was given); **in order that the promise  
may be sure** (not, ‘so that the promise  
was sure?’ this was the *result*, but the  
Apostle states this as the aim and end of  
the inheritance being by faith,—as regarded *the seed of Abraham*,—that they  
all might be inheritors,—as the manifestation of God’s grace was the higher aim  
and end) **to all the seed, not only to that**  
(part of it) **which is of the law** (see ver.  
14), **but to that also which is of the faith**  
(walks in the steps of the faith, ver. 12) **of  
Abraham**. The part of the seed which  
is of the law *here* is of course confined to  
believing Jews; *the seed* being *believers  
only*. This has been sometimes lost sight,  
of, and the whole argument of vv. 13–16  
treated as if it applied to the doctrine of  
justification by faith without the works of  
the law, a point *already proved, and now  
presupposed*,—the present argument being  
an historical and metaphysical one, proceeding on the facts of Abraham’s history,  
and the natures respectively of the law and  
grace, to prove him to be the father of all  
believers, uncircumcised as well as circumcised.

**who is the father of us all**] By  
the last declaration the *paternity* of Abraham, which is co-extensive with the *inheritance*, has been extended to *all who are  
of his fait*h; here therefore it is reasserted: **us** meaning **believers**.

**17. as it is written**] The words (ref.) are  
spoken of the numerous progeny of A  
ham according to the flesh: but not  
out a reference to that covenant, according  
to the terms of which all nations were to  
be blessed in him. The Apostle *may* here  
cite it as comparing his natural paternity  
of many nations with his spiritual one of  
all believers: but it seems more probable  
that he regards the prophecy as *directly  
announcing* a paternity far more extensive  
than mere physical fact substantiated.—‘These words are parenthetical, being merely  
a confirmation by Scripture testimony of  
the words foregoing, with which (see below)  
the following words are immediately connected.

**before God in whose sight he believed**] ‘he meaning appears to be,  
‘Abraham was the father of us all,—though  
not physically, nor in actuality, seeing that  
we were not as yet,—yet *in the sight and  
estimation of God*,—in his relation with  
God, with whom no obstacles of nature or  
time have force.’

**who quickeneth the dead**] A general description of God’s  
almighty creative power (see 1 Tim. vi. 13),  
applied particularly to the matter in hand—the deadness of generative physical power  
in Abraham himself, which was quickened  
by God. The peculiar excellence of Abraham’s faith was, that it overleaped the  
obstacles of physical incapacity, and non-entity, and believed implicitly God’s promise. Comp. 2 Cor. i. 9.

**and calleth those things which be not as though  
they were**] Much difficulty has been found  
here: and principally owing to an idea  
that this clause must minutely correspond  
with the former, and furnish another instance of God’s creative Almightiness.  
Hence Commentators have given to **call**  
the sense which it has sometimes, ‘*to  
summon into being*, and have understood  
*as though they were* as if it were *so as to  
be*. I see however in this latter clause not  
a repetition or expansion of the former,  
but a new attribute of God’s omnipotence  
and eternity, on which Abraham’s faith  
was fixed. **Who calleth** (nameth, speaketh  
of) **the things that are not as being** (as if  
they *were*). This He *did in the present  
case with regard to the seed of Abraham*,  
which *did not as yet exist*:—the two key-texts to this word and clause being, *In Isaac shall thy seed* **be called**, ch. ix. 8 (see  
note there),—and Acts vii. 5, *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**. These *children*,  
which were at present in the category of  
*things that were not*, and the nations which  
should spring, physically or spiritually,  
from him, God *called as though they were,  
spoke of as having an existence*, which  
word Abraham believed. And here, as in  
the other clause, the *calling the things*