
a *Grace Notes* course

Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

History 501

Grace Notes

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Preface	5
Volume 1 The World before the Flood History of the Patriarchs.....	6
I_01 Creation; Man in the Garden of Eden; The Fall	6
I_02 Cain and Abel – The Two Ways and the Two Races	9
I_03 Seth and his Descendants - The Race of Cain.....	11
I_04 Genealogy of the Believing Race, through Seth	13
I_05 The Universal Corruption of Man - Preparation for the Flood.....	15
I_06 The Flood - History of the Patriarchs	18
I_07 After the Flood - Noah's Sacrifice - Noah's Sin - Noah's Descendants	21
I_08 Genealogy of Nations - Babel - Confusion of tongues.....	24
I_09 The Nations and their Religion	27
I_10 The Chronology of the early History of the Bible - Commencement of the History of God's Dealings with Abraham and his Seed	28
I_11 The Calling of Abram - His Arrival in Canaan, and Temporary Removal to Egypt	30

Introduction

That the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is also the "God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and that "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham," - these are among the most precious truths of revelation. They show us not only the faithfulness of our God, and the greatness of our privileges, but also the marvelous wisdom of the plan of salvation, and its consistency throughout. For the Bible should be viewed, not only in its single books, but in their connection, and in the unity of the whole. The Old Testament could not be broken off from the New, and each considered as independent of the other. Nor yet could any part of the Old Testament be disjoined from the rest. The full meaning and beauty of each appears only in the harmony and unity of the whole. Thus they all form links of one unbroken chain, reaching from the beginning to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ came, for whom all previous history had prepared, to whom all the types pointed, and in whom all the promises are "Yea and Amen." Then that which God had spoken to Abraham, more than two thousand years before, became a blessed reality, for "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." That this one grand purpose should have been steadily kept in view, and carried forward through all the vicissitudes of history, changes of time, and stages of civilization, - and that without requiring any alteration, only further unfolding and at last completion - affords indeed the strongest confirmation to our faith. It is also a precious comfort to our hearts; for we see how God's purpose of mercy has been always the same; and, walking the same pilgrim-way which "the fathers" had trod, and along which God had safely guided the Covenant, we rejoice to know that neither opposition of man nor yet unfaithfulness on the part of His professing people can make void the gracious counsel of God: -

But yet another and equally important truth may be gathered. There is not merely harmony but also close connection between the various parts of Scripture. Each book illustrates the other, taking

up its teaching and carrying it forward. Thus the unity of Scripture is not like that of a stately building, however ingenious its plan or vast its proportions; but rather, to use a Biblical illustration, like that of the light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. We mark throughout growth in its progress, as men were able to bear fuller communications, and prepared for their reception. The law, the types, the history, the prophecies, and the promises of the Old Testament all progressively unfold and develop the same truth, until it appears at last in its New Testament fullness. Though all testify of the same thing, not one of them could safely be left out, nor yet do we properly understand any one part unless we view it in its bearing and connection with the others. And so when at last we come to the close of Scripture, we see how the account of the creation and of the first calling of the children of God, which had been recorded in the book of Genesis, has found its full counterpart - its fulfillment - in the book of Revelation, which tells the glories of the second creation, and the perfecting of the Church of God.

That in a work composed of so many books, written under such very different circumstances, by penmen so different, and at periods so widely apart, there should be "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest," can surely not surprise us, more particularly when we remember that it was God's purpose only to send the brighter light as men were able to bear it. Besides, we must expect that with our limited powers and knowledge we shall not be able fully to understand the ways of God. But, on the other hand, this may be safely said, that the more deep, calm, and careful our study, the more ample the evidence it will bring to light to confirm our faith against all attacks of the enemy. Yet the ultimate object of our reading is not knowledge, but experience of grace. For, properly understood, the Scripture is all full of Christ, and all intended to point to Christ as our only Savior. It is not only the law, which is a schoolmaster unto Christ, nor the types, which are shadows of Christ, nor yet the prophecies, which are predictions of Christ; but the whole Old Testament history is full of Christ. Even where persons are not, events may be types. If anyone

failed to see in Isaac or in Joseph a personal type of Christ, he could not deny that the offering up of Isaac, or the selling of Joseph, and his making provision for the sustenance of his brethren, are typical of events in the history of our Lord. And so indeed every event points to Christ, even as He is alike the beginning, the center, and the end of all history - "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." One thing follows from this: only that reading or study of the Scriptures can be sufficient or profitable through which we learn to know Christ - and that as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" to us. And for this purpose we ought constantly to ask the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

A few brief remarks, helpful to the study of patriarchal history, may here find a place. In general, the Old Testament may be arranged into "The Law and the Prophets."¹

It was possibly with reference to this division that the Law consisted of the five books of Moses - ten being the symbolical number of completeness, and the Law with its commands being only half complete without "the Prophets" and the promises. But assuredly to the fivefold division of the Law answers the arrangement of the Psalms into five books, of which each closes with a benediction, as follows: -

Book 1: Psalm 1-41

Book 2: Psalm 42-72

Book 3: Psalm 73-89

Book 4: Psalm 90-106

Book 5: Psalm 107-150

- the last Psalm standing as a grand final benediction.

¹ Matthew 11:13, 22:40; Acts 13:15, etc. The ordinary Jewish division is into the Law (five books of Moses); the Prophets (earlier: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; and later: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets); and "The Writings," or sacred writings, hagiographa, - which comprise The Psalms, Proverbs, and Job; - the "five rolls," read at special festivals in the Synagogue: the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; - Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles (called in Hebrews "Words, or Acts, of the Days," journals, or diaries). Comp. Luke 24:44.

The Law or the Five Books of Moses are commonly called the Pentateuch, a Greek term meaning the "fivefold," or "five-parted" Book. Each of these five books commonly bears a title given by the Greek translators of the Old Testament (the so-called LXX.), in accordance with the contents of each: Genesis (origin, creation), Exodus (going out from Egypt), Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Second Law, or the Law a second time). The Jews designate each book by the first or else the most prominent word with which it begins.

The book of Genesis consists of two great parts, each again divided into five sections. Every section is clearly marked by being introduced as "generations," or "originations" - in Hebrew Toledoth - as follows:

PART 1 - THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD TO THE FINAL ARRANGEMENT AND SETTLEMENT OF THE VARIOUS NATIONS

General Introduction: Chap. 1-2:3.

1. Generations of the Heavens and the Earth, 2:4-4:26.
2. Book of the Generations of Adam 5-6:8.
3. The Generations of Noah, 6:9-9:29.
4. The Generations of the Sons of Noah 10-11:9.
5. The Generations of Shem, 11:10-26.

PART 2--PATRIARCHAL HISTORY

1. The Generations of Terah (the father of Abraham), 11:27-25:11.
2. The Generations of Ishmael 25:12-18.
3. The Generations of Isaac, 25:19-35:29
4. The Generations of Esau, 36.
5. The Generations of Jacob, 37.

These two parts make together ten sections - the number of completeness, - and each section varies in length with the importance of its contents, so far as they bear upon the history of the kingdom of God. For, both these parts, or rather the periods which they describe, have such bearing. In the first we are successively shown man's original position and relationship towards God; then his fall, and the consequent need of redemption; and next God's gracious provision of mercy. The

acceptance or rejection of this provision implies the separation of all mankind into two classes - the Sethites and the Cainites. Again, the judgment of the flood upon the ungodly, and the preservation of His own people, are typical for all time; while the genealogies and divisions of the various nations, and the separation of Shem, imply the selection of one nation, from whom salvation should spring for all mankind. In this first part the interest of the history groups around events rather than persons. It is otherwise in the second part, where the history of the Covenant and of the Covenant-people begins with the calling of Abraham, and is continued in Isaac, in Jacob, and in his descendants. Here the interest centers in persons rather than events, and we are successively shown God's rich promises as they unfold, and God's gracious dealings as they contribute to the training of the patriarchs. The book of Genesis, and with it the first period of the Covenant history, closes when the family had expanded into a nation.

Finally, with reference to the special arrangement of the "generations" recorded throughout the book of Genesis, it will be noticed that, so to speak, the side branches are always cut off before the main branch is carried onwards. Thus the history of Cain and of his race precedes that of Seth and his race; the genealogy of Japheth and of Ham that of Shem; and the history of Ishmael and Esau that of Isaac and of Jacob. For the principle of election and selection, of separation and of grace, underlies from the first the whole history of the Covenant. It appears in the calling of Abraham, and is continued throughout the history of the patriarchs; and although the holy family enlarges into the nation, the promise narrows first to the house of David, and finally to one individual - the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Prophet, the one Priest, the one King, that in Him the kingdom of heaven might be opened to all believers, and from Him the blessings of salvation flow unto all men.

Preface

One of the most marked and hopeful signs of our time is the increasing attention given on all sides to the study of Holy Scripture. Those who believe

and love the Bible, who have experienced its truth and power, can only rejoice at such an issue. They know that "the Word of God liveth and abideth forever," that "not one tittle" of it "shall fail;" and that it is "able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Accordingly they have no reason to dread the results either of scientific investigation, or of searching inquiry into "those things which are most surely believed among us." For, the more the Bible is studied, the deeper will be our conviction that "the foundation of God standeth sure."

It is to help, so far as we can, the reader of Holy Scripture - not to supersede his own reading of it - that the series, of which this is the first volume, has been undertaken. In writing it I have primarily had in view those who teach and those who learn, whether in the school or in the family. But my scope has also been wider. I have wished to furnish what may be useful for reading in the family, - what indeed may, in some measure, serve the place of a popular exposition of the sacred history. More than this, I hope it may likewise prove a book to put in the hands of young men, - not only to show them what the Bible really teaches, but to defend them against the insidious attacks arising from misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the sacred text.

With this threefold object in view, I have endeavored to write in a form so popular and easily intelligible as to be of use to the Sunday-school teacher, the advanced scholar, and the Bible-class; progressing gradually, in the course of this and the next volume, from the more simple to the more detailed. At the same time, I have taken up the Scripture narrative successively, chapter by chapter, always marking the portions of the Bible explained, that so, in family or in private reading, the sacred text may be compared with the explanations furnished. Finally, without mentioning objections on the part of opponents, I have endeavored to meet those that have been raised, and that not by controversy, but rather by a more full and correct study of the sacred text itself in the Hebrew original. In so doing, I have freely availed myself not only of the results of the best criticism, German and English, but also of the aid of such kindred studies as those of Biblical

geography and antiquities, the Egyptian and the Assyrian monuments, etc.

But when all has been done, the feeling grows only more strong that there is another and a higher understanding of the Bible, without which all else is vain. Not merely to know the meaning of the narratives of Scripture, but to realize their spiritual application; to feel their eternal import; to experience them in ourselves, so to speak - this is the only profitable study of Scripture, to which all else can only serve as outward preparation. Where the result is "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," the Teacher must be He, by whose "inspiration all Scripture is given." "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." But the end of all is Christ - not only "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth," but also He in whom "all the promises of God are Yea and Amen."

A. E.

Heniach Bournemouth.

Volume 1 The World before the Flood | History of the Patriarchs

I_01 Creation; Man in the Garden of Eden; The Fall

Genesis 1 to 3

"He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Hence Holy Scripture, which contains the revealed record of God's dealings and purposes with man, commences with an account of the creation.

"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."

Four great truths, which have their bearing on every part of revelation, come to us from the earliest Scripture narrative, like the four rivers which sprung in the garden of Eden. The first of these truths is - the creation of all things by the word of God's power; the second, the descent of

all men from our common parents, Adam and Eve; the third, our connection with Adam as the head of the human race, through which all mankind were involved in his sin and fall; and the fourth, that One descended from Adam, yet without his sin, should by suffering free us from the consequences of the fall, and as the second Adam became the Author of eternal salvation to all who trust in Him. To these four vital truths there might be added, as a fifth, the institution of one day in seven to be a day of holy rest unto God.

It is scarcely possible to imagine a greater contrast than between the heathen accounts of the origin of all things and the scriptural narrative. The former are so full of the grossly absurd that no one could regard them as other than fables; while the latter is so simple, and yet so full of majesty, as almost to force us to "worship and bow down," and to "kneel before the Lord our Maker." And as this was indeed the object in view, and not scientific instruction, far less the gratification of our curiosity, we must expect to find in the first chapter of Genesis simply the grand outlines of what took place, and not any details connected with creation. On these points there is ample room for such information as science may be able to supply, when once it shall have carefully selected and sifted all that can be learned from the study of earth and of nature. That time, however, has not yet arrived; and we ought, therefore, to be on our guard against the rash and unwarranted statements which have sometimes been brought forward on these subjects. Scripture places before us the successive creation of all things, so to speak, in an ascending scale, till at last we come to that of man, the chief of God's works, and whom his Maker destined to be lord of all. (Psalms 8:3-8) Some have imagined that the six days of creation represent so many periods, rather than literal days, chiefly on the ground of the supposed high antiquity of our globe, and the various great epochs or periods, each terminating in a grand revolution, through which our earth seems to have passed, before coming to its present state, when it became a fit habitation for man. There is, however, no need to resort to any such theory. The first verse in the book of Genesis simply states the general fact, that "In the beginning" - whenever that may have been - "God created the heaven and

the earth." Then, in the second verse, we find earth described as it was at the close of the last great revolution, preceding the present state of things: "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." An almost indefinite space of time, and many changes, may therefore have intervened between the creation of heaven and earth, as mentioned in ver. 1, and the chaotic state of our earth, as described in ver. 2. As for the exact date of the first creation, it may be safely affirmed that we have not yet the knowledge sufficient to arrive at any really trustworthy conclusion.

It is of far greater importance for us, however, to know that God "created all things by Jesus Christ;" (Ephesians 3:9) and further, that "all things were created by Him, and for Him," (Colossians 1:16) and that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." (Romans 11:36. See also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3) This gives not only unity to all creation, but places it in living connection with our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time we should also always bear in mind, that it is "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3)

Everything as it proceeded from the hand of God was "very good,"² that is, perfect to answer the purpose for which it had been destined. "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." It is upon this original institution of the Sabbath as a day of holy rest that our observance of the Lord's day is finally based, the change in the precise day - from the seventh to the first of the week - having been occasioned by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which

not only the first, but also the new creation was finally completed. (See Isaiah 65:17)

Of all His works God only "created man in His own image: in the image of God created He him." This expression refers not merely to the intelligence with which God endowed, and the immortality with which He gifted man, but also to the perfect moral and spiritual nature which man at the first possessed. And all his surroundings were in accordance with his happy state. God "put him into the garden of Eden³ to dress it and to keep it," and gave him a congenial companion in Eve, whom Adam recognized as bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. Thus as God had, by setting apart the Sabbath day, indicated worship as the proper relationship between man and his Creator, so He also laid in Paradise the foundation of civil society by the institution of marriage and of the family. (Comp. Mark 10:6, 9)

It now only remained to test man's obedience to God, and to prepare him for yet higher and greater privileges than those which he already enjoyed. But evil was already in this world of ours, for Satan and his angels had rebelled against God. The scriptural account of man's trial is exceedingly brief and simple. We are told: that "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" had been placed "in the midst of the garden," and of the fruit of this tree God forbade Adam to eat, on pain of death. On the other hand, there was also "the tree of life" in the garden, probably as symbol and pledge of a higher life, which we should have inherited if our first parents had continued obedient to God. The issue of this trial came only too soon.

The tempter, under the form of a serpent, approached Eve. He denied the threatenings of God, and deceived her as to the real consequences of eating the forbidden fruit. This, followed by the enticement of her own senses, led Eve first to eat,

² It is noteworthy that in Genesis 1 we always read, "And the evening and the morning were the first day," or second, or third day, etc. Hence the Jews calculate the day from evening to evening, that is, from the first appearance of the stars in the evening to the first appearance of stars next evening, and not, as we do, from midnight to midnight.

³ Many different views have been broached as to the exact locality of Eden, which it would scarcely be suitable to discuss in this place. The two opinions deserving most attention are those which place it either near the northern highlands of Armenia, or else far south in the neighborhood of the Persian Gulf. We know that two of the streams mentioned as issuing from Paradise were the Tigris and the Euphrates, and we can readily conceive that the changes subsequently produced by the flood may have rendered the other descriptions of the district inapplicable to its present aspect.

and then to induce her husband to do likewise. Their sin had its immediate consequence. They had aimed to be "as gods," and, instead of absolutely submitting themselves to the command of the Lord, acted independently of Him. And now their eyes were indeed opened, as the tempter had promised, "to know good and evil;" but only in their own guilty knowledge of sin, which immediately prompted the wish to hide themselves from the presence of God. Thus, their alienation and departure from God, the condemning voice of their conscience, and their sorrow and shame gave evidence that the Divine threatening had already been accomplished: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The sentence of death which God now pronounced on our first parents extended both to their bodily and their spiritual nature - to their mortal and immortal part. In the day he sinned man died in body, soul, and spirit. And because Adam, as the head of his race, represented the whole; and as through him we should all have entered upon a very high and happy state of being, if he had remained obedient, so now the consequences of his disobedience have extended to us all; and as "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," so "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Nay, even "creation itself," which had been placed under his dominion, was made through his fall "subject to vanity," and came under the curse, as God said to Adam: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

God, in His infinite mercy, did not leave man to perish in his sin. He was indeed driven forth from Paradise, for which he was no longer fit. But, before that, God had pronounced the curse upon his tempter, Satan, and had given man the precious promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; that is, that our blessed Savior, "born of a woman," should redeem us from the power of sin and of death, through His own obedience, death, and resurrection. And even the labor of his hands, to which man was now doomed, was in the circumstances a boon.

Therefore, when our first parents left the garden of Eden, it was not without hope, nor into outer

darkness. They carried with them the promise of a Redeemer, the assurance of the final defeat of the great enemy, as well as the Divine institution of a Sabbath on which to worship, and of the marriage-bond by which to be joined together into families. Thus the foundations of the Christian life in all its bearings were laid in Paradise.

There are still other points of practical interest to be gathered up. The descent of all mankind from our first parents determines our spiritual relationship to Adam. In Adam all have sinned and fallen. But, on the other hand, it also determines our spiritual relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, which rests on precisely the same grounds. For "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," and "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The descent of all mankind from one common stock has in times past been questioned by some, although Scripture expressly teaches that "He has made of one blood all nations, for to dwell on the face of the earth." It is remarkable that this denial, which certainly never was shared by the most competent men of science, has quite lately been, we may say, almost universally abandoned, and the original unity of the human race in their common descent is now a generally accepted fact.

Here, moreover, we meet for the first time with that strange resemblance to revealed religion which makes heathenism so like and yet so unlike the religion of the Old Testament. As in the soul of man we see the ruins of what he had been before the fall, so in the legends and traditions of the various religions of antiquity we recognize the echoes of what men had originally heard from the mouth of God. Not only one race, but almost all nations, have in their traditions preserved some dim remembrance alike of an originally happy and holy state, - a so-called golden age - in which the intercourse between heaven and earth was unbroken, and of a subsequent sin and fall of mankind. And all nations also have cherished a faint belief in some future return of this happy state, that is, in some kind of coming redemption,

just as in their inmost hearts all men have at least a faint longing for a Redeemer.

Meanwhile, this grand primeval promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," would stand out as a beacon-light to all mankind on their way, burning brighter and brighter, first in the promise to Shem, next in that to Abraham, then in the prophecy of Jacob, and so on through the types of the Law to the promises of the Prophets, till in the fullness of time "the Sun of Righteousness" arose "with healing under His wings!"

I_02 Cain and Abel – The Two Ways and the Two Races

Genesis 4

THE language in which Scripture tells the second great event in history is once more exceedingly simple. Two of the children of Adam and Eve are alone mentioned: Cain and Abel. Not that there were no others, but that the progress of Scripture history is connected with these two. For the Bible does not profess to give a detailed history of the world, nor even a complete biography of those persons whom it introduces. Its object is to set before us a history of the kingdom of God, and it only describes such persons and events as is necessary for that purpose. Of the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain was the elder, and indeed, as we gather, the first-born of all their children. Throughout antiquity, and in the East to this day, proper names are regarded as significant of a deeper meaning. When Eve called her first-born son Cain ("gotten," or "acquired"), she said, "I have gotten a man from Jehovah."⁴ Apparently she connected the birth of her son with the immediate fulfillment of the promise concerning the Seed, who was to bruise the head of the serpent. This expectation was, if we may be allowed the comparison, as natural on her part as that of the immediate return of our Lord by some of the early Christians. It also showed how deeply this hope had sunk into her heart, how lively was her faith in the fulfillment of the promise, and how

ardent her longing for it. But if such had been her views, they must have been speedily disappointed. Perhaps for this very reason, or else because she had been more fully informed, or on other grounds with which we are not acquainted, the other son of Adam and Eve, mentioned in Scripture, was named Abel, that is "breath," or "fading away."

What in the history of these two youths is of scriptural importance, is summed up in the statement that "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." We next meet them, each bringing an offering unto Jehovah; Cain "of the fruit of the ground," and Abel "of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." Jehovah "had respect unto Abel and his offering," probably marking His acceptance by some outward and visible manifestation; "but unto Cain and his offering He had not respect." Instead of inquiring into the reason of his rejection, and trying to have it removed, Cain now gave way to feelings of anger and jealousy. In His mercy, God indeed brought before him his sin, warned him of its danger, and pointed out the way of escape. But Cain had chosen his course. Meeting his brother in the field, angry words led to murderous deed, and earth witnessed the first death, the more terrible that it was violent, and at a brother's hand. Once more the voice of Jehovah called Cain to account, and again he hardened himself, this time almost disowning the authority of God. But the mighty hand of the Judge was on the unrepenting murderer. Adam had, so to speak, broken the first great commandment, Cain the first and the second; Adam had committed sin, Cain both sin and crime. As a warning, and yet as a witness to all, Cain, driven from his previous chosen occupation as a tiller of the ground, was sent forth "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth." So - if we may again resort to analogy - was Israel driven forth into all lands, when with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him whose blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." But even this punishment, though "greater" than Cain "can bear," leads him not to repentance, only to fear of its consequences. And "lest any finding him should kill him," Jehovah set a mark upon Cain, just as He made the Jews, amidst all their persecutions, an indestructible people. Only in their case the gracious Lord has a purpose of mercy; for they

⁴ It may be well here to note that whenever the word Lord is printed in our English Bibles in capitals, its Hebrew equivalent is Jehovah - a term which marks the idea of the covenant God.

shall return again to the Lord their God - "all Israel shall be saved;" and their bringing in shall be as life from the dead. But as for Cain, he "went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod, that is, of "wandering" or "unrest." The last that we read of him is still in accordance with all his previous life: "he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch."

Now, there are some lessons quite on the surface of this narrative. Thus we mark the difference in the sacrifice of the two brothers - the one "of the fruit of the ground," the other an animal sacrifice. Again, the offering of Cain is described merely in general terms; while Abel's is said to be "of the firstlings of his flock" - the first being in acknowledgment that all was God's, "and of the fat thereof," that is, of the best. So also we note, how faithfully God warns, and how kindly He points Cain to the way of escape from the power of sin. On the other hand, the murderous deed of Cain affords a terrible illustration of the words in which the Lord Jesus has taught us, that angry bitter feelings against a brother are in reality murder (Matthew 5:22), showing us what is, so to speak, the full outcome of self-willedness, of anger, envy, and jealousy. Yet another lesson to be learned from this history is, that our sin will at the last assuredly find us out, and yet that no punishment, however terrible, can ever have the effect of changing the heart of a man, or altering his state and the current of his life. To these might be added the bitter truth, which godless men will perceive all too late, that, as Cain was at the last driven forth from the ground of which he had taken possession, so assuredly all who seek their portion in this world will find their hopes disappointed, even in those things for which they had sacrificed the "better part." In this respect the later teaching of Scripture (Psalm 49) seems to be contained in germ in the history of Cain and Abel.

If from these obvious lessons we turn to the New Testament for further light on this history, we find in the Epistle of Jude (ver. 2) a general warning against going "in the way of Cain;" while St. John makes it an occasion of admonishing to brotherly love: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?

Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John 3:12) But the fullest information is derived from the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we read, on the one hand, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," and, on the other, that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." (Hebrews 11:4) Scripture here takes us up, as it were, to the highest point in the lives of the two brothers - their sacrifice - and tells us of the presence of faith in the one, and of its absence in the other. This showed itself alike in the manner and in the kind of their sacrifice. But the faith which prompted the sacrifice of Abel, and the want of faith which characterized that of Cain, must, of course, have existed and appeared long before. Hence St. John also says that Cain "was of that wicked one," meaning that he had all along yielded himself to the power of that tempter who had ruined our first parents. A little consideration will explain this, and, at the same time, bring the character and conduct of Cain into clearer light.

After the fall the position of man towards God was entirely changed. In the garden of Eden man's hope of being confirmed in his estate and of advancing upwards depended on his perfect obedience. But man disobeyed and fell. Henceforth his hope for the future could no longer be derived from perfect obedience, which, indeed, in his fallen state was impossible. So to speak, the way of "doing" had been set before him, and it had ended, through sin, in death. God in His infinite grace now opened to man another path. He set before him the hope of faith. The promise which God freely gave to man was that of a Deliverer, who would bruise the head of the serpent, and destroy his works. Now, it was possible either to embrace this promise by faith, and in that case to cling to it and set his heart thereon, or else to refuse this hope and turn away from it. Here, then, at the very opening of the history of the kingdom, we have the two different ways which, as the world and the kingdom of God, have ever since divided men. If we further ask ourselves what those would do who rejected the hope of faith, how they would show it in their outward conduct, we answer, that they would naturally choose the

world as it then was; and, satisfied therewith, try to establish themselves in the earth, claim it as their own, enjoy its pleasures and lusts, and cultivate its arts. On the other hand, one who embraced the promises would consider himself a pilgrim and a stranger in this earth, and both in heart and outward conduct show that he believed in, and waited for, the fulfillment of the promise. We need scarcely say that the one describes the history of Cain and of his race; the other that of Abel, and afterwards of Seth and of his descendants. For around these two - Cain and Seth - as their representatives, all the children of Adam would group themselves according to their spiritual tendencies.

Viewed in this light the indications of Scripture, however brief, are quite clear. When we read that "Cain was a tiller of the ground," and "Abel was a keeper of sheep," we can understand that the choice of their occupations depended not on accidental circumstances, but quite accorded with their views and character. Abel chose the pilgrim-life, Cain that of settled possession and enjoyment of earth. The nearer their history lay to the terrible event which had led to the loss of Paradise, and to the first giving of the promise, the more significant would this their choice of life appear. Quite in accordance with this, we afterwards find Cain, not only building a city, but calling it after the name of his own son, to indicate settled proprietorship and enjoyment of the world as it was. The same tendency rapidly unfolded in his descendants, till in Lamech, the fifth from Cain, it had already assumed such large proportions that Scripture deems it no longer necessary to mark its growth. Accordingly the separate record of the Cainites ceases with Lamech and his children, and there is no further specific mention made of them in Scripture.

Before following more in detail the course of these two races - for, in a spiritual sense, they were quite distinct - we mark at the very threshold of Scripture history the introduction of sacrifices. From the time of Abel onwards, they are uniformly, and with increasing clearness, set before us as the appointed way of approaching and holding fellowship with God, till, at the close of Scripture history, we have the sacrifice of our

blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to which all sacrifices had pointed. And not only so, but as the dim remembrance of a better state from which man had fallen, and of a hope of deliverance, had been preserved among all heathen nations, so also had that of the necessity of sacrifices. Even the bloody rites of savages, nay, the cruel sacrifices of best-beloved children, what were they but a cry of despair in the felt need of reconciliation to God through sacrifice - the giving up of what was most dear in room and stead of the offeror? These are the terribly broken pillars of what once had been a temple; the terribly distorted traditions of truths once Divinely revealed. Blessed be God for the light of His Gospel, which has taught us "the way, the truth, and the life," even Him who is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

I_03 Seth and his Descendants - The Race of Cain

Genesis 4

The place of Abel could not remain unfilled, if God's purpose of mercy were to be carried out. Accordingly He gave to Adam and Eve another son, whom his mother significantly called "Seth," that is, "appointed," or rather "compensation;" "for God," said she, "hath appointed me ('compensated me with') another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." Before, however, detailing the history of Seth and his descendants, Scripture traces that of Cain to the fifth and sixth generations. Cain, as we know, had gone into the land of "Nod" - "wandering," "flight," "unrest," - and there built a city, which has been aptly described as the laying of the first foundations of that kingdom in which "the spirit of the beast" prevails.⁵ We must remember that probably centuries had elapsed since the creation, and that men had already multiplied on the earth. Beyond this settlement of Cain, nothing seems to have occurred which Scripture has deemed necessary to record, except that the names of the "Cainites" are still singularly like those of the "Sethites." Thus we follow the

⁵ A modern commentator holds that the words of Genesis 4:17, only imply that Cain "was building," not that he had finished the building of his city.

line of Cain's descendants to Lamech, the fifth from Cain, when all at once the character and tendencies of that whole race appear fully developed. It comes upon us, almost by surprise, that within so few generations, and in the lifetime of the first man, almost every commandment and institution of God should already be openly set aside, and violence, lust, and ungodliness prevail upon the earth. The first direct breach of God's arrangement of which we here read, is the introduction of polygamy. "Lamech took unto him two wives." Assuredly, "from the beginning it was not so." But this is not all. Scripture preserves to us in the address of Lamech to his two wives the earliest piece of poetry. It has been designated "Lamech's Sword-song," and breathes a spirit of boastful defiance, of trust in his own strength, of violence, and of murder.⁶ Of God there is no further acknowledgment than in a reference to the avenging of Cain, from which Lamech augurs his own safety. Nor is it without special purpose that the names of Lamech's wives and of his daughter are mentioned in Scripture. For their names point to "the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh," just as the occupations of Lamech's sons point to "the pride of life." The names of his wives were "Adah," that is, "beauty," or "adornment;" and "Zillah," that is, "the shaded," perhaps from her tresses, or else "sounding," perhaps from her song; while "Naamah," as Lamech's daughter was called, means "pleasant, graceful, lovely." And here we come upon another and most important feature in the history of the "Cainites." The pursuits and inventions of the sons of Lamech point to the culture of the arts, and to a settled and permanent state of society. His eldest son by Adah, "Jabal, was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle," that is, he made even the pastoral life a regular business. His second son, "Jubal, was the father of all such as handle the

harp (or cithern), and the flute (or sackbut)," in other words, the inventor alike of stringed and of wind instruments; while Tubal-Cain, Lamech's son by Zillah, was "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Taken in connection with Lamech's sword-song, which immediately follows the scriptural account of his sons' pursuits, we are warranted in designating the culture and civilization introduced by the family of Lamech as essentially godless. And that, not only because it was that of ungodly men, but because it was pursued independent of God, and in opposition to the great purposes which He had with man. Moreover, it is very remarkable that we perceive in the Cainite race those very things which afterwards formed the characteristics of heathenism, as we find it among the most advanced nations of antiquity, such as Greece and Rome. Over their family-life might be written, as it were, the names Adah, Zillah, Naamah; over their civil life the "sword-song of Lamech," which indeed strikes the key-note of ancient heathen society; and over their culture and pursuits, the abstract of the biographies which Scripture furnishes us of the descendants of Cain. And as their lives have been buried in the flood, so has a great flood also swept away heathenism - its life, culture, and civilization from the earth, and only left on the mountaintop that ark into which God had shut up them who believed His warnings and His promises.

The contrast becomes most marked as we turn from this record of the Cainites to that of Seth and of his descendants. Even the name which Seth gave to his son - Enos, or "frail"⁷ - stands out as a testimony against the assumption of the Cainites. But especially does this vital difference between the two races appear in the words which follow upon the notice of Enos' birth: "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah." Of course, it cannot be supposed that before that time prayer and the praise of God had been wholly unknown in the earth. Even the sacrifices of Cain and of Abel prove the contrary. It must therefore mean, that the vital difference which had all along

⁶ A modern critic has rendered Lamech's Sword-song thus:

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice: ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; Yea, I slay men for my wound, and young men for my hurt. For if Cain is avenged sevenfold, Lamech seventy and sevenfold" -

referring to the invention of Tubal-Cain, and meaning that if God avenged Cain, he would with his sword avenge himself seventy and sevenfold forevery wound and every hurt.

⁷ The word is used for "man," from his frailty, in such passages as Psalm 8:4; 90:3; 103:15, etc.

existed between the two races, became now also outwardly manifest by a distinct and open profession, and by the praise of God on the part of the Sethites. We have thus reached the first great period in the history of the kingdom of God - that of an outward and visible separation between the two parties, when those who are "of faith" "come out from among" the world, and from the kingdom of this world. We remember how many, many centuries afterwards, when He had come, whose blood speaketh better things than that of Abel, His followers were similarly driven to separate themselves from Israel after the flesh, and how in Antioch they were first called Christians. As that marked the commencement of the history of the New Testament Church, so this introduction of an open profession of Jehovah on the part of the Sethites, the beginning of the history of the kingdom of God under the Old Testament.

And yet this separation and coming out from the world, this "beginning to call upon the name of Jehovah," is what to this day each one of us must do for himself, if he would take up the cross, follow Christ, and enter into the kingdom of God.

I .04 Genealogy of the Believing Race, through Seth

Genesis 5

ONE purpose of Scripture has now been fulfilled. The tendencies for evil of the Cainite race have been traced to their full unfolding, and "the kingdom of this world" has appeared in its real character. On the other hand, the race of Seth have gathered around an open profession of their faith in the promises, and of their purpose to serve God, and they have on this ground separated themselves from the Cainites. The two ways are clearly marked out, and the character of those who walk in them determined. There is, therefore, no further need to follow the history of the Cainites, and Scripture turns from them to give us an account of "the elders" who "by faith" "obtained a good report."

At first sight it seems as if the narrative here opened with only a "book," or account, "of the generations of Adam," containing here and there a brief notice interspersed; but in truth it is

otherwise. At the outset we mark, as a significant contrast, that whereas we read of Adam that "in the likeness of God made He him," it is now added that "he begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Adam was created pure and sinless in the likeness of God; Seth inherited the fallen nature of his father. Next, we observe how all the genealogies, from Adam downwards, have this in common, that they give first the age of the father at the birth of his eldest son,⁸ then the number of years which each of them lived after that event, and finally their total age at the time of death. Altogether, ten "elders" are named from the creation to the time of the flood, and thus grouped:⁹

NAMES	ABS	#YEAR	TOTAL	BAC	DAC
ADAM	130	800	930	1	930
SETH	105	807	912	130	1042
ENOS	90	815	905	235	1140
CAINAN	70	840	910	325	1235
MAHALEEL	65	830	895	395	1290
JARED	162	800	962	460	1422
ENOCK	65	300	365	622	987
METHUSELAH	187	782	969	687	1656
LAMECH	182	595	777	874	1651
NOAH	500	450	950	1056	2006
FLOOD	100				
TOTAL	1656				

Column 1 – Names

Column 2 - Age at Birth of Son

Column 3 - No. of years after that event;

Column 4 - Total Age;

Column 5 - Year of Birth from Creation;

⁸ With the exception of Seth, who, of course, was not the eldest son of Adam.

⁹ Such are the numbers according to the Hebrew text. There are differences between this and the Greek translation of the so-called LXX (the Septuagint), and also the Samaritan text. For further particulars we refer to ch. 10, where also the difference between the chronologies of Ussher and Hales is explained.

Column 6 - Year of Death from Creation.

On examining them more closely, what strikes us in these genealogical records of the Patriarchs is, that the details they furnish are wanting in the history of the Cainites, where simply the birth of seven generations are mentioned, viz.: Adam, Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehajael, Methusael, Lamech, and his sons. The reason of this difference is, that whereas the Cainites had really no future, the Sethites, who "called upon the name of Jehovah," were destined to carry out the purpose of God in grace unto the end. Next, in two cases the same names occur in the two races - Enoch and Lamech. But in both, Scripture furnishes characteristic distinctions between them. In opposition to the Enoch after whom Cain called his city, we have the Sethite Enoch, "who walked with God, and was not; for God took him;" and in contradistinction to the Cainite Lamech, with his boastful ode to his sword, we have the other Lamech, who called his son Noah, "saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed." Thus the similarity of their names only brings out the more clearly the contrast of their character. Finally, as the wickedness of the one race comes out most fully in Lamech, who stands seventh in the genealogy of the Cainites, so does the godliness of the other in Enoch, who equally stands seventh in that of the Sethites.

Passing from this comparison of the two genealogies to the table of the Sethites, we are reminded of the saying, that these primeval genealogies are "monuments alike of the faithfulness of God in the fulfillment of His promise, and of the faith and patience of the fathers." Every generation lived its appointed time; they transmitted the promise to their sons; and then, having finished their course, they all "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." That is absolutely all we know of the majority of them. But the emphatic and seemingly needless repetition in each case of the words, "And he died," with which every genealogy closes, tells us that "death reigned from Adam unto Moses,"

(Romans 5:14) with all the lessons which it conveyed of its origin in sin, and of its conquest by the second Adam. Only one exception occurs to this general rule - in the case of Enoch; when, instead of the usual brief notice how many years he "lived" after the birth of his son, we read that "he walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years;" and instead of the simple closing statement that "he died," we are not only a second time told that "Enoch walked with God," but also that "he was not; for God took him." Thus both his life and his translation are connected with his "walk with God." This expression is unique in Scripture, and except in reference to Noah (Genesis 6:9) only occurs again in connection with the priest's intercourse with God in the holy place. (Malachi 2:6) Thus it indicates a peculiarly intimate, close, and personal converse with Jehovah. Alike the life, the work, and the removal of Enoch are thus explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5) His translation was like that of Elijah (2 Kings 2:10), and like what that of the saints shall be at the second coming of our blessed Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52) In this connection it is very remarkable that Enoch "prophesied" of the very thing which was manifested in his own case, "saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

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When Enoch was "translated" only Adam had as yet died: Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared were still alive. On the other hand, not only Methuselah, the son of Enoch, but also his grandson Lamech, who at the time was one

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Jude 14, 15. This quite accords with what was generally known about Enoch. One of the Old Testament apocryphal works, written before the time of Christ (Ecclesiasticus 44:16), has it that "Enoch was translated, being an example of repentance to all generations;" while another book (B. of En. i. 9) expressly states, that he prophesied the coming of the Lord for judgment upon the ungodly.

hundred and thirteen years old, must have witnessed his removal. Noah was not yet born. But how deep on the godly men of that period was the impression produced by the prophecy of Enoch, and by what we may call its anticipatory and typical fulfillment in his translation, appears from the circumstance that Lamech gave to his son, who was born sixty-nine years after the translation of Enoch, the name of Noah - "rest" or "comfort" - "saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed." Evidently Lamech felt the burden of toil upon an earth which God had cursed, and looked forward to a gracious deliverance from the misery and corruption existing in consequence of it, by the fulfillment of the Divine promise concerning the Deliverer. In longing hope of this he called his son Noah. A change, indeed, did come; but it was by the destruction of that sinful generation, and by the commencement of a new period in the covenant-history. We mark that, in the case of Noah, Scripture no longer mentions, as before, only one son; but it gives us the names of the three sons of Noah, to show that henceforth the one line was to divide into three, which were to become the founders of human history.

It is most instructive, also, to notice that Enoch, who seems to have walked nearest to God, only lived on earth altogether three hundred and sixty-five years - less than half the time of those who preceded and who succeeded him. An extraordinary length of life may be a blessing, as affording space for repentance and grace; but in reference to those most dear to God, it may be shortened as a relief from the work and toil which sin has brought upon this world. Indeed, the sequel will show that the extraordinary duration of life, though necessary at the first, yet by no means proved a source of good to a wicked and corrupt generation.

I_05 The Universal Corruption of Man - Preparation for the Flood

Genesis 6

IT is a remarkable circumstance that all nations should have preserved in their traditions notices of the extraordinary length to which human life was

at the first protracted. We can understand that knowledge of such a fact would be most readily handed down. But we should remember, that before the "flood" the conditions of vigor, constitution, climate, soil, and nourishment were quite different from those on which the present duration of life depends. A comparison between the two is therefore impossible, for the best of all reasons, that we have not sufficient knowledge of the primitive state of matters. But this we can clearly see, that such long continuance of life was absolutely necessary, if the earth was to be rapidly peopled, knowledge to advance, and, above all, the worship of God and faith in that promise about a Deliverer which He had revealed, to be continued. As it was, each generation could hand down to remote posterity what it had learned during the centuries of its continuance. Thus Adam was alive to tell the story of Paradise and the fall, and to repeat the word of promise, which he had heard from the very mouth of the Lord, when Lamech was born; and though none of the earlier "fathers" could have lived to see the commencement of building the ark, which took place in the year 1536 from the creation, yet Lamech died only five years before "the flood," and his father Methuselah - the longest-lived man - in the very year of the deluge. If we try to realize how much information even in our own days, when intercourse, civilization, and the means of knowledge have so far advanced, can be gained from personal intercourse with the chief actors in great events, we shall understand the importance of man's longevity in the early ages of our race.

But, on the other hand, it was possible to pervert this long duration of life to equally evil purposes. The rare occurrence, during so many centuries, of death with its terrors would tend still more to blunt the conscience; the long association of evil men would foster the progress of corruption and evil; and the apparently indefinite delay of either judgment or deliverance would strengthen the bold unbelief of scoffers. That such was the case appears from the substance of Lamech's prophecy; from the description of the state of the earth in the time of Noah, and the unbelief of his contemporaries; and from the comparison by our Lord (Matthew 24:37- 39; Luke 17:26) between "the days of Noe" and those of "the coming of the

Son of man," when, according to St. Peter (2 Peter 3:3, 4), there shall be "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

The corruption of mankind reached its highest point when even the difference between the Sethites and the Cainites became obliterated by intermarriages between the two parties, and that from sensual motives. We read that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."¹¹ At that time the earth must have been in a great measure peopled,¹² and its state is thus described, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This means more than the total corruption of our nature, as we should now describe it, and refers to the universal prevalence of open, daring sin, and rebellion against God, brought about when the separation between the Sethites and the Cainites ceased. With the exception of Noah there was none in that generation "to call upon the name of Jehovah." "In those days there were 'giants' (in Hebrew: Nephilim) in the earth . . . the same were the mighty men (or heroes) which were of old, the men of renown." Properly speaking, these Nephilim were "men of violence," or tyrants, as Luther renders it, the root of the word meaning, "to fall upon."¹³ In short, it was a period of violence, of might against right, of rapine, lust,

¹¹ Other theories concerning the "sons of God" have been broached, but cannot be maintained on careful and accurate investigation. Any reader curious on the subject may see it discussed in my edition of Kurtz's History of the Old Covenant, vol. 1., p. 96, etc.

¹² The most exaggerated estimates of the number of the human race at that time have been made, showing the fallacy of such calculations.

¹³ The word Nephilim occurs once again in Numbers 13:33, in the report of the men of gigantic stature, whom the spies saw in Canaan. But though the Nephilim in those days may have been men of gigantic proportions, it does not follow that Nephilim means "giants." Lastly, there is nothing in the text which shows that they were exclusively the offspring of the sons of God.

and universal unbelief of the promise. With the virtual extinction of the Sethite faith and worship no further hope remained, and that generation required to be wholly swept away in judgment.

And yet, though not only the justice of God, but even His faithfulness to His gracious promise demanded this, the tender loving-kindness of Jehovah appears in such expressions as these: "It repented Jehovah that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him" - literally, "it pained into His heart." The one term, of course, explains the other. When we read that God repented, it is only our human way of speaking, for, as Calvin says, "nothing happens by accident, or that has not been foreseen." It brings before our minds "the sorrow of Divine love over the sins of man," in the words of Calvin, "that when the terrible sins of man offend God, it is not otherwise than as if His heart had been wounded by extreme sorrow." The consequence was, that God declared He would destroy "from the face of the earth both man and beast," - the latter, owing to the peculiar connection in which creation was placed with man, as being its lord, which involved it in the ruin and punishment that befell man. But long before that sentence was actually executed, God had declared, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," - or rather, "dwell with man," "bear rule," or "preside," among them, - "for that he also is flesh," or, as some have rendered it, "since in his erring," or aberration, he has become wholly "carnal, sensual, devilish;" "yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years;" that is, a further space of a hundred and twenty years would in mercy be granted them, before the final judgments should burst. It was during these hundred and twenty years that "the long-suffering of God waited," "while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water."

For, to the universal corruption of that generation, there was one exception - Noah. It needs no more than simply to put together the notices of Noah, in the order in which Scripture places them: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah;" and again: "Noah was a just man, and perfect" - as the Hebrew word implies, spiritually upright, genuine, inwardly entire and complete, one whose heart had a single aim - "in his generations," or among his

contemporaries; and lastly, "Noah walked with God," - this expression being the same as in the case of Enoch. The mention of his finding grace in the eyes of Jehovah precedes that of his "justice," which describes his moral bearing towards God; while this justice was again the outcome of inward spiritual rectitude, or of what under the fuller light of the New Testament we would designate a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit. The whole was summed up and completed in an Enoch-like walk with God. The statement that Noah found grace is like the forth-bursting of the sun in a sky lowering for the storm. Three times the sacred text repeats it, that the earth was corrupt, adding that it was full of violence, just as if the watchful eye of the Lord, who "looked upon the earth," had been searching and trying the children of men, and was lingering in pity over it, before judgment was allowed to descend.

Nor was this all. Even so, "the long-suffering of God waited" for one hundred and twenty years, "while the ark was a preparing;" and during this time, especially, Noah must have acted as "a preacher of righteousness." The building of the ark commenced when Noah was four hundred and eighty years old; that is, before any of his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, had been born, - in fact, just twenty years before the birth of Shem. Thus the great faith of Noah appeared not only in building an ark in the midst of a scoffing and unbelieving generation, and that against all human probability of its ever being needed, and one hundred and twenty years before it was actually required, but in providing room for "his sons" and his "sons' wives," while as yet he himself was childless! Indeed, the more we try to realize the circumstances, the more grand appears the unshaken confidence of the patriarch. The words in which God announced His purpose were these: "The end of all flesh is come before Me," - that is, as some have explained it, the extreme limit of human depravity; - "for the earth is filled with violence through them," - that is, violence proceeding from them ("from before their faces"), - "and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Noah and his family were alone to be preserved, and that by means of an "ark," - an expression which only occurs once more in reference to the ark of bulrushes in which Moses was saved.

(Exodus 2:3-5) Noah was to construct his ark of "gopher," most likely cypress wood, and to "pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty broad, and thirty high; that is, reckoning the cubit at one foot and a half, four hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five broad, and forty-five high.¹⁴ As the wording of the Hebrew text implies, there was all around the top, one cubit below the roof, an opening for light and for air (rendered in our version "window"), in which, it has been suggested, some translucent substance like our glass may have been inserted. Here there seems also to have been a regular "window," which is afterwards specially referred to (ch. 8:6). The door was to be in the side of the ark, which was arranged in three stories of rooms (literally "cells"), or the accommodation of all the animals in the ark, and the storage of food. For "of every living thing" Noah was to bring with him into the ark, - seven pairs, in the case of "clean beasts," and one pair of those that were not clean. Then, when the appointed time for it came, God would "bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven." But with Noah God would "establish" His "covenant," that is, carry out through him His purpose in the covenant of grace, which was to issue in the birth of the Redeemer. Accordingly, Noah, his wife - for here there is no trace of polygamy, - his sons, and his sons' wives were to go into the ark, and there to be kept alive during the general destruction of all around.

Thus far the directions of Scripture. Much needless ingenuity has been wasted on a calculation of the exact space in the ark, of its internal arrangements, and of the accommodation it contained for the different species of animals then existing. Such computations are essentially unreliable, as we can neither calculate the exact

¹⁴ Some have calculated the cubit at twenty-one inches, which would give a length of five hundred and twenty-five feet, a width of eighty-seven and half, and a height of fifty-two and a half. St. Augustine calculates that the proportions of the ark were the same as those of a perfect human figure, "the length of which from the sole to the crown is six times the width across the chest, and ten times the depth of the recumbent figure, measured in a right line from the ground." Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 2. p. 566, note.

room in the ark, nor yet the exact number of species which required to be accommodated within its shelter. Scripture, which sets before us the history of God's kingdom, never gratifies such idle and foolish inquiries. But of this we may be quite sure, that the ark which God provided was literally and in every sense quite sufficient for the purposes for which it was intended, and that these purposes were fully secured. It may perhaps help us to realize this marvelous structure if we compare it to the biggest ship known - the Great Eastern, whose dimensions are six hundred and eighty feet in length, eighty-three in breadth, and fifty-eight in depth; or else if we describe it as nearly half the size of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. It should be borne in mind that the ark was designed not for navigation, but chiefly for storage. It had neither masts, rudder, nor sails, and was probably flat at the bottom, resembling a huge floating chest. To show how suitable its proportions were for storage, we may mention that a Dutchman, Peter Jansen, built in 1604 a ship on precisely the same proportions (not, of course, the same figures), which was found to hold one-third more lading than any other vessel of the same tonnage.

All other questions connected with the building of the ark may safely be dismissed as not deserving serious discussion. But the one great fact would stand out during that period: Noah preaching righteousness, warning of the judgment to come, and still exhibiting his faith in his practice by continuing to provide an ark of refuge. To sum up Noah's life of faith, Noah's preaching of faith, and Noah's work of faith in the words of Scripture: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7).

I_06 The Flood - History of the Patriarchs

Genesis 7:1 to 8:15

THERE is a grandeur and majestic simplicity about the scriptural account of "The Flood" which equally challenges and defies comparison. Twice only throughout the Old Testament is the event again referred to - each time in the grave, brief

language befitting its solemnity. In Psalm 29:10 we read: "Jehovah sitteth upon the flood; yea, Jehovah sitteth King forever," - a sort of Old Testament version of "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Then, if we may carry out the figure, there is an evangelical application of this Old Testament history in Isaiah 54:9, 10: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee."

The first point in the narrative of "The Flood" which claims our attention is an emphatic mention, twice repeated, of Noah's absolute obedience, "according unto all that Jehovah commanded him." (Genesis 6:22; 7:5) Next, we mark a "solemn pause of seven days" before the flood actually commenced, when "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened;" in other words, the floodgates alike of earth and heaven thrown wide open. The event happened "in the sixth hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month;" that is, if we calculate the season according to the beginning of the Hebrew civil year, about the middle or end of our month of November. Then Noah and his wife, his three sons - Shem, Ham, and Japheth - and their wives, and all the animals, having come into the ark, "Jehovah shut him in," and for forty days and forty nights "the rain was upon the earth," while, at the same time, the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The flood continued for one hundred and fifty days,¹⁵ when it began to subside. The terrible catastrophe is thus described: "And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the

¹⁵ Genesis 8:3, 4, compared with 7:11, seems to imply that the forty days of rain must be included in these one hundred and fifty days, and not added to them.

waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

The remarks of a recent writer on this subject are every way so appropriate that we here reproduce them: "The narrative is vivid and forcible, though entirely wanting in that sort of description which in a modern historian or poet would have occupied the largest space. We see nothing of the death-struggle; we hear not the cry of despair; we are not called upon to witness the frantic agony of husband and wife, and parent and child, as they fled in terror before the rising waters. Nor is a word said of the sadness of the one righteous man who, safe himself, looked upon the destruction which he could not avert. But an impression is left upon the mind with peculiar vividness from the very simplicity of the narrative, and it is that of utter desolation. This is heightened by the repetition and contrast of two ideas. On the one hand, we are reminded no less than six times in the narrative (Genesis 6, 7, 8) who the tenants of the ark were, the favored and rescued few; and, on the other hand, the total and absolute blotting out of everything else is not less emphatically dwelt upon" (Genesis 6:13, 17; 7:4, 21-23).

We will not take from the solemnity of the impressive stillness, amid which Scripture shows us the lonely ark floating on the desolate waters that have buried earth and all that belonged to it, by attempting to describe the scenes that must have ensued. Only the impression is left on our minds that the words "Jehovah shut him in," may be intended to show that Noah, even if he would, could not have given help to his perishing

contemporaries. At the end of the one hundred and fifty days it is said, in the peculiarly touching language of Scripture, "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark." A drying wind was made to pass over the earth, the flood "was restrained," "and the waters returned from the earth continually." On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, that is, exactly five months after Noah had entered it, the ark was found to be resting "upon the mountains of Ararat," - not necessarily upon either the highest peak, which measures seventeen thousand two hundred and fifty feet, nor yet, perhaps, upon the second highest, which rises to about twelve thousand feet, but upon that mountain range. Still the waters decreased; and seventy-three days later, or on the first day of the tenth month, the mountain-tops all around became visible. Forty days more, and Noah "sent forth a raven," which, finding shelter on the mountain-tops, and food from the floating carcasses, did not return into the ark. At the end of seven days more "he sent forth a dove from him to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground," that is, from the low ground in the valleys. "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark." Yet another week, and he sent her forth a second time, when she returned again in the evening, bearing in her mouth an olive-leaf. It is a remarkable fact, as bearing indirect testimony to this narrative, that the olive has been ascertained to bear leaves under water. A third time Noah put forth the messenger of peace, at the end of another week, and she "returned not again unto him anymore." "No picture in natural history," says the writer already quoted, "was ever drawn with more exquisite beauty and fidelity than this. It is admirable alike for its poetry and its truth." On the first day of the first month, in the sixth hundredth and first year, "the waters were dried up from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, was the earth dried," - just one year and ten days after Noah had entered the ark.

Thus far the scriptural narrative. It has so often been explained that the object of the Bible is to

give us the history of the kingdom of God, not to treat of curious or even scientific questions, that we can dismiss a matter too often discussed of late in an entirely unbecoming spirit, in these words of a recent writer: "It is a question among theologians and men of science whether the flood was absolutely universal, or whether it was universal only in the sense of extending over all the part of the world then inhabited. We do not here enter into this controversy; but we may notice the remarkable fact that the district lying to the east of Ararat, where the ark rested, bears traces of having at one time been under water. It is a peculiarly depressed region, lying lower than the districts around, and thus affording peculiar facilities for such a submersion."

But there is another matter connected with the flood so marked and striking as to claim our special attention. It is that the remembrance of the flood has been preserved in the traditions of so many nations, so widely separated and so independent of each other, that it is impossible to doubt that they have all been derived from one and the same original source. As might be expected, they contain many legendary details, and they generally fix the locality of the flood in their own lands; but these very particulars mark them as corruptions of the real history recorded in the Bible, and carried by the different nations into the various countries where they settled. Mr. Perowne has grouped these traditions into those of Western Asia, including the Chaldean, the Phoenician, that of the so-called "Sibylline Oracles," the Phrygian, the Syrian, and the Armenian stories; then those of Eastern Asia, including the Persian, Indian, and Chinese; and, thirdly, those of the American nations - the Cherokee, and the various tribes of Mexican Indians, with which - strange though it may seem - he groups those of the Fiji Islands. To these he adds, as a fourth cycle, the similar traditions of the Greek nations. But the most interesting of all these traditions is the Chaldean or Babylonian, which deserves more than merely passing notice.

Though it needs not such indirect confirmations to convince us of the truth of the narratives in the Bible, it is very remarkable how all historical investigations, when really completed and rightly

applied, confirm the exactness of what is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. But their chief value to us must always be this, that they tell us of that Ark which alone rides on the waters of the deluge, and preserves forever safe them who are "shut in" there by the hand of Jehovah.

Chaldean Narrative of the Deluge

In general we may say that we have two Chaldean accounts of the flood. The one comes to us through Greek sources, from Berosus, a Chaldean priest in the third century before Christ, who translated into Greek the records of Babylon. This, as the less clear, we need not here notice more particularly. But a great interest attaches to the far earlier cuneiform inscriptions, first discovered and deciphered in 1872 by Mr. G. Smith, of the British Museum, and since further investigated by the same scholar. These inscriptions cover twelve tablets, of which as yet only part has been made available. They may broadly be described as embodying the Babylonian account of the flood, which, as the event took place in that locality, has a special value. The narrative is supposed to date from two thousand to two thousand five hundred years before Christ. The history of the flood is related by a hero, preserved through it, to a monarch whom Mr. Smith calls Izdubar, but whom he supposes to have been the Nimrod of Scripture. There are, as one might have expected, frequent differences between the Babylonian and the Biblical account of the flood. On the other hand, there are striking points of agreement between them, which all the more confirm the scriptural account, as showing that the event had become a distinct part of the history of the district in which it had taken place. There are frequent references to Erech, the city mentioned in Genesis 10:10; allusions to a race of giants, who are described in fabulous terms; a mention of Lamech, the father of Noah, though under a different name, and of the patriarch himself as a sage, reverent and devout, who, when the Deity resolved to destroy by a flood the world for its sin, built the ark. Sometimes the language comes so close to that of the Bible that one almost seems to read disjointed or distorted quotations from Scripture. We mention, as instances, the scorn which the building of the ark is said to have called forth on the part of

contemporaries; the pitching of the ark without and within with pitch; the shutting of the door behind the saved ones, the opening of the window, when the waters had abated; the going and returning of the dove since "a resting-place it did not find," the sending of the raven, which, feeding on corpses in the water, "did not return;" and, finally, the building of an altar by Noah. We sum up the results of this discovery in the words of Mr. Smith:

"Not to pursue this parallel further, it will be perceived that when the Chaldean account is compared with the Biblical narrative, in their main features the two stories fairly agree; as to the wickedness of the antediluvian world, the Divine anger and command to build the ark, its stocking with birds and beasts, the coming of the deluge, the rain and storm, the ark resting on a mountain, trial being made by birds sent out to see if the waters had subsided, and the building of an altar after the flood. All these main facts occur in the same order in both narratives, but when we come to examine the details of these stages in the two accounts, there appear numerous points of difference; as to the number of people who were saved, the duration of the deluge, the place where the ark rested, the order of sending out the birds, and other similar matters."

We conclude with another quotation from the same work, which will show how much of the primitive knowledge of Divine things, though mixed with terrible corruptions, was preserved among men at this early period:

"It appears that at that remote age the Babylonians had a tradition of a flood which was a Divine punishment for the wickedness of the world; and of a holy man, who built an ark, and escaped the destruction; who was afterwards translated and dwelt with the gods. They believed in hell, a place of torment under the earth, and heaven, a place of glory in the sky; and their description of the two has, in several points, a striking likeness to those in the Bible. They believed in a spirit or soul distinct from the body, which was not destroyed on the death of the mortal frame; and they represent this ghost as rising from the earth at the bidding of one of the gods, and winging its way to heaven."

I_07 After the Flood - Noah's Sacrifice - Noah's Sin - Noah's Descendants

Genesis 8:15 to 9:28

RIGHTLY considered, the destruction of "all flesh" by the deluge was necessary for its real preservation. Death was needful for its new life. The old world was buried in the flood, that a new order of things might rise from its grave. For, manifestly, after the mixing up of the Sethite with the Cainite race, an entirely new commencement required to be made if the purpose of God in grace was to be carried to its goal. Hence, also, God once more pronounced upon Noah the blessing of fruitfulness which he had spoken to Adam, and gave him dominion over creation, yet, as we shall see, with such modifications as the judgment that had just passed, and the new state of things which had commenced, implied.

It deserves our notice that, even after the earth was quite dry, Noah awaited the express command of God before leaving the ark. His first act after that was to build "an altar unto Jehovah," and there to offer "burnt-offerings" "of every clean beast, and of every fowl." Nor was it merely in gratitude and homage to God, but also in spiritual worship that he thus commenced his life anew, and consecrated earth unto Jehovah. In bringing an animal sacrifice Noah followed the example of Abel; in calling upon the name of Jehovah he once again and solemnly adopted the profession of the Sethites. But there was this difference between his and any preceding sacrifice, that now for the first time we read of building an altar. While Paradise was still on earth, men probably turned towards it as the place whence Jehovah held intercourse with man. But when its site was swept away in the flood, God, as it were, took up His throne in heaven, and from thence revealed Himself unto men and held intercourse with them. (See also Genesis 11:5, 7) And the truth, that our hearts and prayers must rise upwards to Him who is in heaven, was symbolized by the altar on which the sacrifice was laid. Scripture significantly adds, that "Jehovah smelled a sweet savor," or rather "a savor of rest," "of satisfaction;" in other words, He accepted the sacrifice. "And Jehovah said in His heart," that is, He resolved, "I will not again curse the ground for

man's sake, for (or because) the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Both Luther and Calvin have remarked on the circumstance that men's universal sinfulness, which formerly had been the cause of the judgment of the flood, should now be put forward as the reason for not again cursing the ground. But in fact this only marks another difference between the state of man before and after the flood. If we may so say, God now admitted the fact of universal sinfulness as existing, and made it an element of His future government. He looked upon man as a miserable and wretched sinner, with whom in His compassion and long-suffering He would bear, delaying His second and final judgment till after He should have accomplished all that He had promised to do for the salvation of men. Putting aside Israel, as God's special people, the period between Noah and Christ may be described, in the words of St. Paul, as "the times of this ignorance" which "God winked at," (Acts 17:30) or as those when "through the forbearance of God" sins were passed over. (Romans 3:25, see marginal rendering)

Having thus explained the fundamental terms on which the Lord would deal with the nations of the earth during the period between the flood and the coming of the Savior, that is, during the Jewish dispensation, we proceed to notice, in the words which God addressed to Noah, some other points of difference between the former and the new state of things. First of all, the gracious announcement that, while the earth remained, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night were not to cease, implies not only His purpose to spare our earth, but also that man might henceforth reckon upon a regular succession of seasons, and that he was to make this earth for the present his home, to till it, and to possess it. Hence it was quite another matter when Noah became an "husbandman," from what it had been when Cain chose to be "a tiller of the ground." Next, as already stated, God renewed the blessing of fruitfulness in much the same terms in which He had spoken it originally to Adam, and once more conferred dominion over the lower creation. But in this new grant there was this essential difference - that man's dominion would now be one of force, and not, as formerly, of willing subjection. If God

had at the first brought "every beast" and "every fowl" before Adam, as it were, to do homage to him, and to receive from him their names, it was now said to Noah and to his descendants, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth; . . . into your hand are they delivered."

Perhaps we ought also to notice in this connection that, whatever may have been the common practice before, now for the first time the use of animal food was expressly permitted, with the exception of the blood, and that probably for the reason afterwards mentioned in the case of sacrifices, that the blood was the seat of life. (Leviticus 17:11, 14) Another and most important change is marked by the solemn prohibition of murder, with this addition, that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Such crimes were no longer to be avenged directly by God Himself, but He delegated His authority to man. (Romans 8:1, 2) As Luther rightly says, "In these words the civil magistracy is instituted, and the Divine right of bearing the sword." For when it is added, as a reason why murder should be punished with death, that God made man in His own image, it seems to convey that vengeance might not be taken by any one at his own will, but that this belonged to those who on earth represented the authority of God, or were His delegates; whence also they are called in Psalm 82:6, "gods," or rather "Elohim."¹⁶ And, as Luther rightly argues, "If God concedes to man the power over life and death, assuredly this carries with it authority over that which is less than life, such as goods, family, wife, children, servants, and land." Thus the words spoken by the Lord to Noah contain the warrant and authority of those who are appointed rulers and judges over us. In later times the Jews have been wont to speak of what they called the seven Noachic commandments, which, according to them, were binding upon all Gentile proselytes. These were a prohibition (1) of idolatry, (2) of blasphemy, (3) of murder, (4) of incest, (5) of robbery and theft, (6) of eating blood

¹⁶ Two terms are chiefly used in the Hebrew for God: the one, Elohim, which refers to His power as Ruler and Lord; the other, Jehovah, to His character as the covenant-God.

and strangled animals, and (7) an injunction of obedience to magistrates. (Comp. also Acts 15:20)

In confirmation of what God had spoken, He "established" His "covenant" with Noah and his sons, and in "token" thereof "set," or "appointed," His "bow in the cloud." It may have been so, that the rainbow was then seen for the first time, although this does not necessarily follow from the words of Scripture. They only tell us that henceforth the rainbow was to be a "token" or visible symbol to man of God's promise no more to destroy all flesh by a flood, and also that He Himself would "look upon it" as such, so that He might "remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature." The symbol of the rainbow was therefore to be both a sign and a seal of God's promise. And we can readily understand how impressive, whenever a storm burst upon the earth, this symbol would have appeared to those who had witnessed the flood. In the poetical language of a German writer, "The rainbow, caused by the influence of the sun upon the dark clouds, would show to man, that what was from heaven would penetrate that which rose from earth; and as it spanned the gulf between heaven and earth, it would seem to proclaim peace between God and man; while even the circumstance that it bounded the horizon would symbolize, how the covenant of mercy extended to earth's utmost bounds."

From this scene of intercourse between Noah and God we have to pass to an event in his history, alas, of a very different character. When Noah - with his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth - left the ark to become an husbandman, he planted a vineyard, as Jewish legend has it, from a slip of the vine that had strayed out of Paradise. But it may boldly be asserted that, except the forbidden fruit itself, none has brought more sin, ruin, and desolation upon our earth. Whether Noah was unacquainted with the intoxicating property of the vine, or neglected proper moderation, the sad spectacle is presented of the aged patriarch, so lately rescued from the flood, not only falling a victim to drunkenness, but exposing himself in that state to the impious and vile conduct of his son Ham. As Luther says, "Ham would not have mocked his father, when overcome with wine, if

he had not long before cast from his soul that reverence which, according to God's command, children should cherish towards their parents." It is a relief to find the other sons of Noah, so far from sharing their brother's sin, reverently defending their father from the unnatural vileness of Ham. As we might have expected, the conduct of the brothers received meet reward, - the curse descended on Ham, while a blessing, suited to each, was given to Shem and Japheth. But, in the words of the patriarch, the curse lights specially upon Canaan, the son of Ham, not to the exclusion of his other sons, but probably because as Noah had suffered from his son, so Ham was to experience his punishment in his son; and Canaan may have been specially singled out, either because he fully entered into the spirit of his father, or more probably because of the later connection between Israel and the Canaanites, in whom they would see alike the spirit and the curse of Ham fully realized. In connection with this we mark, that, twice before (Genesis 9:18, 22), when Ham is mentioned, it is added that he was "the father of Canaan."

Shem, Ham, and Japheth, who were to repeople the earth, seem to have impressed their own characteristics on their descendants. Their very names are symbolical and prophetic. Shem means splendor or glory, Ham burning heat, and Japheth enlargement. Bearing this in mind, we listen to the words of the patriarch:

"Cursed be Canaan,

A servant of servants shall he be to his brethren;"

and we know that this has been the fate of the children of Ham, or the races of Africa; while, strangely, the name of Canaan has been interpreted as meaning "he who is subject." Again,

"Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem,

And Canaan shall be their slave:"

a prophecy most signally fulfilled when Israel took possession of the land of Canaan; and, lastly,

"God (Elohim) shall enlarge Japheth (enlargement);

And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem,

And Canaan shall be their slave."

This latter prophecy consists of three parts. It promises from God, as the God of power, that enlargement to Japheth which is the characteristic of his descendants, the European nations. And it adds that Japheth (not, as some have read it, God) shall dwell in the tents of Shem, that is, as St. Augustine has said, "in the churches which the apostles, the sons of the prophets, reared;" thus referring to the blessing which was to flow to all nations through the Hebrew race.¹⁷ Lastly, Canaan was to be the servant of Japheth, as seen in the subjection to Greece and Rome, of Tyre and Carthage, the ancient centers of wealth and merchandise, and of Egypt, the empire of might and of the oldest civilization.

But the words spoken to Shem, the ancestor of the Hebrew race, deserve special notice. The blessing here begins quite differently from that of Japheth. It opens with a thanksgiving to God, for, as Luther says, "Noah sees it to be such that he cannot express it in words, therefore he turns to thanksgiving." Then, the blessing of Shem is not outward, but spiritual; for Jehovah is to be the God of Shem. To speak in an anticipatory figure, Shem's portion, in the widest sense, is that to be hereafter assigned to Levi, amongst the Jews; and Japheth is to dwell in his tents, - in other words, Israel is to be the tribe of Levi to all nations. More than that, whereas Elohim is to give enlargement to Japheth, Jehovah the covenant-God is to be the God of Shem. Thus the primitive promise to Adam is now both further defined and enlarged. The promised Deliverer is to come through Shem, as the ancestor of the chosen race, in the midst of whom Jehovah is to dwell; and through Shem, Japheth is to share in the coming spiritual blessing. Here, then, is clearly defined the separation of the Jews and the Gentiles, and the mission of each: the one from Jehovah, the other from Elohim; the one in the Church, the other in the world.

¹⁷ As a German writer expresses it: "What are we all but descendants of Japheth, who dwell in the tents of Shem; and what is the language of the New Testament, but that of Javan spoken in the dwellings of Shem?"

I_08 Genealogy of Nations - Babel - Confusion of tongues

Genesis 10:1 to 11:10

IT was the Divine will, that after the flood the whole earth should be repeopled by the descendants of Noah. For this purpose they must, of course, have separated and spread, so as to form the different nations and tribes among whom the world should be apportioned. Any attempted unity on their part would not only be contrary to the Divine purpose, but also, considering the universal sinfulness of man, prove dangerous to themselves, and even be untrue, since their inward separation had already appeared in the different characters and tendencies of Ham and his brothers. But before recording the judgment by which the Divine purpose was enforced, Scripture gives us the genealogy of the different nations, and this with a threefold object - to show how the earth was all peopled from the descendants of Noah; to define the relation of Israel towards each nationality; and, best of all, to register, as it were, their birth in the book of God, thereby indicating, that, however "in time past He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," (Acts 14:6) they also were included in the purposes of mercy, and intended finally to "dwell in the tents of Shem."

In accordance with the general plan on which Holy Scripture is written, we read after the prophecy of Noah, which fixed the future of his sons, no more of that patriarch than that he "lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years," and that he died at the age of nine hundred and fifty years. Regarding the division of earth among his three sons, it may be said generally, that Asia was given to Shem, Africa to Ham, and Europe to Japheth. In the same general manner a modern scholar has traced all existing languages to three original sources, themselves, no doubt, derived from a primeval spring, which may have been lost in the "confusion of tongues," though its existence is attested by constant and striking points of connection between the three great families of languages. The more we think of the allotment of Europe, Asia, and Africa among the three sons of Noah, the more clearly do we see the fulfillment of prophecy regarding them. As we run our eye down

the catalogue of nations in Genesis 10, we have little difficulty in recognizing them; and beginning with the youngest, Japheth, we find of those known to the general reader, the Cymry of Wales and Brittany (Gomer), the Scythians (Magog), the Medes (Madaï), the Greeks (Ionians, Javan), and the Thracians (Tiras). Among their descendants, the Germans, Celts, and Armenians have been traced to the three sons of Gomer. It is not necessary to follow this table farther, though all will remember Tarshish, or Spain, and the Kittim, or "inhabitants of the isles."

Passing next to Shem (ver. 21), we notice that he is called "the father of all the children of Eber," because in Eber the main line divided into that of Peleg, from whom the race of Abraham sprang, and the descendants of Joktan (ver. 25). The descendants of Shem are exclusively Asiatic nations, among whom we only notice Asshur or Assyria, and Uz, as the land which gave birth to Job.

We have reserved Ham for the last place, because of the connection of his story with the dispersion of all nations. His sons were Cush or Ethiopia, Mizraim or Egypt, Phut or Libya, and Canaan, which, of course, we know. It will be noticed, that the seats of all these nations were in Africa, except that of Canaan, whose intrusion into the land of Palestine was put an end to by Israel. But yet another of Ham's descendants had settled in Asia. Nimrod, the founder of the Babylonian empire, the conqueror of Assyria, and the builder of Nineveh (ver. 11), was the son of Cush. Altogether this "mighty one in the earth," who founded the first world-empire, reminds us of Cain and of his descendant Lamech. Leaving out of view the possible meaning of his name, which some have explained as being "we will rebel," boastful violence and rebellion certainly constitute the characteristics of his history. Most strangely have the Assyrian tablets of the royal successors of Nimrod been made to furnish an explanation of his description as "a mighty hunter" - for this is the title given in them to the great conquering warrior-monarchs, as "hunting the people." Thus we gather the full meaning of the expression, "he began to be a mighty one in the earth." From Babylon, which was "the beginning of his kingdom," Nimrod

"went out into Assyria" (ver. 11, marginal rendering), "and builded Nineveh" - the remarkable circumstance here being that each time four cities are mentioned in connection with Nimrod: first, the four cities of his Babylonian empire, of which Babel was the capital, and then the four cities of his conquered Assyrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital. Now all this tallies in the most striking manner with what we read in ancient history, and with those Assyrian monuments which within our own lifetime have by the labors of Layard and Loftus been exhumed from their burial of many centuries, to give witness for the Bible. For, first, we now know that the great Asiatic empire of Babylon was of Cushite origin. Nay, even the name Nimrod occurs in the list of Egyptian kings. Secondly, we are made aware that Babel was the original seat of the empire; and, strangest of all, that the earliest Babylonian kings bore a title which is supposed to mean "four races," in reference to "the quadruple groups of capitals" of Babylonia and Assyria. Lastly, we know that, as stated in the Bible, "the Babylonian empire extended its sway northwards" to Assyria, where Nineveh was founded, which in turn succeeded to the empire once held by Babel. In all these respects, therefore, the latest historical investigations have most strikingly confirmed the narrative of Scripture.

Of the magnificence of Babel, the capital of the empire of Nimrod, "the mighty hunter," it is difficult to convey an adequate conception, without entering into details foreign to our purpose. But some idea of it may be formed from its extent, which according to the lowest computation, covered no less than one hundred square miles, or about five times the size of London; while the highest computation would make it cover two hundred square miles, or ten times the extent of London! Such was the world-city, the first "beginning" of which at least Nimrod had founded. No wonder that the worldly pride of that age should have wished to make such a place the world-capital of a world-empire, whose tower "may reach unto heaven!" The events connected with the discomfiture of their plan took place in the days of Peleg, the grandson of Shem. (Genesis 10:25) As Peleg was born one hundred years after the flood, and lived two hundred and thirty-nine

years, there must have been already a considerable population upon the earth.

If evidence were required that the flood had indeed destroyed sinners but not sin, it would be found in the bearing and language of men in the days of Nimrod and Peleg. After leaving the ark, they had "journeyed eastward" (ch. 11:2) till they reached the extensive well-watered plain of Shinar, where they settled. Being still all "of one language and of one speech," they resolved to build themselves there "a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven," for the twofold purpose of making themselves "a name," and lest they "be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Such words read singularly like those which a Nimrod would employ, and they breathe the spirit of "Babylon" in all ages. Assuredly their meaning is: "Let us rebel!" - for not only would the Divine purpose of peopling the earth have thus been frustrated, but such a world-empire would in the nature of it have been a defiance to God and to the kingdom of God, even as its motive was pride and ambition. A German critic has seen in the words "let us make us a name" - in Hebrew, sheen - a kind of counterfeit of the Shem in whom the promises of God centered, or, if one might so express it, the setting up of an anti-Christ of worldly power. Something of this kind seems certainly indicated in what God says of the attempt (ver. 6): "And this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do." These words seem to imply that the building of Babel was only intended as the commencement of a further course of rebellion. The gathering of all material forces into one common center would have led to universal despotism and to universal idolatry, - in short, to the full development of what as anti-Christ is reserved for the judgment of the last days. We read, that "Jehovah came down to see the city and the tower," that is, using our human modes of expression, to take judicial cognizance of man's undertaking. In allusion to the boastful language in which the builders of Babel and of its tower had in their self-confidence stated their purpose: "Go to, let us make brick," etc. (ver. 3), Jehovah expressed His purpose of defeating their folly, using the same words: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language." And by this simple

means, without any outward visible interference, did the Lord arrest the grandest attempt of man's rebellion, and by confounding their language, "scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." "Therefore is the name of it called Babel, or confusion." What a commentary does this history afford to the majestic declarations of the second Psalm!

Of the tower of Babel no certainly ascertained remains have as yet been discovered. It has commonly been identified with the ruins called Birs Nimrud, about six miles to the south-west of the site of ancient Babylon. Birs Nimrud is "a pyramidal mound, crowned apparently by the ruins of a tower, rising to the height of one hundred and fifty-five and a half feet above the level of the plain, and in circumference somewhat more than two thousand feet." Its distance from Babylon, however, seems opposed to the idea that these are the ruins of the tower spoken of in Scripture. But even so, Birs Nimrud can only be a few centuries younger than the tower of Babel; and its construction enables us to judge what the appearance of the original tower must have been. Birs Nimrud faced north-east, and formed a sort of "oblique pyramid, built in seven receding stages. The platform on which these stages rested was of crude brick; the stages themselves of burnt brick, painted in different colors in honor of gods or planets - each stage as it was placed on the other receding, so as to be considerably nearer the back of the building, or the south-west." The first stage, painted black in honor of Saturn, was a square of two hundred and seventy-two feet, and twenty-six feet high; the second stage, orange colored, in honor of Jupiter, was a square of two hundred and thirty feet, and twenty-six high; the third stage, bright red, in honor of Mars, was a square of one hundred and eighty-eight feet, and also twenty-six high; the fourth stage, golden, for the Sun, was one hundred and forty-six feet square, and fifteen high; the fifth stage, pale yellow, for Venus, was one hundred and four feet square, and fifteen high; the sixth stage, dark blue, for Mercury, was sixty-two feet square, and fifteen high; and the seventh stage, silver, for the Moon, was twenty feet square, and fifteen high. The whole was surmounted by a chapel, which must have nearly covered the whole top. The whole height, as already stated, was one

hundred and fifty-three feet; or about one-third that of the great pyramid of Egypt, which measures four hundred and eighty feet. It is also interesting to notice, how exactly what we know of early Babylonian architecture tallies with what we read in Scripture: "Let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime (or rather, bitumen) had they for mortar." The small burnt bricks, laid in bitumen, are still there; not only in the tower, but in the still existing ruins of the ancient palace of Babel, which was coeval with the building of the city itself.

Holy Scripture does not inform us whether "the tower" was allowed to stand after the dispersion of its builders; nor yet does it furnish any details as to the manner in which "Jehovah did there confound the language of all the earth." All this would have been beyond its purpose. But there, at the very outset, when the first attempt was made to found, in man's strength, a vast kingdom of this world, which God brought to naught by confounding the language of its builders, and by scattering them over the face of the earth, we see a typical judgment, of which the counterpart in blessing was granted on the day of Pentecost; when, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, another universal kingdom was to be founded, the first token of which was that gift of tongues, which pointed forward to a reunion of the nations, when the promise would be fulfilled that they should all be gathered into the tents of Shem!

I_09 The Nations and their Religion

Job

A MODERN German writer has well said: "The birth of heathenism may be dated from the moment when the presumptuous statement was uttered, 'Go to, let us build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name.'" Even Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, regards Nimrod as the father of heathenism, the characteristic of which is to find strength and happiness in sin, and not in God. Its essential principle is to reject all that is not seen, and to cling to that which is temporal. Thus we also may be heathens in heart, even though we are not such in mind, and do not worship stocks or

stone. Indeed, it is very remarkable, that neither nation nor tribe has ever been discovered which did not acknowledge and worship some superior Being; and yet from the most savage barbarians to the most refined philosopher, they have all been destitute of the knowledge of the one living and true God. The only exception in the world has been that of Israel, to whom God specially revealed Himself; and even Israel required constant teaching, guidance, and discipline from on high to keep them from falling back into idolatry. Idolatry is the religion of sight in opposition to that of faith. Instead of the unseen Creator, man regarded that which was visible - the sun, the moon, the stars - as the cause and the ruler of all; or he assigned to everything its deity, and thus had gods many and lords many; or else he converted his heroes, real or imaginary, into gods. The worship of the heavens, the worship of nature, or the worship of man - such is heathenism and idolatry. And yet all the while man felt the insufficiency of his worship, for behind these gods he placed a dark, immovable, unsearchable Fate, which ruled supreme, and controlled alike gods and men. It was indeed a terrible exchange to make - to leave our heavenly Father and His love for such delusions and disappointments. The worst of it was, that man gradually became conformed to his religion. He first imputed his own vices to his gods, and next imitated the vices of his gods. Assuredly, the heathen nations were the younger son in the parable (Luke 15:12), who had left his father's house with the portion of goods that belonged to him - heathen science, art, literature, and power - to find himself at the last driven to eat the husks on which the swine do feed, and yet not able to satisfy the cravings of his hunger! Blessed be God for that revelation of Himself in Christ Jesus, which has brought the prodigal back to the Father's home and heart!

But even so, God did not leave Himself without a witness. The inward searching of man after a God, the accusing voice of his conscience, the attempt to offer sacrifices, and the remnants of ancient traditions of the truth among men - all seemed to point upward. And then, as all were not Israel who were of Israel, so God also had at all times His own, even among the Gentile nations. Job, Melchizedek, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, may be

mentioned as instances of this. It will be readily understood that the number of those "born out of season," as it were, from among the Gentiles, must have been largest the higher we ascend the stream of time, and the nearer we approach the period when early traditions were still preserved in their purity in the earth. The fullest example of this is set before us in the book of Job, which also gives a most interesting picture of those early times.

Two things may be regarded as quite settled about the book of Job. Its scene and actors are laid in patriarchal times, and outside the family or immediate ancestry of Abraham. It is a story of Gentile life in the time of the earliest patriarchs. And yet anything more noble, grand, devout, or spiritual than what the book of Job contains is not found, "no, not in Israel." This is not the place to give either the history of Job, or to point out the depth of thought, the vividness of imagery, and the beauty and grandeur of language with which it is written. It must suffice to take the most rapid survey of the religious and social life which it sets before us. Without here referring to the sayings of Elihu, Job had evidently perfect knowledge of the true God; and he was a humble, earnest worshipper of Jehovah. Without any acquaintance with "Moses and the prophets," he knew that of which Moses and the prophets spoke. Reverent, believing acknowledgment of God, submission, and spiritual repentance formed part of his experience, which had the approval of God Himself. Then Job offered sacrifices; he speaks about the great tempter; he looks for the resurrection of the body; and he expects the coming of Messiah.

We have traced the barest outlines of the religion of Job. The friends who come to him, if they share not his piety, at least do not treat his views as something quite strange and previously unheard. This, then, is a blessed picture of at least a certain class in that age. How far culture and civilization must have advanced in those times we gather from various allusions in the book of Job. Job himself is a man of great wealth and high rank. In the language of a recent writer:

"The chieftain lives in considerable splendor and dignity. . . . Job visits the city frequently, and is there received with high respect as a prince, judge,

and distinguished warrior. (Job 29:7,9) There are allusions to courts of justice, written indictments, and regular forms of procedure. (Job 13:26; 31:28) Men had begun to observe and reason upon the phenomena of nature, and astronomical observations were connected with curious speculations upon primeval traditions. We read of mining operations, great buildings, ruined sepulchers. . . . Great revolutions had occurred within the time of the writer; nations, once independent, had been overthrown, and whole races reduced to a state of misery and degradation."

Nor ought we to overlook the glimpses of social life given us in this history. While, indeed, there was violence, robbery, and murder in the land, there is happily also another side to the picture. "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves; and the aged arose and stood up." Along with such becoming tribute of respect paid to worth, we find that the relationship between the pious rich and the poor is thus described: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Assuredly there is nothing in all this which we could wish to see altered even in New Testament times! But the more terrible in contrast must have been the idolatry and the corruption of the vast majority of mankind; an idolatry which they had probably inherited from before the flood, and which soon attained gigantic proportions, and a corruption which went on ever increasing during the "times of this ignorance."

I_10 The Chronology of the early History of the Bible - Commencement of the History of God's Dealings with Abraham and his Seed

BEFORE further proceeding with our history some brief explanation may be desirable of the chronological table given in this volume, and in general of the early chronology of the Bible. It will be noticed, first, that the years are counted from "B.C.," that is, from "before Christ;" the numbers, of course, becoming smaller the farther

we come down from the creation of the world, and the nearer we approach the birth of our Savior. Thus, if the year of creation be computed at 4004 before Christ, the deluge, which happened 1656 years later, would fall in the year 2348 B.C. Further, it will be observed that we have given two chronological tables of the same events, which differ by many hundreds of years - the one "according to Hales," the other "according to Ussher," which latter is that of "the dates in the margin of English Bibles," and, we may add, corresponds with the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The explanation of the difference between them is that our calculations of Biblical dates may be derived from one of three sources. We have, in fact, the five books of Moses in three different forms before us. First, we have the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament; next, there exists a translation of it in Greek, completed long before the time of our Lord, which was commonly used by the Jews at the time of Christ, for which reason also it is generally quoted in the New Testament. This version is known as that of the "LXX," or "Seventy," from the supposed number of translators. Finally, we have the Samaritan Pentateuch, or that in use among the Samaritans. Now, as the genealogies differ in these three in regard to the ages of the patriarchs, the question arises which of them should be adopted? Each in turn has had its defenders, but the most learned critics are now almost unanimous in concluding, as indeed we might have expected, that the Hebrew text contains the true chronology. Of the other two, the Samaritan is so untrustworthy that for practical purposes we may leave it entirely out of view. The Septuagint chronology differs from that of the Hebrew text in prolonging the ages of the patriarchs, partially before the deluge, but chiefly between the deluge and the calling of Abraham, - the result being that the flood is thrown five hundred and eighty-six years later than in the Hebrew text; and the birth of Abraham yet other eight hundred and seventy-eight years - the total difference amounting to no less than one thousand two hundred and forty-five years! It is not difficult to guess the reason why the Greek translators had thus altered the original numbers. It was evidently their wish to throw the birth of Abraham as late as possible after the

flood. Of these two chronologies, that of the Hebrew text may, for convenience sake, be designated as the short, and that of the "LXX" as the long chronology; and, in a general way, it may be said that (with certain modifications which it would take too long to explain) Hales has adopted the long, or Greek, and Ussher the short, or Hebrew chronology.

This may suffice on a matter which has engaged only too much discussion.¹⁸ It is far more important to think of the kingdom of God, the history of which is given us in the Holy Scriptures; for now we are at the beginning of its real appearance. If God had at the first dealt with mankind generally, then with one part of the race, and lastly with one division of nations, He now chose and raised up for Himself a peculiar people, through whom His purposes of mercy towards all men were to be carried out. This people was to be trained from its cradle until it had fulfilled its mission, which was when He came who was the Desire of all nations. Three points here claim our special attention: -

1. The election and selection of what became the people of God. Step by step we see in the history of the patriarchs this electing and separating process on the part of God. Both are marked by this twofold characteristic: that all is accomplished, not in the ordinary and natural manner, but, as it were, supernaturally; and that all is of grace. Thus Abram was called alone out of his father's house - he was elected and selected. The birth of Isaac, the heir of the promises, was, in a sense, supernatural; while, on the other hand, Ishmael, the elder son of Abram, was rejected. The same election and selection appears in the history of Esau and Jacob, and indeed throughout the whole patriarchal history. For at the outset the chosen race was to learn what is the grand lesson of all Scriptures that everything comes to us from God, and is of grace, - that it is not man's doing, but God's working; not in the ordinary manner, but by His special interposition. Nor should we fail to mark another peculiarity in God's dealings. To use

¹⁸ The modern Jews count the year of the Creation from 3761 B.C., so that, in order to calculate the Jewish era, we have to add to our Christian era the number 3761.

a New Testament illustration, it was the grain of mustard-seed which was destined to grow into the tree in whose branches all the birds of the air were to find lodgment. In Abram the stem was cut down to a single root. This root first sprang up into the patriarchal family, then expanded into the tribes of Israel, and finally blossomed and bore fruit in the chosen people. But even this was only a means to an end. Israel had possessed, so to speak, the three crowns separately. It had the priesthood in Aaron, the royal dignity in David and his line, and the prophetic office. But in the "last days" the triple crown of priest, king, and prophet has been united upon Him Whose it really is, even JESUS, a "Prophet like unto Moses," the eternal priest "after the order of Melchizedek," and the real and ever reigning "Son of David." And in Him all the promises of God, which had been given with increasing clearness from Adam onwards to Shem, then to Abraham, to Jacob, in the law, in the types of the Old Testament, and, finally, in its prophecies have become "Yea and amen," till at the last all nations shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

2. We mark a difference in the mode of Divine revelation in the patriarchal as compared with the previous period. Formerly, God had spoken to man, either on earth or from heaven, while now He actually appeared to them, and that specially as the Angel of Jehovah, or the Angel of the Covenant. The first time Jehovah "appeared" unto Abram was when he entered the land of Canaan, in obedience to that Divine call which singled him out to become the ancestor of the people of God. (Genesis 12:7) After that a fresh appearance of Jehovah, and of the Angel of the Covenant, in whom He manifested Himself, marked each stage of the Covenant history. And this appearance was not only granted to Abraham and to Hagar, to Jacob, to Moses, to Balaam, to Gideon, to Manoah and to his wife, and to David, but even towards the close of Jewish history this same Angel of Jehovah is still found pleading for rebellious, apostate Israel in these words: "O Jehovah of Hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem?" (Zechariah 1:12) The more carefully we follow His steps, the more fully shall we be convinced that He was not an ordinary Angel, but that Jehovah was pleased to reveal Himself in this manner under the Old Testament. We shall have

frequent occasion to return to this very solemn subject. Meantime it may be interesting to know that of old the Jews also regarded Him as the Shechinah, or visible presence of God, - the same as appeared in the pillar of the cloud and of fire, and afterwards in the temple, in the most holy place; while the ancient Church almost unanimously adored in Him the Son of God, the Second Person of the blessed Trinity. We cannot conceive any subject more profitable, or likely to be fraught with greater blessing, than reverently to follow the footsteps of the Angel of Jehovah through the Old Testament.

3. The one grand characteristic of the patriarchs was their faith. The lives of the patriarchs prefigure the whole history of Israel and their Divine selection. In the words of a recent German writer, amidst all varying events, the one constant trait in patriarchal history was "faith which lays hold on the word of promise, and on the strength of this word gives up that which is seen and present for that which is unseen and future." Thus "Abraham was the man of joyous, working faith; Isaac of patient, bearing faith; Jacob of contending and prevailing faith." But all lived and "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth." And it is still so. Without ignoring the great privilege of those who are descended from Abraham, yet, in the true sense, only "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" "and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." To adapt the words of a German poet:

I_11 The Calling of Abram - His Arrival in Canaan, and Temporary Removal to Egypt

Genesis 11:27 to 13:4

WITH Abram an entirely new period may be said to begin. He was to be the ancestor of a new race in whom the Divine promises were to be preserved, and through whom they would finally be realized. It seemed, therefore, necessary that, when Abram was called, he should forsake his old home, his family, his country, and his people. Not to speak of the dangers which otherwise would

have beset his vocation, a new beginning required that he should be cut off from all that was "behind." Had he remained in Ur of the Chaldees, he would at best only have been a new link in the old chain. Besides, the special dealings of God, and Abram's faith and patience, as manifested in his obedience to the Divine command, were intended to qualify him for being the head of the new order of things, "the father of all who believe." Lastly, it was intended that the history of Abram, as that of his seed after him, should prepare the way for the great truths of the Gospel, and exhibit as in a figure the history of all who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hitherto, God had only interposed, as in the flood, and at the confounding of tongues, to arrest the attempts of man against His purposes of mercy. But when God called Abram, He personally and actively interfered, and this time in mercy, not in judgment. The whole history of Abram may be arranged into four stages, each commencing with a personal revelation of Jehovah. The first, when the patriarch was called to his work and mission; (Genesis 12-14) the second, when he received the promise of an heir, and the covenant was made with him; (Genesis 15, 16) the third, when that covenant was established in the change of his name from Abram to Abraham, and in circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant; (Genesis 17-21) the fourth, when his faith was tried, proved, and perfected in the offering up of Isaac. (Genesis 22-25:11) These are, so to speak, the high points in Abram's history, which the patriarch successively climbed, and to which all the other events of his life may be regarded as the ascent.

Descending the genealogy of Shem, Abram stands tenth among "the fathers" after the flood. He was a son - apparently the third and youngest - of Terah, the others being Haran and Nahor. The family, or perhaps more correctly the tribe or clan of Terah, resided in Chaldea, which is the southern part of Babylonia. "Ur of the Chaldees," as recently again discovered,¹⁹ was one of the oldest, if not the

most ancient, among the cities of Chaldea. It lies about six miles away from the river Euphrates, and, curious to relate, is at present somewhere near one hundred and twenty-five miles from the Persian Gulf, though it is supposed, that at one time it was actually washed by its waters, the difference being accounted for by the rapid deposit of what becomes soil, or of alluvium, as it is called. Thus Abram must in his youth have stood by the seashore, and seen the sand innumerable, to which his posterity in after ages was likened. Another figure, under which his posterity is described, must have been equally familiar to his mind. It is well known that the brilliancy of a starlit sky in the East, and especially where Abram dwelt, far exceeds anything which we witness in our latitudes. Possibly this may have first led in those regions to the worship of the heavenly bodies. And Abram must have been the more attracted to their contemplation, as the city in which he dwelt was "wholly given" to that idolatry; for the real site of Ur has been ascertained from the circumstance that the bricks still found there bear the very name of Hur on them. Now this word points to Hurki, the ancient moon-god, and Ur of the Chaldees was the great "Moon-city," the very center of the Chaldean moon-worship! The most remarkable ruins of that city are those of the old moon-temple of Ur, which from the name on the bricks are computed to date from the year 2000 before Christ. Thus bricks that are thirty-eight centuries old have now been brought forward to bear witness to the old city of Abraham, and to the tremendous change that must have passed over him when, in faith upon the Divine word, he obeyed its command. Jewish tradition has one or two varying accounts to show how Abram was converted from the surrounding idolatry, and what persecutions he had to suffer in consequence. Scripture does not indulge our fancy with such matters; but, true to its uniform purpose, only relates what belongs to the history of the kingdom of God. We learn, however, from Joshua 24:2, 14, 15, that the family of Terah had "in old time, on the other side of the flood," or of Euphrates, "served other gods;" and we can readily understand what influence their surroundings must, in the circumstances, have exercised upon them. It was out of this city of Ur that God called

¹⁹ See the article Ur, in Smith's Bible Dictionary. The view previously adopted, which finds Ur in quite a different district, is evidently erroneous.

Abram. Previously to this, Haran, Abram's eldest brother, had died. We read, that "Terah took Abram, his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." The words which we have italicized leave no room for doubt, that the first call of God had come to Abram long before the death of Terah, and when the clan were still at Ur. (Comp. Acts 7:2) From the circumstance that Haran is afterwards called "the city of Nahor," (Genesis 24:10; comp. 27:43) we gather that Nahor, Abraham's brother, and his family had also settled there, though perhaps at a later period, and without relinquishing their idolatry. It is a remarkable confirmation of the scriptural account, that, though this district belongs to Mesopotamia, and not to Chaldea, its inhabitants are known to have for a long time retained the peculiar Chaldean language and worship. Haran has preserved its original name, and at the time of the Romans was one of the great battle-fields on which that power sustained a defeat from the Parthians.

The journey from Ur, in the far south, had been long, wearisome, and dangerous; and the fruitful plains around Haran must have held out special inducements for a pastoral tribe to settle. But when the Divine command came, Abram was "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Perhaps the arrival and settlement of Nahor and his family, bringing with them their idolatrous associations, may have formed an additional incentive for departing. And so far, God had in His providence made it easier for Abram to leave, since his father Terah had died in Haran, at the age of two hundred and five years. The second call of Jehovah to Abram, as given in Genesis 12:1-3, consisted of a fourfold command, and a fourfold promise. The command was quite definite in its terms: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee;" leaving it, however, as yet undecided which was to be the place of his final settlement. This uncertainty must have been an additional and, in the circumstances, a very serious difficulty in the way of Abram's obedience. But the word of promise reassured him. It should be distinctly

marked, that on this, as on every other occasion in Abram's life, his faith determined his obedience. Accordingly, we read, "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." (Hebrews 11:8) The promise upon which he trusted assured to him these four things: "I will make of thee a great nation;" "I will bless thee," with this addition (in ver. 3), "and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee;" "I will make thy name great;" and, lastly, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

When we examine these promises more closely, we at once perceive how they must have formed yet another trial of Abram's faith; since he was not only going, a stranger into a strange land, but was at the time wholly childless. The promise that he was to "be a blessing," implied that blessing would, so to speak, be identified with him; so that happiness or evil would flow from the relationship in which men would place themselves towards Abram. On the other hand, from the peculiar terms "them that bless thee," in the plural, and "him that curseth thee," in the singular, we gather that the Divine purpose of mercy embraced many, "of all nations, kindreds, and tongues." Lastly, the great promise, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," went far beyond the personal assurance, "I will make thy name great." It resumed and made more definite the previous promises of final deliverance, by fixing upon Abram as the spring whence the blessing was to flow. Viewed in this light, all mankind appear as only so many families, but of one and the same father; and which were to be again united in a common blessing in and through Abram. Repeated again and again in the history of Abram, this promise contained already at the outset the whole fullness of the Divine purpose of mercy in the salvation of men. Thus was the prediction to be fulfilled: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," as is shown by St. Peter in Acts 3:25, and by St. Paul in Galatians 3:8, 14.

Abram was seventy-five years old "when he departed out of Haran," accompanied by Lot and his family. Putting aside the various traditions

which describe his prolonged stay at Damascus, and his supposed rule there, we learn from Scripture that Abram entered the land of promise, as many years afterwards his grandson Jacob returned to it, leaving on his right the majestic Lebanon, and on his left the pastures of Gilead and the mountain-forests of Bashan. Straight on he passed over hills and through valleys, till he reached the delicious plain of Moreh, or rather the spreading terebinth-tree of Moreh, in the valley of Sichem. Travelers have spoken in the most enthusiastic terms of this vale. "All at once," writes Professor Robinson, "the ground sinks down to a valley running towards the west, with a soil of rich, black vegetable mold. Here a scene of luxuriant and almost unparalleled verdure burst upon our view. The whole valley was filled with gardens of vegetables, and orchards of all kinds of fruits, watered by several fountains, which burst forth in various parts, and flow westward in refreshing streams. It came upon us suddenly, like a scene of fairy enchantment. We saw nothing to compare with it in all Palestine." Another traveler says: "Here there are no wild thickets; yet there is always verdure, always shade, - not of the oak, the terebinth, or the garoub-tree, but of the olive-grove, so soft in color, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood." Such was the first resting-place of Abram in the land of promise, in the plain, or rather in the wood of Moreh, which probably derived its name from the Canaanitish proprietor of the district. For, as shown by the remark of the sacred writer, "and the Canaanite was then in the land," the country was not tenantless, but occupied by a hostile race; and if Abram was to enter on its possession, it must once more be by faith in the promises.

Here it was that Jehovah actually "appeared" unto Abram, under some visible form or other; and now for the first time in sight of the Canaanite was the promise conveyed, "unto thy seed will I give this land." It is added that Abram "there builded an altar unto Jehovah who appeared unto him." Thus, the soil on which Jehovah had been seen, and which He had just promised to Abram, was consecrated unto the Lord; and Abram's faith, publicly professed in the strange land, grasped Jehovah's promise, solemnly given.

From Shechem, Abram removed, probably for the sake of pasturage, southwards to a mountain on the east of Bethel, pitching his tent between Bethel and Ai. This district is, in the words of Robinson, "still one of the finest tracts for pasturage in the whole land." In the glowing language of Dean Stanley: "We here stand on the highest of a succession of eminences, . . . its topmost summit resting, as it were, on the rocky slopes below, and distinguished from them by the olive-grove, which clusters over its broad surface above. From this height, thus offering a natural base for the patriarchal altar, and a fitting shade for the patriarchal tent, Abram and Lot must be conceived as taking the wide survey of the country . . . such as can be enjoyed from no other point in the neighborhood." What met their astonished gaze from this point will be described in the following chapter. Meantime, we note that here, also, Abram "builded an altar unto Jehovah;" and, though He does not seem to have visibly appeared unto him, yet the patriarch called upon the name of Jehovah. After a residence, probably of some time, Abram continued his journey, "going on still toward the south," - a pilgrim and a stranger "in the land of promise;" his possession of it only marked by the altars which he left on his track.

A fresh trial now awaited the faith of Abram. Strong as it always proved in what concerned the kingdom of God, it failed again and again in matters personal to himself. A famine was desolating the land, and, as is still the case with the Bedouin tribes under similar circumstances, Abram and his family "went down into Egypt," which has at all times been the granary of other nations. It does not become us to speculate whether this removal was lawful, without previous special directions from God; but we know that it exposed him to the greatest danger. As we must not underrate the difficulties of the patriarchs, so neither must we overrate their faith and their strength. Abram "was a man of like passions with us," and of like weaknesses. When God spoke to him he believed, and when he believed then he obeyed. But God had said nothing as yet to him, directly, about Sarai; and, in the absence of any special direction, he seems to have taken the matter into his own hands, after the manner of those times and countries. From Genesis 20:13 we

learn that when he first set out from his father's house, an agreement had been made between the two, that Sarai was to pass as his sister, because, as he said, "the fear of God" was not among the nations with whom they would be brought in contact; and they might slay Abram for his wife's sake.²⁰ The deceit - for such it really was - seemed scarcely such in their eyes, since Sarai was so closely related to her husband that she might almost be called his sister. In short, as we all too oftentimes do, it was deception, commencing with self-deception; and though what he said might be true in the letter, it was false in the spirit of it. But we must not imagine that Abram was so heartless as to endanger his wife for the sake of his own safety. On the contrary, it seemed the readiest means of guarding her honor also; since, if she were looked upon as the sister of a mighty chief, her hand would be sought, and certain formalities have to be gone through, which would give Abram time to escape with his wife. This is not said in apology, but in explanation of the matter.

Ancient Egyptian monuments here again remarkably confirm the scriptural narrative. They prove that the immigration of distinguished foreigners, with their families and dependents, was by no means uncommon. One of them, dating from the time of Abram, represents the arrival of such a "clan," and their presentation and kindly reception by Pharaoh. Their name, appearance, and dress show them to be a pastoral tribe of Semitic origin.²¹ Another ancient tablet records how such foreigner attained the highest dignities in the land. So far, then, Abram would meet with a ready welcome. But his device was in vain, and Sarai "was taken into the house of Pharaoh." As the future brother-in-law of the king, Abram now rapidly acquired possessions and wealth. These

presents Abram could, of course, not refuse, though they increased his guilt, as well as his remorse and sense of shame. But he had committed himself too deeply to retrace his steps; and the want of faith, which had at the first given rise to his fears, may have gone on increasing. Abram had given up for a time the promised land, and he was now in danger of losing also the yet greater promise. But Jehovah did not, like Abram, deny her who was to be the mother of the promised seed. He visited "Pharaoh and his house with great plagues," which by-and-by led to their ascertaining the true state of the case - possibly from Sarai herself. Upon this the king summoned Abram, and addressed him in words of reproach, which Abram must have the more keenly felt that they came from an idolater. Their justice the patriarch acknowledged by his silence. Yet the interposition of God on behalf of Abram induced Pharaoh to send him away with all his possessions intact; and, as the wording of the Hebrew text implies, honorably accompanied to the boundary of the land.

It is a true remark, made by a German writer, that while the occurrence of a famine in Canaan was intended to teach Abram that even in the promised land nourishment depended on the blessing of the Lord, - in a manner teaching him beforehand this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," - his experience in Egypt would also show him that in conflict with the world fleshly wisdom availed nothing, and that help came only from Him who "suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm," (Psalm 105:14, 15) thus, as it were, conveying to Abram's mind these two other petitions: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And so Abram once more returned to Bethel, "unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning; unto the place of the altar which he had made at the first: and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah." In one respect this incident is typical of what afterwards befell the children of Israel. Like him, they went into Egypt on account of a famine; and, like him, they left it under the influence of "fear of them which fell" upon the Egyptians - yet laden with the riches of Egypt.

²⁰ There is in the British Museum an ancient Egyptian "papyrus," which, although of somewhat later date than that of Abram, proves that his fears, on entering Egypt, were at least not groundless. It relates how a Pharaoh, on the advice of his counselors, sent armies to take away a man's wife by force, and then to murder her husband.

²¹ Another curious coincidence is, that the name of this "chief" is abshah, "father of land" which reminds us of Abraham, the "father of a multitude." The whole bearing of the Egyptian monuments on the narratives of the Bible will be fully discussed in the next volume.

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