Genesis - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Notes and Comments 1, Civilization

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Civilization is the artificial and polished life which arises from the elaborate development of skill, in which the faculties of men have been exercised, and in which men are associated, by common recognized rules, and where the mental faculties are in play, and can act reflectively on themselves, in contrast with men individually, or collectively acting from natural impulses and passions, and, at least in a greater degree, by means which nature affords. For the faculties exist in the savage, and the impulses and passions remain in the civilized, and, if let loose, unrestrained by common recognized rules, can use the means acquired by civilization to satisfy them, as in revolution, war, etc.

Consequently in civilized society men are more dependent on each other, and more closely united; in savage life more personally free, and individualized, though man is naturally social, if not gregarious, for social is different from gregarious—supposing mind and speech.

As known in the world, civilization supposes the fall, but so indeed does barbarism, though in a different way; in fact civilization began, on man's being driven out from God, in Cain's family; Gen. 4:16-24. Adam in Paradise had no basis of civilization, the simplicity of his life in innocence gave no occasion for it; what the effect of Gen. 1:28 might have been, supposing Adam had remained unfallen, can be only supposition. Barbarism was the natural effect of Adam's state when he had lost God, and civilization is the effort to make, by the development of human faculties and the resources the earth furnished, the world pleasant without Him. What could a naked creature, thrown upon his own resources outside Paradise, be but a barbarian?—though the hunting state was a lower state when alone, and the means of life, but connected with natural energy as in Nimrod—though God had sent him out to till the ground, and clothed him with skins, not utter barbarism, but little more, only peaceful.

If we begin again with Noah, we get something more—barbarism was that into which men sank.

The earliest record language gives is a keeper of cattle; “daughter” means "one who milks the cows."

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 7, "Christianity and Modern Progress", Remarks on

Allow me to draw your attention to a recent publication which professes to give grounds for harmonizing Christianity and modern progress. Such a production ought to produce pain and sorrow, and be dealt with in the spirit which such sorrow will, through grace, engender.

Still I feel, as it has been brought under my eye, that I ought not to pass it over.

No one, of course, is strictly responsible for it but the author; still, as it is an address from the Chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at its annual meeting, it acquires a weight which a mere individual discourse would not have. It shows the tone of the dissenting mind—what finds utterance from the lips of those whom it sets in its high places and in the chief seats of its teachers. It shows us to what point the dissenting body is come in the conflict now going on between faith and unbelief; how completely the high and holy ground of possession of the truth by divine revelation is abandoned, to look for tolerance from the infidel reason of man without God in the world. It is, in fact, a humble supplication to the infidel to be allowed to have share in the inheritance of truth, admitting that they have it in their sphere, and craving the admission that the Christian has it in his.

The infidel reasoners are far enough from troubling their heads about the petitioners; as Dr. Raleigh admits, they turn up their noses with contempt at the evidences of Christianity. The air, he tells us, is weary with their repetitions of scorn at Christian creeds. But Dr. Raleigh begs for quarter. If they have scientific facts, Christianity has historic facts.

No doubt Christianity has facts far better proved than any other facts of history, as every sober mind admits. Science has no such facts really. What are called the facts of science are merely the general laws deduced from phenomena or appearances; many, of course, I admit, adequately proved; but these, when of importance to our subject, are not really facts. Nobody unless some rare German, for I have known such, doubts of the astronomical system, demonstrated by the laws of a principle we call gravity. It is admitted because it accounts for the phenomena. I admit, if you please, as a fact, that the earth goes round the sun. Hence, when these laws are known, calculations can be made as to what will happen if all goes on as usual. In a word, appearances, accounted for by general laws, enable man's mind to draw mental consequences, that is, to calculate the ordinary succession of phenomena.

In natural science facts have another place. They are observed in their present existence, and what is observed, and that only, is a fact. These facts are then generalized. Not into laws, such as the law of gravity, but into general principles of causes, or rather similarity and succession of forms. Be it that all animal being is reduced to cellular atoms: I have nothing against it. I leave science in possession of its facts, and the gradual development of theories connected with them. The uniformity of succession of facts may be adequately ascertained. Harvey may find that nothing had living being which was not previously in an egg, and sufficient instances may be found in various forms of being to justify a general conclusion. It may or may not be adequately investigated to justify the conclusion that the fact is universal. In these cases I dare say it is. Still the conclusion is not a fact. It is sufficient to make a science for classification, and for man to act on and to learn by.

So in geology, though facts are much less accurately ascertained, still we may say a general succession of formation in a certain order is pretty well ascertained, sufficiently so to classify, though with defects and difficulties, and to form a science. Now no Christian has the slightest interest in combating these facts, nor, if done honestly and simply, scientific generalizations from them. But man's conclusions are

not facts. Sir C. Lyell finds a skull or some evidence of human existence in the delta of the Mississippi, begins to calculate the silt deposited by the river, and says man must have lived loo,000 years. This I read in his second edition. I gave it away and got afterward the third, and here he admits he was wrongly informed as to the data, and it must have been 50,000 years. Now, when I find such leaps as this, to say nothing of other questions, can I speak of facts? The fact is that there was a skull in the delta. All the rest is calculation or supposition.

We get some human remains in the Floridas. It must have taken 10,000 years for the coral insects to make the coral. But all this assumes depth of water, and rate of increase of the growth of coral, which are not facts: the only fact is that some human remains are in Florida. The case of cutting through what the Tine torrent has brought down has been insisted upon-Roman remains, bronze remains, and then those of the stone period, and then a skull (one thus thousands of years old). I was assured by a member of the Antiquarian Society, referred to in the account, that they all thought this a mistake, and that the skull was clearly stained with bronze on one side. Now I am not a geologist like Sir C. Lyell; but when we have got the facts, others are, or may be, as competent to reason. We have to remember that " is " represents a fact; " must be " is always man's reasoning: a very different thing from facts. It is a fact that there is a layer of sandstone of many feet thickness. It is a reasoning, not a fact, that it must have taken 20,000 years to have formed it. When I come to reasoning, and to probable calculations, and probable causes, I come to the uncertainty of man's reasonings, and to speculation as to how things came about, in which a thousand possibilities come in to make the " must be " uncertain. My experience of scientific investigation of causes and calculations has led me to conclude that they are extremely uncertain, and little to be relied on. Astronomy, being a question of mathematical calculation for the most part, is of course not liable to the same uncertainty. In general we may say, science is not a system of facts, but of conclusions from phenomena; and conclusions, however interesting and often adequately proved for common life, are never facts.

But on what different ground matters stand, as Dr. R. puts it, is soon seen when the real question is stated.

Those who take this suppliant ground with the infidel admit that, if the man of science has his facts, all must give way. "When so proved," he tells us, "we have but one thing to do-accept it." "No matter what they may seem to involve or bring after them. No matter what cosmogonies, ethnologies, chronologies, the facts may seem to favor or frown upon." Now I am perfectly assured that God's work and God's word cannot contradict each other. But this is not the real question here, but the means of certainty of knowledge, our knowledge. And Dr. R. says, " if they are facts, professed and declared such by the whole scientific world," etc. Now turn the case. Scripture affirms plainly and positively something, in the clearest way, as a fact. It upsets the theory of the scientific world. Will Dr. R. say, Well, if scripture professes and declares it, it is to be accepted, no matter what scientific conclusion it favors or frowns on? If not, he has accepted the authority of science as a means of certain knowledge, and rejected the title of revelation to be such. It is a question of authority, and certainty of knowledge.

I admit that science is not the object of scripture in any way. Of course it is not. It deals with the relationships of man with God. Material facts are before men, and left to men. Scripture speaks on ordinary subjects the ordinary language of men, that man may understand it. It says the sun rises; it does not speak of the sun's rays being, by the revolution of the earth, a tangent at the point forming the horizon to the eye of the spectator. But there are cases where scientific conclusions, not facts, come across the domain of scripture: say, such as the unity of the human race, involving the race in the ruin and effects of the guilt of the first parents of that race—cases, consequently, where it is a question of means of certainty. Which am I to trust, man or God? Thus, there are blacks: that is a fact. Many of these new philosophers conclude that there were originally more races than one. That is a conclusion, not a fact. I read, " by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned "; and that God " hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Now I am not discussing here the point in itself of races of men, but what authority is the word of God to have? Which am I to trust, man's conclusions, or the statement of scripture, because it is a revelation?

I find men differing. Mr. Agassiz may tell me (he is a naturalist), that it is not Darwinian development, that this is utterly unfounded, but that there are many races, that the types of animal forms are different in different quarters of the globe, and that man in each partakes of this typical and characteristic form. Dr. Darwin and followers may insist that the gorilla of Africa, of one quarter of the globe, is the original type of the whole human race everywhere, his own ancestors, as the gorilla is the development of some less perfect form still, and that a stupid penguin may, in a sufficient number of ages, be formed into a clever man by natural selection, let alone gorillas. The ethnologist assures me that negro faces are found in Egyptian monuments in the times of the Osirtasens and Rameses in the earliest records we have of man, and that there must be two races.

Pictet, by accurate investigations of Zend and Sanscrit, assures me that no data of pre-historic man goes beyond some 3,000 years before Christ, as a limit Now the only fact in all this is that there are figures of negroes on Egyptian monuments, and, if you please, different kinds of pigeons; the causes of which difference of typical form no one has yet adequately explained. But scientific facts, Dr. R. tells us, we are to accept, no matter what cosmogonies or ethnologies they seem to favor or frown on. If they set aside Moses' account, so much the worse for Moses; or Paul's declarations, so much the worse for his ignorance. " It is just as certain (Dr. R. tells us) that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, considered as a human book... as it is certain that fallible men wrote the several parts of it, distinguished and selected them one by one from other contemporary writings," etc.

Now I will give all possible credit to Dr. R. The gap I have left out contains this salvo... " which, however, do not affect the substance of its inspiration, or impair the certainty we have of the complete communication of the divine meaning in it." What is the substance of its inspiration? Who is to put the limits? For instance, is the unity of the human race involving all in sin? The real question is that of the authority when scripture has spoken.

Critical examination of copies or translations are the careful ascertainment of what is scripture, the oracles of God having been committed to man, though secured to us by God in grace and providential care. The authority of what is ascertained to be so is another question. As to this, we have Dr. R.'s assertion, " It is just as certain that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, as it is certain that fallible men wrote the several parts of it." What then is inspiration? What the authority of the scriptures? We find in the word that in the perilous days of the last times we are referred to the scriptures; and it is declared that every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that what the apostle taught, having received it by revelation, he communicated not by words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Ghost taught; 1 Cor. 2. And Peter says, holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I need not recall how the Lord Himself puts His seal on the authority of the scriptures, and uses them as of divine authority against Satan, and in reference to Himself. The facts of Christianity, Dr. R. tells us, are adequately proved by history, and this is sufficient.

Proved by what? " They stand on the highest ground of historic credibility." No doubt they do, so as to prove the folly of infidels. But what has this to do with the authority of the word of God-our one security, according to the apostle, in the last days? But still, if all rests on historic credibility, there may be mistakes; and where is the authority of the word? " But here is our case " (says Dr. R.), " that out of this book, as history, and out of other books as histories contemporary and subsequent, there arise up to our view, first dimly in type and shadow, then clearly in personal life, the great facts which stand at the heart of Christianity," etc. Now here the scriptures, Old and New Testaments, I suppose, and other books, are heaped together to prove facts historically. One book may be more exact than another; they are all histories written by fallible men. And all this is to curry favor with, to get a little allowance from, those who care not for them, and will not have, save as an historical document (such as others are for ethnology), their book nor their Christianity at all at any price.

What shall we say to such pandering to infidelity? " For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor a profit, but a shame and also a reproach." If the church rests on the authority of God and of His word, they have a place which that authority will sanction and give honor to. " He that believeth not, hath made God a liar." " He that is of God heareth us." If they relinquish this to try and put themselves on a level with men, if they try and drag in Christianity after them, they have lost all their vantage ground, divine authority over the heart and conscience; and the infidel, to use an oriental expression, will make them eat dirt, and will not be bothered with their Christianity. And this is the ground leading dissenters have now taken. This is what it is important to notice in what is passing around us. They are giving up the only solid ground of truth. We must know now-a-days who is to be trusted. Christians must be Christ's and on the ground He has laid for it in the revelation He has given. God's word must have authority over men; or it is not His word, and it, and they who should have wielded it as the sword of the Spirit, have lost their place and title and true greatness.

And now see what a singular and strange blindness this treachery to the authority of God's word, this pandering to infidels, brings in. It is perfectly incredible that an intelligent man should have fallen into such utter darkness, if it were not that unfaithfulness to God ever brings in blindness and confusion in man. Men, Dr. R. tells us, were to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. Man " was made," he tells us, "for this world" (the italics are his), " as we may say, an earthly man in the higher sense-reproductive, progressive through the ages, industrial, scientific, artistic, conquering, lordly." Is this Adam in paradise, or out of it? How wholly is the fall ignored here! But to pursue. " But this is not all: the first chapters of Genesis are full of art and science. Poetry, music, metal working, husbandry, architecture; a whole city is built almost before Eden had time to wither. So far is it from being true that natural knowledge is the natural enemy of revealed religion, we see them

here in their cradle, and they are twin sisters." Who would have thought that all here referred to sprung up under the hand

of Cain and his family, after he had killed Abel, the accepted one of God and because he was so, and when God had driven him out from His presence because he had thus filled up the measure of sin, and had chased him as a vagabond (Nod) from before His face, from which Cain declares he was now hid-that Cain had now built the city and embellished it, invented the music and the metal working, to get on as happily as he could without God, and that the result of all was the flood? " This they willingly are ignorant of," even how the world that then was perished-the result of the mixture of the sons of God with the daughters of men.

Let us see the account from which the statement is drawn:" And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou finest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto Jehovah, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And Jehovah said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And Jehovah set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah," Gen. 4:11-22.

And then Abel and Cain and his city of progress are twin sisters in the same cradle! Is it possible to conceive a greater degree of infatuation than that to which this pitiable servility to infidelity has reduced the writer of the address? Cain, driven out from the presence of Jehovah, hid from His face, a mark set on him by God, establishing a city where God had made him a vagabond and embellishing it with arts and sciences to make it pleasant without God-for God he certainly had not-and which ended in result in the judgment of God in the flood: this is our pattern, this is the twin sister whose embraces we are to court! We are to learn by it, we are told, that there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. Is it possible for infatuation to be more complete? But such is the ground taken by dissent now; and, while reading that the friendship is enmity against God, pandering to the world, that the world may, in some small degree, admit it to its company and its career of progress.

And what is the grand point of agreement? " The need is just this-that each party (if we may speak of parties in the matter) shall accept frankly the facts which are universally accepted by the other." Can anything be more absurd? Why, as to facts, am I to accept all that are accepted by another party? Why are infidels to trust the facts the Christian party accepts? It is merely trusting the competent investigation of the party, they would say their prejudices, a book or fifty books full of errors and mistakes, according to Dr. R. Why should I accept the facts other people accept, without knowing their infallibility or competency as conclusive, or investigating for myself? I take facts on adequate testimony, not on other people's accepting them. Nothing can be more absurd. A treaty of peace with those who reject the truth of God on such ground as this: because indeed my party believes it, they are to do so too, and I am to be bound by their facts as they choose to state them! And where is God in all this, where a revelation? Where a word sharper than any two-edged sword? Men's opinions (for the acceptance of facts is only that) are to be trusted, and trusted on both sides without examination, by an agreement between Christians and infidels; and this is to be the ground of faith and common progress: a ground impossible, I do not say to a Christian, who would be abhorrent from the whole scheme, but to an honest man.

But my object is not now to discuss the scheme, which seems to me the shallowest thing imaginable, and base in its servile pandering to infidel men of science; but in these days, when everyone sees that all is breaking up (and dissenters know it as well as anybody else, and this discourse is the proof of it, and the betrayal of their fears), we need to know what we can trust, and whom; and while I doubt not that there are many beloved brethren amongst dissenters, saints who believe in and trust the word of God as I do myself, such a testimony from such a place is a witness and a proof that we cannot trust for a moment the ground on which dissenters have placed themselves, nor the dissenting body as standing on the sure ground of divine truth. I urge, and such statements should only press upon the soul the need of doing so, every humble soul to hold fast the word of God and its authority, its divine authority.

We all know translations are man's work, and of course in a measure partake of his imperfection. All may know from the word of God that the oracles of God were committed to men to keep. But they are prophetic or inspired writings which were so. Their authority is a matter of faith. And though man's failure in faithfulness may affect details, as in the work of his own salvation, they are given, according to the wisdom and will of God to be His word, and are their own evidence, as the sun in the firmament. Man may, in one sense, labor for his own salvation; he may diligently seek to have the word of God pure; but the soul taught of God knows God has given both, and will have both owned as His and appreciated as His. It is God's will that man should use diligence thus; but the humble soul taught of God knows on whom it leans with confidence, and from whom it has received alike eternal life and the word by which it has been engendered in him. He may make mistakes in his path, in his interpretation of the word, but he is, for all that, led and guided of God in both, and attributes his mistakes to man in both, and faithfulness and truth to God. He says, " Let God be true, and every man a liar," and he knows God has not left him in darkness, but that God has given him a revelation from Himself, a revelation of grace and truth come by Jesus Christ, and of all His preliminary dealings, so important to the full understanding of that, and that the scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus-able to make the man of God perfect, and that the entering of God's word gives light and understanding to the simple. The Christian is one who, by divine teaching, knows the truth and authority and power of the divine word. He accepts it in the largeness and fullness in which it is given, thankful if learned inquirers, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, can give it to him as free from all human imperfections as possible, if they labor that no earthly particles of mud be in the water; but the water he knows to be water, and drinks it and lives.

Letters 2, Atonement; Place of Governmental Wrath; Use of the Term Wrath; Humanity of Christ, The

As to the question you put: governmental wrath [on Christ] is all totally wrong. When I speak of governmental wrath, it is just in contrast with expiation; and any governmental wrath on the cross was on Israel, not on Christ at all, only He entered into it I believe. That is what they made so much fuss about. His sympathy will be with them at the end, but He suffered in going through it all in heart and spirit, that He might sympathize with them, as He suffered being tried to be able to sympathize with us. This is what H. denied expressly—the actual suffering—or I should have withdrawn the tract for his sake and D.'s, if no more.

But no governmental wrath was on Him; whereas when He was made sin it was on Him though for us—then the cup He had to drink that we might never drink it—He, and He alone (as to us), drank the cup. In the other, He felt the sorrow for His people of their losing all according to the flesh, suffered from Gentiles, suffered from apostate Jews, as they will, and was cut off as Messiah, taking nothing. But the governmental wrath was on them, not on Him, though He entered into it, and had the sorrow and suffering of it on His heart and in His circumstances. But the cross is another thing as expiation. There it was Himself drank the cup instead of others. It was the hatred of God's nature to sin, and His judicial action as to it on Him, to save us; though the scripture, I suppose to avoid the idea of personal displeasure, does not use the word "wrath" as to it. Yet it was the cup of God's wrath against sin. But the absence of the word would suffice to set aside the idea of governmental wrath, which I judge all wrong. I have no difficulty as to it myself. I do not believe one drop of consolation was in Christ's heart when He made propitiation for sin, or it would have rendered the suffering and sacrifice for sin imperfect: He drank the cup—solemn thought—of bitterness without alloy, or any relief, because He was made sin, and had to be that before God as God in holiness for us, and it was just the perfectness of this in obedience and love to His Father, its absoluteness for God's glory, that made God and the Father find perfect complacency in it and in Him. If there had been some relief, some assuagement of the suffering, it would not have been sin before God; but because there was none, and He perfect in glorifying God in it, therefore God's complacency was perfect in it, and the Father's in Him as doing it. Hence, too, He says, "My Father," but on the cross, "My God, my God," when accomplishing the work (still "my" because He was perfect), and "my Father" and "my God" after (and ours then) and that for us too, entering into the full effect in righteousness and love, ever personally His—but now through redemption for us too. The divinity did not screen the manhood from the taste of the terrible cup, but enabled Him to drink it He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit to God, as He cast out devils by the Spirit of God. And though God of course could not die—no more even could a human soul—yet there was no separation of the natures. Let nothing weaken our sense of the full propitiation for sin.

Of course, if I think of the Son as a divine Person, He could not die—no more, I repeat, could a human soul in fact. But if a man not having a soul was there, what is his death? Nonentity. If Christ was only as a man there, it was no more than another man there, only sinless—that is, it was nothing. The Son as a divine Person of course could not die, looked at apart; but He who was Son died and gave Himself, not as apart, but in all the infinite value of His Person and in His divine love to us. I do not say Mary was the mother of God, if I may compare them, but she was the mother of Him personally who was God, and if He was not, His birth was nothing. A person may object to saying the Son died, because he is looking at Him apart as a divine Person; but if it be denied that He being Son died, I have lost the value of His death, which is infinite, both in love and value.

Governmental wrath is all wrong. I admit perfect complacency, but complacency in His perfectly drinking the cup (forsaken of God as to the feeling of His soul) and in Him that did it; but solace by it, there is not a trace of in scripture; it would destroy its perfectness.

1872.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Sacrifice in the Ways of God, The Place of

IF we take the history of the garden of Eden as a whole, we shall see it is such a whole, and, in brief, a complete picture of the ways of God. Man placed under responsibility (and even under law failed and broke it) was sinful, and an actual sinner, and was driven out from the place of sojourn, where God visited him for fellowship. But God did not send him out to begin a new world away from Himself, without giving the fullest testimony to the sovereign grace that has met the evil. Man's nakedness was the expression of innocence being gone. Shame and guilt, and a guilty fear of God's presence, was now man's estate. God, in sovereign grace, met this. He clothed Adam with robes which came from death, and His eye had His own work before Him. That did not say man was not naked in himself, but that God Himself, having taken knowledge of it in grace, had covered his nakedness. The present state was perfectly provided for in full, and the power of evil judged in the future. Hereafter the power of the serpent's seed would be destroyed.

But man thus driven out from God, and innocence gone, began a new world, and the question necessarily arose, Can man have to say to God, and how? Now it is clear that if God wrought in man, He could not for a moment be indifferent to what had happened, and still clearer that God could not be indifferent to the state of evil which had brought man where he now was, and was expressed by what he was-in sin and away from God. That which was the sad effect for man, God saw as the evil state in him.

The driving him out of paradise had placed man in a judicial way in this place, though not irrecoverably. He was in it morally, and the question arose: Could he approach God-go to God? Now he could not really, while insensible to the state he had got into; he would be still as far from God as ever; and, in the public government and testimony of God, God could not give a testimony to His so receiving him: and this is the new platform of Cain and Abel-approaching God when in a state which was the result of being driven out from His presence. Do we approach God as if nothing had happened, in connection with the everyday circumstances and duties of the place we have got into, or in the sense of the sinfulness of this state, the sense of our fall, and looking up to God in our consciences, as those who have got there by sin? Every Christian knows. And here note, it is not committed sin, but the consciousness of our true standing before God Cain goes with the fruit of his toil (man had been sent forth to be a tiller of the ground)-the actual practical state of man driven out. In Abel faith had its perceptions. Sin had come in and death by sin: faith recognized it. " So Christ appeared once in the consummation of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This was not the clearing the individual's sins actually, committed: they are spoken of immediately after as a distinct subject, adding judgment-but, a judgment past for those who look for Him seeing He has borne their sins Himself, who becomes Himself the Judge; Heb. 9:26-28.

We have four worlds, so to speak, in this aspect: the garden of Eden; a world no longer innocent, but departed from God and driven out, where sin reigns and Satan; a world in which Christ reigns and in righteousness; and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We have an innocent world (now gone), tested without evil being it, by simple obedience. The final world as based in righteousness, which in its nature never changes, cannot change in its moral stability.

But the moment sin had come in, and characterized the world and the state of man, the terms on which man could be with God must be altered, must be changed, because God could not change. That a holy God and a sinful creature should be on the same terms as an innocent one, could not be. Free and happy communion would be impossible: cry for mercy there might be-challenge on what ground he was there; but no free intercourse. That God is love does not alter this. His love is a holy love and He is light, but " men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John 3:19.

Now, I admit and believe, that the free, sovereign self-originated love of God is the source of all our joys and hopes and blessings, eternal and infinite as they are. But God exercises that love by bringing in a Mediator in death: not here by blood-shedding to meet guilt, but in perfect self-surrender to God in that which was death, as such, and the fruit of sin. Fat (Gen. 4:4) was forbidden as much as blood, but not offered as such for forgiveness, but for acceptance in another, who gave Himself wholly to God in death which had come in. And remark, this was that souls might approach to God: each came with his offering.

Cain came, as I have said, as if nothing had happened, so much so that he brought to God, as offering, what was the sign of the ruined state into which he had got, but which did not reckon it as ruin. There was no faith in it. In Abel's there was; he offered by faith, which recognized that death had come in, come in by sin, but that another had given Himself for him " an offering made by fire of a sweet savor ": for there are two things-" unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins "; " Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us to God " as an offering made by fire, " and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor "-one to clear foregone sins; the other, the value and preciousness of the One in whom we are accepted-" Accepted in the beloved." Now this was a question of acceptance in coming. God did not accept Cain. He did accept Abel, but the witness was borne to his gifts. He was accepted, but God's testimony was to that which he brought-the life of another in all its energies and perfectness given up to God in death.

Another thing we have to remark here, it was not God setting forth anything to the sinner. That was " a mercy-seat through faith in His blood." It was Abel presenting himself to God, but coming by the acceptance and perfectness of another, who had given his life for him. And this is propitiation. Now to say that God could receive a sinner as He received an innocent person is to say that God is indifferent to good and evil. And note here, it was not by the eye of God resting on an inward change that a difference was made: there was such a change, for faith was working in Abel's heart; but it was a judicial estimate on the part of God of the gifts he brought-Christ, Christ offered in sacrifice-and for this we have the express authority of the Hebrews. It was a propitiatory sacrifice-a ground of acceptance, or the whole basis of the standing of a fallen world is gone-the whole moral basis of the preference of Abel to Cain is gone.

That love may have been there, nay, if you please, electing love, I admit, but the ground of acceptance, as stated in scripture (see Heb. 11), is gone if propitiatory sacrifice be not accepted: and to win secure righteousness before God, and for the believer's acceptance, according to the value that is in Christ, He offered Himself absolutely without spot for God's glory. " Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." Faith believed in it then and found its fruit. Abel was accepted, and distinctively on the ground of what he brought-his gifts: Cain brought no such offerings, he had to be accepted in himself only, and he was not. Faith looks to this sacrifice, and comes by it now, and finds acceptance and blessing according to the value of Christ in the eyes of God.

I only add, now, that God gave Christ to us to this end. He "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The self-originating work of love is in it, but the effectual work of suffering is to make good in righteousness that love. God forbid that I should weaken the feeblest confidence in the Father's love. " He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to

us."

It is certain, then, that Abel, man being fallen, sought God's face and acceptance, by a sacrifice, to the value of which God bore testimony: " By which he obtained witness that he was righteous "; a sacrifice which recognized death as come in, but which, as so presented, bore the character of perfect self-offering to God's glory. It was not actual sins which were in question, but the state of man and his acceptance upon the ground of mediatorial death, in which God's own glory alone was sought on man's part in obedience, and in which the highest gift of grace shone out on God's part in love.

But I add, here, as it immediately connects itself with our subject, there is another point, less abstract, narrower possibly in effect, but dealing more immediately with conscience, and hence of present necessity. If a man believes in heart, that is as convinced of guilt, in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not come into judgment, he knows he is justified, forgiven, has peace with God, and so rejoices in the hope of the glory, and trusts God for the road on to the end. " Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity "-not that he has not done any, but it has been dealt with, borne by another. Another has been substituted in his place by grace, who has taken charge of it in Himself-" Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." It is not here the basis on which the race is before God, as in Abel's case, and which, as a general principle, recognizes the whole truth, but actual sins committed, which are dealt with and put away out of God's sight by One " who was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. 53:5.

Now this, call it by any word you please, was one person put in the place of another, and then in such sort taking the sins and their consequences on Himself as that they should not come at all upon the person who was himself guilty, in judgment or penal consequences. Upon all who are not under this substitutionary benefit they do come, and God enters into judgment with them concerning them. For the believer it is said, " according to this time," not, what have men wrought, but " what hath God wrought," Num. 23:21-23.

Thus, substitution is as certain a truth as scripture can afford, that is, one person standing in another's place, bearing his sins in His own body on the tree, bruised for them instead of the guilty, who is healed by the other taking the stripes, for " All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. 53:6.

February 25th, 1882.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Prophecy

Prophecy, St. John's Gospel, tongues, and St. Paul's conversion, are next considered as to the evidence afforded by them -for this is our subject now.

It is well, as to prophecy, to notice a great principle called in question by Mr. N.-what he calls "double interpretation." "No one dreams of a `second sense,' " he tells us, "until the primary sense prove false." Now I meet this assertion by saying, that there cannot be a doubt that from the fall of Adam there was one grand subject of promise and prophecy, of hope and expectation-the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head-the seed of Abraham-the seed of David. To say that this was not produced in the universal mind of Israel, at all times with which we are acquainted (and with no nation are we acquainted so long, or so well at this early date), would be to deny the most certain fact, sustained by the most incontrovertible evidence. It is much more certain than that Mr. N. is author of "Phases of Faith," and was once a Fellow of Balliol. The testimony of Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius concur, it is well known, as stating that through all the East a notion prevailed, that, at the time Christ arose, He should arise who would possess the empire of the world. In a word, so strong was the testimony and the expectation, that all over the East it had reached the Gentiles, and was well enough known in the West to be recorded by the two Gentile historians of those times. All prophecy must (if God's promise was such and true) have centered here; and so, in fact, it does-sometimes clearer-sometimes more obscure- sometimes given as a relief and encouragement to oppressed saints-sometimes breaking through the dark cloud of judgment, like the sun in a stormy day; but, from Gen. 3 to the last chapter of Malachi, beginning, middle, and ending, every ray of light converged to this point, that Messiah was to come. This is the first enduring sense, the key and object of all prophecy. All the rest is subordinate to, and conduces to this.

I have no doubt myself that this leads us to the sense of "private interpretation" in 2 Peter 1:20. We have not God's mind in it unless we take His scope in the whole. No prophecy of scripture is , of its own interpretation. It must have its meaning as part of a great whole. Now, no doubt, partial temporal judgments were announced, which were parts of this great whole; and the prophetic word passed on to the grand summing up at the close, when all the parties to the wondrous drama that is enacting will meet in its eventful dénouement on the stage of this world. In this way only is there a double sense. That partial displays (of the spirit of that which is to be judged in its full manifestation) may be dealt with as anticipative of the great final event, is an unquestionable scriptural principle. "Ye have heard," says St. John, "that antichrist shall come, and even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." Here the manifestation of the same spirit is taken as indicating the epoch, and accompanied by the clearest testimony that it is not the fulfillment. I believe that various passages, applied by some to previous events, are spoken of final ones: others, completely fulfilled in previous ones, have been applied to ultimate ones.

Prophecy is much simpler, in general, than is supposed. But that characteristic evil may be partially, as well as fully developed, is undoubted; and as prophecies have generally a moral character, and those in whom the character is judged, a local habitation and a name, the principle of application to characteristic things or events, while fulfillment is to be sought at another time, is perfectly sound and easily intelligible. There has been mischievous spiritualizing. But no one can doubt that Jerusalem, Babylon, and even Egypt, embody certain great principles and systems, which may be variously developed, and judged according to this development.

Now, this is not a question of a "second sense"; it is a sound and enlarged view of what is undeniable in principle, and unquestionably true in its application to scripture. What the believer has to do is to ascertain the principle involved, and the facts referred to in connection with it. The actual accomplishment of the prophecy is to be sought according to the plain testimony of the passage.

And here I would add a remark or two. Nothing can be simpler or more natural than that some great characterizing principle should be embodied in some system, and this have its center in some place Or people where it finds its development and full maturity, as we speak of

Rome being this and doing that, meaning the corporate system of papal power. Now scriptural statements, as to these systems and places, are most useful, as guiding the mind in its judgment of the principles embodied. Prophecies declare the ultimate judgment of God on these systems, showing out the principles judged therein. When Christians apply these prophecies to partial developments of the principles, it is not morally false, although as an interpretation it is inadequate, and may be mistaken as to the letter. But the soul is guided in the judgment of the real principles by the actual judgment of it at the end. It does morally what God will do in power; and while there may be mistakes in interpretation, there is moral rectitude of judgment. The ultimate judgment of God is the application of power to the judgment and removal of the whole system, which is justly judged meanwhile morally in all its partial manifestations. Of course it is important, in interpretation, to keep to what is really and fully meant; without this, even our moral judgment will not be correctly formed.

The addresses to the seven churches call for even individual application and use of the judgment pronounced on what was locally verified in certain places, as to which the Lord declared His mind, and the results which would follow from the neglect of it.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Sentence on the Serpent: Serpent Worship, The

Mr. Newman sneers (he must forgive me the word) at the sentence on the serpent (Phases, p. 110), the meaning of which is evidently the entire humiliation of the serpent. Going on its belly and eating dust would present this thought to any one familiar with scripture. The import of the words is, beyond all question, the expression of judicial degradation, and the feeding on it even to its fullest extent in the symbol of death.

Hence his full final judgment is expressed in these words: "And dust shall be the serpent's meat." But this one sentence, thus ignorantly scorned, gives the source, explanation, and judgment of what has characterized the universal race of man over the whole globe, to an extent without rival; unless, perhaps, the worship of the sun, which was generally identified with it. Where the polished idolatry of Greece and Rome (with which, I dare say, Mr. N. is well acquainted) has never penetrated, the exaltation of the serpent has reigned paramount, and even in all its details proved the truth of the Mosaic account of the fall. Indeed, the allusion of Mr. N. here is unfortunate; for the fact that a single verse of simple statement accounts for what has governed the whole world, though it embraces nothing of the corruption that characterized what so governed it, is the strongest possible proof of the divinity of the record we possess.

It is evidently impossible for me here to give an account of the Ophiolatreia, or Serpent worship. I can only notice some of the remarkable elements of it. It is found in China, Egypt, Babylon, England, France, Ireland, North America, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Scandinavia (i.e., Sweden and Norway), Greece, Italy, Africa in its most savage parts, Palestine, India-in a word, all over the world. It is connected with the principal gods of the East, of Greece, of Rome, and with the most solemn worship of the countries I have mentioned. In Sweden and Norway, and in Macedonia serpents were kept in the houses as household gods; in Greece and elsewhere, in temples as public ones. They were considered the preservers of Athens, as of Whidah on the coast of Guinea; and the savage of Louisiana carried a serpent and the sun, as the symbols of his religion, and tattooed them on his skin.

If we turn to the elements which characterized it, we find it accompanied with a tree, and a naked woman constantly its priestess. In India and Mexico, the deliverer 1S bitten in the heel by the serpent, which in these and other cases is destroyed by being smitten on the head. Further, he is worshipped often erect, and not prostrate on his belly, and was fed alive with sweet cakes of honey. We find him frequently associated with a tree, and conversing with a woman. And this in countries, in sculptures, and in heathen accounts, which leave no possibility of alleging fraud or intention.

It has been shown that the early history of Greece relates to colonies partly from Egypt, but partly from Hivites, serpent worshippers driven out from Palestine by Joshua, as indeed were the Carthaginians.1 Can any one doubt for a moment of the bearing and origin of all this, and the importance of sheaving that "that old serpent," which had elevated himself to be the god of all the world, was, by present ocular proof, a venomous prostrate reptile? There he was, manifested and marked out by his condition under the finger of God. And when we see the whole world full everywhere with these traditions of the serpent, of the worship of the serpent (and of the serpent erect and not on his belly), is not the immense moral importance of this declaration (which in one little word explains it all, gives the terrible and real secret of it all, and reveals the ruined condition of the rebellious and disobedient man) evident to any serious sober-minded person? Scripture has not invented these facts; the whole state of the world, as the research and learning of the nineteenth century have brought to light, has demonstrated the truth of the account given it in Genesis-the divine importance of the key given in a few short words. That is, the whole history of the universe demonstrates the folly of the flippant sneers of ignorant or willfully blind infidelity, spinning thoughts out of itself, as a spider its web, to catch those who may be foolish enough to fall into it, and neglecting the universal testimony of the world.

I may just add, as curious, that a living serpent was kept in the temple of Esculapius, the god of healing. So serpent amulets among the Britons were supposed to preserve from all harm. Serpents were carried in baskets by the Bacchanals, Bacchus having in Greek the same name as the object of serpent honor in India, as indeed was the case with another name in Egypt.

Another remarkable fact connected with it was, that the notion of gaining wisdom from serpents was universal. This •Kent even to the notion, that eating their flesh gave it. They gave oracles. The progress of idolatry seems to have been this: Satan seized upon the idea of God in men's minds, and the obscure traditions of what had happened. Where he could, he connected this directly with himself; and serpent worship was universal, as we have seen. Still, the sun being the great and splendid benefactor of man, and in unity, man's heart connected this with the one supreme God. This allied itself with the universe. Thus the serpent and sun worship (both being intimately associated with the idea of the unity of Deity and the universe) became connected.

Sometimes the worship of the sun drove out the serpent worship in its grosser form, yet was always connected with it: how should it be otherwise? Thus Apollo, who is the sun, established his worship at Delphi by slaying Typhon, an immense serpent, who was also said to have been cast down from heaven by Jupiter. Tie then gave oracles in his place. Still the serpent was sacred to him, and was otherwise associated with the Delphic worship. So in the Scandinavian mythology, the great serpent produced by the evil spirit, Loke, against the supreme God, is cast into the sea. He is the enemy of the gods; Thor will destroy him, but he will die in doing it. So the wolf, produced by the evil spirit, now chained, will in the end break loose and devour the sun.

On the other hand, Hercules, and other such mystic personages answering to Thor in many respects, a kind of god-man, destroys serpents in all manner of fables. And Krishna in India, and Teotl in Mexico, reproduce traditional accounts of scripture redemption, connected with what is said of the serpent in Genesis.2 Caesar produces as the doctrine of the Druids, that man's sins could only be expiated by man's death.

Now idolatry, as far as we can say from scripture, came in only after the Hood. Hence we have the next step in idolatry, a vague tradition of a reign of bliss under Saturn, which recalled Paradise; and then his three sons, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, who become the supreme gods of heaven, earth, and sea; that is the three sons of Noah (the ark being so distinctly remembered, that in the grand procession they carried a statue about in a kind of ship). Indeed, it is very probable that the Greek word translated "temple" is really identical with that of "ship." In fine, the worship of the serpent connected itself with that of the sun and whole host of heaven; and, in cultivated Greece and Rome, merged, though retaining both, into traditions as to Paradise, Noah's three sons, and the flood. The purest of all serpent worship was perhaps in England.3

This serpent worship retained its power longer than we suppose. In idolatrous Egypt, so judged in scripture, there was a sect of Gnostics who connected it with their pretended Christianity, and, under the name of Ophites (that is, "serpent worshippers "), had a living serpent, which was let out to glide over the sacramental elements to consecrate them, it being the source of wisdom (exactly as was done with Isis,4 the great object of serpent worship, on whose temple was written, "I am all that hath been, and ís, and shall be; and my veil no mortal hath ever removed;" and exactly as the worship in England was carried on in the serpent temple at Abury and other places, as recorded in British bards' writings of that day): so in Brittany in France, where the remains of these dragon temples are abundant, it is curious to see the mounts ("barrows" as they are called) where the sun was worshipped with the serpent, now all dedicated to St. Michael, whom the Revelation presents to us as the destroyer of Satan's power. And within man's memory, in a village wake, the serpent worship was commemorated, though none understood what it meant.

But I have said enough to demonstrate the importance of sheaving that the serpent was to go on his belly and eat dust. The world has consecrated it-has shown the place the serpent had in its history. The connection of it with the worship of the host of heaven is shown in the fable that Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, seized hold of the great serpent that was attacking Jupiter and the gods, and flung it into heaven, where it became the constellation Draco. Indeed, all the constellations are idolatrous gods. And, to this day, the planets known to antiquity are all marked by the symbolical signs connected with this worship-that of a circle and cross.

In a word, while many traditions of truth were preserved, the serpent was deified. The Englishman little knows, when he tends his sheep or plows over Hackpen, that the hill he has beneath his feet has for its name "the serpent's head," for such, in old British, is the meaning of "Hackpen" (and there was the head of the immense serpent formed by stones, the circle of deity through which it passed being in the center, and known as Abury, a name which is undoubtedly supposed to recall the universal name given to the serpent as worshipped); nor that Arthur Pendragon is " Uther of the dragon's head;" nor that when he calls his "mother," he uses most probably one of the names of Isis, the Egyptian goddess, which identifies death and the woman, for Moth signifies "death."5

The reader who wishes to have more details on this must consult Bryant and Faber; or, if he has not access to these, a work more popular, but with, perhaps, fuller information-Deane's "Worship of the Serpent." He will find the facts I have only alluded to, and an abundance more, which it is, of course, impossible for me to give here.

Universal testimony renders it unnecessary for me to dwell upon the pain and peril of childbirth. The apprehension of death which so often accompanies it tells a tale in a woman's heart which a man's indifference (Phases, p. no) to it will avail little against. I am aware that Mr. N., who thinks it mawkish sentiment to make difficulties about hanging people for the good of society, and takes evil for granted, must, among other evils, take for granted that of parturition. But one who believes in goodness, though he believes God can bring good out of evil, and that He has attached increase of suffering to seeming greater ease, that men's lot may be more even-one who believes God is good may naturally ask, "Why was suffering attached to the bringing in an innocent babe into the world? Why was this special suffering attached to woman, and man left exempt from it necessarily and always?" For, whatever the reason, general and universal suffering, more or less, there is in this respect. Were the Bible an imposture as to this, it could only found such an imposture on the universal consent of man's universal knowledge of the fact. There was not such extravagant effeminacy of habits when Moses wrote the Pentateuch. A person who founds his infidelity on an assertion that suffering does not, as a general rule, accompany childbirth, must be wonderfully fond of the infidelity he is sustaining.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, in Egypt

Mr. Newman objects to Abraham's saying twice, and Isaac once, that his wife was his sister, as being improbable. (Phases, p. 124.) Now it is stated that Abraham and Sarah had agreed to do it on beginning their wanderings. Nor is it therefore very extraordinary that Isaac should have thus learned it in his father's house.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Rivers in Paradise, The

The next difficulty is the geography of the rivers in Paradise. It is "inexplicable." (Phases, p. 110.) This is very possible. But I apprehend that the inexplicable thing is the text which speaks of geography, not the geography of the text. If so, which certainly is the case, I should think Mr. N. had better waft till he can explain or rather translate it before he raises an objection from ít. The interpretation of this exceedingly brief statement is not easy. If it were explicable, perhaps Mr. N. might find no objection arising out of it. A river went from Eden to water the garden; from thence it was separated, and it became four heads. Now, that there were four rivers is pretty clear, for of four heads we have two well known named ones which are rivers-Tigris and Euphrates. The other two are not clearly ascertained. Two systems have been maintained: one that Gihon and Pison were the two rivers which form or formed the mouths of Tigris and Euphrates, which, after uniting, separated again. But this presents many difficulties. Others, who have placed the garden in Armenia, near the sources of Tigris and Euphrates, seek Gihon and Pison in rivers in that country. No opinion has been clearly proved, because the text itself presents serious

difficulties as to its meaning.

The first words, "a river going out from Eden," present a difficulty. The general idea, that the garden of Eden was not without this refreshment, is clear; and Tigris and Euphrates give a general idea of the country it was ín. Eden supplied this water; that general idea is given. Eden may have contained the general source of waters, hence called Nahar generically; but the waters of this common springhead separated, and four principal streams were formed from them.1

N rivers had yet been mentioned, though seas and dry land had. The source of these was the territory from which God had ordered that blessing should flow. Thus Nahar would be used generically (as I might say land in contrast with sea). Nahar, river-streams, took their source in Eden. The garden was thus watered. Their freshness all was there. From thence the waters flowed here and there, and surrounded and characterized by their course other countries. Thus the sense would be-"And a river-source was in Eden to water the garden; and from thence [Eden] it was distributed, and became four principal streams." Of these we know two, and two are uncertain-a circumstance not very astonishing; while there are such, and which answer accurately enough to such description. This sense has its perfect place in the general moral bearing of this pan of scripture. There were the streams of refreshment found. The primary object was the garden; but thence they flowed around the world which needed it. The context of the passage speaks of the different things that characterized the garden; and this account of the river which refreshed it then comes in. Every reader knows the place which a river holds in every description of what God has established. There is "a river which makes glad the city of God." "God is in the midst of her." This last could not be said of the garden.

Here what follows is-"Jehovah Elohim took the man and placed him in the garden;" and then goes on to show the responsibility under which he was placed-a contrast with the security flowing from God being in the midst of her. It was not the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High; but the place of all those blessings and testimonies of goodness by which He had surrounded man when He had placed him under the responsibilities, which He must have done if all the wondrous scene which we know, and which infidelity is ignorant of and incapable of discerning, was to unfold itself before the angels and the universe of God-responsibilities of which we know the consequences, and (if we believe in the Second Adam) the glorious remedy.

Of these analogies, and developments, and proofs of truth flowing from the link which God's ways and hand in it afford between all the parts of this wonderful book, infidelity, of course, is ignorant; cannot pretend to the knowledge of. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." With Mr. N. it is a question of geography; as if God, in unfolding the first steps in that wondrous scene which angels desire to look into, were giving us some additional elements to settle a point in Rennel's Geography. I admit scripture ought to be accurate in everything, without going beyond the forms of knowledge of those to whom it was addressed at the time, or it would not have been suited to them, as God does condescend to suit His instruction to us; as, if we know His grace, we might expect He would. And where is the book which-addressed, in ages earlier than otherwise known history, to a despised people- has stood the test of increasing light as the Bible has on every point? Take the Koran, and see the nonsense that is found in it: yet this was in the seventh century. Take the Fathers. Take any book pretending to give an account of what are called fabulous ages, and see how the marvelous prevails; the little grains of fact to be picked out of these large stories; the prodigality of marvelous nonsense, from which we must in a mythical way conjecture some historical idea (if there is any). The only effect of which is, when we have discovered it, to show that what we have as plain history in scripture is the true origin of the distorted fables we meet with in profane accounts and ceremonies-ceremonies of which the vulgar know nothing but the outside, as the religion of their fathers; but which show, when investigated, that what we have in scripture is really the world's history-is that which, however distorted, has formed everywhere the basis of the whole system which knit portions together as one people, and separated them as different peoples too; which acted on their fears and conscience, and impressed their imagination-had been the origin of their different religions, which were but the conscience of having had to say to God in these gradually forgotten wonders, of which Satan had possessed himself to acquire the veneration and govern the lusts of those who had utterly departed from, and forgotten, the true God who had wrought them.

This leads me, in connection with the next objection, to the exceeding little-mindedness of infidelity.

Letters 3, Hebrew Names for God, The Force of

There is, I think, no difficulty in Ex. 6:3. If we1 compare {vi 1594-1595}Ex. 3:14, 15, we find there, "Jehovah, the God of your fathers." It was the personal name of God as having to do with men, and particularly with Israel—man in the flesh set in relationship with God. It is His abiding name as to this world, either who was, and is, and is to come, if we take Him historically, or more perfectly as in Revelation who is ( ), and was, and is to come, the , the existing one (atta hu), and past in time, and to come. But in Ex. 6:3 it is different. It speaks of the character in which He revealed Himself in order to their walking before Him. And note, when the revelation of Shaddai, as the name to be owned in walk took place, it is said Jehovah appeared unto Abram; and the word was, "I (Jehovah) am El Shaddai; walk before me." Hence, in Ex. 6:3, "I am Jehovah; and I appeared unto Abraham () as El Shaddai: (in) my name Jehovah was I not (made) known to them." This refers to the appearing to put them according to the nature of that revelation in relationship with Himself: so to Jacob (Gen. 35:11), as soon as God revealed Himself to him. To Isaac, who stands connected with Rebekah, the risen head of the church, He is not revealed by any name.

The historical name is always Jehovah or Elohim. The One who appears is always Jehovah; but He appears to Abraham as El Shaddai, and so reveals Himself as the ground of, and that which gives its character to, his walk before Him. But it is always Jehovah who appears, as in chapter 12:7. In chapter 15:7 it is no appearing. The word of Jehovah came to Abraham and said, "I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur." And in Psa. 91, the title of Shaddai is used as the expression of almighty protection; the Messiah says as knowing the true secret of who the Most High is: "I will say of Jehovah," etc. And so He is kept by the power of Shaddai. Thus, I judge, that though Jehovah, as the expression of the constant being of God, was taken as the specific covenant name of Israel's God—the God of man in the flesh who had to say to God—yet it was, as the name of constant being, the abiding historical name of God. Almighty and Father are special names of character and relationship taken with those to whom God is so revealed. The name of the one true God, the name of the being, is His abiding name, in relationship with the earth—the name. The Israelite had "blasphemed the name." Most High is another relative name taken. Hence it is only in the millennium fully. But it is still Jehovah who is the Most High. Hence you would not have 'the angel of Shaddai' or of the Father, or Elion, because he represents His power as such, not a name of relationship; but he took His name, as the name of relationship with Israel.

It was not that the name of Jehovah was not known as the proper name of the true God, but that His making Himself known to them, as the One before whom they were to walk, was in another specific name. He did not take His name, His own name so to speak, as the name by which He was to be in relationship with them. It is a very important circumstance as to Israel that God's own name, what I may call His personal name, at least in connection with man on earth, "the name" became the name of relationship with that people. Hence in celebrating that name, even in the wide extent of the unopened glory, in the past which belongs to earth, we have (Psa. 8), " O Jehovah our Adon, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" He had set in that His glory now above the heavens. Elohim is the One who stands in the position of the divine being. Jehovah is the personal name of Him who truly is so. He became the Elohim of the Jews as a nation who had been called out of the world to and by Him when idolatry had come in. (Josh. 24) Jehovah, He is Elohim. And now we say, Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; but withal of the Son, He is the true God and eternal life. When it is said "then Jehovah shall be my Elohim" (Gen. 28:21), we must refer to verse 13, whence Jacob drew that which he then said, and so verse 16. But in Ex. 6:2, we have equally, "I am Jehovah." But in Gen. 35, when Elohim reveals Himself to Jacob as the present God with whom he had to do, it is again (ver. 11) El Shaddai. Jehovah is found in chapters 31:3; 32:9. In a word, Jehovah was not unknown to their own thoughts or in intercourse; but it was not the name He took in relationship to the patriarchs in their character as such: it was with Israel after the bush.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Critical 1, Likeness and Image

I do not know that I should trouble you with any remarks on the words " likeness " and " image," though evidently of importance, had I not found, in searching the scriptures as to them, the opening out of a good deal of truth precious to my own soul. But I shall be very brief, only suggesting matter for your readers' research into scripture.

I pass by many words translated image and likeness, (as which is more the bright revelation of God, Himself invisible, or the attempt to reproduce it; úÌÇáÀåéú, , , or others which speak of images, statues, etc.), to peak of the words employed of man, øÀîåú, likeness; and , image.

First; I reject entirely the thought of righteousness and holiness of truth; that is positively declared to be the new creation, and is not the old. Christ and Adam are not the same. Righteousness and holiness suppose the knowledge of good and evil, which it is absolutely certain by scripture Adam before the fall had not. This point is not without importance as to what our redemption involves. Is it a restoration to the state of the first Adam, or an introduction into the state of the Second? Unquestionably the latter. "As is the earthy such are they also that are earthy; as is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly: and as we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also of the heavenly; " conformed to the image of God's Son that He may be the firstborn among many brethren: blessed privilege! There is no return to the image of the first Adam, no loss of the knowledge of good and evil; but conformity to, as partakers of, the divine nature, which is above evil in holiness; the flesh down here remaining the same. You must alike exalt Adam above scripture, and depreciate Christ, to make our conformity to the latter a return to the former. And this is pretty much what the professing church has done.

This, then, God's likeness and image in Adam was not; but what was it? I reject anthropomorphism; that is, its being in the form of his body. It is lowering God Himself and even Adam's position, and is confusion only, though an early error; though it be true that, as incarnate and anticipating manifestations, God took this form. That is a blessed mystery, but refutes the idea as to Adam. For it is incarnation-and this the creation of Adam was not, though doubtless in view of it. What was then this likeness and image, and what the difference of the two? We are renewed in (into) knowledge after the image of Him that created us. This itself shows it was not Adam's. It is the , the wholly new man which is this. And it is a , a new kind of man too.

"Likeness" is a simple word for all of us; it is being like. "Image" is somewhat different: an image represents, be it like or unlike. The image of Jupiter presents him to men. One like another has the same traits and features. Now Adam was like God, and he was His image. He was absolutely without evil. No sin, no evil, was, or could be found, in him. This was a capital point in the likeness, though it was not holiness; in one sense more important, more intrinsic. Holiness is relative; it supposes evil, though being above and hating it. Absence of evil is in the nature itself. God is light; pure, besides revealing all else; but holy, not holiness. He cannot be what is relative; nor does His being suppose evil, as holiness does. It is good, absolute purity, though this is an imperfect and relative word; but I shall be understood. Adam was very good, no evil or sin was there. But there was more: he was made the center of all affections and reverence in the sphere in which he was placed. No angel was made a center of any sphere. Man was made one, and amiable and good; loving in kindness surely (had he so remained) all around him; the center of a sphere of created good. And I mean now of a character which could be so; for his being so in fact was more his being the image of God. How gloriously this will be fulfilled in Christ in the whole creation, I need not say. He is the true image of the invisible God. Adam was His image. But Adam was fit to be so by his likeness to God-not to deal with evil, for this he had not to say to; nor would have had, had he not fallen; but pure, no evil of any kind in him, and good; a blessed happy center of happiness, looking down on all; fit to be looked up to by all. If Eve was created too, she was to be before him (kenegdo). But this runs into the image, and they are meant to run into one another. Adam stood there from God and to represent Him on the earth. He stood as such to all around and below him. Had he not been from, and for, and like, God, he would not have been fit to be His image on the earth. But he was; and so Christ will be in the highest and an infinite way in the whole creation.

I think we shall find these meanings of likeness and image everywhere. The first point in God's mind was setting man in His image (Gen. 1:26). And this consequently is insisted on in verse 27. He set him to be like Him, to represent Him to their minds, before others; but it was also in making him like Him. It was not like a stone image, merely to recall, but not like; but to be before others as His image, being really like Him. Hence dominion also was given to him over the creation he was in. Hence, in Gen. 9, the grievousness of the fault of putting him to death was not that he was like God, for indeed he now was not at all like Him, but that God had set him in this place. If I deface the king's image, the question is not if it be like him but my defacing his image. In James 3:9, on the contrary, we bless God and curse what was made like Him: what sense is there in that? It is not the evil come in, surely, we curse; but we curse what was made in God's likeness. On the other hand, we read (1 Cor. 11:7) " For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God "- holds thus his place and dignity where he is. " The woman is the glory of the man." Then Adam begets a son in his own likeness. Alas! yes; like him; upon him were the signs of what he was; not like the beasts that perish, surely, but fallen and sinful, and after his image, holding the public place in the world he did; its head no doubt, but fallen head. The image tends to make us suppose that of which it is the image to be like it. See

Acts 17:29; Psa. 50:21. The " likeness " has there the simple force of the word; the " image " is the representing, to his glorifying before others, Him whose image we are. Now, if we look into Ephesians and Colossians, we shall find God holding a place in the one which Christ does in the other; and the former occupied with our likeness to God, the latter with His image, which Christ is perfectly.

Remark here, that Christ is never said to be like God, or the likeness of God, because He is God; but He is said to be the image of God, for He does represent and glorify Him and God will be displayed in Him in the millennial glory.

Thus, in the Ephesians, we are to be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is His likeness, and it is before Him, not for display. We are to be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God. So God is all; and we are in Christ, a man raised from the dead by God. And if He be in us, it is to be filled unto all the fullness of God. We are to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us. Hence, when speaking of the new man, our having put off the old man, and put on the new, there is a difference in Ephesians and Colossians. In

Ephesians, " the truth in Jesus "is....." and to have put on

the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth." The spirit of our mind is to be a wholly new one, one we had not before (), and the put on new in kind and nature. It is created after God, like Him in righteousness and true holiness, what He is as knowing good and evil. Such is the new man as characterized in Ephesians.

In Colossians, on the other hand, we have put on the new man, a new one () we had not before, which is renewed, new in character (), after the image of Him that created us. Here Christ is in all; and the image, not the likeness, is brought out. No doubt it is like; still, what is made prominent is the image, what is to represent and glorify God; and, as we have seen, Christ is all and in all. So it is forgiving one another; as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. Hence, in chapter 1, we have Christ the image of the invisible God; and His place in creation, the Firstborn of every creature. Yet, see how carefully His divine nature and title is guarded. Not only is He the Creator, but all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him; and in Him, in fact, dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In Eph. 1, you have " holy and without blame before him in love," which is likeness to God in His presence.

I do not go farther here than to suggest these thoughts. That the second man, the Lord from heaven, is the true image of God, is clearly taught; but, I think, with other precious truth, from which I have no wish to divert the attention of the reader of these precious Epistles, this difference will be found to pervade them. Our conformity to Christ in this respect, and our progressive conformity to Him, is taught in many passages, as Rom. 8:29 Cor. 15:48, 49 John 3:1-3 Cor. 3:18. But it gives a wonderful testimony to what the Christian is, and ought to be; his place in Christ.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Apologetic 1, Isaac, Of the Name of

There are no two reasons for the name of Isaac. God directs his name to be called Isaac-"laughter"-as a term of joy and gladness at this peculiar blessing to Abraham. Sarah takes up the name when he is born, and says, "God hath made me to laugh;" but this is no double account of his name.

Christian Truth: Volume 35, End of Christendom, The

May God give us to see and mark the course which this world is running, and enable us to avoid all its influences. When one knows what will be the end of a thing, one avoids that which would lead to it. The end of Christendom is awful. God makes us acquainted with it in order that we may avoid it. The more I see what is taking place, the more I discover that things are hastening on that evil may have the upper hand and be judged, that God may judge it and purify the earth. The iniquity must be full before God strikes. We are in the last days, in this respect. Men believe there is great progress taking place, yet they feel great uneasiness in the expectation of what is going to happen. Christians must keep apart, living according to the principles of their divine calling.

Bible Treasury: Volume 15, Call of Abraham, The

Genesis 12:1-9

This chapter occupies a place of great importance, being the first public call by which the saint is separated from the world. The book of Genesis brings out the great principles of God's dealings with those taught of the Spirit to know His mind. He acts as the God of Abram, as later of Isaac and of Jacob; not here as the God of the whole world, though this is true, but specially of His elect. He is pleased to identify Himself with them, and is not ashamed to be called their God (Heb. 11), as they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly. We are partakers of heavenly calling, not of earthly like Israel. The time is soon coming when God will bind Satan and take the world as a whole for His kingdom (Rev. 11:15); as He anticipatively proclaimed Himself “Lord of all the earth” when Joshua in His name led Israel across the Jordan on dry ground. Till then He is the God of those called out to Himself.

Within the chosen family, Abram is the depositary of promise, the root of the olive-tree of testimony; Isaac figures the son in resurrection and heavenly places, after the sacrifice; as Jacob sets forth Israel's history, an outcast from the land, but brought back again. In Joseph we see the beloved of his father, handed over by his brethren to the Gentiles, but out of the depth of humiliation exalted to the right hand of the throne, whence in famine he ministers to both Jew and Gentile. But further we see him who was separated from his brethren, and then glorified in another and a larger sphere, making himself known to his brethren in sovereign grace and earthly blessing, when they are brought down, in the person of Judah, to own their sin against their guileless brother and their loving father. So rich are the germs of truth in Genesis—the

wonderful introduction to the Bible.

In Noah another principle had been brought out: government for the restraint of evil; and then the whole order of the earth, in not only the families of men, but their tongues, countries, and nations. For corruption had come in, man set up in responsible rule having failed (as we see in Gen. 9, and more and more in Gen. 10, 11). It was not only violent self-exaltation in Nimrod, nor the rebellious unity of men in the confederacy of Babel; but another evil entered (Josh. 24:2), Satan elevating himself as head of power and object of divine worship. For “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20). Thus came in the destructive delusion of the heathen—ascribing those things which God did to Satan, and setting Satan in God's place; which seduced even the forefathers of Abram, not the sons of Ham or Japheth merely but the line of Shem too. “They served other gods.” Separation therefore became imperative: God's witness must be called and come out thence. For what communion has light with darkness? and what agreement has God's worshipper with an idolater? Abram is therefore called of God to get out of his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house.

The chapter divides itself into two parts: ver. 1-9, and ver. 10-20. The first tells us what Abram was, blessed in connection with God; the second, what he became in failure through his own thoughts and ways. On the latter we do not enlarge at this time.

In the first part (ver. 1-9) two things appear, God calls Abram out to a land which he is to show him. Abram is thereon a pilgrim and stranger. But again Abram worships when in the land. He pitches his tent here and there in Canaan, and in Canaan he builds an altar here and there (ver. 7,8).

The special blessing of the believer then as now cannot be without separation from all God's natural order of things, where Satan had succeeded in setting himself up. God did not say, Leave the worship of Satan (or of other gods), but “Get thee out” (ver. 1). So in the days of our Lord the Jewish system, or God's natural order regulated by His law, had fallen so completely under Satan as to be the main power in crucifying the Son of God. Therefore He called His sheep outside, as He tells us in John 10, “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice.” God's ties before were by natural order, by family blessings and inheritances. But out of all these, as well as the idolatrous evil, Abram was called. The link of false worship must be thoroughly broken. Correction of one's ways in the old country is not enough. “Get thee out,” is the word, “into a land that I will show thee.”

Then Abram, “chosen” and “called,” has the “promise” of blessing—not Adam, but Abram. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (ver. 2, 3). We do not hear, of “thy seed” till ver. 7. Abram is made to be a head and center of blessing, with a curse on him that cursed Abram; for it is not heaven but earth as yet, “a land that I will show thee.” The “one” seed is in ch. 22:18, where nothing is said of the stars or the sand. Compare Gal. 3:16.

The same principle applied even to Israel when defiled by idolatry (Ex. 32): only that here judgment was at once executed on the guilty leaders. The people mourned and no man put on him his ornaments (Ex. 33). “And Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp” (ver. 7). Compare Heb. 13:13.

So there is nothing for us now to rest on but God's word. What God calls us to is to believe His word. By His word all things were made and subsist; by His word heavens of old, and an earth having its subsistence out of water and in water, the then world, perished under a deluge. To the believer His word is a necessary authority, he being governed by the obedience of faith; as here we see that all turned on “Jehovah had said” (ver. 1).

But a believer may be hindered when right in the main. Abram departed, but did not for years get into Canaan; he could not because of Terah his father. “Terah took Abram and they came unto Haran and dwelt there” (Gen. 11:31). When Terah died there, “they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came” (ch. 12:5). The call of God had been only partially obeyed. Abram got out of his country, but not from his father's house; and nature, thwarted the results of faith. He went with Terah to go into Canaan, but not in the simplicity of faith, and therefore did not get there; for they came to Haran and abode there. Now Haran was not Canaan. Nature cannot break from nature; but faith can. Here it was failure from natural order in the flesh resisting faith. It was not faith really, though Abram was a believer. Nothing can set aside the immediate and personal responsibility of obedience to God's word; nothing can rightly be between the soul and God but His word. The error in Christendom at all times springs from putting something between. All the instrumentality of the Lord is by the word and Spirit to bring the soul to God; as He suffered once for sins to accomplish it. This principle God never gives up—the immediate claim of obedience to His word.

Abram blessed in Canaan answers to the Christian united to Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 1, 2); and as now our conflict is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, so for Abram “the Canaanite was then in the land” (ver. 6). Thus is here presented to us our actual position by union with Christ, which faith has to make good against the wiles of the devil. Our bodies are here on earth; but we are seated in heavenly places in Christ and have to resist the enemy there, who would make us forget and act inconsistently with our calling and position as one with Christ.

Hence our walk is to be preeminently by faith, not only our justification and salvation, but our walk and our worship. It will not be so unless founded like Abram's on the divine revelation of Himself in Canaan. “And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto the Loan who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD” (ver. 7, 8). Faith acts on the word, receives God's testimony, and finds itself not of the world—yea, of heaven, as Christ is, and in virtue of Christ. Such is the true and proper worship of the Christian, heavenly, and (we may add) of the Father, His Father and our Father, His God and our God, founded on His full revelation of Himself. And the true and proper walk of the Christian, as a stranger and pilgrim here below, goes with it. It supposes peace with God known and enjoyed, and Christ Himself our peace in heaven, blotting out all legal distinction of Jew and Gentile, which kept up distance from God and between men. Now that we have redemption in Christ through His blood, and draw near in spirit where He is—into the holiest, the old reserve and all that appertained to it are gone forever; and in this as in other ways we are called, as God's assembly, to make known (not to the world, but) to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the all-various wisdom of God.

On the latter half of the chapter, the history of Abram's failure in faith, we do not now speak: what we have seen is the call, worship, and walk of faith.

J. N. D.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 1, Genesis 12-18: History of Abram

I have been particularly interested latterly in the history of Abram; and I send you a brief outline of what has struck me in this history as a picture of many interesting elements of the life of faith. There is a difference between public worship and personal communion brought out in this history, and the intimacy of the latter, and the ground on which it is built, which have especially occupied me. But I can, on account of other occupations, only give the outline.

His life, in as far as it is presented to us as a life of faith, begins by his calling, when in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan. The God of glory appeared to him, says Stephen. In a word, it was God's revelation of Himself to him, by which he was called into the path of life. Object of divine election, Jehovah's revelation of Himself to him calls him out of darkness and subjection to the power of Satan (for his family worshipped other gods beyond the flood out of the land of promise), and gives to him the promises, in connection with a faith which set out, on the simple word of God, to be led where God Himself should show him his country and his home. He was to quit all for the word and promise of God. This is the first element and character of the life of faith. The Lord gives sufficient of the details of this history to show that, till Abram had fully broken with all God called upon him to leave, he could not, though he had left much, and might plead the best claims of nature for the rest, attain the end for which he had left all the rest. He had left Ur, come to Charan, and dwelt there. However, after Terah's death, he left Charan, as the Lord had said to him, and now comes to Canaan. This begins the second part of the life of faith: that which passes in the place of promise.

In that life we are called on to set out, trusting God towards the place of promise and hope, called by the blessed revelation of God to our souls. And we are called to walk with God in this place of blessing and communion into which we are entered in spirit. This is the second part of our christian life. It is found here (chap. 12: 6-8). Abram walks up and down in the place of promise-to us heavenly places. The Canaanite, the hostile power of evil, is still in the land. Joshua will, in time, root them out; but for Abram's walk of faith, they are still in the land, while he walks there in hope. How true it is, and how far we are from always sufficiently bearing it in mind.

The Lord appears to Abram; this is the ground of worship, as well as of walk. He does not evidently appear to him to cause him to set out, leaving all; for He appears to him when he is, though a stranger there, in the land to which God has brought him. But He appears to draw out to Himself the affections of him whom He has brought there. But it is not in that condition Abram is to possess or inherit it. He would have lost much by such a possession, his being a stranger there led his heart and hope, through grace, to a city which had foundations-a better country, that is, a heavenly. We can surely say, it was expedient for us that Christ went away. Oh, how sweet the heavenly associations and hopes to which He has drawn us, and into which He has introduced us by the Spirit He has sent down on His going up on high. How truly He has set man in heavenly places with God. How far better than the establishment of an earthly kingdom, however glorious it may be. There is something peculiarly excellent and blessed in a life of faith, dependent on God for enjoyment in what is not seen. A man of the world, one, at least, whose life was passed as such, a sage of their own, has said, " Whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, exalts man in the scale of intellectual being." How much more so when it is God who fills it all up, and that in the creating and unfolding of affections, which are awakened and formed by Christ and have Him, and the divine perfectness which is in Him, for their object and their source.

But to return to the history we are studying. The Lord appeared-made Abram feel practically that he was not to have the land-God, and confidence in Him was his portion- he was a stranger there; promise as to this, was his proper portion, but in his seed he should inherit it. There was a settled purpose of God, and this purpose he was thus to know. How blessed, thus, to rest in God, our heart founded on communications from Himself, and that He can bless us in teaching us to trust Him enough to live the life of faith, to be content with Him. The heart of a stranger, who has God with him, is, of all, the best in this world; it was, in the perfectest way and degree, Christ's. Judgment God will execute to introduce others into actual blessing; we have all with Him, and now, and indeed forever, in Himself. We have no need of judgment to enjoy our portion, though we know judgment will issue and work deliverance for all else.1 This is the church's place, and it is a very blessed one-she suffers with Christ. This position in Abram's case drew out worship. It is its true and real power for us. It was to the God who appeared to him that he raised his altar: the revelation of Himself by God in the place of promise, draws out worship; as the revelation of Himself, when we are far from it, sets us in the way to the place of rest that God is to show us. It is this blessed revelation of Himself by God putting us into conscious relationship with Himself, flowing from what is known to faith only, which forms the ground of worship. It is His favor, direct interest in us, His having brought us by His revelation into connection with Himself, which in and by this confidence creates worship. Our worship answers to the revelation we thus have, while it is founded on the grace of it. The revelation of His purpose, and of the way of the accomplishment of His promise, accompanies and makes part of the revelation on which it is founded. But this puts the soul into permanent intercourse with God of this kind. The worship, to Abram, realizes the various parts of the home promised to faith, to be possessed when pilgrimage is over; and when he realizes the enjoyment of it, his pilgrimage, his altar, is renewed. He goes around the place of promise and hope, where he is yet a stranger; but when he pitches his tent in the enjoyment of it, then he raises his altar too. This is a sweet and happy picture of the life and occupation of faith. These two elements -the setting out on the journey towards the place of promise, and the happy acknowledgment of God in it, form the two parts of the life of faith.

The rest of this chapter, on which I do not enlarge, shows the failure of the believer, who is apt, if the place of promise does not afford him all for present need which he wants, instead of consulting God, to go down to the world for help. This, though accompanied by outward prosperity-as it has been with the church-leads to further unfaithfulness. Abram has no altar here, nor till he returns to the altar he made at the beginning, where he had last had one-no new communion- no further acquaintance with the place of promise. All he can do is through grace to get back to the place he has left.

When Abram had returned to the altar he had left to go southward, he again gets into worship. Here, though perhaps the prosperity of Egypt had given occasion to the strife and sorrow, the conduct of Abram is beautiful and characteristic of one having the heavenly portion. If Egypt

had betrayed him, it had at least taught him a lesson. Returned with this experience into communion with God, he has enough in this to give up all the rest in grace. There is a moment when our own faith is put to the test: often we walk by that of others; but our own state must be tried. Lot, a believer, chooses the world (and contrary to every right feeling), and vexes his righteous soul in the midst of what was the very object of coming judgment. As soon as the worldly-minded believer and his portion are together, the distinction, made by faith and faithfulness in the disinterestedness of heavenly happiness and grace, where God was a sufficient portion, was given effect to by the worldly wish of Lot. Abram is told to go over the whole place of promise, and know its length and breadth; northward, southward, eastward, and westward, all its extent- it all was his. That is, when once the heart has left all that selfishness would have of what might seem within the limits of the land, but was taken by the carnal heart to please itself, the full extent and blessed details of what we are to enjoy with God is made known to us-and experimentally. We have here, then, after the general character of the life of faith, and failure in it, an important experimental element of it: after failure and restoration to communion by grace, and complete victory over, and renunciation of the world, such a sense of the value of the heavenly and unseen things, as frees from the influence of the world. The consequence is, an escape from being entangled in what is the scene and object of judgment, and a full experimental knowledge of the inheritance of faith. Note, Abram escapes, and gets the increased privilege by walking in the path of faith, where there is no perception of the consequences. Abram had yielded through weakness and want of faith in trial; but his heart was right, and after the trouble his fault had occasioned, and his restoration, the very effect of this humbling experience is to give the superiority to all worldly influence which saves him entirely from the fatal mistake of Lot.2 Here the Lord, though He does not appear as when He called, or revealed Himself in the land of promise, speaks to Abram. And Abram, after removing his tent, builds an altar where he comes to sojourn. For our worship is in the measure in which we enter into the details of our portion from God.

We have here three, in a certain sense four, of these altars, in what we have hitherto read. Firstly, the one built on the Lord's revelation of Himself in the land, which gives the general character of the worship of faith. Secondly, one showing the permanent abiding character of worship in his strangership. In Egypt, out of the place of promise and faith, none; then (what made me say, in a certain sense a fourth), the return to the place of strangership and worship in the place of promise; and, lastly, when his exercised heart had renounced all but God, and God (the worldly-minded believer having chosen the well-watered plain) had made him realize all the extent of the scene of promise, he builds an altar there to worship the God who had bestowed all on him, assured him in the possession of it, and given him the present knowledge of and enjoyment of it in hope.

But renouncing the world is the path to victory over it; the choosing of it is captive subjection to its power. Lot is carried away captive by the powerful ones of the earth, along with those among whom his worldly propensities had led him. Abram, free and walking in the faith of God, has more force from Him than all the kings, conquerors or conquered, and delivers Lot and the kings who could not help themselves. The full victory of faith is here presented-ours is not with carnal weapons, when it is gained; and what is figured will only be fully accomplished in connection with the Jews. This brings Abram under Melchizedek blessing, God taking the character, which is properly millennial, of possessor of heaven and earth. Praise and blessing constitute the priestly work of Melchizedek. This is the victory of faith, and the full blessing of Christ (priest and king over God's universal dominion) being established-all enemies being overcome. But it historically gives occasion, not merely to renouncing the world completely, but to the refusal of the least dependence on it. Abram depends on God for wealth and everything. In such a relationship -receiving from the world, depending on it, for advantage as its debtor, is pollution. Thus closes this part of Abram's history, and the worship which belongs to it.

Details of the most interesting kind are given in what follows; but they are the development of his personal relationship with God. What we have examined is, in its general characters, the public life of faith. What follows enters into the private and personal communion which belongs to the life of faith, through' the divine grace which visits it. We do not find worship, but what we may be allowed reverently to call intercourse. In one place we are told God talked with Abram. Abram, no doubt, fell on his face, the fitting position in such intercourse; and even when he, in all liberty, pleaded with Jehovah for others, when Jehovah appeared to him in the form of a man, it was with the fullest recognition of the divine glory of Him with whom he spoke. Still it was not worship, but communications from Jehovah to Abram, and in return Abram's with Him.

This has evidently a peculiar character of blessing and privilege-a grace, an intimacy to which our highest and most adoring attention is due. And if we have the lovely picture here of this gracious familiarity of God with the earliest and, so to speak, infant movings of faith, surely in the riper knowledge of all His ways, and of all His grace, which we have by redemption, and through the gift of His Holy Spirit, this privilege is not lost. It may have a deeper character-a more reverent one, as filled with a deeper knowledge of God-more confiding, because His love is better known-less familiar, but more intimate; still it exists, and the gracious picture of it in Abram's case is not lost for our instruction. It has a christian, not a patriarchal character; but the same God who loves us, and the same faith that trusts Him, meet through His grace to receive the gracious communications of that love, and to tell our wants and the feelings of our hearts, and the wants of others too, to One on whom we know how to count. These communications have a very different character, both on the side of the Lord, and (in consequence of that) on the side of Abram, but they were all what I may call personal.

The first occasion of these communications from God was Abram's definite refusal to take anything from the world, even where he had rendered it the greatest possible service. He would have nothing to say to it from a thread to a shoelatchet. His faith had got the victory over its power. His value for his own relationship with God refused its proffered reward. God meets this in Abram, and says, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. His defense in battle had been God; his abundant reward, not the poor and perishing gifts of a world, to which its debtor after all always owes something -at least, acknowledges that he will receive from it-but the Lord Himself. Such, in general, is the blessed announcement made by the word of the Lord to Abram.

There is a difference between the communications of chapter is and chapter 17. God does not, so to speak, personally visit Abram in chapter 15. He communicates to him what He is for him in a vision, a great and special blessing, but evidently different from the personal revelation of chapters 17 and 18. The two communications have this essential difference: in chapter 15 God declares what He is for Abram, in chapter 17 what He is: and this last leads to much deeper communion, and a larger unfolding of grace and imbuedness with the mind of God, than the revelation of chapter 15. This latter makes Abram's wants and desires the measure of His blessings, or, at least, they characterize these latter. Hence Abram is thrown back upon himself. God meets him there in full grace, but meets his wants and wishes. Now this is most precious. God shows His most tender condescension. He inspires us with confidence: we can tell Him our wants, open our hearts to Him, in consequence; and all the communication that results, while it makes us know God better, leads us up to that knowledge of Him which makes

us see our own littleness in what we have presented to Him as the object of our desires, and gives us to find our joy in Himself, and draw our feelings towards others from Himself, and our assimilating enjoyment of what He is for ourselves.

Thus, when God had spoken to Abram of His being his shield, and his reward, Abram says, " What wilt thou give me? " The first want of his heart is presented to God. God had told Abram He Himself was his reward; but where our feelings and need are referred to, if God presents Himself as our portion, the human heart will turn, by the very confidence that is produced in it, to its own thoughts and its own desires. Abram's reward led Abram to Abram's wants and feelings and wishes. Though God, and even because God, had said He was his reward, the love and goodness was felt, but did not put aside, nor lead Abram, beyond, what Abram desired to have from that goodness, if it was there. God knew all this, and used it for the occasion of bringing out His own thoughts and purposes. This is the grace, then, that comes down to the heart of man himself, and draws it out in confidence towards God, but thereby leaves it in the circle of its own wants and feelings; but its wants and feelings, such as they can exist in connection with God; but then, remark, not going beyond this world, beyond what man wants as conscious of his position here.

The interference of God in goodness to us in this sphere is full of sweetness, but it is not in its object heavenly. As a man upon this earth, Abram wanted a son to continue his name, and posterity to inherit and enjoy the promises. God was fully minded to give this. The natural wish and desire of Abram, Abram connects with the testimony of divine favor. God had, in the revelation which Abram had received when in the land, promised a seed to Abram connected with the inheritance of the land. Abram naturally wished to associate the promised blessing and glory with his own descendants. If his desire had been merely to enjoy God in heaven, such a wish had had no place; the moment his thoughts rested on earth, and God had promised him blessing there, such wish came in. It fell in with God's purposes, but took, necessarily, if the blessing was to be made precise, an earthly character. Our wants, whatever character they may have, necessarily have their place on earth. We may bring God into them, but it is into them we bring Him, and there indeed He is gracious enough to come.

I have said, that the answer of God when making His promise precise, necessarily took an earthly character. The fifteenth chapter of Genesis makes this evident. The numerous seed and limits of the land are given. Some principles are also given full of blessing, but which characterize the position of Abram; most blessed in themselves, but still meeting man's need and weakness, not properly communion in the truest and highest sense. God was communicating with Abram, and Abram speaking with Him; but it was not communion in the sense of the enjoyment of God Himself, and in conformity to His nature. Righteousness is imputed to Abraham; blessed truth! How could he stand before God, or be the blessed one of God, without it? He believes in the power of resurrection in God, and in His faithfulness to perform His promise, and it is counted to him for righteousness. It is the first time this great and all-important truth is taught in Scripture, or even the word for it found; and, I doubt not, intentionally so, though we know there were believers before. But now, in the great root of the tree of promise, this fundamental truth was to be brought out. The very ground of man's blessing was laid here, but it was still meeting man's need. He could not be before God or inherit the promise without it. He had it not in himself. God counts his faith to him as such.

Next, to assure the feeble heart of man, God binds Himself by covenant. Most gracious condescension, indeed; but what does it meet in this wondrously condescending grace? "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? " God then, while nature and man pass through the dark shadow of the power of death (and this Christ as man has done for us), passes between the pieces, and binds Himself in a covenant of death to accomplish this desire of the believer's heart, according to His own thoughts; and promise lays the sure foundation of it in Christ. The very limits of the land are pointed out, the power of those that held them is naught. In this very remarkable passage, we learn the blessed and perfect assuring of man in the righteousness of faith, and the immutability of the covenant; only it is not communion in life, but earthly, and meeting need, though the thing given was pure grace. God has a people, and He gives them a law.

Chapter 16 I pass over. It is not the life of faith, but the effort of flesh to obtain the blessing in its own way; the promised blessing, but under law. It is, typically, legal Israel. (Compare Gal. 4.)

In chapter 17 we have the revelation of God Himself to Abram. Jehovah appears, but He does not appear as formerly, to call on him to leave all, and come to the land; nor merely to communicate promises. He reveals Himself in what was to be His own name of relationship with Abram-Himself under this name-and gives Abram a name in connection with Himself. This is the highest way of revelation. To us it is the communication of a still better name, a far nearer relationship. The Father's name is revealed to us by the Son, and we are called sons. This is the best and highest possible revelation of God in relationship, for it is that of the Father to Christ the Son Himself. Still we have, as to Abram, this kind of revelation. God does not here reveal what He is for Abram, but what He is. Abram was to walk before Him, known in that character. " I am the Almighty God-walk before me." Hence Abram falls on his face, and does not ask for anything to meet the desires of his own heart. God talks with him. Such is the character of this wondrous interview. Jehovah reveals His intentions, and gives Abram a name in connection with them. God does not bind Himself through sacrifice, He only assures to Abraham the various blessings. But He puts Abraham into the condition of intercourse with Himself, as belonging to Himself, by the sign of the death of the flesh (there, of course, in figure, still he is thus placed in the enjoyment of the relationship). Thus God is revealed to Abraham, and Abraham brought into personal relationship with God. He knows Him as none else does.

God is about to judge the world (chap. 18), and He now appears to Abraham to give him the immediate promise of the son as about to come. He comes in human form, with two others, angels also in human form. These latter went on to Sodom to execute judgment on it, and at the same time deliver Lot. But Abraham saw at once who approached, and would detail Him awhile. With exquisite propriety, he does not (while showing unfeigned reverence) break through the disguise which hid from others the presence of Jehovah. The angels were there, Sarah was there, it may be others. He deals with the mysterious guest as He presents Himself, only with the utmost attention and reverence. However, promises belong but to One, and He it is who speaks to the patriarch. But, the word of present accomplishment being given, they rise up to go on their way; and now Jehovah will deal with Abraham as a man deals with his friend. He speaks with Abraham, of what concerned not himself but the world. It is not Abraham's wants, or even Abraham's walk, but the intention of God which He would have him know, opening His thoughts and counsels to him. (Compare Eph. 1:10, 11.) The two men go on towards Sodom; and Abraham and the Lord remain together. What a place of privilege and blessing! It is not worship. It is not a call to follow when the Lord led. This had all had its place. It is communion, personal intercourse with God about what concerns Himself and His ways; intercourse founded on God's revelation of Himself, and on personal acquaintance with His character, grace working on the heart, and producing intercession.

The whole scene is instructive. His son and heir is promised as a present thing. That is our own hope. It is a settled one, independent of all that happens to the world; our own peculiar hope. We are in communion with God, on the ground of His special revelation of Himself to us,

and the expected heir is revealed as coming. God then deals with us in the intimacy of friends, and tells us His purpose and plans, awakening in us, by the grace He exercises towards us and the confidence it imparts, the spirit of grace and intercession founded on what He is, on our knowledge of Him.

Abraham does not ask anything for himself here; he pleads for others. Indeed, what could he ask, when enjoying converse with God, and the certain and present promises of the son? He is in the place of blessing, and walking in the spirit of communion, and of the God he now knows. This began with the revelation of Himself by God. Now that Abraham is alone with Him all is boldness, though reverence, with one well known. The very silence of Abraham when others were there, and Jehovah had hid Himself, belonged to a knowledge of Him which none else had. Jehovah surely had clearer judgment, and even surer ways of deliverance and mercy than even Abraham knew; but we speak of the terms on which Abraham was with Him. It closed this wondrous conference; and when Abraham's words were exhausted, and the Lord had answered him to the end, He went His way, when He had done communing with Abraham. What a place for the child of faith to be in!

And such is our place. God has revealed Himself, yet more fully and nearly. He tells us the good pleasure of His will, according to the good pleasure He has purposed in Himself. He tells us of the soon-coming Son. He tells us, though but as a part of His will and counsels, of the coming judgment of the world. Our place is in grace with Him who communes with us.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 1, Altar of Abraham, The

Genesis 11:27; Genesis 12

We are going to examine the various circumstances which furnished Abraham occasion to offer his worship to God. We will also consider his walk and the character of his worship, and how he was led by faith to present this worship to God.

It is very precious to find in Genesis the elements and the broad principles of the relations of God with man in all their freshness, from the creation, sin, and the promise of the second Adam. We also see how the government of God was exercised; in what manner man fell; the judgment of the deluge, which put an end to the old world; the promises made to Abraham; the two covenants of Sarai and Hagar; the relations of God with the Jews in the beautiful typical history of Joseph. Thus, in a word, we find in Genesis, not only a history, but the grand bases of God's relations with man. Abraham under this holds a chief place as the depositary of the promises. We may understand this by what the apostle Paul says to the Galatians, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).

We see by this word, “blessing of Abraham,” the importance of that which is attributed to him. In considering the blessing of Abraham, we shall see the position God has made for us, in His grace, as to the accomplishment of the promises; even in considering it as a principle, we shall better understand the glory of Christ, heir of all promises of God. It is true that the relations of Christ with the church were as yet hidden, having been revealed only after His death, save at least in type; nevertheless, the various aspects of the relations of God with man, in all their freshness, and the various cases in which they have place, are in the germ found in this book.

In chapter 9, after the account of the deluge, we find that Noah, to whom the government of the earth had been entrusted, fails in this position.. He got drunk: we see then the iniquity of Ham, who mocked his father. Afterward, in Babel, comes the separation of the nations, each after his tongue (ch. 10).

In chapter 11 men, united amongst one another, exalt themselves against God. In the midst appears Nimrod, the violent man upon the earth; while the family of Shem, blessed in the earth, is that in the bosom of which God establishes particular relations with men. Babel presents itself, whether as the commencement of the kingdom of Nimrod, or as the false glory of those men whose unity was in Babel, and who were dispersed of God.

Such are the principal features of the three preceding chapters. Noah had failed; then the nations. Men exalted themselves against God instead of being subject to Him; they joined themselves together to make themselves a name, and not to be scattered; but their exaltation becomes the cause of their dispersion.

Before we stop at the race of Shem, concerning whom God is particularly occupied, one remark is needed. A terrible principle is come up in this state of things. Man exalts himself in separating from God. But, insufficient to himself, he becomes a slave; he submits to Satan's power, serves him and adores him. Having abandoned God, Satan usurps this place; he alarms the conscience; he takes possession of the heart and energy of man, who gives himself up to idolatry.

You will find this fact in Joshua 24:2. It is the principle of Satan's power on earth; which adds to the history of man. Joshua furnishes us with this addition to the account of the things which came to pass after the deluge—the violence of man, the dispersion of the nations; that is, that the family of Shem even, these children of Heber, worshipped other gods than the true and living God. The apostle tells us they were demons. The things which they sacrificed, “they sacrificed to devils and not unto God” (Deut. 32:17). Such is the new world; Satan becomes the ruler of the one we inhabit (a circumstance we set too much aside). God can deliver us, in one sense, from the yoke of Satan as ruler, although it abides true that this latter can tempt us by the lusts of this world, and make us fall morally under his yoke. For example, if the gospel be received outwardly in a country, and if the word of God have its free course there, whilst in another country evangelization is not even permitted. It is evident that, in this latter, souls labor under a yoke which does not weigh in the former, and that Satan rules over one of these countries as he does not over the other. I believe it is important in these times to discern these two things.

The simple fact of being entrapped by one's own lusts is a yoke of Satan, but is not the rule of which we speak. Now, it may happen that several persons of the enfranchised country may be more guilty, for the very reason that they have superior advantages; but the yoke is not the same.

Independence of God is the desire of all men. Man will do his own will, and he falls into the enemy's hand. Such was the state of Abraham's family, as of all other men. In the midst of this evil, God comes, and manifests these three principles to Abraham; election, calling, and the promises. He finds him in the evil, and He calls him according to the choice He has made; then He gives the promises to him He has called, and Abraham receives them.

Besides this, we have the manner in which God does this. He manifests Himself, then He speaks. Often, in those days, He visibly did so. He came down to the earth and spoke to the individuals, and He has even done so since. Let the manner be what it may, He manifests Himself to faith by producing confidence. For example, when Jesus manifested Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, He did so by a visible glory, but acting on the conscience and drawing the heart. Paul asks himself, “Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:9). In Acts 7:2 you will find these words of Stephen: “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.”

God manifests Himself to the conscience, which sees itself in the presence of God; it feels that God is there; it perceives beforehand a judgment which is impending; and, whatever be the lack of outward manifestation, man must find himself before God, must follow Him, whereas before this he did his own will. So it happened to Saul of Tarsus. Saul had not troubled himself about God's will; but as soon as he had heard Christ, he must enlist himself. The effect produced in the heart is expressed in these words: “What wilt thou have me to do” (Acts 9:6)? The communication of life, we know, takes place in the soul. Also, God speaks, even though He should have manifested Himself to the sight, as to Saul. It is His word which makes itself to be heard, even when it is written; and the written word is in fact of authority, without question, to judge what is said, though it were an apostle who spoke. The Lord Himself refers His disciples to it (“they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them,” Luke 16:29), and places it as an instrument above His own words. I say as an instrument, or rather, as a rule; for, whether written or from His own lips, it is from Himself.

The authority of the word is immediate. The Lord may employ Paul, Peter, and John, as messengers, but He wills that it be received from Himself. The word of God, addressed to man; must be received on the sole authority, that it is God who has spoken it: if he does not know how to discern the voice of God and to submit to it, without the authority of man, it is not faith in God; the man does not receive it because it is God. In the natural state, the heart does not hear His voice. The principle of Abraham is, that he believed God, and God put him to this trial. There is hard work in the heart of man before the authority of God Himself be established in it.

I daily perceive more and more the importance of this. In an exercised soul which has felt that God has manifested Himself to it, which has known its responsibility, whose heart is in activity, the word has often but little authority. Such a soul may have received a strong impression. God has manifested Himself: the conscience is awakened; but it does not receive what God has said in that quiet faith which, having owned that God has spoken, is arrested by His word, confides to it unhesitatingly, unquestioningly, and is found in peace.

We must not despise the first of these positions, neither must we abide in it. If I belong to God, I can no longer do my own will, and this is what God says to Abraham: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred.”... This is neither pleasant, nor easy; but hearken to what Jesus says: “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). There is the grand principle. God will have a people that absolutely belongs to Him.

Christ gave not Himself by halves: circumstances may vary, but the principle is ever the same. Whatsoever be the friends, the things which retain us, we must nevertheless come to this: “Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred.”... This order is terrible to the flesh; it is not that we must hate our father and our mother as the flesh hates; notwithstanding the chain that is in oneself must be broken. It is from within the heart that we are detained; it is also from this we would escape; it is with self that we must break.

But God, who knows the heart, makes it deny itself, by making it break the ties with the world, which are without it. “Get thee out of thy country,” says He. He goes further: “And from thy kindred, and from thy father's house.” Because God had manifested Himself to Abraham, he must belong to Him entirely. Abraham does it, but not completely. He did not, at first, all he ought to have done. He truly left his country and his kindred generally, but not his father's house; he goes no farther than Haran, and stays there.

He desires not, like many, to take all with him: he gives up a great deal; but this is useless: Terah cannot enter into Canaan. He was not called. In chapter 11:31, Terah took his son Abraham, and Lot his grandson, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, Abraham's wife, and they went forth with him, from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there.

We see by this verse that Terah took Abraham; then he did not quit his father's house, and could not make much way. The thing is evident in Genesis 11; and Stephen speaks of it in these words, Acts 7:2,4: “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,” “and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.” God had said to him: “Get thee out from thy father's house,” but he leaves it not. Just so it happens to a heart which has not understood that it must give itself wholly to God. It gives up a great deal for duty, it receives nothing. When the question is of following God, it keeps something for itself. Nevertheless, grace acted towards Abraham, but thus it is that one often plunges oneself into doubt.

The Lord had said, Get out and come into the country that I will show thee. Abraham, not having done so, might have said, What will become of me? I have not left my father's house: what will befall me? I have only followed half way the command of the Lord; I have not done all that He said to me; my heart not being in it, I have here neither the word nor the promises, I am about to perish in Charran. But such was not God's thought. Now, in chapter 12:4 it is said: “So Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him.” All goes well. Lot goes with him; Abraham was seventy-five years old. They come not to Haran to live there, but “into the land of Canaan they came” That is to say, as to us, as soon as we will do God's will, all goes well, God takes care for all. Before this, Abraham had stayed at Haran, and there was no blessing. It is only when his father Terah is dead that he goes forth and comes into Canaan. This is what we see in the four first verses of chapter 12. We may remark how God presents Himself to Abraham. He does not reproach him. The obstacles are removed; he is put in the way of faith.

In verse 7 God appears to Abraham; it is a fresh manifestation. He says to him: “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” He renews the promises in a more definite way; He had already brought him to live and walk in dependence on Himself; now, He shows him the land and renews to him the promises, explaining to him the accomplishment of them. He will give the land to his posterity. In our case, it is heaven. God wills that we also should be in blessing, walking in dependence on Him.

In verse 2 God had said to him: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee”; in verse 3: “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” God will be glorified, and He will bless; two precious things, for He glorifies Himself by blessing. He encourages Abraham in the way of faith, by identifying himself with the blessing. He engages him to trust in Him; “I will bless them that bless thee.” Thus Balaam cannot curse; and in Jesus we are blest. God Himself conducts us, and identifies us with the blessing of Christ. The church may be tried, may encounter difficulties; but the blessing resulting from it is assured in Christ.

God then brings Abraham into Canaan: what is there for him there? Nothing as yet to be possessed. The Canaanites are there; enemies all around in this land of promise. He has only his faith for his pains, not a place where to set his foot on, which properly belonged to him. Stephen tells us so in Acts 7:5: “And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.”

This also happens to the church. In the land of promise we find the wicked spirits, and we are pilgrims here below. Abraham also was a stranger and a pilgrim. He had not where to set his foot. It is a little hard to the flesh to have forsaken all and to have found nothing. But he cannot yet possess the country. This happens to us as well as to the Jewish people, who went up to the wilderness, and find but a wilderness. Man must sacrifice all he loves, and rise to the height of the thoughts of God. But thus it is that the call and the deliverance make us strangers even in the very land of promise, until the execution of judgment be come.

We read in Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” There is that which characterizes his faith. “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9-10). In drawing him by the path of faith and renunciation in the land of promise, God gives him nothing; but He sets him on a position elevated enough to see the city which hath foundations.

God draws us also into the wilderness; and when we are there, He gives us nothing; and if we ask for anything, God answers: It is not good enough. The disciples would have liked to remain and for Jesus to remain; but Jesus tells them, It is good enough for your heart, but not enough for Mine; I would not that you should remain where you are; but where I am, there ye shall be also. He desires a complete felicity for His own. He tells them, before leaving them, I go to prepare a place for you. For where I am, I desire that “there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

When we are come out of this world and of that which keeps back our heart, then He can receive us. Abraham being thus separated from his earthly ties, He shows him the city which hath foundations. The great principle we find here is that, these Canaanites (to us the wicked spirits) not being yet driven out, we are strangers in the land; but, on the other hand, Abraham being in the land, the Lord appears to him. He had the revelations from God, no longer to make him walk (it was no longer a question of manifestation for the walk), but for him who has walked in order that he might enjoy God Himself.

I have wished you to observe, that God begins by making the conscience act. Afterward He gives the enjoyment of Himself and of converse with Him after we have walked; such is the difference. The God of glory appeared indeed to Abraham in Ur. Thus perhaps He reveals Himself to our souls to draw them. But after that, He will have the conscience touched, and completely separates us from all that nature would retain, or by which nature would retain us, and that we should walk as called of God and belonging to Him, that the heart may thus peacefully enjoy Him in communion with Him when we have walked.

God can speak to Abraham, not now to make him go on, but that he may enjoy Him and converse with Him; and, further, to communicate to him all His thoughts as to the fulfillment of the promises. God will bless. Here is his position. He has walked with God, but as yet possesses nothing of the inheritance in the place to which God has led him. The enemies are there. But the Lord appears to faithful Abraham. In the enjoyment there of this communion and of this hope, Abraham builds an altar to Him who thus appeared to him.

God introduces us into the position of promises, in order that we should render Him worship, and make us understand distinctly how He will accomplish His promises. When Christ shall appear, then we shall also appear with Him in glory. We shall have all things with Him.

The portion of God's child is communion, intelligence of the counsels of God for the enjoyment of what God will accomplish. Thou shalt be a stranger, but I will accomplish my promises it giving the land to thy posterity. And Abraham builded an altar to God who had appeared to him. His first manifestation made him walk; this makes him worship in the joy of communion in the land of promise whereinto faith introduced him, and in the intelligence of the promise relative to it. We see God by faith, and how by-and-by He will fulfill the promise. He makes us see Jesus, the true “Seed” and “Heir” of all things, and gives us the enjoyment of it in our souls.

Abraham, stranger-like, goes here and there. He pitches his tent and builds an altar. It is all he has in the land. Happy and quiet he rests in the promise of God. And this also is what we ourselves have to do. Perhaps it will happen to us, as to Abraham, to buy a sepulcher (ch. 23), and that is all.

The Lord give to us a like position, that is to say, a quiet faith, like his who left all. God cannot be satisfied with a half-obedience; but, having walked in what God says, we may rest in His love and have His altar until He come in whom are all the promises; even Jesus, in whom all the promises of God are YEA and AMEN to the glory of God by us.

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