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ART. I.—*A Christian College—Its Instruction and its Government.*

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF REV. DR. WILLIAM L. BRECKINRIDGE, PRESIDENT OF CENTRE COLLEGE,
DELIVERED IN PRESENCE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND OF THE SYNOD OF KENTUCKY, IN SESSION
AT DANVILLE, OCTOBER 14, 1864.

*Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, Members of the Board of Trustees of Centre College:
Mr. Moderator and Brethren of the Synod of Kentucky:*

You will allow me to address myself to you all, as Guardians of the School, whose principal charge you have seen fit to assign to me.

I hold the office at your pleasure, and by your good will. On no other terms could I ever wish to hold it; and this, not only because my brethren are the persons with whom, above all others, I desire to be associated, but also and more, because the school is yours—founded, built up, and supported by the Church to which we all belong; and now, as one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, resting on your hands, the sons come up in the place of the fathers.

Believing with you, that all events are so many Divine appointments—for even the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord—I recognized His hand in the circumstances which have led me to this place, and I accepted the conclusion as the ordering of His Providence. Looking only at myself, I had shrunk from the difficult and solemn trust which it imposed—the more when I thought of the men whom I was to follow in this work. But looking at the whole matter, I could not do otherwise than undertake the service

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no practical effect, that it is a mere "brutum fulmen." But they tell the world what they will do in certain contingencies; they intimate a possible universal slaughter of the black race in their midst; "make it absolutely necessary," says the Address, "for the public safety, that the slaves be slaughtered, and he who should write the history of that event, would record the darkest chapter of human woe yet written." These several denominations of Christians, through this Address, commend the Christian character of their rulers, generals, soldiers, and people; and they make the Rebel Chief—the man who in his message to their Congress rejoiced over the victory at Fort Pillow—the type of that exalted piety which they display to the admiration of "Christians throughout the World."

ART V.—*Abraham's Position in Sacred History.*

ABOUT two thousand years after the creation of the human race, and two thousand before the incarnation of its Redeemer, a Shemite family left Ur of the Chaldees, in the region beyond the Euphrates, and removed to Haran. The head of the family was Terah. He took with him Abram, his youngest son; Sarah, Abram's wife; and Lot, his grandson, whose father, Haran, Terah's eldest son, was dead. The occasion of this migration was the command of God, requiring Abram to leave his country and his kindred, and go to another land (Acts vii: 3). Although this command was addressed to Abram, yet Terah, true to the instincts of an aged father, undertook the journey with his son. The party remained at Haran until the death of Terah; when Abram, now the patriarch of the family, took with him "Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan," (Gen. xii: 5).

In this incident mention is made, for the first time, of the most illustrious name in Old Testament history. The prominence given to Abraham in the Scriptures appears in a variety

of forms: in the space appropriated to his biography, in the frequent recurrence of his name throughout the Sacred Volume, in the titles of honor applied to him, and in the position assigned to him in the genealogical registers. The history of the world, for the first two thousand years, is condensed into eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, but the personal history of Abraham is spread over fourteen chapters of the same book; and, besides, all the following Scriptures are occupied in unfolding the divine purposes, the rudiments of which were revealed to the patriarch. Next, the name of Adam occurs eleven times in both Testaments; the name of Noah twenty times; but that of Abraham may be found in as many as one hundred and twenty places—these places being distributed, not unequally, throughout the entire volume. Terms of the highest reverence also are applied to him. “Ab,” is equivalent to Father; “Ab-ram,” to high Father, and “Abra-ham,” to Father of many nations (Gen. xvii: 5). He is called the “friend of God,” by historian, prophet and apostle (2 Chron. xx: 7; Isaiah xli: 8; James ii: 23). Paul styles him, “our father Abraham,” “the father of all them that believe,” and “faithful Abraham;” and Christ employs the expression, “Abraham’s bosom,” as an equivalent for the heavenly rest. Again: the tables of genealogy and chronology, which occur in the antecedent history, terminate in this patriarch; and the tables, which follow in Moses, in the Chronicles and in Matthew, take their departure from his name, make their way through the ages to David, and through David and his royal line to Christ. Not less significant, moreover, is the position accorded to the patriarch in the written history and unwritten traditions of the Oriental races. The cheeks of the Jews mantled with pride when they exclaimed, “We have Abraham to our father!” According to Josephus, he is revered by the Chaldeans as their teacher in monotheism; and by the Egyptians, as their teacher in mathematics and astronomy. Nicolaus, the historian of Syria, ascribes to him the conquest of Damascus, accomplished when on his journey from Chaldea to Canaan.* The Koran abounds in tributes of respect to his memory and in traditions of his piety and wisdom. He is known among the

* Josephus, *Ant.* i, ch. vii, §7, 8.

Arabs, to this day, as "El Khalil," "The Friend," i. e. of God. The natives of Orfa, a town which claims to be the ancient Ur of the Chaldees, still repeat his story; and, among the cypresses which shade the sacred pool of Callirhoe, the Beautiful Spring, they point to the spot, where, as they say, he offered his first prayer to the living God.* Hebron, in Palestine, to this day bears the name of El Khalil in honor of Abraham; and the inhabitants show not only his tomb but the venerable oak, Sindian, under which, as they believe, he pitched his tent.

Now, the celebrity of Abraham is wholly due to his position in Biblical history, or to the part which was assigned to him in the historical evolution of the plan of salvation. In order to a proper appreciation of his true position, it is necessary to advert to the religious condition of mankind at the period of his migration. The time that elapsed between the flood and the birth of Abraham is computed at about three hundred and sixty-five years. The population of the earth at this period is purely a matter of conjecture. Professor C. F. Keil entertains his readers with two calculations; in one of these he assumes an average of eight children, and in the other of ten children, to a marriage. The first calculation terminates in a sum total of twenty-five millions of souls; the second, in a sum total of two hundred and ninety millions, as the population of the globe at the call of Abram.† The patriarchs of the world after the flood were still living. Noah died shortly before or shortly after the birth of Abraham; but Shem lived until Abraham was far advanced in life, and until Isaac had reached early manhood. The human race, as a whole, had long since forgotten God. In the Messianic prophecy, uttered by Noah, it was declared that salvation should come to man through the line of Shem (Gen. ix: 26). But, in the days of Peleg, a general apostasy occurred, taking the form of an attempt, in which the whole race, the posterity of Shem included, were joined together to set up a godless empire, having its capital city on the plains of Shinar. The Almighty crushed the conspiracy by confounding their languages; and, as the effect of that measure, scattering the people abroad over the whole earth. Neither the confusion of tongues, nor the dispersion of man-

* Stanley's Jewish Church, p. 7.

† Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. i, p. 178.

kind, served to hold in check the prevailing ungodliness. Many tongues there were, many nations, many lands; but one heart was in all men—and that was desperately wicked. The Pentateuch does not describe the religious condition of the nations descending from Ham and Japheth; but there is no reason to suppose that they were better than the descendants of Shem; and the descendants of Shem, although Shem himself was still living and the Messianic promise was in his line, had become idolaters. This fact is fully established by the message which God sent to the Hebrews soon after the conquest of Canaan: "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods" (Josh. xxiv: 2. Comp. v. 14). Chaldea was, according to the commonly received opinion, the cradle of idolatry, if not its native land. In the time of Jeremiah, fifteen hundred years later, Chaldea was notorious for its pagan worship. "It is a land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols" (Jer. 1: 38. Comp. 1: 2; li: 47, 52). It may be assumed, therefore, that at the birth of Abraham, the human race was in a state of total apostasy. The promise of God, in the first Gospel, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and His promise, through Noah, that salvation should come to mankind in the family of Shem, demanded the adoption of measures to arrest the universal ungodliness, and to establish, upon sure foundations, the kingdom of God among men. These measures began with the calling of Abraham. Now, in the degeneracy of mankind, and in the peculiar plan upon which it pleased God to unfold the work of redemption, the true place of Abraham in sacred history is to be sought.

Five factors entered into his historical position. First, in him was commenced a new era or dispensation of the kingdom of God on earth. The term *Universalism* has been employed to describe what was peculiar in the previous administration of that kingdom. In the foregoing ages the word of revelation, the worship of God, and the care of the sanctuary were committed to the keeping of the human family as a whole. No special relation had been established between God and a favored race. There was in existence no chosen people, in the bosom

of which the kingdom of the saints was established, no sacerdotal order whose exclusive prerogative it was to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. Throughout the three groups of nations descending from Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the knowledge of divine truth was not unequally diffused, and the worship of God perpetuated by here and there a patriarchal priest. Shem had received the promise, but the most of his descendants were idolatrous. The curse had been pronounced on Canaan, yet his posterity had not wholly forgotten Jehovah; for Melchisedek, a priest of the most high God, was a Canaanite. But with Abraham a new era was introduced, the characteristic of which has been denominated *Particularism*. In him a chosen individual, in his immediate posterity a chosen family, and in his more remote descendants a chosen people emerged from the mass of mankind. To them only were intrusted the word of revelation, a true sanctuary, a consecrated priesthood, and an acceptable worship. The seed of Abraham became unto God a peculiar treasure above all people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. xix: 5, 6). The rest of mankind, including all the nations descending from Japheth and Ham and all the nations descending from Shem, the Abrahamic stock excepted, experienced a silent rejection for their ungodliness and idolatry. The end of this arrangement, however, was the redemption of the whole human race. The universal gave place for a time, to the particular; but the particular was intended to terminate in the universal. One man and his posterity were selected to receive the blessing, but they were to be the channels through which the blessing was to flow unto all nations.

Secondly, he became the progenitor and founder of a new and remarkable race. The most important branch of his posterity were called Hebrews, a term which points, according to some of the learned, to Eber, one of Abraham's ancestors, or, as others maintain, to the fact that he crossed the river Euphrates on his journey to Canaan. After the time of the Judges they were known as the children of Israel or Israelites, or simply Israel. At the secession of the Ten Tribes the remnant took the name of Jews, from the tribe of Judah. But although they never bore the name of Abraham, as a patronymic, they were so far true to their history as to refer to Abraham as their progenitor, and to begin their national genealogies with his

name. The unique and conspicuous position occupied by the Jews in all the ages and in every country, their place in the history of every historical race in ancient and modern times, above all the part assigned to them in the development of salvation and the wonderful career of this people in the progress of which that plan of mercy was evolved, all point back to Abraham as one of the most renowned of the renowned few who have founded great nationalities.

Thirdly. His relation to the covenant of circumcision, as the human party contractor, was another element entering into his public position. The biography of the patriarch turns upon the giving of the covenant as the most decisive event of his life, and this instrument became the primal organic law of the institutions of Judaism and Christianity. Very grave questions have arisen touching the nature, extent, and permanency of the Abrahamic covenant, very wide differences of opinion exist as to the proper interpretation of its promises and stipulations, and as to the uses and significance of its seal; yet it will not be denied that the covenant itself is one of the most, if not the very most important document, of its kind, recorded in the biblical history.

Fourthly. In Abraham the Church of God received its first organization. The church had existed through all the ages, even from the utterance of the first Gospel in the curse pronounced on the serpent; but it existed in the persons of its individual members, scattered abroad; it was made manifest in the observance of the holy Sabbath and in the ordinance of sacrifice, as that was solemnized by here and there a true worshiper like Abel, Noah, and Melchisedek; or it was made known in the word of life revealed unto it and published by here and there a preacher of righteousness like Enoch and Noah. But as an organized society it did not exist until it was established in the family of Abraham. As the light was on the first day created and not until the fourth day gathered upon the disc of the sun, so the church was at first made visible in the persons and holy worship of the saints scattered abroad, and then, at the end of two thousand years, these were assembled and constituted into a separate community—the household of faith.

Fifthly. The Scriptures do not hesitate to speak of Abraham as, in a spiritual sense, the father of all true believers. He is

called "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. iv: 11). Gentile converts are repeatedly described as his children (Rom. iv: 12; Gal. iii: 29). And the promise made to him that he should be the father of many nations, is explained by Paul in the same spiritual and comprehensive sense (Gen. xvii: 5; Rom. iv: 16, 17). True believers, though they be Gentiles, are the real Israel of God, the acknowledged children of Abraham, and, as children, heirs to all the covenant promises that remain to be fulfilled.

The historical position of Abraham supplies the point of view from which his biography is to be examined. The problem actually solved, by the providence and grace of God, may be stated thus: A man was raised up, in a period of almost total apostasy, in whom a nature was formed answerable to the dispensation of saving mercy that was introduced in his person, to the mission and career of the race that took its origin from himself, to the covenant in which he became a party with the Almighty, to the Church of God that was organized, for the first time in his family, and to the whole body of the redeemed on earth, of whom he was reckoned to be the father. Any biographical sketch of the patriarch or any commentary on his life and times, will be wholly insufficient which does not rightly estimate his place in biblical history, and which does not, also, reproduce those features in his character and those incidents in his life which correspond to his exalted and peculiar position. He was not a statesman, or lawgiver, or soldier; he was not the founder of a new world-power or of a dynasty of kings; but he was the representative and type of the visible kingdom of God on earth.

The opening paragraph of the inspired biography of Abraham furnishes the clue to the real tenor of the narrative: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii: 1-3). It will be observed that these words contain in both form and substance a divine communication to Abram. This circumstance exhibits the first

characteristic in his personal history : it was, more than that of any other patriarch, a series of divine revelations. The contents of these communications are to be examined hereafter. Nothing more is needful, just here, than to point out the fact that an abundance of revelations was made to him, and that these enter largely into what was peculiar in his career. He who denies the possibility of a special revelation from God, or admitting its possibility, denies that any such communication has been made to mankind, can not proceed a step in this inquiry. The biography of Abraham contains either a series of veritable revelations or of insignificant legends.

The narrative is so constructed, secondly, as to explain the nature of his vocation and its attending circumstances. "The LORD had said unto him, Get thee out of thy country," etc. (Gen. xii : 1. Compare Acts vii : 2-3). His journey was undertaken at the command of God. He was not, as some writers have assumed, a Bedouin sheik, leaving the crowded pastures and exhausted water-springs of Chaldea and wandering with his flocks as far as Canaan, in search of wider fields and more redundant fountains ; nor was he drawn away from home by the love of adventure or by the impulses of a r6ving disposition ; he was not a fugitive from justice or oppression, nor a refugee from the ruins of a falling kingdom or from the terrors of civil war. His vocation was undoubtedly divine. Not only the call itself, as supernatural, is determined by the record, but its circumstantialia are explained. One of the most important of these, is the fact that the divine choice fell upon the line of Shem. According to the terms of the second Messianic prophecy, as it was uttered by Noah, the blessing promised in the first gospel, even a holy seed, was to be revealed in the posterity of Shem (Gen. ix : 26). The genealogical table in the eleventh chapter of Genesis traces the lineage of Shem through eight generations down to Terah and Abram his son ; which completes that part of the case. Next ; the people out of which Abram was taken were idolaters (Josh. xxiv : 2). That Terah served other gods is distinctly stated. Whether Abram was himself an idolater is, perhaps, an open question. But even if he had escaped the contagion, the fact that his immediate family had reached that stage of iniquity, lends much significance to the circumstance that he was chosen and called out of

the world unto the service of God. Once more: This vocation was sovereign. Why Abram was chosen rather than Terah his father, or Nahor his brother, or Lot his nephew, or any other individual in the line of Shem, does not appear. If, as it seems to be established, he was the youngest son of Terah, the election did not follow the law of primogeniture.*

If, in early life, he served other gods, there was no reason in his religion why he should be taken out of the mass of the Chaldeans; if he was from his youth up a worshiper of the true God, his piety was a divine gift, and as such was not the procuring cause of his vocation. His moral qualities, such as his generosity, courage and hospitality, were of a high order. His obedience and faith were every way remarkable; yet these also were the gifts of God. They do not explain his vocation. They were the fruits, not the roots thereof. Their existence in him is to be accounted for by the fact that he had been chosen and foreordained of God unto his exalted position, and these virtues had been imparted to him as qualifications for the work set before him. His vocation was sovereign in the general sense that he was called for reasons not revealed, and in the more rigid sense of an act of sovereignty, in that he was called for reasons which were not in him but in God.

The opening paragraph of the narrative indicates a third characteristic of Abraham's career—his colonization. The com-

* The names of Terah's sons are arranged in the following order: Abram, Nahor, Haran (Gen. xi: 27). This arrangement is not decisive of their relative ages, but may have been designed to indicate their relative importance in the history. Terah became a parent at 70 years of age (xi: 26); he died at Haran, aged 205, when his eldest son, if living, was 135 (xi: 32). But Abram went to Canaan after the death of Terah, and was at that time 75 (Acts vii: 4; Gen. xii: 4): showing that Abram was not the oldest son by 65 years, and that Terah was 130 years old at the birth of Abram. But if that be true, why did Abram think it strange that he himself should become a father at 100? (Gen. xvii: 17. Comp. Rom. iv: 19). The Samaritan Pentateuch escapes the difficulty by putting the age of Terah when he died, at 145; but this reading is not sustained by any of the ancient versions. The best explanation is, perhaps, that Abram at 100 knew himself to be prematurely old; an explanation which is suggested by the fact that after the death of Sarah, at which time he was 137, six sons were born to him in his marriage with Keturah (Gen. xvii: 17; xxiii: 1; xxiv: 67; xxv: 1-2). Haran, who died in Ur, was probably the oldest son; for Nahor married his daughter, and if, as the Jews assert, Ischah was another name for Sarah, Abram also married a daughter of Haran (xi: 29). Comp., however, xx: 12.

mand required him to leave his country and to go to a land that God would show him (Gen. xii : 1). It is to be borne in mind that the original call was addressed to Abram, not after he reached Haran, as some have held, but before he left his native place in Ur of the Chaldees. This fact is to be deduced from the terms of the call ; it required him to leave his *country*, a command which would have been superfluous if he had already migrated from Chaldea. It is confirmed by what God afterward said to him : " I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees " (Gen. xv : 7). It is established by the testimony of Stephen : " The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into a land that I will show thee " (Acts vii : 3). There is a wide difference between the two methods according to which the dispersions of mankind have proceeded. The first is a process of colonization, whereby a certain number of families expatriate themselves forever and remove to a distant land, crossing a continent or a sea in a movable column, as birds of the air migrate from land to land. The second and more common method is a process of natural expansion, whereby mankind when they multiply, enlarge gradually the bounds of their habitations and spread abroad like a sea with its shores taken away. The early settlements effected nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, on the eastern edge of this continent, furnish a fine example of colonization ; the progressive occupancy of its vast interior is a remarkable example of natural expansion. Now the enterprise of colonization which has made so large a figure in the history of the Japhetic races and the Phenician branch of the family of Ham, has been almost wholly foreign to the habits and traditions of the Shemitic tribes. The Chaldean shepherds, guided by the stars, led their flocks over wide ranges of hunting grounds ; and their warriors, impelled by the lust of plunder or revenge, carried their arms, even before the call of Abraham, as far as Southern Palestine. But the wanderings of the shepherds and the raids of the Bedouin robbers terminated at the point of departure—the tents of the women and children. Their habitual inertness and contentment, their virtues, such as they were, and their vices, too, rooted them to their native regions. Now

Abraham was required to abandon all these traditions, to quit forever his country and to emigrate to another land. With colonization its usual concomitants came to him and to his posterity—new forms of government, new usages, new habits of life, a new type of civilization, and what was peculiar in their experience, a new religion.

Closely allied to the process of colonization was a fourth element in the plan of life prescribed to the patriarch: the process of segregation. He was directed to separate himself not only from his country, but from his kindred, and from his father's house (Gen. xii: 1). At his departure from Ur of the Chaldees, he took with him none of his family except his wife, his father, Lot his nephew, and Lot's wife; and thus he was parted from the great body of his kindred. He sojourned at Haran, a city several days' journey north of Canaan, until the death of Terah, his father, severed the last link that bound him to his ancestry (Acts vii: 4). After his arrival in Palestine, a difficulty which arose among the herdsmen led to the final separation of Lot from the chosen family. The isolation of Abram was now complete; he and Sarah, his wife, with their servants, were alone in the land. Not only so, but his wandering life, bringing him successively to Sichem, to Bethel, to Hebron, to Egypt, to Gerar, to Beersheba, and back to Hebron, precluded the possibility of his becoming identified with the people who held the promised land. Further, the difficulties in which he became involved with Pharaoh and Abimilech prevented his affiliation with the Egyptians and the Philistines, and banished him from those countries. And, further yet, when he went into the land of Canaan he had no children, and was, therefore, cut off from alliance, by intermarriage, with the aborigines. Then, finally, Ishmael, as soon as he was grown, was separated from the chosen family and dwelt in the desert; and the children of Abraham's last wife, Keturah, were sent away "eastward into the east country." Nothing is more remarkable in the dealings of God with the patriarch than the rigor with which the law of segregation was applied to his immediate family.

The Almighty, having given these commands to Abraham, proceeds to bestow upon him a series of promises. These promises shaped and colored the course of his life. "I will

make of thee," said Jehovah, "a great nation." He entered the land of Canaan without a child and without expectation of offspring. At his death he left behind him, in his son Isaac, the germ of David's kingdom in all its glory and power; in Ishmael, the progenitor of twelve princes, and of as many powerful Bedouin tribes; and in the seven sons of Keturah, the ancestors of the vast and warlike populations of Arabia. And, yet more, Abraham left behind him the beginnings of a "nation" greater than all these combined, to wit, his spiritual seed, the whole body of the redeemed (Gal. iii: 29).

Then followed the words: "I will bless thee." The sacred writer shows, in many particulars, how this promise was fulfilled. The wealth of Abraham increased; "he was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (xiii: 2). The servants born in his house multiplied until they furnished him with a band of three hundred and eighteen fighting men (xiv: 14). He routed the armies of the confederate kings from the East, who invaded Palestine, put them to flight, chased them from the valley of the salt-sea, through the whole length of the country, as far north as Hobah, "which is on the left of Damascus," and rescued his nephew Lot, and the goods, the women, and the prisoners from the hands of the marauders (xiv: 13, 16). And as the richest of his temporal blessings, God gave to him a son in his marriage with Sarah, and spared the boy when bound upon the altar. Length of days is commonly considered an inestimable blessing. This Abraham enjoyed, for he lived to a good old age, even to a hundred and seventy-five years.

Another element in this benediction is thus described: "I will make thy name great." The renown of Abraham, first in his own day, among his own kindred, and throughout the East, and then by means of the circulation of the Scriptures, through all the ages, among all kindreds of the earth, and throughout all lands under heaven, has given to this promise its largest fulfillment. Nothing can exceed the honors which Jew, Mohammedan, and Christian, at war in almost every other sentiment, unite in paying to the far-famed, illustrious, and imperishable memory of Abraham.

Not only so, but the Almighty declared that he would regulate the destiny of other men according to the attitude they should assume toward his chosen one. He said: "I will bless

them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Calvin finds in these words an extraordinary manifestation of the kindness of God, "in that he familiarly makes a covenant with Abraham, as men are wont to do with their companions and equals. For this is the accustomed form of covenants between kings and others, that they mutually promise to have the same friends and enemies."* The promise, moreover, indicates a leading feature in the biography of the patriarch. God did, in point of fact, bless the friends and curse the enemies of his servant. When Abraham went to Egypt, Pharaoh took Sarah from her husband, intending, doubtless, to shut her up in his harem. Jehovah sent great plagues upon the king and upon his house on account of Sarah; so that Pharaoh gave her back to her husband (xii: 14-20). Several years afterward, Abimilech, a Philistine chief, offered to Abram and Sarah a similar indignity. Jehovah warned the Philistine of the crime he was about to commit, and threatened him with instant death. The warning was effectual, and Sarah was again restored unharmed to Abraham (chap. xx). The life of the patriarch was full of honors and blessings. All his affairs, even his sorest trials, received a joyous issue. Toward the close of the narrative the sacred writer sums it all up in terms responsive to the original promise: "Abraham was old and well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (Gen. xxiv: 1).

The concluding consummate blessing is thus described: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." The Apostle Paul declares, in terms, that the true intent and meaning of this promise is the salvation of the heathen by the Gospel. "And 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" (Gal. iii: 8. Comp. Rom. iv: 16, 17). It is also a favorite opinion with some of the best interpreters, that the expression "all families of the earth" should be read "all families of *the ground*;" that the word *families* points to the division of the one family into many at the confusion of tongues (Gen. x: 5, 20, 31); and the word *ground* points to the curse pronounced on the ground

* Calvin on Gen. xii: 8.

(chap. iii: 17). The conclusion, according to Keil, is, that "the blessing of Abraham was once more to unite the divided families, and change the curse, pronounced upon the ground on account of sin, into a blessing for the whole human race. This concluding word of God to the patriarch comprehends all nations and times, and condenses, as Baumgarten has said, the fullness of the divine counsel for the salvation of all men in the call of Abram. All further promises, therefore, not only to the patriarchs, but also to Israel, were merely expansions and closer definitions of the salvation held out to the whole human race in the promise to our first parents."* This glorious promise was repeatedly renewed. At the destruction of Sodom, the Almighty assigned, as a reason for admitting Abraham into His secret counsels, the fact that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (xviii: 18). After the sacrifice of Isaac, Jehovah said to him, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." Here a new and further revelation was made, even the assurance that all nations should be blessed in the seed of Abraham, and not in Abraham severally, according to the terms used in chap. xii: 3. But the seed of Abraham is Christ, according to the interpretation put upon the promise by the Apostle Paul. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii: 16). The same promise was afterward renewed to Isaac (Gen. xxvi: 3, 4); and again to Jacob, both on his flight from Canaan and on his return thither (Gen. xxviii: 14; xxxv: 11). All the promises made to Abraham, to the patriarchs who came after him, and to the Hebrew nation, and all the blessings bestowed upon them all in their generations culminate in this—the exceeding great and precious promise of a Saviour. In the form in which it was delivered to Abraham, on the occasion of his original call, it is commonly styled the Third Messianic Promise; the first having been given to Adam, the first father of the race; the next to Noah, the second father of the race; and the third to Abraham, the father of the faithful. This promise imparts to the biography of Abraham, to the covenant made with him, to the subsequent cove-

* Keil and Delitzsch's *Penta*, i: 193, 194.

nants, to the law and the prophets, to all the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New, to the life and death of Christ, to the Pentecost of the Jews and the Pentecost of the Gentiles, to the labors of the apostles, to the testimony of the martyrs and confessors, and to all human history, their true significance and final end.

It has been already stated that the career of Abraham was distinguished by the number and importance of the divine revelations which he received. Before examining their contents it is necessary to consider the medium through which they were communicated, their subject-matter, their central mass, the form in which they were delivered, the elements which enter into the record made of them, and the progressive development of their leading ideas.

The term Theophany describes the medium through which the revelations were communicated to Abraham. This term is derived from the Greek (*θεωφανεια*), and is applied to the visible manifestations of Jehovah, the actual appearance of the God of glory to the senses of men. He revealed his will to the earlier patriarchs by immediate inward communications; although, it must be acknowledged, that the expressions "The Lord God called unto Adam," "God spake unto Noah," etc., might be taken in the more literal sense of an audible address. But without debating that question, it is to be received as indubitable, that the Almighty appeared openly and spoke audibly to Abraham, and to multitudes of his descendants in their generations. The manifestation occurred sometimes in supernatural visions, sometimes in dreams, and at other times to the external senses, when Jehovah assumed a bodily form. Moses wrote: "The word of Jehovah came unto Abraham in a vision;" "And Jehovah appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre" (Gen. xv: 1; xviii: 1). Stephen said: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia" (Acts vii: 2).* The theophany is, therefore, a leading feature of the Abrahamic history; and many of the learned treat the period as the opening of the theophanic era, an era

* The term for "appeared" is *ωφθη*. Compare Acts ii: 3. "And there *appeared* [*ωφθησαν*] unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." The phenomenon was, in both cases, doubtless visible.

which culminated when Jehovah went before the Hebrews, through the wilderness, in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, and which, perhaps, was not finally closed until the apostolical age. The divine manifestations granted to Abraham were ten in number. They occurred in the following order: I. In Mesopotamia, Acts vii: 2. II. At Sichem, Gen. xii: 7. III. At Bethel, xiii: 14. IV-VIII. At Mamre, xv: 1; xvii: 1; xviii: 1; xxi: 12; xxii: 1. IX and X. At Mt. Moriah, xxii: 11, 15.

The subject-matter of these ten theophanic revelations lies upon their surface: The two ideas, which are most prominent in the entire series, are the Promised Land and the Promised Seed. God gave the assurance to Abraham that he should be the father of a great nation, even of many nations; and the further assurance that his posterity should occupy, as their own rightful inheritance, the land of Canaan. Six of the ten revelations contain the promise both of the seed and of the land; the remaining four are restricted to the one transcendent blessing of a vast posterity.

It is evident, also, that the central mass of all these revelations, and of all the incidents which enter into the life of Abraham, is the covenant of circumcision. This covenant was concluded between the Almighty and the patriarch in two stages; it was begun in the fourth theophany and finished, several years afterward, in the fifth. The leading idea of this instrument in its first stage is, clearly, the Promised Land, and in the second the Promised Seed. To this covenant all that precedes is preparatory and all that follows is supplementary. The whole weight and stress of the narrative rests on this central ground-work. Many promises had been made to Abraham; but these are all repeated in terms or by implication in the body of the covenant. Many providential events had attended or controlled his career in life; these are all explained in the covenant. It sums up and reduces into one body, and broadly unfolds all the revelations which before, even from the days of Adam, had been given to mankind; and it contains the elements of every spiritual blessing which has, through all ages since the time of Abraham, even unto this day, been disclosed to the faith of the believer.

The form in which these revelations were communicated fol-

lowed the analogy of the other holy oracles. It has pleased God to make known his will through the word, not by a single revelation, complete in all its parts, but through a series of successive revelations. He gave the Scriptures, not at one time, by one man in one volume; but at different times, running through a period of two thousand years, by thirty or forty inspired penmen, and in as many as sixty-six different books. "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. i: 1). This law of inspiration governed the commands and promises which were addressed to Abraham; they were communicated not all at once, but in nine distinct portions, at eight different times, and in five different places. The period within which these revelations were given may be estimated at fifty years. Abraham was seventy-five years of age when he entered the land of Canaan (Gen. xii: 4); eighty-six at the birth of Ishmael (xvi: 16); one hundred at the birth of Isaac (xxi: 5); one hundred and thirty-seven when Sarah died (xxiii: 1; xvii: 17); and one hundred and seventy-five at his own death (xxv: 7). The age of Isaac at the time of his sacrifice is not recorded; but on supposition that he was then twenty-five years of age, it will follow that not less than fifty years elapsed between the first theophany at Ur and the tenth and last on Mt. Moriah.

It is to be observed, still further, that two distinct elements enter into the structure of the history. One of these is a series of specific revelations, and the other is a running narrative of the events in the life of Abraham, by which the revelations are connected and explained. The covenant-promises are neither wrought into one consecutive whole, nor are they left in detached and insulated fragments. In their nature they are divers not diverse, and in form not disparate but linked together by the record of facts. The plan of the history combines both its two constituent elements in one coherent narrative. The intervals between some of the theophanies extend through several years, but they are filled up with incidents which elucidate the promises and commands of Jehovah. At the beginning God made known his purpose to bless the friends and afflict the enemies of the patriarch; and the subsequent history shows how this purpose was executed on Pharaoh, on Melchisedek, on Abimilech, on Lot, on the confederate kings.

The divine word calling Abram out of the mass of mankind is fully explicated by the divine providence which separated him from his country and his kindred, and his father, and his son Ishmael, and his six sons, the offspring of Keturah, and from all the heathen. The promise of a country is expounded by the record which is made of his sojourn in Canaan, and by the altars and wells, the grove and the burying-place which he left in the land as the monuments of his title to the inheritance. The repeated promises which God made to him respecting his posterity are recorded; so also are the successive stages in his personal history which terminated in the birth of Isaac. Through the entire narrative the sacred writer holds the reader closely to the connection which God established between his revelations to Abraham and his dealings with him. Every word of promise, and every word of command uttered by Jehovah, stand related to some corresponding act of faith or act of obedience performed by the patriarch.

The progressive development of the covenant promises ought also to be noted. It may be clearly traced in the revelations respecting the land of promise, the seed of promise, and the assurances which God gave of his faithfulness to his engagements.

At Ur, in the first theophany, God said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country . . . to a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii: 1). The patriarch "went out not knowing whither he went" (Heb. xi: 8); being left in ignorance as to the name and character of the country to which he was traveling. On his arrival at Sichem, God announced to him, in the second theophany, that he had at last reached the land of promise: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. xii: 7). He added nothing, however, defining the extent of the inheritance. At a later period the patriarch ascended "the mountain east of Bethel," where he had "builded an altar unto the Lord" (xii: 8). The view from this height commanded to the north the hills which separate Judea from the fertile plain of Samaria, with glimpses through their valleys of the intrenched cities of the Canaanites; to the south the mountains which were round about the site of Jerusalem and the more distant ranges of Hebron met the vision; to the west rolled the waters of the great sea; while to the east the valley of the Jordan,

laden with tropical luxuriance and fragrant with aromatic shrubs, the long ravine, rich with verdure, and fruits, and stately cedars, winding from Bethel to the Jordan, and beyond the Jordan the dim outline of Moab, graven themselves upon the picture.* Here in this mountain the LORD appeared the third time to Abraham, and said: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever" (Gen. xiii: 14, 15). The Lord said more than this; for he added: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (verse 17). This wide domain was still further enlarged beyond the spheres of both his vision and his journeys. At Mamre, in the fourth theophany, God granted to his seed the whole vast region "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (xv: 18). And then, in the fifth theophany, the imperial gift was made perpetual: "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (xvii: 8). And, finally, the Almighty endowed his servant with an eternal inheritance in "a better country, even an heavenly," of which the earthly Canaan was only a type. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi: 10).

This law of progressive development appears in the revelations concerning the chosen seed. Respecting their numbers God said at Ur (Gen. xii: 2): "I will make of thee a great nation;" afterward at Bethel (xiii: 16): "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth;" at Mamre (xv: 5): as the stars in heaven "so shall thy seed be;" and at Moriah (xxii: 17): "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore." More remarkable still was the gradual disclosures to the patriarch in regard to the legitimacy of the promised seed. At Ur the word of God was: "I will make of thee a great nation;" although Abraham was childless, and Sarah his wife was sixty-five years of age, and she had borne no children. At Sichem, and then at Bethel,

* Stanley's Sinai and Palestine, pp. 214, 215.

the promise became more definite: "Unto thy seed will I give this land;" and "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth." The patriarch relied, it is certain, with implicit faith upon these repeated assurances; but year after year passed away, and he went childless in the land. In his perplexity he attempted to solve the problem, not knowing the power of God, by the conjecture that his seed should arise by way of adoption. Accordingly he proposed to acknowledge and treat as his own heir a child born in his house, the son of his steward, Eliezer of Damascus. God corrected his mistake, saying: "This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir" (xv: 1-14). But the eleventh year of his sojourn in Canaan found Sarah still childless; and despairing of offspring, she in her turn, not knowing the power of God, attempted to solve the problem. Her conjecture was that the birth of a son from the loins of Abraham and the womb of her servant-maid Hagar, followed by her act, receiving and adopting the child as her own, would fulfill the divine oracle. She gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife, and Ishmael was born. Although the unhappiness which this carnal expedient introduced into the family, should have taught all the parties that they had misinterpreted the word of God, yet both Abraham and Sarah appear to have treated Ishmael as the legitimate heir of the promises until he was thirteen years of age (chap. xvi). In the theophany of the covenant of circumcision, God said to Abraham: "I will bless Sarah and give thee also a son of her" (xvii: 16). At this news, as if it were too strange and too good to be true, Abraham fell upon his face and laughed. Not long afterward the Lord repeated the assurance to Abraham in the hearing of his wife, and she also laughed (xviii: 10-13). But within a year Isaac was born at Mamre; God's covenant was established in him to the exclusion of Ishmael; in due time Isaac was offered in sacrifice to God, and Abraham received him a second time from the dead, the type of Christ, the true and holy SEED of the covenant promises (Gen. xxii: 12; Heb. xi: 19; Gal. iii: 16).

After the same manner were the assurances of the Divine faithfulness communicated. In the beginning God gave to the patriarch a simple promise; in the next two theophanies

this promise was repeated; in the fourth God exalted the promise into a covenant, which he ratified by passing between the fragments of slain beasts (xv: 17); in the fifth God gave the second stage of the covenant in the sign of circumcision (xvii: 10); and finally, He confirmed it all by an oath, wherein, when he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself (xxii: 16). The attestation assumed the forms successively of a promise, a covenant with sacrifice, a covenant with a sacrament, and an oath: "By Myself, saith the LORD."

It has been already observed, that the progressive discovery of God's purposes to Abraham followed the general law of divine revelation. To this it should be added, that one of the providential purposes of this arrangement was to secure the spiritual discipline of Abraham. His vocation was divine; in him a new dispensation of the kingdom of God was introduced; in him and in his family the visible Church was organized; he became, with the Almighty, an original party to the covenant in which the foundations of that Church were laid; he was the founder of a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and the father of all true believers coming after him to the end of time. A spiritual discipline, protracted, thorough, and complete, was therefore a necessity of his position. Without this, his departure from Chaldea, his separation from his kindred, his segregation from the heathen, have no significance. Now, as the means of this discipline, God imparted to him imposing manifestations of his glory; slowly unfolded before him stage by stage, his adorable purposes, and held him, through the space of fifty years in subjection to specific revelations, special providences, the powers of the world to come, and the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit.