

JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF
HISTORY, VOLUME 02:
JEWISH HEROES AND
PROPHETS

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02: Jewish Heroes and Prophets

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Volume 02: Jewish

Heroes and Prophets

ABRAHAM

RELIGIOUS FAITH

From a religious point of view, Abraham appears to us, after the lapse of nearly four thousand years, as the most august character in history. He may not have had the genius and learning of Moses, nor his executive ability; but as a religious thinker, inspired to restore faith in the world and the worship of the One God, it would be difficult to find a man more favored or more successful. He is the spiritual father equally of Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, in their warfare with idolatry. In this sense, he is the spiritual progenitor of all those nations, tribes, and peoples who now acknowledge, or who may hereafter acknowledge, a personal God, supreme and eternal in the universe which He created. Abraham is the religious

father of all those who associate with this personal and supreme Deity a providential oversight of this world,—a being whom all are required to worship, and alone to worship, as the only true God whose right it is to reign, and who does reign, and will reign forever and ever over everything that exists, animate or inanimate, visible or invisible, known or unknown, in the mighty universe of whose glory and grandeur we have such overwhelming yet indefinite conceptions.

When Abraham appeared, whether four thousand or five thousand years ago, for chronologists differ in their calculations, it would seem that the nations then existing had forgotten or ignored this great cardinal and fundamental truth, and were more or less given to idolatry, worshipping the heavenly bodies, or the forces of Nature, or animals, or heroes, or graven images, or their own ancestors. There were but few and feeble remains of the primitive revelation,—that is, the faith cherished by the patriarchs before the flood, and which it would be natural to suppose Noah himself had taught to his children.

There was even then, however, a remarkable material civilization, especially in Egypt, Palestine, and Babylon; for some of the pyramids had been built, the use of the metals, of weights and measures, and of textile fabrics was known. There were also cities and fortresses, cornfields and vineyards, agricultural implements and weapons of war, commerce and arts, musical instruments, golden vessels, ornaments for the person, purple dyes, spices, hand-made pottery, stone-engravings, sundials, and

glass-work, and even the use of letters, or something similar, possibly transmitted from the antediluvian civilization. Even the art of printing was almost discovered, as we may infer from the stamping of letters on tiles. With all this material progress, however, there had been a steady decline in spiritual religion as well as in morals,—from which fact we infer that men if left to themselves, whatever truth they may receive from ancestors, will, without supernatural influences, constantly decline in those virtues on which the strength of man is built, and without which the proudest triumphs of the intellect avail nothing. The grandest civilization, in its material aspects, may coexist with the utmost debasement of morals,—as seen among the Greeks and Romans, and in the wicked capitals of modern Europe. "There is no God!" or "Let there be no God!" has been the cry in all ages of the world, whenever and wherever an impious pride or a low morality has defied or silenced conscience. Tell me, ye rationalists and agnostics! with your pagan sympathies, what mean ye by laws of development, and by the *necessary* progress of the human race, except in the triumphs of that kind of knowledge which is entirely disconnected with virtue, and which has proved powerless to prevent the decline and fall of nations? Why did not art, science, philosophy, and literature save the most lauded nations of the ancient world? Why so rapid a degeneracy among people favored not only with a primitive revelation, but by splendid triumphs of reason and knowledge? Why did gross superstition so speedily obscure the intellect, and infamous vices so soon undermine the

moral health, if man can elevate himself by his unaided strength? Why did error seemingly prove as vital as truth in all the varied forms of civilization in the ancient world? Why did even tradition fail to keep alive the knowledge of God, at least among the people?

Now, among pagans and idolaters Abram (as he was originally called) lived until he was seventy-five. His father, Terah, was a descendant of Shem, of the eleventh generation, and the original seat of his tribe was among the mountains of Southern Armenia, north of Assyria. From thence Terah migrated to the plains of Mesopotamia, probably with the desire to share the rich pastures of the lowlands, and settled in Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was one of the most ancient of the Chaldean cities and one of the most splendid, where arts and sciences were cultivated, where astronomers watched the heavens, poets composed hymns, and scribes stamped on clay tablets books which, according to Geikie, have in part come down to our own times. It was in this pagan city that Abram was born, and lived until the "call." His father was a worshipper of the tutelary gods of his tribe, of which he was the head; but his idolatry was not so degrading as that of the Chaldeans, who belonged to a different race from his own, being the descendants of Ham, among whom the arts and sciences had made considerable progress,—as was natural, since what we call civilization arose, it is generally supposed, in the powerful monarchies founded by Assyrian and Egyptian warriors, although it is claimed that both China and India were

also great empires at this period. With the growth of cities and the power of kings idolatry increased, and the knowledge of the true God declined. From such influences it was necessary that Abram should be removed if he was to found a nation with a monotheistic belief. So, in obedience to a call from God, he left the city of his birthplace, and went toward the land of Canaan and settled in Haran, where he remained until the death of his father, who it seems had accompanied him in his wanderings, but was probably too infirm to continue the fatiguing journey. Abram, now the head of his tribe and doubtless a powerful chieftain, received another call, and with it the promise that he should be the founder of a great nation, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.

What was that call, coupled with such a magnificent and cheering promise? It was the voice of God commanding Abram to leave country and kindred and go to a country utterly unknown to him, not even indicated to him, but which in due time should be revealed to him. He is not called to repudiate idolatry, but by divine command to go to an unknown country. He must have been already a believer in the One Supreme God, or he would not have felt the command to be imperative. Unless his belief had been monotheistic, we must attribute to him a marvellous genius and striking originality of mind, together with an independence of character still more remarkable; for it requires not only original genius to soar beyond popular superstitions, but also great force of will and lofty intrepidity to break away from

them,—as when Buddha renounced Brahmanism, or Socrates ridiculed the Sophists of Attica. Nothing requires more moral courage than the renunciation of a popular and generally received religious belief. It was a hard struggle for Luther to give up the ideas of the Middle Ages in reference to self-expiation. It is exceedingly rare for any one to be emancipated from the tyranny of prevailing dogmas.

So, if Abram was not divinely instructed in a way that implies supernatural illumination, he must have been the most remarkable sage of all antiquity to found a religion never abrogated by succeeding revelations, which has lasted from his time to ours, and is to-day embraced by so large a part of the human race, including Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews. Abram must have been more gifted than the whole school of Ionian philosophers united, from Thales downward, since after three hundred years of speculation and lofty inquiries they only arrived at the truth that the being who controls the universe must be intelligent. Even Socrates, Plato, and Cicero—the most gifted men of classical antiquity—had very indefinite notions of the unity and personality of God, while Abram distinctly recognized this great truth even amid universal idolatry and a degrading polytheism.

Yet the Bible recognizes in Abram moral rather than intellectual greatness. He was distinguished for his faith, and a faith so exalted and pure that it was accounted unto him for righteousness. His faith in God was so profound that it was

followed by unhesitating obedience to God's commands. He was ready to go wherever he was sent, instantly, without conditions or remonstrance.

In obedience to the divine voice then, Abram, after the death of his father Terah, passed through the land of Canaan unto Sichem, or Shechem, afterward a city of Samaria. He then went still farther south, and pitched his tent on a mountain having Bethel on the west and Hai on the east, and there he built an altar unto the Lord. After this it would appear that he proceeded still farther to the south, probably near the northern part of Idumaea.

Wherever Abram journeyed he found the Canaanites—descendants of Ham—petty tribes or nations, governed by kings no more powerful than himself. They are supposed in their invasions to have conquered the aboriginal inhabitants, whose remote origin is veiled in impenetrable obscurity, but who retained some principles of the primitive religion. It is even possible that Melchizedek, the unconquered King of Salem, who blessed Abram, belonged to those original people who were of Semitic origin. Nevertheless the Canaanites, or Hametic tribes, were at this time the dominant inhabitants.

Of these tribes or nations the Sidonians, or Phoenicians, were the most powerful. Next to them, according to Ewald, "were three nations living toward the South,—the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites; then two in the most northerly country conquered by Israel,—the Girgashites and the Hivites; then four in Phoenicia; and lastly, the most northern of all, the

well known kingdom of Hamath on the Orontes." The Jebusites occupied the country around Jerusalem; the Amorites also dwelt in the mountainous regions, and were warlike and savage, like the ancient Highlanders of Scotland. They entrenched themselves in strong castles. The Hittites, or children of Heth, were on the contrary peaceful, having no fortified cities, but dwelling in the valleys, and living in well-ordered communities. The Hivites dwelt in the middle of the country, and were also peaceful, having reached a considerable civilization, and being in the possession of the most flourishing inland cities. The Philistines entered the land at a period subsequent to the other Canaanites, probably after Abram, coming it is supposed from Crete.

It would appear that Abram was not molested by these various petty Canaanitish nations, that he was hospitably received by them, that he had pleasant relations with them, and even entered into their battles as an ally or protector. Nor did Abram seek to conquer territory. Powerful as he was, he was still a pilgrim and a wanderer, journeying with his servants and flocks wherever the Lord called him; and hence he excited no jealousy and provoked no hostilities. He had not long been settled quietly with his flocks and herds before a famine arose in the land, and he was forced to seek subsistence in Egypt, then governed by the shepherd kings called Hyksos, who had driven the proud native monarch reigning at Memphis to the southern part of the kingdom, in the vicinity of Thebes. Abram was well received at the court of the Pharaohs, until he was detected in a falsehood in regard to his

wife, whom he passed as his sister. He was then sent away with all that he had, together with his nephew Lot.

Returning to the land of Canaan, Abram came to the place where he had before pitched his tent, between Bethel and Hai, unto the altar which he had some time before erected, and called upon the name of the Lord. But the land was not rich enough to support the flocks and herds of both Abram and Lot, and there arose a strife between their respective herdsmen; so the patriarch and his nephew separated, Lot choosing for his residence the fertile plain of the Jordan, and Abram remaining in the land of Canaan. It was while sojourning at Bethel that the Lord appeared again unto Abram, and promised to him the whole land as a future possession of his posterity. After that he removed his tent to the plain of Mamre, near or in Hebron, and again erected an altar to his God.

Here Abram remained in true patriarchal dignity without further migrations, abounding in wealth and power, and able to rescue his nephew Lot from the hands of Chedorlaomer the King of Elam, and from the other Oriental monarchs who joined his forces, pursuing them even to Damascus. For this signal act of heroism Abram was blessed by Melchizedek, in the name of their common lord the most high God. Who was this Prince of Salem? Was he an earthly potentate ruling an unconquered city of the aboriginal inhabitants; or was he a mysterious personage, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning nor end of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the

Son of God, an incarnation of the Deity, to repeat the blessing which the patriarch had already received?

The history of Abram until his supreme trial seems principally to have been repeated covenants with God, and the promises held out of the future greatness of his descendants. The greatness of the Israelitish nation, however, was not to be in political ascendancy, nor in great attainments in the arts and sciences, nor in cities and fortresses and chariots and horses, nor in that outward splendor which would attract the gaze of the world, and thus provoke conquests and political combinations and grand alliances and colonial settlements, by which the capital on Zion's hill would become another Rome, or Tyre, or Carthage, or Athens, or Alexandria,—but quite another kind of greatness. It was to be moral and spiritual rather than material or intellectual, the centre of a new religious life, from which theistic doctrines were to go forth and spread for the healing of the nations,—all to culminate, when the proper time should come, in the mission of Jesus Christ, and in his teachings as narrated and propagated by his disciples.

This was the grand destiny of the Hebrew race; and for the fulfilment of this end they were located in a favored country, separated from other nations by mountains, deserts, and seas, and yet capable by cultivation of sustaining a great population, while they were governed by a polity tending to keep them a distinct, isolated, and peculiar people. To the descendants of Ham and Japhet were given cities, political power, material

civilization; but in the tents of Shem religion was to dwell. "From first to last," says Geikie, "the intellect of the Hebrew dwelt supremely on the matters of his faith. The triumphs of the pencil or the chisel he left with contemptuous indifference to Egypt, or Assyria, or Greece. Nor had the Jew any such interest in religious philosophy as has marked other people. The Aryan nations, both East and West, might throw themselves with ardor into those high questions of metaphysics, but he contented himself with the utterances of revelation. The world may have inherited no advances in political science from the Hebrew, no great epic, no school of architecture, no high lessons in philosophy, no wide extension of human thought or knowledge in any secular direction; but he has given it his religion. To other races we owe the splendid inheritance of modern civilization and secular culture, but the religious education of mankind has been the gift of the Jew alone."

For this end Abram was called to the land of Canaan. From this point of view alone we see the blessing and the promise which were given to him. In this light chiefly he became a great benefactor. He gave a religion to the world; at least he established its fundamental principle,—the worship of the only true God. "If we were asked," says Max Müller, "how it was that Abraham possessed not only the primitive conception of the Divinity, as he has revealed himself to all mankind, but passed, through the denial of all other gods, to the knowledge of the One God, we

are content to answer that it was by a *special divine revelation*." ¹

If the greatness of the Jewish race was spiritual rather than temporal, so the real greatness of Abraham was in his faith. Faith is a sentiment or a principle not easily defined. But be it intuition, or induction, or deduction,—supported by reason, or without reason,—whatever it is, we know what it means.

The faith of Abraham, which Saint Paul so urgently commends, the same in substance as his own faith in Jesus Christ, stands out in history as so bright and perfect that it is represented as the foundation of religion itself, without which it is impossible to please God, and with which one is assured of divine favor, with its attendant blessings. If I were to analyze it, I should say that it is a perfect trust in God, allied with obedience to his commands.

With this sentiment as the supreme rule of life, Abraham is always prepared to go wherever the way is indicated. He has no doubts, no questionings, no scepticism. He simply adores the Lord Almighty, as the object of his supreme worship, and is ready to obey His commands, whether he can comprehend the reason of them or not. He needs no arguments to confirm his trust or stimulate his obedience. And this is faith,—an ultimate principle that no reasonings can shake or strengthen. This faith, so sublime and elevated, needs no confirmation, and is not made more intelligent by any definitions. If the *Cogito, ergo sum*, is an elemental and ultimate principle of philosophy, so the faith of Abraham is the fundamental basis of all religion, which is

¹ Chips from a German Workshop, vol. i. p. 372.

weakened rather than strengthened by attempts to define it. All definitions of an ultimate principle are vain, since everybody understands what is meant by it.

No truly immortal man, no great benefactor, can go through life without trials and temptations, either to test his faith or to establish his integrity. Even Jesus Christ himself was subjected for forty days to the snares of the Devil. Abram was no exception to this moral discipline. He had two great trials to pass through before he could earn the title of "father of the faithful,"—first, in reference to the promise that he should have legitimate children; and secondly, in reference to the sacrifice of Isaac.

As to the first, it seemed impossible that Abram should have issue through his wife Sarah, she being ninety years of age, and he ninety-nine or one hundred. The very idea of so strange a thing caused Sarah to laugh incredulously, and it is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis that Abram also fell on his face and laughed, saying in his heart, "Shall a son be born unto him that is one hundred years old?" Evidently he at first received the promise with some incredulity. He could leave Ur of the Chaldees by divine command,—this was an act of obedience; but he did not fully believe in what seemed to be against natural law, which would be a sort of faith without evidence, blind, against reason. He requires some sign from God. "Whereby," said he, "shall I *know* that I shall inherit it,"—that is Canaan,—and that my seed shall be in number as the stars of heaven?" Then followed the renewal of the covenant; and, according to

the frequent custom of the times, when covenants were made between individual men, Abram took a new name: "And God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be any more Abram [Father of Elevation] but thy name shall be Abraham [Father of a Multitude], for a father of many nations have I made thee." We observe that the covenant was repeatedly renewed; in connection with which was the rite of circumcision, which Abraham and his posterity, and even his servants, were required scrupulously to observe, and which it would appear he unreluctantly did observe as an important condition of the covenant. Why this rite was so imperatively commanded we do not know, neither can we understand why it was so indissolubly connected with the covenant between God and Abraham. We only know that it was piously kept, not only by Abraham himself, but by his descendants from generation to generation, and became one of the distinctive marks and peculiarities of the Jewish nation,—the sign of the promise that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed,—a promise fulfilled even in the patriarchal monotheism of Arabia, the distant tribes of which, under Mohammed, accepted the One Supreme God.

A still more serious test of the faith of Abraham was the sacrifice of Isaac, on whose life all his hopes naturally rested. We are told that God "tempted," or tested, the obedient faith of Abraham, by suggesting to him that it was his duty to sacrifice

that only son as a burnt-offering, to prove how utterly he trusted the Lord's promise; for if Isaac were cut off, where was another legitimate heir to be found? Abraham was then one hundred and twenty years old, and his wife was one hundred and ten. Moreover, on principles of reason why should such a sacrifice be demanded? It was not only apparently against reason, but against nature, against every sacred instinct, against humanity, even an act of cruelty,—yea, more, a crime, since it was homicide, without any seeming necessity. Besides, everybody has a right to his own life, unless he has forfeited it by crime against society. Isaac was a gentle, harmless, interesting youth of twenty, and what right, by any human standard, had Abraham to take his life? It is true that by patriarchal customs and laws Isaac belonged to Abraham as much as if he were a slave or an animal. He had the Oriental right to do with his son as he pleased. The head of a family had not only absolute control over wife and children, but the power of life and death. And this absolute power was not exercised alone by Semitic races, but also by the Aryan in their original settlements, in Greece and Italy, as well as in Northern India. All the early institutions of society recognized this paternal right. Hence the moral sense of Abraham was not apparently shocked at the command of God, since his son was his absolute property. Even Isaac made no resistance, since he knew that Abraham had a right to his life.

Moreover, we should remember that sacrifices to all objects of worship formed the basis of all the religious rites of the ancient

world, in all periods of its history. Human sacrifices were offered in India at the very period when Abraham was a wanderer in Palestine; and though human nature ultimately revolted from this cruelty, the sacrifice of substitute-animals continued from generation to generation as oblations to the gods, and is still continued by Brahminical priests. In China, in Egypt, in Assyria, in Greece, no religious rites were perfected without sacrifices. Even in the Mosaic ritual, sacrifices by the priests formed no inconsiderable part of worship. Not until the time of Isaiah was it said that God took no delight in burnt offerings,—that the real sacrifices which He requires are a broken and a contrite heart. Nor were the Jews finally emancipated from sacrificial rites until Christ himself made his own body an offering for the sins of the world, and in God's providence the Romans destroyed their temple and scattered their nation. In antiquity there was no objective worship of the Deity without sacrificial rites, and when these were omitted or despised there was atheism,—as in the case of Buddha, who taught morals rather than religion. Perhaps the oldest and most prevalent religious idea of antiquity was the necessity of propitiatory sacrifice,—generally of animals, though in remotest ages the offering of the fruits of the earth.²

The inquiry might here arise, whether in our times anything would justify a man in committing a homicide on an innocent

² Dr. Trumbull has made a learned and ingenious argument in his "Blood Covenant" to show that sacrifices were not to propitiate the deity, but to bring about a closer Spiritual union between the soul and God; that the blood covenant was a covenant of friendship and love among all primitive peoples.

person. Would he not be called a fanatic? If so, we may infer that morality—the proper conduct of men as regards one another in social relations—is better understood among us than it was among the patriarchs four thousand years ago; and hence, that as nations advance in civilization they have a more enlightened sense of duty, and practically a higher morality. Men in patriarchal times may have committed what we regard as crimes, while their ordinary lives were more virtuous than ours. And if so, should we not be lenient to immoralities and crimes committed in darker ages, if the ordinary current of men's lives was lofty and religious? On this principle we should be slow to denounce Christian people who formerly held slaves without remorse, when this sin did not shock the age in which they lived, and was not discrepant with prevailing ideas as to right and wrong. It is clear that in patriarchal times men had, according to universally accepted ideas, the power of life and death over their families, which it would be absurd and wicked to claim in our day, with our increased light as to moral distinctions. Hence, on the command of God to slay his son, Abraham had no scruples on the ground of morality; that is, he did not feel that it was wrong to take his son's life if God commanded him to do so, any more than it would be wrong, if required, to slay a slave or an animal, since both were alike his property. Had he entertained more enlightened views as to the sacredness of life, he might have felt differently. With his views, God's command did not clash with his conscience.

Still, the sacrifice of Isaac was a terrible shock to Abraham's

paternal affection. The anguish of his soul was none the less, whether he had the right of life and death or not. He was required to part with the dearest thing he had on earth, in whom was bound up his earthly happiness. What had he to live for, but Isaac? He doubtless loved this child of his old age with exceeding tenderness, devotion, and intensity; and what was perhaps still more weighty, in that day of polygamous households, than mere paternal affection, with Isaac were identified all the hopes and promises which had been held out to Abraham by God himself of becoming the father of a mighty and favored race. His affection as a father was strained to its utmost tension, but yet more was his faith in being the progenitor of offspring that should inherit the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, at God's command he was willing to make the sacrifice, "accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead." Was there ever such a supreme act of obedience in the history of our race? Has there ever been from his time to ours such a transcendent manifestation of faith? By reason Abraham saw the foundation of his hopes utterly swept away; and yet his faith towers above reason, and he feels that the divine promises in some way will be fulfilled. Did any man of genius ever conceive such an illustration of blended piety and obedience? Has dramatic poetry ever created such a display of conflicting emotions? Is it possible for a human being to transcend so mighty a sacrifice, and all by the power of faith? Let those philosophers and theologians who aspire to define faith, and vainly try to reconcile it with reason, learn modesty and

wisdom from the lesson of Abraham, who is its great exponent, and be content with the definition of Paul, himself, that it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" that reason was in Abraham's case subordinate to a loftier and grander principle,—even a firm conviction, which nothing could shake, of the accomplishment of an end against all probabilities and mortal calculations, resting solely on a divine promise.

Another remarkable thing about that memorable sacrifice is, that Abraham does not expostulate or hesitate, but calmly and resolutely prepares for the slaughter of the innocent and unresisting victim, suppressing all the while his feelings as a father in obedience and love to the Sovereign of heaven and earth, whose will is his supreme law.

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son," who was compelled as it were to bear his own cross. And he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" yet suffered himself to be bound by his father on the altar. And Abraham then stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. At this supreme moment of his trial, he heard the angel of the Lord calling upon him out of heaven and saying, "Abraham! Abraham! lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.... And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns;

and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering instead of his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand upon the seashore, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

There are no more recorded promises to Abraham, no more trials of his faith. His righteousness was established, and he was justified before God. His subsequent life was that of peace, prosperity, and exaltation. He lives to the end in transcendent repose with his family and vast possessions. His only remaining solicitude is for a suitable wife for Isaac, concerning whom there is nothing remarkable in gifts or fortunes, but who maintains the faith of his father, and lives like him in patriarchal dignity and opulence.

The great interest we feel in Abraham is as "the father of the faithful," as a model of that exalted sentiment which is best defined and interpreted by his own trials and experiences; and hence I shall not dwell on the well known incidents of his life outside the varied calls and promises by which he became the most favored man in human annals. It was his faith which made him immortal, and with which his name is forever associated. It is his religious faith looming up, after four thousand years, for

our admiration and veneration which is the true subject of our meditation. This, I think, is distinct from our ordinary conception of faith, such as a belief in the operation of natural laws, in the return of the seasons, in the rewards of virtue, in the assurance of prosperity with due regard to the conditions of success. Faith in a friend, in a nation's future, in the triumphs of a good cause, in our own energies and resources *is*, I grant, necessarily connected with reason, with wide observation and experience, with induction, with laws of nature and of mind. But religious faith is supreme trust in an unseen God and supreme obedience to his commands, without any other exercise of reason than the intuitive conviction that what he orders is right because he orders it, whether we can fathom his wisdom or not. "Canst thou by searching find out Him?"

Yet notwithstanding the exalted faith of Abraham, by which all religious faith is tested, an eternal pattern and example for our reverence and imitation, the grand old man deceived both Pharaoh and Abimelech, and if he did not tell positive lies, he uttered only half truths, for Sarah was a half sister; and thus he put expediency and policy above moral rectitude,—to be palliated indeed in his case by the desire to preserve his wife from pollution. Yet this is the only blot on his otherwise reproachless character, marked by so many noble traits that he may be regarded as almost perfect. His righteousness was as memorable as his faith, living in the fear of God. How noble was his disinterestedness in giving to Lot the choice of lands for

his family and his flocks and his cattle! How brave was he in rescuing his kinsman from the hands of conquering kings! How lofty in refusing any remuneration for his services! How fervent were his intercessions with the Almighty for the preservation of the cities of the plain! How hospitable his mode of life, as when he entertained angels unawares! How kind he was to Hagar when she had incurred the jealousy of Sarah! How serene and dignified and generous he was, the model of courtesy and kindness!

With Abraham we associate the supremest happiness which an old man can attain unto and enjoy. He was prosperous, rich, powerful, and favored in every way; but the chief source of his happiness was the superb consciousness that he was to be the progenitor of a mighty and numerous progeny, through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. How far his faith was connected with temporal prosperity we cannot tell. Prosperity seems to have been the blessing of the Old Testament, as adversity was the blessing of the New. But he was certain of this,—that his descendants would possess ultimately the land of Canaan, and would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. He was certain that in some mysterious way there would come from his race something that would be a blessing to mankind. Was it revealed to his exultant soul what this blessing should be? Did this old patriarch cast a prophetic eye beyond the ages, and see that the promise made to him was spiritual rather than material, pertaining to the final triumph of truth and righteousness?—that the unity of God, which he taught to

Isaac and perhaps to Ishmael, was to be upheld by his race alone among prevailing idolatries, until the Saviour should come to reveal a new dispensation and finally draw all men unto him? Did Abraham fully realize what a magnificent nation the Israelites should become,—not merely the rulers of western Asia under David and Solomon, but that even after their final dispersion they should furnish ministers to kings, scholars to universities, and dictators to legislative halls,—an unconquerable race, powerful even after the vicissitudes and humiliations of four thousand years? Did he realize fully that from his descendants should arise the religious teachers of mankind,—not only the prophets and sages of the Old Testament, but the apostles and martyrs of the New,—planting in every land the seeds of the everlasting gospel, which should finally uproot all Brahminical self-expiations, all Buddhistic reveries, all the speculations of Greek philosophers, all the countless forms of idolatry, polytheism, pantheism, and pharisaism on this earth, until every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?

Yet such were the boons granted to Abraham, as the reward of faith and obedience to the One true God,—the vital principle without which religion dies into superstition, with which his descendants were inspired not only to nationality and civil coherence, but to the highest and noblest teachings the world has received from any people, and by which his name is forever linked with the spiritual progress and happiness of mankind.

JOSEPH

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

No one in his senses would dream of adding anything to the story of Joseph, as narrated in Genesis, whether it came from the pen of Moses or from some subsequent writer. It is a masterpiece of historical composition, unequalled in any literature sacred or profane, in ancient or modern times, for its simplicity, its pathos, its dramatic power, and its sustained interest. Nor shall I attempt to paraphrase or re-tell it, save by way of annotation and illustration of subjects connected with it, having reference to the subsequent development of the Jewish nation and character.

Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, was born at Haran in Mesopotamia, probably during the XVIII. Century B.C., when his father Jacob was in the service of Laban the Syrian. There was nothing remarkable in his career until he was sold as a slave by his unnatural and jealous brothers. He was the favorite son of the patriarch Jacob, by his beloved Rachel, being the youngest, except Benjamin, of a large family of twelve sons,—a beautiful and promising youth, with qualities which peculiarly called out the paternal affections. In the inordinate love and partiality of Jacob for this youth he gave to him, by way of distinction, a

decorated tunic, such as was worn only by the sons of princes. The half-brothers of Joseph were filled with envy in view of this unwise step on the part of their common father,—a proceeding difficult to be reconciled with his politic and crafty nature; and their envy ripened into hostility when Joseph, with the frankness of youth, narrated his dreams, which signified his future pre-eminence and the humiliation of his brothers. Nor were his dreams altogether pleasing to his father, who rebuked him with this indignant outburst of feeling: "Shall I and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee on the earth?" But while the father pondered, the brothers were consumed with hatred, for envy is one of the most powerful passions that move the human soul, and is malignant in its developments. Strange to say, it is most common in large families and among those who pass for friends. We do not envy prosperous enemies with the virulence we feel for prosperous relatives, who theoretically are our equals. Nor does envy cease until inequality has become so great as to make rivalry preposterous: a subject does not envy his king, or his generally acknowledged superior. Envy may even give place to respect and deference when the object of it has achieved fame and conceded power. Relatives who begin with jealousy sometimes end as worshippers, but not until extraordinary merit, vast wealth, or overtopping influence are universally conceded. Conceive of Napoleon's brothers envying the great Emperor, or Webster's the great statesman, or Grant's the great general, although the passion may have lurked in the

bosoms of political rivals and military chieftains.

But one thing certainly extinguishes envy; and that is death. Hence the envy of Joseph's brothers, after they had sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants, was succeeded by remorse and shame. Their murmurings passed into lies. They could not tell their broken-hearted father of their crime; they never told him. Jacob was led to suppose that his favorite son was devoured by wild beasts; they added deceit and cowardice to a depraved heartlessness, and nearly brought down the gray hairs of their father to the grave. No subsequent humiliation or punishment could be too severe for such wickedness. Although they were destined to become the heads of powerful tribes, even of the chosen people of God, these men have incurred the condemnation of all ages. But Judah and Reuben do not come in for unlimited censure, since these sons of Leah sought to save their brother from a violent death; and subsequently in Egypt Judah looms up as a magnanimous character, whom we admire almost as much as we do Joseph himself. What can be more eloquent than his defence of Benjamin, and his appeal to what seemed to him to be an Egyptian potentate!

The sale of Joseph as a slave is one of the most signal instances of the providence of God working by natural laws recorded in all history,—more marked even than the elevation of Esther and Mordecai. In it we see permission of evil and its counteraction,—its conversion into good; victory over evil, over conspiracy, treachery, and murderous intent. And so marked is this lesson

of a superintending Providence over all human action, that a wise and good man can see wars and revolutions and revolting crimes with almost philosophical complacency, knowing that out of destruction proceeds creation; that the wrath of man is always overruled; that the love of God is the brightest and clearest and most consoling thing in the universe. We cannot interpret history without the recognition of this fundamental truth. We cannot be unmoved amid the prevalence of evil without this feeling, that God is more powerful than all the combined forces of his enemies both on earth and in hell; and that no matter what the evil is, it will surely be made to praise Him who sitteth in the heavens. This is a sublime revelation of the omnipotence and benevolence of a personal God, of his constant oversight of the world which he has made.

The protection and elevation of Joseph, seemingly a natural event in view of his genius and character, is in some respects a type of that great sacrifice by which a sinful world has been redeemed. Little did the Jews suspect when they crucified Jesus that he would arise from his tomb and overturn the idolatries of nations, and found a religion which should go on from conquering to conquer. Little did the gifted Burke see in the atrocities of the French Revolution the overturning of a system of injustices which for centuries had cried to Heaven for vengeance. Still less did the proud and conservative citizens of New England recognize in the cruelties of Southern slaveholders a crime which would provoke one of the bloodiest wars of modern times, and

lead to the constitutional and political equality of the whites and blacks. Evil appeared to triumph, but ended in the humiliation of millions and the enfranchisement of humanity, when the cause of the right seemed utterly hopeless. So let every one write upon all walls and houses and chambers, upon his conscience and his intellect, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and will bring good out of the severest tribulation!" And this great truth applies not to nations alone, but to the humblest individual, as he bows down in grief or wrath or penitence to unlooked-for chastisement,—like Job upon his heap of ashes, or the broken-hearted mother when afflicted with disease or poverty, or the misconduct or death of children. There is no wisdom, no sound philosophy, no religion, and no happiness until this truth is recognized in all the changes and relations of life.

The history of Joseph in Egypt in all his varied fortunes is, as I have said, a most memorable illustration of this cardinal and fundamental truth. A favorite of fortune, he is sold as a slave for less than twenty dollars of our money, and is brought to a foreign country,—a land oppressed by kings and priests, yet in which is a high civilization, in spite of social and political degradation. He is resold to a high official of the Egyptian court, probably on account of his beauty and intelligence. He rises in the service of this official,—captain of the royal guard, or, as the critics tell us, superintendent of the police and prisons,—for he has extraordinary abilities and great integrity, character as well as natural genius, until he is unjustly accused of a meditated

crime by a wicked woman. It is evident that Potiphar, his master, only half believes in Joseph's guilt, in spite of the protestations of his artful and profligate wife, since instead of summarily executing him, as Ahasuerus did Haman, he simply sends him to a mild and temporary imprisonment in the prison adjacent to his palace. Here Joseph wins the favor of his jailers and of his brother prisoners, as Paul did nearly two thousand years later, and shows remarkable gifts, even to the interpretation of dreams,—a wonderful faculty to superstitious people like the Egyptians, and in which he exceeds even their magicians and priests. The fame of his rare gifts, the most prized in Egypt, reaches at last the ears of Pharaoh, who is troubled by a singular dream which no one of his learned men can interpret. The Hebrew slave interprets it, and is magnificently rewarded, becoming the prime minister of an absolute monarch. The King gives him his signet ring, emblem of power, and a collar or chain of gold, the emblem of the highest rank; clothes him in a vestment of fine linen, makes him ride in his second chariot, and appoints him ruler over the land, second only to the King in power and rank. And, further, he gives to him in marriage the daughter of the High Priest of On, by which he becomes connected with the priesthood.

Joseph deserves all the honor and influence he receives, for he saves the kingdom from a great calamity. He predicts seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, and points out the remedy. According to tradition, the monarch whom he served was Apepi, the last Shepherd King, during whose reign slaves

were very numerous. The King himself had a vast number, as well as the nobles. Foreign slaves were preferred to native ones, and wars were carried on for the chief purpose of capturing and selling captives.

The sacred narrative says but little of the government of Egypt by a Hebrew slave, or of his abilities as a ruler,—virtually supreme in the land, since Pharaoh delegates to him his own authority, persuaded both of his fidelity and his abilities. It is difficult to understand how Joseph arose at a single bound to such dignity and power, under a proud and despotic king, and in the face of all the prejudices of the Egyptian priesthood and nobility, except through the custom of all Oriental despots to gratify the whim of the moment,—like the one who made his horse prime minister. But nothing short of transcendent talents and transcendent services can account for his retention of office and his marked success. Joseph was then thirty years of age, having served Potiphar ten years, and spent two or three years in prison.

This all took place, as some now suppose, shortly after 1700 B.C., under the dynasty of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings, who had conquered the kingdom about three hundred years before. Their capital was Memphis, near the pyramids, which had been erected several centuries earlier by the older and native dynasties. Rawlinson supposes that Tanis on the delta was the seat of their court. Conquered by the Hyksos, the old kings retreated to their other capital, Thebes, and were probably made tributary to the

conquerors. It was by the earlier and later dynasties that the magnificent temples and palaces were built, whose ruins have so long been the wonder of travellers. The Shepherd Kings were warlike, and led their armies from Scythia,—that land of roving and emigrant warriors,—or, as Ewald thinks, from the land of Canaan: Aramaean chieftains, who sought the spoil of the richest monarchy in the world. Hence there was more affinity between these people and the Hebrews than between them and the ancient Egyptians, who were the descendants of Ham. Abraham, when he visited Egypt, found it ruled by these Scythian or Aramaean warriors, which accounts for the kind and generous treatment he received. It is not probable that a monarch of the ancient dynasties would have been so courteous to Abraham, or would have elevated Joseph to such an exalted rank, for they were jealous of strangers, and hated a pastoral people. It was only under the rule of the Hyksos that the Hebrews could have been tolerated and encouraged; for as soon as the Shepherd Kings were expelled by the Pharaohs who reigned at Thebes, as the Moors were expelled from Spain by the old Castilian princes, it fared ill with the descendants of Jacob, and they were bitterly and cruelly oppressed until the exodus under Moses. Prosperity probably led the Hyksos conquerors to that fatal degeneracy which is unfavorable to war, while adversity strengthened the souls of the descendants of the ancient kings, and enabled them to subdue and drive away their invaders and conquerors. And yet the Hyksos could not have ruled Egypt had they not

adapted themselves to the habits, religion, and prejudices of the people they subdued. The Pharaoh who reigned at the time of Joseph belonged like his predecessors to the sacerdotal caste, and worshipped the gods of the Egyptians. But he was not jealous of the Hebrews, and fully appreciated the genius of Joseph.

The wisdom of Joseph as ruler of the land destined to a seven years' famine was marked by foresight as well as promptness in action. He personally visited the various provinces, advising the people to husband their harvests. But as all people are thoughtless and improvident, he himself gathered up and stored all the grain which could be spared, and in such vast quantities that he ceased to measure it. At last the predicted famine came, as the Nile had not risen to its usual height; but the royal granaries were full, since all the surplus wheat—about a fifth of the annual produce—had been stored away; not purchased by Joseph, but exacted as a tax. Nor was this exaction unreasonable in view of the emergency. Under the Bourbon kings of France more than one half of the produce of the land was taken by the Government and the feudal proprietors without compensation, and that not in provision for coming national trouble, but for the fattening of the royal purse. Joseph exacted only a fifth as a sort of special tax, less than the present Italian government exacts from all landowners.

Very soon the famine pressed upon the Egyptian people, for they had no corn in reserve; the reserve was in the hands of the government. But this reserve Joseph did not deal out gratuitously, as the Roman government, under the emperors, dealt out food to

the citizens. He made the people pay for their bread, and took their money and deposited it in the royal treasury. When after two years their money was all spent, it was necessary to resort to barter, and cattle were given in exchange for corn, by which means the King became possessed of all the personal property of his subjects. As famine pressed, the people next surrendered their land to avoid starvation,—all but the priests. Pharaoh thus became absolute proprietor of the whole country; of money, cattle, and land,—an unprecedented surrender, which would have produced a wide-spread disaffection and revolt, had it not been that Joseph, after the famine was past and the earth yielded its accustomed harvest, exacted only one-fifth of the produce of the land for the support of the government, which could not be regarded as oppressive. As the King thus became absolute proprietor of Egypt by consent of the people, whom he had saved from starvation through the wisdom and energy of his prime minister, it is probable that later a new division of land took place, it being distributed among the people generally in small farms, for which they paid as rent a fifth of their produce. The gratitude of the people was marked: "Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the eyes of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves." Since the time of Christ there have been two similar famines recorded,—one in the eleventh century, lasting, like Joseph's, seven years; and the other in the twelfth century, of which the most distressing details are given, even to the extreme desperation of cannibalism. The same cause originated both,—

the failure of the Nile overflow. Out of the sacred river came up for Egypt its fat kine and its lean,—its blessings and its curses.

The price exacted by Joseph for the people's salvation made the King more absolute than before, since all were thus made dependent on the government.

This absolute rule of the kings, however, was somewhat modified by ancient customs, and by the vast influence of the priesthood, to which the King himself belonged. The priests of Egypt, under all the dynasties, formed the most powerful caste ever seen among the nations of the earth, if we except the Brahmanical caste of India. At the head of it was the King himself, who was chief of the religion and of the state. He regulated the sacrifices of the temples, and had the peculiar right of offering them to the gods upon grand occasions. He superintended the feasts and festivals in honor of the deities. The priests enjoyed privileges which extended to their whole family. They were exempt from taxes, and possessed one-third of the landed property, which was entailed upon them, and of which they could not be deprived. Among them there were great distinctions of rank, but the high-priests held the most honorable station; they were devoted to the service of the presiding deities of the cities in which they lived,—such as the worship of Ammon at Thebes, of Phtha at Memphis, and of Ra at On, or Heliopolis. One of the principal grades of the priesthood was that of prophets, who were particularly versed in all matters pertaining to religion. They presided over the temple and the sacred rites,

and directed the management of the priestly revenues; they bore a distinguished part in solemn processions, carrying the holy vase.

The priests not only regulated all spiritual matters and superintended the worship of the gods, but they were esteemed for their superior knowledge. They acquired an ascendancy over the people by their supposed understanding of the sacred mysteries, only those priests being initiated in the higher secrets of religion who had proved themselves virtuous and discerning. "The honor of ascending from the less to the greater mysteries was as highly esteemed as it was difficult to obtain. The aspirant was required to go through the most severe ordeal, and show the greatest moral resignation." Those who aspired to know the profoundest secrets, imposed upon themselves duties more severe than those required by any other class. It was seldom that the priests were objects of scandal; they were reserved and discreet, practising the strictest purification of body and mind. Their life was so full of minute details that they rarely appeared in public. They thus obtained the sincere respect of the people, and ruled by the power of learning and sanctity as well as by privilege. They are most censured for concealing and withholding knowledge from the people.

How deep and profound was the knowledge of the Egyptian priests it is difficult to settle, since it was so carefully guarded. Pythagoras made great efforts and sacrifices to be initiated in their higher mysteries; but these, it is thought, were withheld, since he was a foreigner. What he did learn, however, formed

a foundation of what is most valuable in Grecian philosophy. Herodotus declares that he knew the mysteries, but should not divulge them. Moses was skilled in all the knowledge of the sacred schools of Egypt, and perhaps incorporated in his jurisprudence some of its most valued truths. Possibly Plato obtained from the Egyptian priests his idea of the immortality of the soul, since this was one of their doctrines. It is even thought by Wilkinson that they believed in the unity, the eternal existence, and invisible power of God, but there is no definite knowledge on that point. Ammon, the concealed god, seems to have corresponded with the Zeus of the Greeks, as Sovereign Lord of Heaven. The priests certainly taught a state of future rewards and punishments, for the great doctrine of metempsychosis is based upon it,—the transmission of the soul after death into the bodies of various animals as an expiation for sin. But however lofty were the esoteric doctrines which the more learned of the initiated believed, they were carefully concealed from the people, who were deemed too ignorant to understand them; and hence the immense difference between the priests and people, and the universal prevalence of degrading superstitions and the vile polytheism which everywhere existed,—even the worship of the powers of Nature in those animals which were held sacred. Among all the ancient nations, however complicated were their theogonies, and however degraded the forms of worship assumed,—of men, or animals, or plants,—it was heat or light (the sun as the visible promoter of blessings)

which was regarded as the *animus mundi*, to be worshipped as the highest manifestation of divine power and goodness. The sun, among all the ancient polytheists, was worshipped under various names, and was one of the supremest deities. The priestly city of On, a sort of university town, was consecrated to the worship of Ra, the sun. Baal was the sun-god among the polytheistic Canaanites, as Bel was among the Assyrians.

The Egyptian Pantheon, except perhaps that of Rome, was the most extensive among the ancient nations, and the most degraded, although that people were the most religious as well as superstitious of ancient pagans. The worship of the Deity, in some form, was as devout as it was universal, however degrading were the rites; and no expense was spared in sacrifices to propitiate the favor of the peculiar deity who presided over each of the various cities, for almost every city had a different deity. Notwithstanding the degrading fetichism—the lowest kind of Nature-worship, including the worship of animals—which formed the basis of the Egyptian religion, there were traces in it of pure monotheism, as in that of Babylonia and of ancient India. The distinguishing peculiarity of the Egyptian religion was the adoration of sacred animals as emblems of the gods, the chief of which were the bull, the cat, and the beetle.

The gods of the Egyptian Pantheon were almost innumerable, since they represented every form and power of Nature, and all the passions which move the human soul; but the most remarkable of the popular deities was Osiris, who was regarded

as the personification of good. Isis, the consort of Osiris, who with him presided at the judgment of the dead, was scarcely less venerated. Set, or Typhon, the brother of Osiris, was the personification of evil. Between Osiris and Set, therefore, was perpetual antagonism. This belief, divested of names and titles and technicalities and fables, seems to have resembled, in this respect, the religion of the Persians,—the eternal conflict between good and evil. The esoteric doctrines of the priests initiated into the higher mysteries probably were the primeval truths, too abstract for the ignorant and sensual people to comprehend, and which were represented to them in visible forms that appealed to their senses, and which they worshipped with degrading rites.

The oldest of all the rites of the ancient pagans was in the form of sacrifice, to propitiate the deity. Abraham and Jacob offered sacrifices, but without degrading ceremonies, and both abhorred the representation of the deity in the form of animals; but there was scarcely an animal or reptile in Egypt that the people did not hold sacred, in fear or reverence. Moral evil was represented by the serpent, showing that something was retained, though in a distorted form, of the primitive revelation. The most celebrated forms of animal worship were the bulls at Memphis, sacred to Osiris, or, as some think, to the sun; the cat to Phtha, and the beetle to Re. The origin of these superstitions cannot be traced; they are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. All that we know is that they existed from the remotest period of which we have cognizance, long before the pyramids were built.

In spite, however, of the despotism of the kings, the privileges of the priests, and the degrading superstitions of the people, which introduced the most revolting form of religious worship ever seen on earth, there was in Egypt a high civilization in comparison with that of other nations, dating back to a mythical period. More than two thousand years before the Christian era, and six hundred before letters were introduced into Greece, one thousand years before the Trojan War, twelve hundred years before Buddha, and fifteen hundred years before Rome was founded, great architectural works existed in Egypt, the remains of which still astonish travellers for their vastness and grandeur. In the time of Joseph, before the eighteenth dynasty, there was in Egypt an estimated population of seven millions, with twenty thousand cities. The civilization of that country four thousand years ago was as high as that of the Chinese of the present day; and their literary and scientific accomplishments, their proficiency in the industrial and fine arts, remain to-day the wonder of history. But one thing is very remarkable,—that while there seems to have been no great progress for two thousand years, there was not any marked decline, thus indicating virtuous habits of life among the great body of the people from generation to generation. They were preserved from degeneracy by their simple habits and peaceful pursuits. Though the armies of the King numbered four hundred thousand men, there were comparatively few wars, and these mostly of a defensive character.

Such was the Egypt which Joseph governed with signal ability for more than half a century, nearly four thousand years ago,—the mother of inventions, the pioneer in literature and science, the home of learned men, the teacher of nations, communicating a knowledge which was never lost, making the first great stride in the civilization of the world. No one knows whether this civilization was indigenous, or derived from unknown races, or the remains of a primitive revelation, since it cannot be traced beyond Egypt itself, whose early inhabitants were more Asiatic than African, and apparently allied with Phoenicians and Assyrians, But the civilization of Egypt is too extensive a subject to be entered upon in this connection. I hope to treat it more at length in subsequent volumes. I can only say now that in some things the Egyptians were never surpassed. Their architecture, as seen in the pyramids and the ruins of temples, was marvellous; while their industrial arts would not be disdained even in the 19th century.

Over this fertile, favored, and civilized nation Joseph reigned,—with delegated power indeed, but with power that was absolute,—when his starving brothers came to Egypt to buy corn, for the famine extended probably over western Asia. He is to be viewed, not as a prophet, or preacher, or reformer, or even a warrior like Moses, but as a merely executive ruler. As the son-in-law of the high-priest of Hieropolis, and delegated governor of the land, in the highest favor with the King, and himself a priest, it is probable that Joseph was initiated into the esoteric

wisdom of the priesthood. He was undoubtedly stern, resolute, and inflexible in his relations with men, as great executive chieftains necessarily must be, whatever their private sympathies and friendships. To all appearance he was a born Egyptian, as he spoke the language of Egypt, had adopted its habits, and was clothed with the insignia of Egyptian power.

So that when the sons of Jacob, who during the years of famine in Canaan had come down to Egypt to buy corn, were ushered into his presence, and bowed down to him, as had been predicted, he was harsh to them, although at once recognizing them. "Whence come ye?" he said roughly to them. They replied, "From the land of Canaan to buy corn," "Nay," continued he, "ye are spies." "Not so, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are not spies." "Nay," he said, "to see the nakedness of the land are ye come,"—for famine also prevailed in Egypt, and its governor naturally would not wish its weakness to be known, for fear of a hostile invasion. They replied, "Thy servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." But Joseph still persisted that they were spies, and put them in prison for three days; after which he demanded as the condition of their release that the younger brother should also appear before him. "If ye be true men," said he, "let one of your brothers be bound in the house of your prison, while you carry corn for the famine of your house; but bring your youngest brother unto me, and ye

shall not die." There was apparently no alternative but to perish, or to bring Benjamin into Egypt; and the sons of Jacob were compelled to accept the condition.

Then their consciences were moved, and they saw a punishment for their crime in selling Joseph fifteen years before. Even Reuben accused them, and in the very presence of Joseph reminded them of their unnatural cruelty, not supposing that he understood them, since Joseph had spoken through an interpreter. This was too much for the stern governor; he turned aside and wept, but speedily returned and took from them Simeon and bound him before their eyes, and retained him for a surety. Then he caused their sacks to be filled with corn, putting also their money therein, and gave them in addition food for their return journey. But as one of them on that journey opened his sack to give his ass provender, he espied the money; and they were all filled with fear at this unlooked-for incident. They made haste to reach their home and report the strange intelligence to their father, including the demand for the appearance of Benjamin, which filled him with the most violent grief. "Joseph is not," cried he, "and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away!" Reuben here expostulated with frantic eloquence. Jacob, however, persisted: "My son shall not go down with you; if mischief befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave."

Meanwhile the famine pressed, as Joseph knew full well it would, and Jacob's family had eaten all their corn, and it became

necessary to get a new supply from Egypt. But Judah refused to go without Benjamin. "The man," said he, "did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Then Jacob upbraided Judah for revealing the number and condition of his family; but Judah excused himself on account of the searching cross-examination of the austere governor which no one could resist, and persisted in the absolute necessity of Benjamin's appearance in Egypt, unless they all should yield to starvation. Moreover, he promised to be surety for his brother, that no harm should come to him. Jacob at last saw the necessity of allowing Benjamin to go, and reluctantly gave his consent; but in order to appease the terrible man of Egypt he ordered his sons to take with them a present of spices and balm and almonds, luxuries then in great demand, and a double amount of money in their sacks to repay what they had received. Then in pious resignation he said, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved," and hurried away his sons.

In due time they all safely arrived in Egypt, and with Benjamin stood before Joseph, and made obeisance, and then excused themselves to Joseph's steward, because of the money which had been returned in their sacks. The steward encouraged them, and brought Simeon to them, and led them into Joseph's house, where a feast was prepared by his orders. With great difficulty Joseph restrained his feelings at the sight of Benjamin, who was his own full brother, but asked kindly about the father. At last his pent-up affections gave way, and he sought his chamber and

wept there in secret. He then sat down to the banquet with his attendants at a separate table,—for the Egyptian would not eat with foreigners,—still unrevealed to his brethren, but showed his partiality to Benjamin by sending him a mess five times greater than to the rest. They marvelled greatly that they were seated at the table according to their seniority, and questioned among themselves how the austere governor could know the ages of strangers.

Not yet did Joseph declare himself. His brothers were not yet sufficiently humbled; a severe trial was still in store for them. As before, he ordered his steward to fill the sacks as full as they could carry, with every man's money in them, for he would not take his father's money; and further ordered that his silver drinking-cup should be put in Benjamin's sack. The brothers had scarcely left the city when they were overtaken by the steward on a charge of theft, and upbraided for stealing the silver cup. Of course they felt their innocence and protested it; but it was of no avail, although they declared that if the cup should be found in any one of their sacks, he in whose sack it might be should die for the offence. The steward took them at their word, proceeded to search the sacks, and lo! what was their surprise and grief to see that the cup was found in Benjamin's sack! They rent their clothes in utter despair, and returned to the city. Joseph received them austerely, and declared that Benjamin should be retained in Egypt as his servant, or slave. Then Judah, forgetting in whose presence he was, cast aside all fear, and made the most eloquent and plaintive

speech recorded in the Bible, offering to remain in Benjamin's place as a slave, for how could he face his father, who would surely die of grief at the loss of his favorite child.

Joseph could refrain his feelings no longer. He made every attendant leave his presence, and then declared himself to his brothers, whom God had sent to Egypt to be the means of saving their lives. The brothers, conscience stricken and ashamed, completely humbled and afraid, could not answer his questions. Then Joseph tenderly, in their own language, begged them to come near, and explained to them that it was not they who sent him to Egypt, but God, to work out a great deliverance to their posterity, and to be a father to Pharaoh himself, inasmuch as the famine was to continue five years longer. "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him that God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither." And he fell on Benjamin's neck and wept, and kissed all his brothers. They then talked with him without further reserve.

The news that Joseph's brethren had come to Egypt pleased Pharaoh, so grateful was the King for the preservation of his kingdom. He could not do enough for such a benefactor. "Say to thy brethren, lade your beasts and go, and take your father and

your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land." And the King commanded them to take his wagons to transport their families and goods. Joseph also gave to each one of them changes of raiment, and to Benjamin three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment, and ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt for their father, and ten she-asses laden with corn. As they departed, he archly said unto them, "See that ye fall not out by the way!"

And when they arrived at Canaan, and told their father all that had happened and all that they had seen, he fainted. The news was too good to be true; he would not believe them. But when he saw the wagons his spirit revived, and he said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die." The old man is again young in spirit. He is for going immediately; he could leap,—yea, fly.

To Egypt, then, Israel with his sons and his cattle and all his wealth hastened. His sons are astonished at the providence of God, so clearly and impressively demonstrated on their behalf. The reconciliation of the family is complete. All envy is buried in the unbounded prosperity of Joseph. He is now too great for envy. He is to be venerated as the instrument of God in saving his father's house and the land of Egypt. They all now bow down to him, father and sons alike, and the only strife now is who shall render him the most honor. He is the pride and glory of his family, as he is of the land of Egypt, and of the household

of Pharaoh.

In the hospitality of the King, and his absence of jealousy of the nomadic people whom he settled in the most fertile of his provinces, we see additional confirmation of the fact that he was one of the Shepherd Kings. The Pharaoh of Joseph's time seems to have affiliated with the Israelites as natural friends,—to assist him in case of war. All the souls that came into Egypt with Jacob were seventy in number, although some historians think there was a much larger number. Rawlinson estimates it at two thousand, and Dean Payne Smith at three thousand.

Jacob was one hundred and thirty years of age when he came to dwell in the land of Goshen, and he lived seventeen years in Egypt. When he died, Joseph was about fifty years old, and was still in power.

It was the dying wish of the old patriarch to be buried with his fathers, and he made Joseph promise to carry his bones to the land of Canaan and bury them in the sepulchre which Abraham had bought,—even the cave of Machpelah.

Before Jacob died, Joseph brought his two sons to him to receive his blessing,—Manasseh and Ephraim, born in Egypt, whose grandfather was the high-priest of On, the city of the sun. As Manasseh was the oldest, he placed him at the right hand of Jacob, but the old man wittingly and designedly laid his right hand on Ephraim, which displeased Joseph. But Jacob, without giving his reason, persisted. While he prophesied that Manasseh should be great, Ephraim he said should be greater,—verified in

the fact that the tribe of Ephraim was the largest of all the tribes, and the most powerful until the captivity. It was nearly as large as all the rest together, although in the time of Moses the tribe of Manasseh had become more numerous. We cannot penetrate the reason why Ephraim the younger son was preferred to the older, any more than why Jacob was preferred to Esau. After Jacob had blessed the sons of Joseph, he called his other sons around his dying bed to predict the future of their descendants. Reuben the oldest was told that he would not excel, because he had loved his father's concubine and committed a grievous sin. Simeon and Levi were the most active in seeking to compass the death of Joseph, and a curse was sent upon them. Judah was exalted above them all, for he had sought to save Joseph, and was eloquent in pleading for Benjamin,—the most magnanimous of the sons. So from him it was predicted that the sceptre should not depart from his house until Shiloh should come,—the Messiah, to whose appearance all the patriarchs looked. And all that Jacob predicted about his sons to their remote descendants came to pass; but the highest blessing was accorded to Joseph, as was realized in the future ascendancy of Ephraim.

When Jacob had made an end of his blessings and predictions he gathered up his feet into his bed and gave up the ghost, and Joseph caused him to be embalmed, as was the custom in Egypt. When the days of public mourning were over (seventy days), Joseph obtained leave from Pharaoh to absent himself from the kingdom and his government, to bury his father according to his

wish. And he departed in great pomp, with chariots and horses, together with his brothers and a great number, and deposited the remains of Jacob in the cave of the field of Machpelah, where Abraham himself was buried, and then returned to his duties in Egypt.

It is not mentioned in the Scriptures how long Joseph retained his power as prime minister of Pharaoh, but probably until a new dynasty succeeded the throne,—the eighteenth as it is supposed, for we are told that a new king arose who knew not Joseph. He lived to be one hundred and ten years of age, and when he died his body was embalmed and placed in a sarcophagus, and ultimately was carried to Canaan and buried with his fathers, according to the oath or promise he exacted of his brothers. His last recorded words were a prediction that God would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt to the land which he swore unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On his deathbed he becomes, like his father, a prophet. He had foretold his own future elevation when only a youth of seventeen, though only in the form of a dream, the full purport of which he did not comprehend; as an old man, about to die, he predicts the greatest blessing which could happen to his kindred,—their restoration to the land promised unto Abraham.

Joseph is one of the most interesting characters of the Bible, one of the most fortunate, and one of the most faultless. He resisted the most powerful temptations, and there is no recorded act which sullies his memory. Although most of his life was spent among idolaters, and he married a pagan woman, he retained

his allegiance to the God of his fathers. He ever felt that he was a stranger in a strange land, although its supreme governor, and looked to Canaan as the future and beloved home of his family and race. He regarded his residence in Egypt only as a means of preserving the lives of his kindred, and himself as an instrument to benefit both his family and the country which he ruled. His life was one of extraordinary usefulness. He had great executive talents, which he exercised for the good of others. Though stern and even hard in his official duties, he had unquenchable natural affections. His heart went out to his old father, his brother Benjamin, and to all his kindred with inexpressible tenderness. He was as free from guile as he was from false pride. In giving instructions to his brothers how they should appear before the King, and what they should say when questioned as to their occupations, he advised the utmost frankness,—to say that they were shepherds, although the occupation of a shepherd was an abomination to an Egyptian. He had exceeding tact in confronting the prejudices of the King and the priesthood. He took no pains to conceal his birth and lineage in the most aristocratic country of the world. Considering that he was only second in power and dignity to an absolute monarch, his life was unostentatious and his habits simple.

If we seek a parallel to him among modern statesmen, he most resembles Colbert as the minister of Louis XIV.; or Prince Metternich, who in great simplicity ruled Continental Europe for a quarter of a century.

Nothing is said of his palaces, or pleasures, or wealth. He had not the austere and unbending pride of Mordecai, whose career as an instrument of Providence for the welfare of his countrymen was as remarkable as Joseph's. He was more like Daniel in his private life than any of those Jews who have arisen to great power in foreign lands, though he had not Daniel's exalted piety or prophetic gifts. He was faithful to the interests of his sovereign, and greatly increased the royal authority. He got possession of the whole property of the nation for the benefit of his master, but exacted only a fifth part of the produce of the land for the support of the government. He was a priest of a grossly polytheistic religion, but acknowledged only the One Supreme God, whose instrument he felt himself to be. His services to the state were transcendent, but his supremest mission was to preserve the Hebrew nation.

The condition of the Israelites in Egypt after the death of Joseph, and during the period of their sojourn, it is difficult to determine. There is a doubt among the critics as to the length of this sojourn,—the Bible in several places asserting that it lasted four hundred and thirty years, which, if true, would bring the Exodus to the end of the nineteenth dynasty. Some suppose that the residence in Egypt was only two hundred and fifteen years. The territory assigned to the Israelites was a small one, and hence must have been densely populated, if, as it is reckoned, two millions of people left the country under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. It is supposed that the reigning sovereign at

that time was Menephtah, successor of Rameses II. It is, then, the great Rameses, who was the king from whom Moses fled,—the most distinguished of all the Egyptian monarchs as warrior and builder of monuments. He was the second king of the eighteenth dynasty, and reigned in conjunction with his father Seti for sixty years. Among his principal works was the completion of the city of Rameses (Raamses, or Tanis, or Zoan), one of the principal cities of Egypt, begun by his father and made a royal residence. He also, it appears from the monuments, built Pithon and other important towns, by the forced labor of the Israelites. Rameses and Pithon were called treasure-cities, the site of the latter having been lately discovered, to the east of Tanis. They were located in the midst of a fertile country, now dreary and desolate, which was the object of great panegyric. An Egyptian poet, quoted by Dr. Charles S. Robinson, paints the vicinity of Zoan, where Pharaoh resided at the time of the Exodus, as full of loveliness and fertility. "Her fields are verdant with excellent herbage; her bowers bloom with garlands; her pools are prolific in fish; and in the ponds are ducks. Each garden is perfumed with the smell of honey; the granaries are full of wheat and barley; vegetables and reeds and herbs are growing in the parks; flowers and nosegays are in the houses; lemons, citrons, and figs are in the orchards." Such was the field of Zoan in ancient times, near Rameses, which the Israelites had built without straw to make their bricks, and from which place they set out for the general rendezvous at Succoth, under Moses. It will be noted that if Rameses, or Tanis,

was the residence of the court when Moses made his demands on Menephtah, it was in the midst of the settlements of the Israelites, in the land of Goshen, which the last of the Shepherd Kings had assigned to them.

It is impossible to tell what advance in civilization was made by the Israelites in consequence of their sojourn in Egypt; but they must have learned many useful arts, and many principles of jurisprudence, and acquired a better knowledge of agriculture. They learned to be patient under oppression and wrong, to be frugal and industrious in their habits, and obedient to the voice of their leaders. But unfortunately they acquired a love of idolatrous worship, which they did not lose until their captivity in Babylon. The golden calves of the wilderness were another form of the worship of the sacred bulls of Memphis. They were easily led to worship the sun under the Egyptian and Canaanitish names. Had the children of Israel remained in the promised land, in the early part of their history, they would probably have perished by famine, or have been absorbed by their powerful Canaanitish neighbors. In Egypt they were well fed, rapidly increased in number, and became a nation to be feared even while in bondage. In the land of Canaan they would have been only a pastoral or nomadic people, unable to defend themselves in war, and unacquainted with the use of military weapons. They might have been exterminated, without constant miracles and perpetual supernatural aid,—which is not the order of Providence.

In Egypt, it is true, the Israelites lost their political

independence; but even under slavery there is much to be learned from civilized masters. How rapid and marvellous the progress of the African races in the Southern States in their two hundred years of bondage! When before in the history of the world has there been such a progress among mere barbarians, with fetichism for their native religion? Races have advanced in every element of civilization, and in those virtues which give permanent strength to character, under all the benumbing and degrading influences of slavery, while nations with wealth, freedom, and prosperity have declined and perished. The slavery of the Israelites in Egypt may have been a blessing in disguise, from which they emerged when they were able to take care of themselves. Moses led them out of bondage; but Moses also incorporated in his institutions the "wisdom of the Egyptians." He was indeed inspired to declare certain fundamental truths, but he also taught the lessons of experience which a great nation had acquired by two thousand years of prosperity. Who can tell, who can measure, the civilization which the Israelites must have carried out of Egypt, with the wealth of which they despoiled their masters? Where else at that period could they have found such teachers? The Persians at that time were shepherds like themselves in Canaan, the Assyrians were hunters, and the Greeks had no historical existence. Only the discipline of forty years in the wilderness, under Moses, was necessary to make them a nation of conquerors, for they had already learned the arts of agriculture, and knew how to protect themselves in walled

cities. A nomadic people were they no longer, as in the time of Jacob, but small farmers, who had learned to irrigate their barren hills and till their fertile valleys; and they became a powerful though peaceful nation, unconquered by invaders for a thousand years, and unconquerable for all time in their traditions, habits, and mental characteristics. From one man—the patriarch Jacob—did this great nation rise, and did not lose its national unity and independence until from the tribe of Judah a deliverer arose who redeemed the human race. Surely, how favored was Joseph, in being the instrument under Providence of preserving this nation in its infancy, and placing its people in a rich and fertile country where they could grow and multiply, and learn principles of civilization which would make them a permanent power in the progress of humanity!

MOSES

1571-1451 B.C. [USHER]

HEBREW JURISPRUDENCE

Among the great actors in the world's history must surely be presented the man who gave the first recorded impulse to civilization, and who is the most august character of antiquity. I think Moses and his legislation should be considered from the standpoint of the Scriptures rather than from that of science and criticism. It is very true that the legislation and ritualism we have been accustomed to ascribe to Moses are thought by many great modern critics, including Ewald, to be the work of writers whose names are unknown, in the time of Hezekiah and even later, as Jewish literature was developed. But I remain unconvinced by the modern theories, plausible as they are, and weighty as is their authority; and hence I have presented the greatest man in the history of the Jews as our fathers regarded him, and as the Bible represents him. Nor is there any subject which bears more directly on the elemental principles of theological belief and practical morality, or is more closely connected with the progress

of modern religious and social thought, than a consideration of the Mosaic writings. Whether as a "man of God," or as a meditative sage, or as a sacred historian, or as an inspired prophet, or as an heroic liberator and leader of a favored nation, or as a profound and original legislator, Moses alike stands out as a wonderful man, not to the eyes of Jews merely, but to all enlightened nations and ages. He was evidently raised up for a remarkable and exalted mission,—not only to deliver a debased and superstitious people from bondage, but to impress his mind and character upon them and upon all other nations, and to link his name with the progress of the human race.

He arose at a great crisis, when a new dynasty reigned in Egypt,—not friendly, as the preceding one had been, to the children of Israel; but a dynasty which had expelled the Shepherd Kings, and looked with fear and jealousy upon this alien race, already powerful, in sympathy with the old régime, located in the most fertile sections of the land, and acquainted not merely with agriculture, but with the arts of the Egyptians,—a population of over two millions of souls; so that the reigning monarch, probably a son of the Sesostris of the Greeks, bitterly exclaimed to his courtiers, "The children of Israel are more and mightier than we!" And the consequence of this jealousy was a persecution based on the elemental principle of all persecution,—that of fear blended with envy, carried out with remorseless severity; for in case of war (and the new dynasty scarcely felt secure on the throne) it was feared the Hebrews might side with enemies.

So the new Pharaoh (Rameses II., as is thought by Rawlinson) attempted to crush their spirit by hard toils and unjust exactions. And as they still continued to multiply, there came forth the dreadful edict that every male child of the Hebrews should be destroyed as soon as born.

It was then that Moses, descended from a family of the tribe of Levi, was born,—1571 B.C., according to Usher. I need not relate in detail the beautiful story of his concealment for three months by his mother Jochebed, his exposure in a basket of papyrus on the banks of the Nile, his rescue by the daughter of Pharaoh, at that time regent of the kingdom in the absence of her father,—or, as Wilberforce thinks, the wife of the king of Lower Egypt,—his adoption by this powerful princess, his education in the royal household among those learned priests to whose caste even the King belonged. Moses himself, a great master of historical composition, has in six verses told that story, with singular pathos and beauty; yet he directly relates nothing further of his life until, at the age of forty, he killed an Egyptian overseer who was smiting one of his oppressed brethren, and buried him in the sands,—thereby showing that he was indignant at injustice, or clung in his heart to his race of slaves. But what a history might have been written of those forty years of luxury, study, power, and honor!—since Josephus speaks of his successful and brilliant exploits as a conqueror of the Ethiopians. What a career did the son of the Hebrew bondswoman probably lead in the palaces of Memphis, sitting at the monarch's table, fêted

as a conqueror, adopted as grandson and perhaps as heir, a proficient in all the learning and arts of the most civilized nation of the earth, enrolled in the college of priests, discoursing with the most accomplished of his peers on the wonders of magical enchantment, the hidden meaning of religious rites, and even the being and attributes of a Supreme God,—the esoteric wisdom from which even a Pythagoras drew his inspiration; possibly tasting, with generals and nobles, all the pleasures of sin. But whether in pleasure or honor, the soul of Moses, fortified by the maternal instructions of his early days,—for his mother was doubtless a good as well as a brave woman,—soars beyond his circumstances, and he seeks to avenge the wrongs of his brethren. Not wisely, however, for he slays a government official, and is forced to flee,—a necessity which we can hardly comprehend in view of his rank and power, unless it revealed all at once to the astonished king his Hebrew birth, and his dangerous sympathies with an oppressed people, the act showing that he may have sought, in his earnest soul, to break their intolerable bonds.

Certainly Moses aspires prematurely to be a deliverer. He is not yet prepared for such a mighty task. He is too impulsive and inexperienced. It must need be that he pass through a period of preparation, learn patience, mature his knowledge, and gain moral force, which preparation could be best made in severe contemplation; for it is in retirement and study that great men forge the weapons which demolish principalities and powers, and master those *principia* which are the foundation of thrones and

empires. So he retires to the deserts of Midian, among a scattered pastoral people, on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, and is received by Jethro, a priest of Midian, whose flocks he tends, and whose daughter he marries.

The land of Midian, to which he fled, is not fertile like Egypt, nor rich in unnumbered monuments of pride and splendor, with pyramids for mausoleums, and colossal statues to perpetuate kingly memories. It is not scented with flowers and variegated with landscapes of beauty and fertility, but is for the most part, with here and there a patch of verdure, a land of utter barrenness and dreariness, and, as Hamilton paints it, "a great and terrible wilderness, where no soft features mitigated the unbroken horror, but dark and brown ridges, red peaks like pyramids of fire; no rounded hillocks or soft mountain curves, but monstrous and misshapen cliffs, rising tier above tier, and serrated for miles into rugged grandeur, and grooved by the winter torrents cutting into the veins of the fiery rock: a land dreary and desolate, yet sublime in its boldness and ruggedness,—a labyrinth of wild and blasted mountains, a terrific and howling desolation."

It is here that Moses seeks safety, and finds it in the home of a priest, where his affections may be cultivated, and where he may indulge in lofty speculations and commune with the Elohim whom he adores; isolated yet social, active in body but more active in mind, still fresh in all the learning of the schools of Egypt, and wise in all the experiences of forty years. And the result of his studies and inspirations was, it is supposed, the

book of Genesis, in which he narrates more important events, and reveals more lofty truths than all the historians of Greece unfolded in their collective volumes,—a marvel of historic art, a model of composition, an immortal work of genius, the oldest and the greatest written history of which we have record.

And surely what poetry, pathos, and eloquence, what simplicity and beauty, what rich and varied lessons of human experience, what treasures of moral wisdom, are revealed in that little book! How sublimely the poet-prophet narrates the misery of the Fall, and the promised glories of the Restoration! How concisely the historian compresses the incidents of patriarchal life, the rise of empires, the fall of cities, the certitudes of faith, of friendship, and of love! All that is vital in the history of thousands of years is condensed into a few chapters,—not dry and barren annals, but descriptions of character, and the unfolding of emotions and sensibilities, and insight into those principles of moral government which indicate a superintending Power, creating faith in a world of sin, and consolation amid the wreck of matter.

Thus when forty more years are passed in study, in literary composition, in religious meditation, and active duties, in sight of grand and barren mountains, amid affections and simplicities,—years which must have familiarized him with every road and cattle-drive and sheep-track, every hill and peak, every wady and watercourse, every timber-belt and oasis in the Sinaitic wilderness, through which his providentially trained military

instincts were to safely conduct a vast multitude,—Moses, still strong and laborious, is fitted for his exalted mission as a deliverer. And now he is directly called by the voice of God himself, amid the wonders of the burning bush,—Him whom, thus far, he had, like Abraham, adored as the Elohim, the God Almighty, but whom henceforth he recognizes as Jehovah (Jahveh) in His special relations to the Jewish nation, rather than as the general Deity who unites the attributes ascribed to Him as the ruler of the universe. Moses quakes before that awful voice out of the midst of the bush, which commissions him to deliver his brethren. He is no longer bold, impetuous, impatient, but timid and modest. Long study and retirement from the busy haunts of men have made him self-distrustful. He replies to the great *I Am*, "Who am I, that *I* should bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt? Behold, I am not eloquent; they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice." In spite of the miracle of the rod, Moses obeys reluctantly, and Aaron, his elder brother, is appointed as his spokesman.

Armed with the mysterious wonder-working rod, at length Moses and Aaron, as representatives of the Jewish people, appear in the presence of Pharaoh, and in the name of Jehovah request permission for Israel to go and hold a feast in the wilderness. They do not demand emancipation or emigration, which would of course be denied. I cannot dwell on the haughty scepticism and obdurate hardness of the King—"Who is Jehovah, that I should obey *his* voice?"—the renewed persecution of the Hebrews, the

successive plagues and calamities sent upon Egypt, which the magicians could not explain, and the final extorted and unwilling consent of Pharaoh to permit Israel to worship the God of Moses in the wilderness, lest greater evils should befall him than the destruction of the first-born throughout the land.

The deliverance of a nation of slaves is at last, it would seem, miraculously effected; and then begins the third period of the life of Moses, as the leader and governor of these superstitious, sensual, idolatrous, degraded slaves. Then begin the real labors and trials of Moses; for the people murmur, and are consumed with fears as soon as they have crossed the sea, and find themselves in the wilderness. And their unbelief and impatience are scarcely lessened by the tremendous miracle of the submersion of the pursuing host, and all successive miracles,—the mysterious manna, the pillar of cloud and of fire, the smitten rock at Horeb, and the still more impressive and awful wonders of Sinai.

The guidance of the Israelites during these forty years in the wilderness is marked by transcendent ability on the part of Moses, and by the most disgraceful conduct on the part of the Israelites. They are forgetful of mercies, ungrateful, rebellious, childish in their hankering for a country where they had been more oppressed than Spartan Helots, idolatrous, and superstitious. They murmur for flesh to eat; they make golden calves to worship; they seek a new leader when Moses is longer on the Mount than they expect. When any new danger threatens

they lay the blame on Moses; they even foolishly regret that they had not died in Egypt.

Obviously such a people were not fit for freedom, or even for the conquest of the promised land. They were as timid and cowardly as they were rebellious. Even the picked men sent out to explore Canaan, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, reported nations of giants impossible to subdue. A new generation must arise, disciplined by forty years' experience, made hardy and strong by exposure and suffering. Yet what nation, in the world's history, ever improved so much in forty years? What ruler ever did so much for a people in a single reign? This abject race of slaves in forty years was transformed into a nation of valiant warriors, made subject to law and familiar with the fundamental principles of civilization. What a marvellous change, effected by the genius and wisdom of one man, in communion with Almighty power!

But the distinguishing labor of Moses during these forty years, by which he linked his name with all subsequent ages, and became the greatest benefactor of mind the world has seen until Christ, was his system of Jurisprudence. It is this which especially demands our notice, and hence will form the main subject of this lecture.

In reviewing the Mosaic legislation, we notice both those ordinances which are based on immutable truth for the rule of all nations to the end of time, and those prescribed for the peculiar situation and exigencies of the Jews as a theocratic state, isolated

from other nations.

The moral code of Moses, by far the most important and universally accepted, rests on the fundamental principles of theology and morality. How lofty, how impressive, how solemn this code! How it appeals at once to the consciousness of all minds in every age and nation, producing convictions that no sophistry can weaken, binding the conscience with irresistible and terrific bonds,—those immortal Ten Commandments, engraven on the two tables of stone, and preserved in the holy and innermost sanctuary of the Jews, yet reappearing in all their literature, accepted and reaffirmed by Christ, entering into the religious system of every nation that has received them, and forming the cardinal principles of all theological belief! Yet it was by Moses that these Commandments came. He is the first, the favored man, commissioned by God to declare to the world, clearly and authoritatively, His supreme power and majesty, whom alone all nations and tribes and people are to worship to remotest generations. In it he fearfully exposes the sin of idolatry, to which all nations are prone,—the one sin which the Almighty visits with such dreadful penalties, since this involves, and implies logically, rebellion against Him, the supreme ruler of the universe, and disloyalty to Him as a personal sovereign, in whatever form this idolatry may appear, whether in graven images of tutelary deities, or in the worship of Nature (ever blind and indefinite), or in the exaltation of self, in the varied search for pleasure, ambition, or wealth, to which the debased

soul bows down with grovelling instincts, and in the pursuit of which the soul forgets its higher destiny and its paramount obligations. Moses is the first to expose with terrific force and solemn earnestness this universal tendency to the oblivion of the One God amid the temptations, the pleasures, and the glories of the world, and the certain displeasure of the universal sovereign which must follow, as seen in the fall of empires and the misery of individuals from his time to ours, the uniform doom of people and nations, whatever the special form of idolatry, whenever it reaches a peculiar fulness and development,—the ultimate law of all decline and ruin, from which there is no escape, "for the Lord God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." So sacred and awful is this controlling Deity, that it is made a cardinal sin even to utter His name in vain, in levity or blasphemy. In order also to keep Him before the minds of men, a day is especially appointed—one in seven—which it is the bounden duty as well as privilege of all generations to keep with peculiar sanctity,—a day of rest from labor as well as of adoration; an entirely new institution, which no Pagan nation, and no other ancient nation, ever recognized. After thus laying solemn injunctions upon all men to render supreme allegiance to this personal God,—for we can find no better word, although Matthew Arnold calls it "the Power which maketh for righteousness,"—Moses presents the duties of men to each other, chiefly those which pertain to the abstaining from injuries they are most tempted to commit,

extending to the innermost feelings of the heart, for "thou shalt not covet anything which is thy neighbor's;" thus covering, in a few sentences, the primal obligations of mankind to God and to society, afterward expanded by a greater teacher into the more comprehensive law of Love, which is to bind together mortals on earth, as it binds together immortals in heaven.

All Christian nations have accepted these Ten Commandments, even Mohammedan nations, as appealing to the universal conscience,—not a mere Jewish code, but a primary law, susceptible of boundless obligation, never to be abrogated; a direct injunction of the Almighty to the end of time.

The Ten Commandments seem to be the foundation of the subsequent and more minute code which Moses gave to the Jews; and it is interesting to see how its great principles have entered, more or less, into the laws of Christian nations from the decline of the Roman Empire, into the Theodosian code, the laws of Charlemagne, of Ina, of Alfred, and especially into the institutions of the Puritans, and of all other sects and parties wherever the Bible is studied and revered. They seem to be designed not merely for Jews, but for Gentiles also, since there is no escape from their obligation. They may seem severe in some of their applications, but never unjust; and as long as the world endures, the relations between man and man are to be settled on lofty moral grounds. An elevated morality is the professed aim of all enlightened lawgivers; and the prosperity of nations is built upon it, for it is righteousness which exalteth

them. Culture is desirable; but the welfare of nations is based on morals rather than on aesthetics. On this point Moses, or even Epictetus, is a greater authority than Goethe. All the ordinances of Moses tend to this end. They are the publication of natural religion,—that God is a rewarder of virtuous actions, and punishes wicked deeds. Moses, from first to last, insists imperatively on the doctrine of personal responsibility to God, which doctrine is the logical sequence of belief in Him as the moral governor of the world. And in enforcing this cardinal truth he is dogmatic and dictatorial, as a prophet and ambassador of the Most High should be.

It is a waste of time to use arguments in the teaching of the primal principles which appeal to consciousness; and I am not certain but that elaborate and metaphysical reasoning on the nature and attributes of God weakens rather than strengthens the belief in Him, since He is a power made known by revelation, and received and accepted by the soul at once, if received at all. Among the earliest noticeable corruptions of the Church was the introduction of Greek philosophy to harmonize and reconcile with it the truths of the gospel, which to a certain class ever have been, and ever will be, foolishness. The speculations and metaphysics of theologians, I verily believe, have done more harm than good,—from Athanasius to Jonathan Edwards,—whenever they have brought the aid of finite reason to support the ultimate truths declared by an infinite and almighty mind. Moses does not reason, nor speculate, nor refine; he affirms, and appeals

to the law written on the heart,—to the consciousness of mankind. What he declares to be duties are not even to be discussed. They are to be obeyed with unhesitating obedience, since no discussion or argument can make them clearer or more imperative. The obligation to obey them is seen and felt at once, as soon as they are declared. What he says in regard to the relations of master and servant; to injuries inflicted on the body; to the respect due to parents; to the protection of the widow, the fatherless, and the unfortunate; to delicacy in the treatment of women; to unjust judgments; to bribery and corruption; to revenge, hatred, and covetousness; to falsehood and tale-bearing; to unchastity, theft, murder, and adultery,—can never be gainsaid, and would have been accepted by Roman jurists as readily as by modern legislators; yea, they would not be disputed by savages, if they acknowledged a God at all. The elevated morality of the ethical code of Moses is its most striking feature, since it appeals to the universal heart, and does not conflict with some of the ethical teachings of those great lights of the Pagan world to whose consciousness God has been revealed. Moses differs from them only in the completion and scope and elevation of his system, and in its freedom from the puerilities and superstitions which they blended with their truths, and from which he was emancipated by inspiration. Brahma and Confucius and Socrates taught some great truths which Moses would accept, but they taught errors likewise. He taught no errors, though he permitted some sins which in the beginning did not exist,—such, for instance, as

polygamy. Christ came not to destroy his law, but to fulfil it and complete it. In two things especially, how emphatic his teaching and how permanent his influence!—in respect to the observance of the Sabbath and the relations of the sexes. To him, more than to any man in the world's history, do we owe the elevation of woman, and the sanctity and blessing of a day of rest. In the awful sacredness of the person, and in the regular resort to the sanctuary of God, we see his immortal authority and his permanent influence.

The other laws which Moses promulgated are more special and minute, and seem to be intended to preserve the Jews from idolatry, the peculiar sin of the surrounding nations; and also, more directly, to keep alive the recognition of a theocratic government.

Thus the ceremonial or ritualistic law—an important part of the Mosaic Code—constantly points to Jehovah as the King of the Jews, as well as their Supreme Deity, for whose worship the rites and ceremonies are devised with great minuteness, to keep His *personality* constantly before their minds. Moreover, all their rites and ceremonies were typical and emblematical of the promised Saviour who was to arise; in a more emphatic sense their King, and not merely their own Messiah, but the Redeemer of the whole race, who should reign finally as King of kings and Lord of lords. And hence these rites and sacrifices, typical of Him who should offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, are not supposed to be binding on other

nations after the great sacrifice has been made, and the law of Moses has been fulfilled by Jesus and the new dispensation has been established. We see a complicated and imposing service, with psalms and hymns, and beautiful robes, and smoking altars,—all that could inspire awe and reverence. We behold a blazing tabernacle of gold and silver and precious woods and gorgeous tapestries, with inner and secret recesses to contain the ark and the tables of stone, the mysterious rod, the urn of manna, the book of the covenant, the golden throne over-canopied by cherubs with outstretched wings, and the mercy-seat for the Shekinah who sat between the cherubim. The sacred and costly vessels, the candlesticks of pure and beaten gold, the lamps, the brazen sea, the embroidered vestments of the priests, the breastplate of precious stones, the golden chains, the emblematic rings, the ephods and mitres and girdles, the various altars for sacrifice, the burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, and sin-offerings, the consecrated cakes and animals for sacrifice, the rites for cleansing leprosy and all uncleanness, the grand atonements and solemn fasts and festivals,—all were calculated to make a strong impression on a superstitious people. The rites and ceremonies of the Jews were so attractive that they made up for all other amusements and spectacles; they answered the purpose of the Gothic churches and cathedrals of Europe in the Middle Ages, when these were the chief attractions of the period. There is nothing absurd in ritualism among ignorant and superstitious people, who are ever most easily impressed through

their senses and imagination. It was the wisdom of the Middle Ages,—the device of popes and bishops and abbots to attract and influence the people. But ritualism—useful in certain ages and circumstances, certainly in its most imposing forms, if I may say it—does not seem to be one of the peculiarities of enlightened ages; even the ritualism of the wilderness lost much of its hold upon the Jews themselves after their captivity, and still more when Greek and Roman civilization had penetrated to Jerusalem. The people who listened to Peter and Paul could no longer be moved by imposing rites, even as the European nations—under the preaching of Luther, Knox, and Latimer—lost all relish for the ceremonies of the Middle Ages. What, then, are we to think of the revival of observances which lost their force three hundred years ago, unless connected with artistic music? It is music which vitalizes ritualistic worship in our times, as it did in the times of David and Solomon. The vitality of the Jewish ritual, when the nation had emerged from barbarism, was in its connections with a magnificent psalmody. The Psalms of David appeal to the heart and not to the senses. The ritualism of the wilderness appealed to the senses and not to the heart; and this was necessary when the people had scarcely emerged from barbarism, even as it was deemed necessary amid the turbulence and ignorance of the tenth century.

In the ritualism which Moses established there was the absence of everything which would recall the superstitions and rites, or even the doctrines, of the Egyptians. In view of this,

we account partially for the almost studied reticence in respect to a future state, upon which hinged many of the peculiarities of Egyptian worship. It would have been difficult for Moses to have recognized the future state, in the degrading ignorance and sensualism of the Jews, without associating with it the tutelary deities of the Egyptians and all the absurdities connected with the doctrine of metempsychosis, which consigned the victims of future punishment to enter the forms of disgusting and hideous animals, thereby blending with the sublime doctrine of a future state the most degrading superstitions. Bishop Warburton seizes on the silence of Moses respecting a future state to prove, by a learned yet sophistical argument, his divine legation, *because* he ignored what so essentially entered into the religion of Egypt. But whether Moses purposely ignored this great truth for fear it would be perverted, or because it was a part of the Egyptian economy which he wished his people to forget, still it is also possible that this doctrine of immortality was so deeply engraved on the minds of the people that there was no need to recognize it while giving a system of ritualistic observances. The comparative silence of the Old Testament concerning immortality is one of its most impressive mysteries. However dimly shadowed by Job and David and Isaiah, it seems to have been brought to light only by the gospel. There is more in the writings of Plato and Cicero about immortality than in the whole of the Old Testament, And this fact is so remarkable, that some trace to the sages of Greece and Egypt the doctrine itself, as ordinarily understood;

that is, a *necessary* existence of the soul after death. And they fortify themselves with those declarations of the apostles which represent a happy immortality as the special gift of God,—not a necessary existence, but given only to those who obey his laws. If immortality be not a gift, but a necessary existence, as Socrates supposed, it seems strange that heathen philosophers should have speculated more profoundly than the patriarchs of the East on this mysterious subject. We cannot suppose that Plato was more profoundly instructed on such a subject than Abraham and Moses. It is to be noted, however, that God seems to have chosen different races for various missions in the education of his children. As Saint Paul puts it, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, . . . diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh in all." The Hebrew genius was that of discerning and declaring moral and spiritual truth; while that of the Greeks was essentially philosophic and speculative, searching into the reasons and causes of existing phenomena. And it is possible, after all, that the loftiest of the Greek philosophers derived their opinions from those who had been admitted to the secret schools of Egypt, where it is probable that the traditions of primitive ages were preserved, and only communicated to a chosen few; for the ancient schools were esoteric and not popular. The great masters of knowledge believed one thing and the people another. The popular religion was always held in contempt by the wise in all countries, although upheld by them in external rites and emblems and sacrifices, from patriotic purposes. The last act of Socrates

was to sacrifice a cock to Esculapius, with a different meaning from that which was understood by the people.

The social and civil code of Moses seems to have had primary reference to the necessary isolation of the Jews, to keep them from the abominations of other nations, and especially idolatry, and even to make them repulsive and disagreeable to foreigners, in order to keep them a peculiar people. The Jew wore an uncouth dress. When he visited strangers he abstained from their customs, and even meats. When a stranger visited the Jew he was compelled to submit to Jewish restraints. So that the Jew ever seems uncourteous, narrow, obstinate, and grotesque: even as others appeared to him to be pagan and unclean. Moses lays down laws best calculated to keep the nation separated and esoteric; but there is marvellous wisdom in those which were directed to the development of national resources and general prosperity in an isolated state. The nation was made strong for defence, not for aggression. It must depend upon its militia, and not on horses and chariots, which are designed for distant expeditions, for the pomp of kings, for offensive war, and military aggrandizement. The legislation of Moses recognized the peaceful virtues rather than the warlike,—agricultural industry, the network of trades and professions, manufacturing skill, production, not waste and destruction. He discouraged commerce, not because it was in itself demoralizing, but because it brought the Jews too much in contact with corrupt nations. And he closely defined political power, and divided it

among different magistrates, instituting a wise balance which would do credit to modern legislation. He gave dignity to the people by making them the ultimate source of authority, next to the authority of God. He instituted legislative assemblies to discuss peace and war, and elect the great officers of state. While he made the Church support the State, and the State the Church, yet he separated civil power from the religious, as Calvin did at Geneva. The functions of the priest and the functions of the magistrate were made forever distinct,—a radical change from the polity of Egypt, where kings were priests, and priests were civil rulers as well as a literary class; a predominating power to whom all vital interests were intrusted. The kingly power among the Jews was checked and hedged by other powers, so that an overgrown tyranny was difficult and unusual. But above all kingly and priestly power was the power of the Invisible King, to whom the judges and monarchs and supreme magistrates were responsible, as simply His delegates and vicegerents. Upon Him alone the Jews were to rely in all crises of danger; in Him alone was help. And it is remarkable that whenever Jewish rulers relied on chariots and horses and foreign allies, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies. It was only when they fell back upon the protecting arms of their Eternal Lord that they were rescued and saved. The mightiest monarch ruled only with delegated powers from Him; and it was the memorable loyalty of David to his King which kept him on the throne, as it was self-reliance—the exhibition of independent power—which caused the sceptre

to depart from Saul.

I cannot dwell on the humanity and wisdom which marked the social economy of the Jews, as given by Moses,—in the treatment of slaves (emancipated every fifty years), in the sanctity of human life, in the liberation of debtors every seven years, in kindness to the poor (who were allowed to glean the fields), in the education of the people, in the division of inherited property, in the inalienation of paternal inheritances, in the discouragement of all luxury and extravagance, in those regulations which made disproportionate fortunes difficult, the vast accumulation of which was one of the main causes of the decline of the Roman Empire, and is now one of the most threatening evils of modern civilization. All the civil and social laws of the Jewish commonwealth tended to the elevation of woman and the cultivation of domestic life. What virtues were gradually developed among those sensual slaves whom Moses led through the desert! In what ancient nation were seen such respect to parents, such fidelity to husbands, such charming delights of home, such beautiful simplicities, such ardent loves, such glorious friendships, such regard to the happiness of others!

Such, in brief, was the great work which Moses performed, the marvellous legislation which he gave to the Israelites, involving principles accepted by the Christian world in every age of its history. Now, whence had this man this wisdom? Was it the result of his studies and reflections and experiences, or was it a wisdom supernaturally taught him by the Almighty? On the

solution of this inquiry into the divine legation of Moses hang momentous issues. It is too grand and important an inquiry to be disregarded by any one who studies the writings of Moses; it is too suggestive a subject to be passed over even in a literary discourse, for this age is grappling with it in most earnest struggles. No matter whether or not Moses was gifted in a most extraordinary degree to write his code. Nobody doubts his transcendent genius; nobody doubts his wonderful preparation. If any uninspired man could have written it, doubtless it was he. It was the most learned and accomplished of the apostles who was selected to be the expounder of the gospel among the Gentiles; so it was the ablest man born among the Jews who was chosen to give them a national polity. Nor does it detract from his fame as a man of genius that he did not originate the most profound of his declarations. It was fame enough to be the oracle and prophet of Jehovah. I would not dishonor the source of all wisdom, even to magnify the abilities of a great man, fond as critics are of exalting the wisdom of Moses as a triumph of human genius. It is natural to worship strength, human or divine. We adore mind; we glorify oracles. But neither written history nor philosophy will support the work of Moses as a wonder of mere human intellect, without ignoring the declarations of Moses himself and the settled belief of all Christian ages.

It is not my object to make an argument in defence of the divine legation of Moses; nor is it my design to reply to the learned criticisms of those who doubt or deny his statements. I

would not run a-tilt against modern science, which may hereafter explain and accept what it now rejects. Science—whether physical or metaphysical—has its great truths, and so has Revelation; the realm of each is distinct while yet their processes are incomplete: and it is the hope and firm belief of many God-fearing scientists that the patient, reverent searching of to-day into God's works, of matter and of mind, as it collects the myriad facts and classifies them into such orderly sequences as indicate the laws of their being, will confirm to men's reason their faith in the revealed Word. Certainly this is a consummation devoutly to be wished. I am not scientist enough to judge of its probability, but it is within my province to present a few deductions which can be fairly drawn from the denial of the inspiration of the Mosaic Code. I wish to show to what conclusions this denial logically leads.

We must remember that Moses himself most distinctly and most emphatically affirms his own divine legation; for is not almost every chapter prefaced with these remarkable words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses"? Jehovah himself, in some incomprehensible way, amid the lightnings and the wonders of the sacred Mount, communicated His wisdom. Now, if we disbelieve this direct and impressive affirmation made by Moses,—that Jehovah directed him what to say to the people he was called to govern,—why should we believe his other statements, which involve supernatural agency or influence pertaining to the early history of the race? Where, then, is his authority? What is it worth? He has indeed no authority

at all, except so far as his statements harmonize with our own definite knowledge, and perhaps with scientific speculations. We then make our own reason and knowledge, not the declarations of Moses, the ultimate authority. As a divine oracle to us, his voice is silent; ay, his august voice is drowned by the discordant and contradictory opinions that are ever blended with the speculations of the schools. He tells us, in language of the most impressive simplicity and grandeur, that he *was* directly instructed and commissioned by Jehovah to communicate moral truths,—truths, we should remember, which no one before him is known to have uttered, and truths so important that the prosperity of nations is identified with them, and will be so identified as long as men shall speculate and dream. If we deny this testimony, then his narration of other facts, which we accept, is not to be fully credited; like other ancient histories, it may be and it may not be true,—but there is no certainty. However we may interpret his detailed narration of the genesis of our world and our race,—whether as chronicle or as symbolic poem,—its central theme and thought, the direct creative agency of Jehovah, which it was his privilege to announce, stands forth clear and unmistakable. Yet if we deny the supernaturalism of the code, we may also deny the supernaturalism of the creation, in so far as both rest on the authority of Moses.

And, further, if Moses was not inspired directly from God to write his code, then it follows that he—a man pre-eminent for wisdom, piety, and knowledge—was an impostor, or at least,

like Mohammed and George Fox, a self-deceived and visionary man, since he himself affirms his divine legation, and traces to the direct agency of Jehovah not merely his code, but even the various deliverances of the Israelites. And not only was Moses mistaken, but the Jewish nation, and Christ and the apostles, and the greatest lights of the Church from Augustine to Bossuet.

Hence it follows necessarily that all the miracles by which the divine legation of Moses is supported and credited, have no firm foundation, and a belief in them is superstitious,—as indeed it is in all other miracles recorded in the Scriptures, since they rest on testimony no more firmly believed than that believed by Christ and the apostles respecting Moses. Sweep away his authority as an inspiration, and you undermine the whole authority of the Bible; you bring it down to the level of all other books; you make it valuable only as a thesaurus of interesting stories and impressive moral truths, which we accept as we do all other kinds of knowledge, leaving us free to reject what we cannot understand or appreciate, or even what we dislike.

Then what follows? Is it not the rejection of many of the most precious revelations of the Bible, to which we *wish* to cling, and without a belief in which there would be the old despair of Paganism, the dreary unsettlement of all religious opinions, even a disbelief in an intelligent First Cause of the universe, certainly of a personal God,—and thus a gradual drifting away to the dismal shores of that godless Epicureanism which Socrates derided, and Paul and Augustine combated? Do you ask for

a confirmation of the truths thus deduced from the denial of the supernaturalism of the Mosaic Code? I ask you to look around. I call no names; I invoke no theological hatreds; I seek to inflame no prejudices. I appeal to facts as incontrovertible as the phenomena of the heavens. I stand on the platform of truth itself, which we all seek to know and are proud to confess. Look to the developments of modern thought, to some of the speculations of modern science, to the spirit which animates much of our popular literature, not in our country but in all countries, even in the schools of the prophets and among men who are "more advanced," as they think, in learning, and if you do not see a tendency to the revival of an attractive but exploded philosophy,—the philosophy of Democritus; the philosophy of Epicurus,—then I am in an error as to the signs of the times. But if I am correct in this position,—if scepticism, or rationalism, or pantheism, or even science, in the audacity of its denials, or all these combined, are in conflict with the supernaturalism which shines and glows in every book of the Bible, and are bringing back for our acceptance what our fathers scorned,—then we must be allowed to show the practical results, the results on life, which of necessity followed the triumph of the speculative opinions of the popular idols of the ancient world in the realm of thought. Oh, what a life was that! what a poor exchange for the certitudes of faith and the simplicities of patriarchal times! I do not know whether an Epicurean philosophy grows out of an Epicurean life, or the life from the philosophy; but both are indissolubly

and logically connected. The triumph of one is the triumph of the other, and the triumph of both is equally pointed out in the writings of Paul as a degeneracy, a misfortune,—yea, a sin to be wiped out only by the destruction of nations, or some terrible and unexpected catastrophe, and the obscuration of all that is glorious and proud among the works of men.

I make these, as I conceive, necessary digressions, because a discourse on Moses would be pointless without them; at best only a survey of that marvellous and favored legislator from the standpoint of secular history. I would not pull him down from the lofty pedestal whence he has given laws to all successive generations; a man, indeed, but shrouded in those awful mysteries which the great soul of Michael Angelo loved to ponder, and which gave to his creations the power of supernal majesty.

Thus did Moses, instructed by God,—for this is the great fact revealed in his testimony,—lead the inconstant Israelites through a forty years' pilgrimage, securing their veneration to the last. Thus did he keep them from the idolatries for which they hankered, and preserved among them allegiance to an invisible King. Thus did he impress his own mind and character upon them, and shape their institutions with matchless wisdom. Thus did he give them a system of laws—moral, ceremonial, and civil—which kept them a powerful and peculiar people for more than a thousand years, and secured a prosperity which culminated in the glorious reigns of David and Solomon and a political power unsurpassed in Western

Asia, to see which the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost part of the earth,—nay, more, which first formulated for that little corner of the world principles and precepts concerning the relations of men to God and to one another which have been an inspiration to all mankind for thousands of years.

Thus did this good and great man fulfil his task and deliver his message, with no other drawbacks on his part than occasional bursts of anger at the unparalleled folly and wickedness of his people. What disinterestedness marks his whole career, from the time when he flies from Pharaoh to the appointment of his successor, relinquishing without regret the virtual government of Egypt, accepting cheerfully the austerities and privations of the land of Midian, never elevating his own family to power, never complaining in his herculean tasks! With what eloquence does he plead for his people when the anger of the Lord is kindled against them, ever regarding them as mere children who know no self-control! How patient he is in the performance of his duties, accepting counsel from Jethro and listening to the voice of Aaron! With what stern and awful majesty does he lay down the law! What inspiration gilds his features as he descends the Mount with the Tables in his hands! How terrible he is amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, at the rock of Horeb, at the dances around the golden calf, at the rebellion of Korah and Dathan, at the waters of Meribah, at the burning of Nadab and Abihu! How efficient he is in the administration of justice, in the assemblies of the people, in the great councils of rulers and

princes, and in all the crises of the State; and yet how gentle, forgiving, tender, and accessible! How sad he is when the people weary of manna and seek flesh to eat! How nobly does he plead with the king of Edom for a passage through his territories! How humbly does he call on God for help amid perplexing cares! Never was a man armed with such authority so patient and so self-distrustful. Never was so experienced and learned a man so little conscious of his greatness.

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