David flees to Gath to escape him. Here he is identified by the servants of Achish, the king of the place, whose fears on his account are aroused. To lull his fears David "changed his behaviour and feigned himself mad and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." This only made the fears of Achish more acute, and after a time David departed thence and escaped to the case of Adullam, where he was joined by "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in

debt, and every one that was discontented." Over these he becomes a kind of guerilla captain. While his affairs are in this posture, he hears that the Philistines are attacking Keilah, a city of Judah, and feels moved to go against them. He enquires of the Lord if he will do so. The answer is "Yes." But David's men are afraid of the enterprize. They said, "Behold we be afraid here in Judah, how much more if we go against the armies of the Philistines?" So David enquires of the Lord, and the answer is (unlike the vague so-called oracles of the Greek priestesses), "Arise, go down to Keilah: for I will deliver the Philistines into thy hand." So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines successfully, and remained with the inhabitants of Keilah, whom they had saved. Saul hears that David is at Keilah, and resolves upon a military expedition against the place to catch David and his men. David is perplexed what to do. If he could be sure that the report is true and that the men of Keilah will be faithful to him, he would stay and resist the siege to which Saul would subject the place; but he could not be sure. He calls for Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod. He then addresses to God these pointed practical words, "O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah to destroy the place for my sake. Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? And will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand?" And the Lord said (again so unlike the pretended oracles of Greece), "Saul will come down, and the men of Keilah will deliver thee up" (that is, if David stays), "So David and his men arose and departed out of Keilah."

Would a fictitious narrative have represented a

great king of Israel in so humiliating a plight? And would such a narrative, on the supposition of David having delivered Keilah from the Philistines, have represented them as so ungrateful that they would betray their deliverer at the first pinch of fortune?

Saul continues his chase of David, and the two come into accidental proximity, in the same cave on the rocks at Engedi at night. David discovers the presence of Saul, and that Saul and his men are asleep. David's men advise David to seize his opportunity and despatch his enemy. David refuses, saying, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." But he went so far as to steal over and cut off Saul's skirt, and leave the cave with the mutilated garment in his hand. From a safe place he afterwards shouts to Saul and holds up the garment to him. "See the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand. . . . The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee, but mine hand shall not be upon thee." Saul was naturally much moved at this incident, and weeping, said, "Is this thy voice, my son David? Thou art more righteous than I. . . . If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware

unto Saul. And Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold."

But Saul came out again in a few months, the two met again in a similar way, and the meeting ended with similar friendliness, as the result of David's self-restraint. But David began to be distrustful of the future. "David said in his heart: *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.* There is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines" (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). So he went to Achish, King of Gath, who assigns him a town of residence at Ziklag, where David and his men lived for sixteen months. At the end of that time, during their temporary absence from Ziklag, on an expedition, a band of the Amalekites fall upon the place, seize everything, and the wives and the children, and the goods, burn the place down, and march away. When David and his men return and find the place a smoking desolation, "David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. . . . And David was greatly distressed, for *the people spake of stoning him*, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He calls for Abiathar, the priest, and the ephod, and enquires of God, "Shall I pursue after this troop, and shall I overtake them?" God answers: "Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." So David and his men start at once. They come upon the Amalekites encamped. They attack and overpower them, and rescue all the captives and the booty, and return to Ziklag.

I submit, Ladies and Gentlemen, that every feature

of these narratives is stamped with the impress of evident truth, and that their invention is "inconceivable." I had hoped to have spoken of other features of David's story, but I must leave them till our next meeting.

Chapter 32

THE STORY OF DAVID (continued)

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

On the last occasion I submitted recorded particulars of David's case, which it is no extravagance to contend are sufficient to carry conviction to men of penetration, that the story is a true one. My urgent argument is, that on no principle of story-telling, or story writing, or history making, or fiction-fabricating known to man, could such things come to be written, except one, and that is the simple principle that the things written are true. It is very easy for the sweeping dogmatisms of doubt, learned or ignorant, to waive its hand over the narrative in a general way and class it with the myths and legends of antiquity; and such a performance may carry weight with those who do not take the trouble to read and consider the narrative for themselves. But the narrative remains with features which cannot be so disposed of, and which on the strong principles of common sense, even when

the reader may not be able to formulate them, will create and perpetuate confidence and faith when unbelief is shouting its loudest triumphs. If this is the case with the incidents rehearsed at our last meeting, how much more with those that remain ?

When David came to the throne after the death of Saul, and had acquired Jerusalem as his capital, his first care was for the ark of God, which, at that moment, was in an obscure corner of the land in which it had been left after its return from the land of the Philistines, who had captured it in the days of Eli. He erected a tent for it at Jerusalem, and then appointed a day for its public removal, with great pomp, to its new quarters from the house of Abinadab at Gibeah, where it had been for twenty years. The ark was placed in a new cart made for the occasion, drawn by oxen, and taken charge of in the procession by the two sons of Abinadab—Uzzah and Ahio. When they got to a certain spot, the oxen shook the cart: and Uzzah, evidently afraid of the ark falling off the cart, laid hold of it. He was struck dead on the spot. It had been enacted in the law given at Sinai that none but the sons of Aaron should handle the ark, on pain of death, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error." It is the next feature of the narrative that demands your notice: "*And David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-Uzzah (that is, the breach of Uzzah), . . .*" and he abandoned the ceremony of the removal of the ark, and "carried it aside in to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite" (2 Sam. vi. 6-10).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Remember this is written in the public records of the nation of Israel. Can

you suggest a reason why it should be written that David suspended a public ceremonial because of displeasure at the death of a servant? Was it flattering to the king? Was it flattering to the servant whom it represents in the act of committing sacrilege? Was it pleasing to the people to represent God as marring their festivity because of forgetfulness of His law? Was it not the reverse in each case? Yet here it is. You cannot account for the record as a myth or a fable. You can account for it if it happened, and only in that way. And if it happened, what then? God is before us as a Living Reality in Israel's life, And if a Living Reality in David's transactions, He was necessarily so in the enactment of the Law, and in the reproofs of the Prophets, and in the message by Christ and the Apostles.

Then consider David's relation to the Temple—the great feature of the Jewish system as historically viewed from the world's standpoint. A mythical history would certainly have given the whole credit of this to David. Instead of that, you have David thinking of the project, but interdicted from prosecuting it (in 2 Sam. vii.; 1 Chron. xvii.): "That night . . . the word of the Lord came unto Nathan (the prophet), saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house to dwell in? . . . I will build thee an house. . . . I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." David refers to this in his "last words" (2 Sam. xxiii.) as a promise going forward to the millennial day: and Peter refers to it (Acts ii. 29) as a promise of the succession of Christ to the throne of David. You cannot imagine *this* as

an invention. Does it not bear on its face the impress of truth? For what purpose could the idea have been invented, that David was Divinely forbidden to build the Temple? If it is not an invention, then consider the proof of revelation it brings with it, and the unity subsisting between a promise given in the days of David and the birth of Christ a thousand years after—a unity inexplicable on any supposition that the official writings of Israel are mere human records.

Next, consider the great blot of David's life, which has given so much cause for unbelieving scorn in every generation. David erred grievously with Uriah's wife, and then, to cover his shame, procured the death of Uriah. The particulars are rehearsed with unsparing literality (2 Sam. xi.). Nathan, the prophet, comes to him: and in parable presents the supposed case (which David supposed to be a real case) of a rich man, with many flocks, seizing the only lamb in a poor man's possession to provide hospitality for a visitor. David's indignation is excited against the rich man, and he declares that he must die. Nathan says, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. xii. 7), and proceeds to rehearse the particulars of David's crime with a "Thus saith the Lord." He not only rehearses the crime, but passes judgment on David: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house . . . because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Did you ever hear of a story like this written in the records of any king's reign, at any time, in any nation under heaven? I make bold

to answer for you. You never came across anything of the sort. Royal Chronicles are always written in the vein of subservient and servile adulation. The king is praised in everything he does, says, or thinks. He is indeed alleged incapable of any wrong or any weakness: and if anything discreditable is known it is carefully hushed up in the records, and not a breath or trace allowed to appear. But here is a story of vulgar crime—patly and plainly told: here is a rebuke, stern and unsparing, delivered to royal ears. Here is retribution, unmixed and terrible, denounced against the most illustrious of Israel's kings, the anointed of Jesse's sons, the "man after God's own heart." Can you imagine such a story the work of invention or legendary development by any known process whatever? The story is before you. It has been in the Bible for ages. How do you account for its existence? Allow that the thing happened, and there is no difficulty: but if your opposition to Bible truth requires you to suppose it did not happen, you have a problem absolutely insoluble in your hands. You cannot give a reasonable account, or hazard a reasonable theory, of how this actually existing story came to be written in a serious national record, yet you are bound to have a reasonable theory of it: because the thing is there, and it came into existence in a way that reason can recognize;—if, as a myth, then with objects that reason can always recognize as the inspiration, or origin, or object of myth:—or, if as a fact and a truth, then in a way that reason can recognize as the usual origin of truth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—Try your hand. You cannot possibly succeed with the problem except in one way. This story exists because as a fact David sinned,—which is the only reason adequate to

the influencing of any writer to write such a story as part of Israel's record.

If this is the fact—if truth is the explanation of the story—(I earnestly repeat there can be no other explanation)—then you must see that it brings much more with it than David's sin. It brings David's God, and all that is involved in the prophet's message of condemnation. It brings with it David as a king, and Israel as a nation, and a hundred questions concerning their origin and history which can only be answered by the fact of God's revelation and co-operation with their father, which logically takes with it the Divinity of the whole Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.

Chapter 33

THE STORY OF DAVID (continued)

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

The story of David would be incomplete without those later passages which, equally with those we have passed under review, prove by their bare existence, the truth of the Bible. The domestic trouble that God said would afflict David in punishment of his sin in the matter of Uriah, soon began to shew itself. Amnon, his son, ravishes Tamar, the sister of his son Absalom, causing a feud which ends in the murder of Amnon by Absalom's orders, and the flight of Absalom. Absalom is an exile for four years, at the end of which he returns by the king's permission, but is not restored to his position at court, and in consequence plots against the king. His plots are so successful that David is obliged to fly from Jerusalem. Accompanied by many of the people he departs "by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went bare-foot, and all the people that were with him covered every man

his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (2 Sam. xv. 30). The High Priest and all the Levites were with him "bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God. . . And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." Zadok and his sons return with the ark to Jerusalem, to watch affairs in the interest of David. Hearing bad news of the popularity of Absalom's conspiracy, David makes haste towards Jordan.

At Bahurim, where the road lay between two hills, an enemy of the name of Shimei came out on one of the hills parallel with the king's course and the company that were with him, and, keeping pace with the king's progress, poured forth volumes of insulting invective as he went. "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned." This was the style of Shimei's tirade, which he poured forth unceasingly, as he walked along the opposite hillside, throwing stones and dust at David's company. It was very galling to all concerned. One of David's men asked permission to go over to Shimei and take off his head. David's response was: "Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjaminite do it? Let him alone, let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12).

David and his weary company encamped at Bahurim, and Absalom entered Jerusalem, which David had just evacuated. After consultation, Absalom, instead of pushing on at once after David, while he was weary and weak-handed, resolved on a pause, during which he should muster overwhelming forces to crush David. This gave David time to prepare for the attack at Mahanaim on the eastern side of Jordan, to which he had retreated. In due time Absalom advanced with a numerous army. On the eve of battle, David gave strict injunctions to his captains to be careful of the life of Absalom. The battle was a victory for David, and was fatal to Absalom's life. When David heard of the death of Absalom, he gave himself over to a transport of grief. He went up to the chamber over the gate (of Mahanaim) and wept, and as he went, thus he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The effect of the king's grief was to put a cloud over the victory. "The people, as they returned from the battle," gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" Joab, his commander-in-chief, put a check on the king's grief when he came from the field. His tonic words were somewhat strong: "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day hath saved thy life. . . . This day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one

with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now" (2 Sam. xix. 5-7). Rallied in this way, David stopped his mourning, and went out, and "sat in the gate," and the people hearing of it, came out of their hiding everywhere, and presented themselves to the king. Soon everyone was in suspense as to the next move. The people who had followed Absalom began to ask why David should not come back, seeing Absalom was dead. "The speech of all Israel came to the king" in this sense: and at last the king returned, amidst universal joy, marred with a slight and temporary exception. The tribe of Judah, to which David belonged, and with which Benjamin was always allied, stole a march on the nation in the matter of bringing him back. They brought him back before the other (ten) tribes had given their voice in a definite way, and the tribes challenged the action of Judah in the matter. Judah defended their conduct on the plea that the king was near of kin to them. The ten tribes answered this by saying that they had ten parts in David, and ought to have been consulted. Judah would not admit of the reasonableness of the demur, and the strife was so sharp that the standard of revolt was raised by one, Sheba, to whose treasonable leadership the ten tribes yielded themselves. The rebellion was short-lived. Joab, with characteristic energy and promptitude, gave chase to Sheba before he had time to make his arrangements, followed him into a city called Abel, on which he made a vigorous attack with battering rams, but was spared the trouble of overcoming the city by the people inside agreeing to throw the head of Sheba over the wall. The kingdom was then re-settled in peace, and David wrote a psalm for public use "in the day that the Lord had

delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies." A passage or two from this psalm will throw light on the nature of all these performances.

"Yahweh liveth. Blessed by my Rock, and exalted be the God of the Rock of my salvation. It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me: and that bringeth me forth from mine enemies. Thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me. Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. . . . He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me, for they were too strong for me. . . . The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands, He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me: and as for the statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also upright before Him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyesight. With the merciful man, thou wilt shew thyself merciful: and to the upright man, thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure, thou wilt shew thyself pure: and with the froward, thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down. . . . Therefore, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen: and I will sing praises unto thy name."

But there was one more day of darkness for David which, as a narrative, emits what we might call a culminating gleam of brightness on the question I am pressing upon your notice, namely, the self-evident truth of the Bible narratives when all their elements

are taken into account. In a moment of self-complacency at the greatness of his position, he ordered a census of the people to be taken. When the census was completed, "David's heart smote him," and "he said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that which I have done." But God would mark His displeasure. "When David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer these three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee: . . . Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? Or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies while they pursue thee? Or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?"

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I strongly submit, and would implore you to consider, whether it is not so, and cannot be otherwise than so, that the occurrence of such a passage in the national archives of the house of Israel is inexplicable on any hypothesis but its truth. First, of all, it is inconceivable that the numbering of the people should have been considered an offence, apart from the thoughts of God: for on no principle natural to men would such a thing be regarded in that light. To glory in one's greatness is universal among men—a thing done and accepted as the right thing to be done in all countries, and in all ages of which history furnishes any record. Even boasting is not viewed as a crime; and as to ascertaining the precise extent of your resources, the idea of its being a censurable thing would be scouted in every land—in every age. A mere affair of innocent statistics! Yet here it is put on record as a crime against God. That the king should be represented at all in the national records as falling into an error is conclusive

evidence of truth, in view of the universal disposition of courtiers of all sorts to be flatterers, and, at least, to be smooth spoken, and say nothing about the king's faults. But that counting his people should be represented as a punishable offence is not at all to be accounted for on the notion that we are dealing with an invented narrative. No man could suggest even a plausible notion of how such a narrative could come to be put on record if it were not true. Its truth admitted, all is clear as noonday.

David is greatly embarrassed by the choice of evil offered him. "I am in a great strait," he says. He ends the strait by a choice which is very eloquent of many things. "*Let me fall now into the hands of YAHWEH, for very great are His mercies: let me not fall into the hand of man.*" Here is a distinction very real and practical to David in a moment of great trouble:—(1) Falling into the hands of Yahweh: (2) Falling into the hand of man. How came David to make the distinction, and to choose the former in preference to the latter, if he had no experience of what it was to "fall into" the Divine hands as contrasted with human hands? According to the view which is so popular, and becoming daily and rapidly more so, there was no "falling into the hands of Yahweh" to choose. That was a mere illusion, and any choice of that sort must have ended in nothing. If so, how came it on this great state occasion to be a practical alternative offered to David—by whomsoever? The thing offered him was not that God in providence should go against him; in such a case as that it might be supposable that a merely human occurrence might erroneously and superstitiously be described as "falling into the hands of Yahweh." The thing offered him was offered in contrast to that: he might

have that if he liked—discomfiture before his enemies or famine; but the third thing offered, and which David chose, was a thing out of the order of natural occurrence altogether, and beyond the power of any priests or conjurers to manipulate, viz., that an angel should go through the land with ravaging pestilence for three days.

And the question pressingly returns and returns; how came such an alternative to be offered to David, and David to choose it, unless the matter were a matter of fact and truth, and no illusion at all? David expressly stipulated that he should "not fall into the hand of man." Is not this evidence of a very practical discrimination on the part of David? He had experience of man, as we all may have; and he found, as we may all have found, that man in power is unmerciful and false. Here is no roseate idealizing of human nature—so common to human books, but so foreign to the one Divine Book on earth, which Mr. Carlyle calls "the truest of all books." Here rather is the flat colourless record of truth—that man was not to be trusted as the administrator of punishment. "Let me fall, now," exclaims David, "into the hands of Yahweh." He gives his reason: "Very great are Yahweh's mercies," which shews he had practical experience of the thing lamented by Jonah on a certain occasion, that Yahweh is "gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth of the evil" (Jonah iv. 2). "So Yahweh sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, Yahweh beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. . . . And David lifted up his

eyes and SAW the angel of Yahweh stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Yahweh my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued" (1 Chron. xxi. 14-17).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—The more you investigate these narratives, the more you must, in the exercise of a discriminating reason, be able to see that their very existence as narratives, quite apart from all extraneous questions whatsoever, is proof of their truth, and therefore of the truth of the whole Bible, of which they form a part.

Chapter 34

THE PROPHETS

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

We must now be drawing these pleasant meetings to a close—not because the subject is exhausted, but because to all things human there are inevitable limits. Before we say finally "adieu," I should desire to draw your attention to the powerful illustration of the argument which I have employed, which is found in the case of the prophets as a whole. That argument is, as I may once more remind you, that the things written in the Scriptures could not have been written unless they were true, because none of them are of the class of things in which fiction is ever resorted to in any of its categories, or to which fiction could lend itself for any purpose. I have striven to shew this in the many cases we have had under our review. How obviously must this appear to be the case with the prophets as exhibited to us in Bible narrative. It is not a story that could give any satisfaction, either to the writers or to those for whom it

was written. It is not a case of heroism in which human pride could glory on their behalf, nor a case in which Jewish patriotism could find any satisfaction as regards the national treatment of them.

Their case is briefly summarized in the statement of the apostle Paul (Heb. xi. 37), that "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth." Jesus speaks of them under the figure of servants sent by the owner of a vineyard to get the fruits in its season, whom the occupants of the vineyard shamefully handled one after the other, beating some and killing some (Mark xii. 1-5). Their origin, their function, and their treatment are plainly related thus, in the close of Israel's history: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16, "All the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much, . . . and the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

Most frequently throughout the Scriptures is there an acknowledgement such as Daniel makes (ix. 6), that Israel in their generations had "not hearkened to thy servants, the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. . . . Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets."

I put it to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, whether it is conceivable that the record of such a state of things

could have been the work of imagination. It is contrary to the habits of universal fiction, whether in the form of cumulative legend and tradition coming down from far-off times, or in the form of direct and daring invention, to represent the leading teachers of a nation as the victims of the national blindness and stupidity. The tendency of myth is to glorify and not degrade its subjects, especially when the latter process involves the degradation of the people to whom the mythologers belong.

All things considered, it must be felt that the record of the national revolt against the prophets and of the national misuse of them, is proof that the revolt and the misuse happened, since on no other hypothesis can the existence of the record be accounted for. And we have then to consider what caused the revolt and the misuse: upon which we find ourselves in the presence of one of the most powerful evidences of the Divinity of the Bible. Their writings are the all-sufficient explanation. Without exception, they condemned Israel's ways. The opening verses of Isaiah and the closing portion of Malachi may be taken as an illustration of all.

Here is the very first message of Isaiah: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

Here are among the last utterances of Malachi:

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. . . . Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. . . . Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances? . . . ” (Mal. iii. 7, 9, 14).

The whole of the voluminous writings between, are mainly in the same strain.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I ask you to ponder this extraordinary phenomenon—of an ancient nation’s preserved literature being in denunciation of its character. I pray you to realize that we are dealing with a matter of fact that has to be accounted for, and not with a matter of fancy or opinion at all. Here is the Bible: it is in your hands—it is in the hands of all nations—and has been there for ages. And this is one of its peculiarities—that the writings of the prophets condemn the nation to which they belonged—condemn them earnestly and long, from generation to generation, at the cost of their lives. As Stephen earnestly said to the Jewish rulers who persecuted the Apostles: “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* And they have SLAIN THEM which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts vii. 51, 53).

Here is no literature of fiction or of fancy. Nothing but the utmost earnestness of fact could have brought such a literature into existence.

And now consider one point more—a strong one. These earnest men, the prophets, who earnestly condemned the ways of Israel, and were one and all put

out of the way for their pains, were not volunteers in the part they performed. They yielded to compulsion. They were in some cases unwilling and reluctant tools. I am not in this putting forth a theory or expressing an opinion, but only enunciating what you will find to be a matter of fact, calling for explanation. The case of Amos samples the rest: “. . . I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos vii. 14, 15). Jonah fled when ordered to his work (Jonah i. 3). Jeremiah also records that when “the word of the Lord came to him,” appointing him a prophet, he said, “Ah, Lord God! behold; I cannot speak: for I am a child” (Jer. i. 6). The compulsion in the case was a powerful compulsion from without, operating irresistibly from within. It is signally illustrated in the case of Jeremiah, who was disposed to resist the motions of inspiration on account of the unpopular character of the messages it was causing him to utter. “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart, as *a burning fire shut up in my bones*, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. xx. 9).

It was, therefore, no empty flourish when the prophets prefaced their messages with the words, “Thus saith the Lord.” It was the declaration of a literal fact, as worded by Nehemiah in his prayer: “THOU testifiedst against them by THY SPIRIT in *Thy prophets*” (Neh. ix. 30). Some men pretended to be prophets and were not. The Divine definition of them is exact: They “follow *their own spirit*, and have seen nothing.” “Have ye not seen a

vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination? Whereas ye say, The Lord saith it, albeit *I have not spoken?*" (Ezek. xiii. 3-7). We have their condemnation thus: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken unto them, yet they prophesied. . . . They speak a vision *of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.* . . . The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a *false vision and divination*, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. . . . I am against them. . . . By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed" (Jer. xxiii. 21, 16, 30; xiv. 14, 15). This discrimination of the false from the true prophets, throws a powerful light on the character and actuality of the latter. They were the simple vehicles of the Divine intelligence; they were not purveyors of their own thoughts. Their true position was circumstantially and pathetically illustrated during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah's messages had a disheartening effect on the defenders of the city, and the military men advised his execution. His answer was: "The *Lord sent me* to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. . . . As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: *for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears*" (Jer. xxvi. 12-15).

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I earnestly submit to you

that the mere existence of the prophetic writings, involving all these things, is a proof of the Divine character of the prophets in their work and mission, and therefore of the entire scheme of things to which they stand related, from Moses to Christ. I implore you to follow out the argument to its logical conclusion, and, endorsing the Scriptures as the Word of God, give yourselves to their study, in which you will find great light and peace now, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

Chapter 35

AT THE FEET OF CHRIST

Ladies and Gentlemen,—

In bidding you farewell, I commend to your notice the crowning illustration of the argument I have been pressing upon your attention during the past four years. The story of Christ as rehearsed in the four Gospels must, above all others, appear to you on reflection a story that could not have been written except as the record of things that actually happened—whether you consider the character of the central figure, the quality of his doctrine, the nature of his performances, or the use that was made of the tragic ending of his life. John Stuart Mill truly said something to the effect that the conception embodied in the Gospels was wholly above the level of first century authorship: and Napoleon is credited with the remark that from his knowledge of men, he was certain that Christ was not a mere man.

The force of the argument, Ladies and Gentlemen, requires for its perception some knowledge of the ways

of men, in actual or recorded cases; and also some acquaintance with the figure exhibited to us in the New Testament. Without some knowledge under both these heads, it might be difficult to bring home the argument with the force that belongs to it. But I must assume, Ladies and Gentlemen, that you are possessed of some degree of that knowledge, and that, therefore, you are prepared to open your minds to the power of the thoughts that press upon us when we contemplate Jesus of Nazareth as exhibited in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The first feeling created in the mind is the great distance between the motives attributed to Christ and those feelings and ideas that are natural to all men. His leading moral characteristic is outside of the circle of feelings that belong to man. It is not such as a fiction writer could have invented or imagined; e.g., "I am come to do the will of Him that sent me." The one thing that characterizes all men, without distinction of race or epoch, is the impulse to do their own will. This impulse is glorified under various high-sounding names: freedom, independence, liberty, patriotism, etc. To do the will of another is considered inconsistent with "the dignity of manhood." It is considered the badge of slavery. Yet this is the actuating thought of all Christ's teaching: this idea of the subordination of the will of man to a higher will.

It could not have occurred to an inventing writer to consider this as an excellence. It must have appeared the opposite of true virtue. Yet it is the constant and overpowering element in the biography of Christ, which is proof that that biography is a sketch from life, and not an invented story. Especially strong does this feeling become when we remember

that the story was written by men not gifted—by illiterate men, as all agree the disciples were: a story not remarkable for effort to paint a highly-coloured picture, but the reverse. There is no effort of any kind. There is no praising of Christ: not even a complimentary allusion: only a recital in the simplest language of what Christ said and did. And this bare unadorned recital conveys to the mind the impression of a personality unapproached by ordinary men, a man such as we never meet, such as we never read of in the wide range of human literature, such as we never imagine, except as a reflex of the apostolic narrative, great-minded, dignified, earnest, pure, kind, and powerful, as men never are.

My argument, Ladies and Gentlemen, is this: That the mere existence of such an artless narrative, the production of "ignorant and unlearned men," conveying in simple language such a sublime impersonation, is of itself an actual proof of the truth of the things narrated. My argument is that you cannot otherwise account for it. If the things narrated did not occur, then they have been imagined, and the difficulty would then be to account for ignorant and unlearned men, or men of any stamp, imagining such things. Imagination cannot rise higher than experience. Imaginative writing is but the putting together of disconnected fragments of things that have been experienced in some shape or form. It is a performance that can be brought wonderfully near the likeness of truth when done by trained and cultured hands. But in this case, the hands are not cultured hands, and the picture exhibited to the reader is beyond the ordinary experience of men.

How increasingly powerful does the argument become when we ponder the doctrines associated with

the principal figure of the story. It is not only that Christ was strong where men are weak; that he was great and commanding where men are small and insignificant; that he humbled himself where men are proud; that he "went about doing good" where men go about promoting their own advantage; that he shewed a zeal for God where men exhibit concern for their own honour; that he was holy where men shew relish only for the "desires of the flesh and of the mind;" that he manifested a towering anger against unrighteousness where men are unmoved and indifferent, and that he stooped to the poor where men usually pander to the rich and the great—all these overpowering contrasts are themselves significative of the fundamental difference between this and all other literary works under the sun. But it is when we consider the doctrines that are put into the mouths of Christ and his Apostles that we see the strongest evidence that the Apostolic life of Christ, embodied in the "gospels," is no work of the imagination, but the simple record of actual fact. It is not in human nature to imagine, still less advocate, such doctrines. Consider them, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is not only that we are to do to others as we would be done by, but we are to go a step further and "be kind to the unthankful and the evil." It is not only that we are to abstain from vindictiveness, but that we are to submit to wrong and to resist not evil. We are not only to believe in Christ, but to lose our lives in the confession of him if such a result accompany it. We are informed by Christ that "he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it." We are apprised by him that whoso forsaketh not all that he hath (when the call of allegiance to him requires it) is not fit to be his disciple.

These are altogether unnatural doctrines, and become intelligible only on the supposition of the truth of the things narrated by the Apostles—that Christ is the Son of God and was manifested in the world to seek and to save the lost, of which he gave evidence that will stand to the end of the world, in his miraculous performances, crowned by the stupendous miracle of his own resurrection.

And now consider the larger sentiments surrounding and inspiring his work and that of his Apostles. They are such as could not have been imagined at all. They lay hold of God. Men can understand the saving of a man as a work of philanthropy; but this was but a small element of the work of Christ as presented by Christ and the Apostles. Its chief bearing was heavenwards—not earthwards. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.” “I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou hast given me out of the world.” This is Christ’s definition of the essence of his work—the glorification of God. It is what the song of the angels put first at his birth, “Glory to God in the highest.” It is what Paul strongly enforced: “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, *that no flesh should glory in His presence.* But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

This sentiment will be found running through the

entire system of New Testament teaching. If Christ is preached, it is but as its highest embodiment. “God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*” The impossibility of invention here must strike you forcibly. I submit, Ladies and Gentlemen, the sentiment is above and beyond man. Its prevalence in the apostolic writings can only be accounted for on the principle that what is written is true. If you introduce the supposition of fiction or untruth, you involve this literary problem in impenetrable darkness. It is not soluble on any principle but that Christ appeared and did and said the things recorded—from which it would follow that all he said was true.

The same conclusion is yielded by the prominence accorded to his crucifixion and the character imputed to it. It is put forward as the declaration of the righteousness of God with a view to man’s forgiveness on his humble identification therewith in faith and obedience. What man left to himself could have guessed such a view of the transaction? What man left to himself would have thought of teaching that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” I put it to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, as having some acquaintance with the thoughts and ways of men, whether it is conceivable that an inventing historian (who would of course be an historian writing with human motives and human ideas) could have imparted such a colour to the apparently common-place occurrence of the public execution of a reputed criminal.

And so with his resurrection, not discussing the evidence which exists of its actual occurrence; looking merely to the ideas associated with it in the apostolic proclamation; it is impossible to account for the place it occupies in the New Testament on any theory of the New Testament being a work of fiction or legend. It is put forward as a moral effect with moral aims. "By man—(by one man's *obedience*)—came the resurrection of the dead." "For this cause (because he was obedient unto death), God hath highly exalted him. . . . God hath raised him from death, for it was not possible that he should be holden of it." As an operation with moral aims, it is thus described: "He is raised again *for our justification*." "God raised him from the dead . . . *that your faith and hope might be in God*." "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: *ye are yet in your sins*."

The combined force of these considerations must be decisive with true intelligence in favour of the character of this wonderful history of Christ that has been in the hands of the world for so many years. Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is a true story: a Divine story: the record of Divine operations that visibly occurred among men over 1,800 years ago, whose verity and whose efficacy have not in the least been impaired by the lapse of time. I earnestly press the conclusion upon you. It is the most momentous in the whole realm of human thought: the most imperative of all the laws of logical induction. The apostle Paul is a proper illustration of the right treatment of the subject. He was a man of vigorous understanding, as well as of an enthusiastic temperament: and his estimate may seem strongly worded, but it is one that reason must endorse, and that consistency must emulate: "I count all things but loss for the excellency

of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "That I may preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."