Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Genesis

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

Its distinctive character presenting the great elementary principles of the relationships of God with man

Genesis has a character of its own; and, as the beginning of the Holy Book, presents to us all the great elementary principles which find their development in the history of the relationships of God with man, which is recorded in the following books. The germ of each of these principles will be found here, unless we except the law. There was however a law given to Adam in his innocence; and Hagar, we know, prefigures at least Sinai. There is scarce anything afterwards accomplished of which the expression is not found in this book in one form or another. There is found also in it, though the sad history of man's fall be there, a freshness in the relationship of men with God, which is scarce met with afterwards in men accustomed to abuse it and to live in a society full of itself. But whether it be the creation, man and his fall, sin, the power of Satan, the promises, the call of God, His judgment of the world, redemption, the covenants, the separation of the people of God, their condition of strangers on the earth, the resurrection, the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan, the blessing of the nations, the seed of promise, the exaltation of a rejected Lord to the throne of the world, all are found here in fact or in figure — in figure, now that we have the key, even the church itself.

Chapter 1

Creation with man as head: God's work and God's rest

Let us examine then the contents of this book in order. First, we have the creation — creation in which man is found placed on earth as centre and head. We have first the work of God, and then the rest of God: at the close of His work, rest from labour, without presenting the idea that any one participated in it. God Himself rested from His work. Man comes in to take his place then in happiness at its head.

God's revelation given as to man's relationship with Him

But here some brief general remarks deserve a place. This revelation from God is not a history by Him of all that He has done, but what has been given to man for his profit, the truth as to what he has to say to. Its object is to communicate to man all that regards his own relationship with God. In connection with the second Adam he will know as he is known; and already, by means of the work of Christ, he has that unction of the Holy One by which he knows all things. But historically the revelation is partial. It communicates what is for the conscience and spiritual affections of man. The created world therefore is taken up as it subsists before the eyes of man, and he in the midst of it, and in so bringing it forward Genesis gives God's work as the author of it. What is here said is true of the whole Bible. Here it is evident in this, that nothing is said of the creation, but what places man in the position which God had made for him in the creation itself, or presents to him this sphere of his existence as being the work of God Thus no mention is made of any heavenly beings. Nothing is said of their creation. We find them

as soon as they are in relationship with men; although afterwards, as a truth, it is fully recognised of course that they are so created.

God as Creator of the material universe

Thus also, as regards this earth, except the fact of its creation, nothing is said of it beyond what relates to the present form of it. The fact is stated that God created all things, all man sees, all the material universe. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What may have taken place between that time and the moment when the earth (for it only is then spoken of) was without form and void, is left in entire obscurity. Darkness was then upon the face of the deep, but the darkness is only spoken of as resting on the face of the deep.

Out of chaos and darkness the earth prepared and furnished

From out of this state of chaos and darkness in which the earth then lay God brought it, first introducing light into it by His word, and then formed seas and dry land, and furnished it with plants and living creatures. In this earth, thus prepared and furnished, man, made after the image of God, is placed as lord of all that was in it. Its fruits are given him for food; and God rests from His work, and distinguishes with His blessing the day which saw His labours closed. Man enjoyed the fruit of God's work rather than entered into the rest; for in nothing had he taken part in the work.

Light and order out of darkness and confusion

The first four days, God brings light and order out of darkness and confusion: light, the first day; the expanse as a scene of heavenly power over the earth, the second day; then He divided what was formed and orderly, on the one hand, from the moving powerful but shapeless mass of waters, on the other, and then ornamented the ordered habitable scene with beauty and fruitfulness on the third. The symbols of directing power were set visibly in their places on the fourth.

The prepared creation, proof of God's life-giving power

The scene of man's display and dominion was formed, but man was not yet there. But before He formed man, God created living energies of every kind in the seas, and earth, and air, which, instinct with life, should propagate and multiply, the proof of God's life-giving power, that to matter He could communicate living energy; and thus, not only a scene was formed, where His purposes in man should be displayed, but that existence, which man should rule so as to display his energies and rights according to the will of God, and as holding his place as vicegerent over the earth, apart and distinct from all, the centre of all, the ruler of all, as interested in them as his; living in his own sphere of blessedness according to his nature, and as to others, ordering all in blessing and subjection. In the midst of all the prepared creation, in a word, man is set.

Man formed a living soul in immediate connection with God

But this was not all. He was not to spring out of matter by the mere will of God, as the beasts, by that power which calls things that are not as though they were, and they are. God formed man out of the dust, and when formed breathed from Himself into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul in immediate connection with God Himself. As the apostle states elsewhere, we also are His offspring. It is not said "Let the earth bring forth"; but "Let us make." And He made man in His likeness, created him indeed to multiply as the other living creatures, but gave him dominion over them, and made him the centre and head of God's creation on the earth. The seeds of the fruitful earth were given to him, the green herb and its increase to the beasts. Death and violence were not yet. * {* Nothing can be more marked than the distinction of man — of that being in whom the purposes of God also were to be fulfilled; His delights were with the sons of men, His good pleasure in (not merely good will towards) men proved by His blessed Son becoming a man. Here no doubt it is the responsible man, but the difference from all other creatures is marked as strongly as possible. The sixth day's creation finishes with the usual formula, "And God saw that it was good" (chap. 1:25), before man is spoken of. Then comes a solemn consultation to give him a special place, and the image and likeness of God are introduced by God as that after which He creates him. And it is repeated, "so God created man in his own image." I must say, to make a mere animal of him is monstrous and slights this passage, the emphatic declaration of God. As an order of being, he is evidently the counterpart of the ways of God, though this be only fully accomplished in Christ according to Psalm 8 which just brings this out: compare Romans 5:14 and Hebrews 2.}

Man's creation distinct from all else

We shall see, in chapter 2, another immensely important principle brought out as to man, when the question of his relationship to God is brought forward. Here his creation is a distinct one from all else; he is presented simply, apart from every other thought, as God's workmanship as a creature, the head and centre of the rest, the ruler over them all. But this we may remark: while he represents God and is like Him we have nothing of righteousness and holiness here. This came in by redemption and the partaking of the divine nature. There was of course the absence of evil, and so far the likeness of God; but ignorance of it, not what God is in respect of it. It is much more here the place man holds, than his nature, though the absence of evil, and the spring of condescending affections as the centre of being, must have been found there, had he not fallen. These last are more the likeness, his place more the image. He was the central authority of all things, and all things referred to him as their head. All authority and all affections were related to him as their centre and head, and no sin, sorrow, or evil, or insubordinate self-seeking was there. Unfallen moral order would have been his delight.

God's rest

The first three verses of chapter 2 belong to the first chapter. It is the rest of God, He ceasing from His own works, all very good.

Chapter 2

Man's relationship with God: the special manner of his creation

In chapter 2 we have man's relationship with God, and his own portion as such. Hence the LORD* God is introduced: not merely God as a creator, but God in relationship with those He has created. Hence we have the special manner of man's creation. {* That is Jehovah Elohim, a personal name as well as Godhead. It was important too that Israel should know that their God was the original Creator of all. Still it is only used when special ways and connection with man are introduced. The distinction of Jehovistic and Elohistic documents is the merest child's play, and flows from entire ignorance of the ways and mind of God. There is always a reason for one or the other. Elohim is simply God; Jehovah is the acting governing person in time though self-existing, who abides ever the same and having to do with others, who is, and was, and is to come.}

The Garden of Eden

Only a word or two is called for as to the garden. It was a place of delights. Eden means pleasure. It has wholly disappeared, and it was meant that it should; only we find, by two at least of the rivers, that it was on this earth substantially as we have it. Jehovah Elohim had formed the man, Jehovah Elohim had planted the garden. The river of God to water the earth had its rise there. The fresh springs of God are found in the place of His delight. Man was set there to dress and keep it. Man and the earth are both now in ruin.

The two trees: man's responsibility in obedience and a sovereign source of life

But we have in this chapter, more particularly, the special relationship of man with God, with his wife (type of Christ and His church), with the creation; and the two great principles, from which everything flows as regards man, established in the garden where man was placed in blessing; namely, responsibility in obedience, and a sovereign source of life — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. In these two things, in conciliating these two, lies the lot of every man*. It is impossible out of Christ. It is the question raised in the law, and answered in grace in Christ. The law put life as the result of the perfect obedience of him who knew good and evil, that is, made it depend on the result of our responsibility. Christ, having undergone the consequence of man's having failed, becomes (in the power of a life which had gained the victory over death which was the consequence of that disobedience) a source of life eternal that evil could not reach, and that in a righteousness perfect according to a work which has taken away all guilt from him that has share in it, a righteousness moreover in which we stand before God according to His own mind and righteous will and nature, according to His own glory. His priesthood** applies to the details of the development of this life in the midst of evil, and the place of divine perfectness in which we are set by His work, and reconciles our present infirmities with our divinely given place before God. In the garden the knowledge of good and evil did not yet exist: obedience only in refraining from an act, which was no sin if it had not been forbidden, constituted the test. It was not a prohibition of sin as at Sinai, and a claim of good when good and evil were known. {*In Eden the two principles were there, obedience and life; man failed, incurred

death, and was excluded from life there. The law did not treat man as lost, though it proves him so, but takes up the two principles and makes life dependent on obedience. Christ takes the consequence of failure for us on the cross, and is the source of divine life to us, and that in a new resurrection state. ** The difference between priesthood and advocacy will be treated in its place in John and Hebrews. I only remark here that priesthood refers to help and access to God, advocacy to failure.}

Man in contrast with every other creature

The condition of man, in contrast with every other creature here below, found its source in this, that, instead of springing from the earth or water by the sole word of God, as a living being, man was formed and fashioned from the dust, and God places him in immediate relationship, as a living being, with Himself; inasmuch as he becomes a living being through God Himself's breathing into his nostrils the breath of life.

Man by his derivation of life in immediate relationship with God

All animated creatures are called living souls, and said to have the breath of life; but God did not breathe into the nostrils of any in order to their becoming living souls. Man was, by his existence, in immediate relationship with God, as deriving his life immediately from Himself; hence he is called in Acts 17 the offspring of God, and in Luke it is said "the [son] of Adam the [son] of God."

Adam's relationship with God, his wife, and the inferior creation

It is important to consider this chapter as laying down, in a special manner, all the principles of the relationship of man, whether with God, with his wife, or with the inferior creation. Here were all things in their own order as creatures of God in connection with the earth; but man's labour not the means of their growth and fruitfulness. Nor did rain from heaven minister fruitfulness from above. The mist that watered it rose from the earth, drawn up by power and blessing, but not coming down. Yet man was, as to his place, in a peculiar one in reference to God. Man did not dwell in heaven; God did not dwell on earth. But God had formed a place of peculiar blessing and delight for man's habitation, and there He visited him. Out of this garden, where he was placed by the hand of God as sovereign of the world, flowed rivers which watered and characterised the world without. Upon Adam reposed the duty of obedience. The image of God upon earth, in the absence of evil from his nature, and as the centre of a vast system around him and in connection with him, his own proper blessing was in his immediate connection and intercourse with God, according to the place he was set in.

Adam's blessing secured by dependence on and intercourse with God

As soon as God had redeemed a people, He dwelt among them. His abiding presence is the consequence of redemption and through it only (Ex. 29:46). Here He created, blessed, and visited. Adam, created the conscious centre of all around him, had his blessing and security in dependence on and intercourse with God. This, as we shall see, he forfeited, and became the craving centre of his own

wishes and ambition, which he could never satisfy.

The position of the first and innocent Adam

Earthly nature then in its perfection, with man, in relationship with God by creation and the breath of life that was in him, for its centre; enjoyment; a source of abiding life, and a means of putting responsibility to the test; the sources of universal refreshment to the world without; and if continuing in his created condition, blessed intercourse with God on this ground — such was the position of the first and innocent Adam. That he might not be alone here, but have a companion, fellowship, and the enjoyment of affection, God formed — not another man, for then the one were not a centre — but out of the one man himself, his wife, that the union might be the most absolute and intimate possible, and Adam head and centre of all. He receives her, moreover, from the hand of God Himself. Such was nature around man: what God always owns, and man never sins against with impunity, though sin has spoiled it all; the picture of what Christ, the church, and the universe shall be at the end in power in the obedient man. As yet all was innocence, unconscious of evil.

Chapter 3

Man's fall: disobedience and failure

In chapter 3 we find — what, alas! has always happened, and happened immediately when God has set up anything in the hands of responsible man — disobedience and failure. So it was in Adam, so in Noah, so in Israel with the golden calf, so in the priesthood with strange fire, so in Solomon son of David, and Nebuchadnezzar. So indeed in the church, 1 John 2:18-19 and Jude. It was always the first thing when what was set up was trusted to man. All is set up again in Christ, the Man of God's purpose. The subtlety of the hidden enemy of our souls is now at work. The first effect is the distrust of God which he inspires; then lusts and disobedience; utter dishonour done to God, whether as regards His truth or His love; the power of natural affections over man; the consciousness of being naked and powerless; effort to hide it from oneself*; terror of God — seeking to hide from Him; self-justification, which seeks to cast upon another, and even upon God, that of which we have been guilty. After that, we have, not the blessing or restoration of man, or promises made to him, but the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, and, in that, the promise made to the second Adam, the victorious Man, but who in grace has His birthplace where the weakness and the fall were. It is the Seed of the woman who bruises the serpent's head. {* He made fig leaves to cover his nakedness as to human shame, but when God came in he was as naked as ever. 'I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and went and hid myself, for I was naked.' The fig leaves were man's covering. God clothed them with skins which were had through death.}

Man trusts Satan rather than God

Remark too how complete was the fall and separation from God. God had fully blessed; Satan suggests that God keeps back the best gift out of envy, lest man should be like Him. Man trusts Satan for

kindness rather than God, whom he judges according to Satan's lie. He believes Satan instead of God, when he tells him he should not die, as God said he should, and casts off the God who had blessed him, to gratify his lusts. Not trusting God, he uses his own will to seek happiness by, as a surer way, as men do now.

Contrasts between the first Adam and the Second

We see in Philippians 2 how completely the Lord Jesus glorified God in all these points, acting in a way exactly opposite to Adam. We may remark too that Adam did it to exalt himself, to be as God, as a robbery; while Christ, when He was in the divine glory, emptied Himself to be like man, and was obedient, not disobedient, unto death. Remark, too, how the hiding of sin from self is gone when God comes in. Adam, who had covered his nakedness, speaks of it when God is there as much as if he had done nothing to cover it. And so it is with all our efforts to make out what shall hide our sin, or make out righteousness. Moreover man flies from God before ever God drives him in righteousness from His presence and blessing. The knowledge of good and evil in a state of disobedience makes us afraid of God, and must have a divine work and righteousness to cover it. Remark farther, what is of great importance, Adam had no promise: there is none to the first Adam; no restoration of the first man, no way back to the tree of life; all is in the Second, the woman's Seed. In judging Satan He and His victory are promised.

Death, and life through an accomplished work

What follows is the present result as to the government of God; the temporal sentence pronounced on Adam and his wife, until death, under the power of which he was fallen, seized him. There was a sign however of deeper mercies. Life is recognised as still there though death had come in: Eve is the mother of all living; a faith, it would seem, real, though obscure, at any rate, ours. But there is yet more. Before they are driven out, and shut out from all return back to the tree of life according to nature, God clothes them with a garment which covers their nakedness, a garment which had its origin in death (the death of another), which had come in, but which hid the effects of the sin that had introduced it. Man was no longer naked. So, though out from God's presence in nature, we have not yet indeed the serpent's head bruised, though this is sure to be accomplished; the prince of this world is judged (though he be it still), and we know it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, when Christ, whom the world led by Satan slew, was seated at God's right hand; but if that be not yet accomplished, we are before God clothed with the clothing which He has put upon us, that best robe. It is not now a promise or a figure, but an accomplished work — a work of God. God has made our coat; the world may mock at such a thought, we know what it means. But he is justly driven out of the garden, an outcast from paradise and God, and hindered from partaking of the tree of life, that he may not perpetuate here below a life of disaster and of misery. The way of the tree of life was henceforth inaccessible to man*, according to nature, as the creature of God. There is no return to the paradise of man in innocence. Adam, already in sin and far from God, is the parent of a race in the same condition as himself**. {*The cherubim I believe always to represent judicial government and power. ** Whatever Eve's own condition as believing promise, what she says at the birth of Cain was the expression of the thought that

the fulfilment of promise was in nature, which could not be. Sin was there and death, and the judgment of the hope of promise connected with nature come in. "I have gotten a man from Jehovah" was faith in promise, but expectation of the accomplishment of promise in nature. And Cain had to go out from the presence of Jehovah.}

Chapter 4

The separation of the families of God and of the enemy: Cain and Abel

But grace could work. The grace of a God above the evil of man, and Abel approaches Him by faith.

Hereon follows the separation of the families of God and of the enemy, of the world and of faith. Abel comes as guilty, and, unable as he is to draw near to God, setting the death of another between himself and God, recognises the judgment of sin — has faith in expiation. Cain, labouring honestly outwardly where God had set him to do so, externally a worshipper of the true God, has not the conscience of sin; he brings as an offering the fruits which are signs of the curse, proof of the complete blinding of the heart, and hardening of the conscience of a sinful race driven out from God. He supposes that all is well; why should not God receive him? There is no sense of sin and ruin. Thus is brought in sin, not only against God which Adam had fully wrought, but against one's neighbour, as it has been displayed in the case of Jesus; and Cain himself is a striking type of the state of the Jews.

Sin and its present consequences

In these two chapters we have sin in all its forms, as a picture set before us, in Adam's and Cain's conduct — sin in its proper original character against God, and then more particularly against Christ (in figure) in the conduct of Cain, with its present consequences set forth as regards the earth. We may remark, in both Adam's and Cain's case, how the government of God on the earth is set in prominence as to the effects of sin. Separation from God of a being capable of, and naturally formed for, intercourse with Him, is there, but left rather for the moral weighing of the soul. The publicly revealed judgment is that of consequences on earth. It is clearly said no doubt, "He drove out the man" with whom He was to have held intercourse (chap. 3); and "from thy face," says Cain, "am I driven out" (chap. 4). But what is developed is the earthly condition. Adam is shut out from a peaceful and unlaborious paradise, to labour and till the ground. Cain is cursed from the earth in this very position, and a fugitive and a vagabond; but he will be as happy there as he can, and frustrate God's judgment as far as he can, and settle himself in comfort in the earth as his, where God had made him a vagabond *; and that is the world. Here it is first pictured in its true character. {* Nod is "vagabond." God had made him Nod; and he settles himself, calls "the land after his own name," or at least his son's name, as an inheritance, and embellishes his city with arts and the delights of music — a remarkable picture.}

Man's state and sin apart from God

Remark also the two solemn questions of God: "Where art thou?" — man's own state apart from God — intercourse with Him lost; and, "What hast thou done?" — sin committed in that state; of which the consummation and full witness is in the rejection and death of the Lord.

Lamech

In the history of Lamech we have on man's part, self-will in lust (he had two wives), and vengeance in self-defence; but, I apprehend, an intimation in God's judgment, that as Cain was the preserved though punished Jew, his posterity at the end, before the heir was raised up and men called on Jehovah in the earth, would be sevenfold watched over of God. Lamech acknowledges he had slain to his hurt, but shall be avenged.

Summary of chapters 2, 3, 4: Seth, the heir of God's counsel

In the second chapter then we have man in the order of created blessing, the state in which he is; in the third, man's fall from God, by which his intercourse with God on this ground is foreclosed; in the fourth, his wickedness in connection with grace in the evil state resulting from his fall; what the world thereupon became; man being driven out from the presence of Him who accepted by sacrifice in grace, and ordering its comforts and pleasures without God, yet borne with; and a remnant preserved, and the heir of God's counsels, Seth, set up, and men calling on the name of God in relationship with them, that is, on Jehovah.

Driven from the presence of God, Cain seeks, in the importance of his family, in the arts and the enjoyments of life, temporal consolation, and tries to render the world, where God had sent him forth as a vagabond, a settled abode and as agreeable as possible, far from God. Sin has here the character of forgetfulness of all that had passed in the history of man; of hatred against grace and against him who was the object and vessel of it; of pride and indifference; and then despair, which seeks comfort in worldliness. We have also the man of grace (Abel, type of Christ and of them that are His) rejected, and left without heritage here below; man, his enemy, judged and abandoned to himself; and another (Seth) the object of the counsels of God, who becomes heir of the world on the part of God. We must remember however that they are only figures of these things, and that in the antitype the Man who is heir of all is the same as He who has been put to death.

Chapter 5

The family of God on the earth: Enoch and Noah

In chapter 5 we have the family of God upon the earth, subject to death, but depositary of the counsels and of the testimony of God. Here we may remark Enoch, who has his portion in heaven, and who bears witness to the world of the coming of Jesus in judgment, but is himself taken up there before it; and Noah, on the other hand, warned for himself, preaching righteousness and judgment, and passing through the judgments to begin a new world — figures of the church and the Jews in connection with

Christ's coming.

Chapters 6 to 8

The result of apostasy: man's ruin ending in judgment

Finally we find power and force here below, the result, of the sons of God not keeping their first estate, of apostasy; and God executes judgment instead of any longer pleading with men by the testimony of His Spirit in grace, which has its allotted term. The obedience of faith is the security of the warned remnant; but the principle of degeneracy worked on in spite of the testimony, and worked on the accomplishment of the testimony it despised. Man grew worse and worse, and God's creation was utterly defiled and filled with violence, the two universal characters of active will out of God. As regards man, it was now brought out, when he was left to himself (for before the flood, save gracious testimony, he was so left), that every thought of his heart was only evil continually. God creates and destroys; He calls and repents not. Creation was utterly corrupted, and God destroys it wherever the breath of life is. The testimony of these things is gone out everywhere among the heathen. We have here the exact though brief account of them, so far as needed to shew what man was and is, and God's ways with him.

The way of salvation through the judgment

In the midst of the ruin and judgment God points out the way of salvation through the judgment. The remnant taught of God profit by it. The flood is brought upon the world of the ungodly. Up to this, though the seed of the woman had been promised, sacrifice brought in, and testimony given, there were no special dealings of God with man. It was man walking before God in wickedness, no calling out, no law, no judgment. The world, man, was judged (save Noah and his family) and its deeds were hidden under an overwhelming flood. The judgment of God is accomplished; but He remembers His mercy.

Chapter 9

The History of the New Earth

In chapter 9 begins the history of the new earth. God blesses the earth more than before; and the answer to the sweet savour of the sacrifice assures the world that a universal deluge will never recur. God makes a covenant* with the creation to this effect. Government is established in the hand of man, and death begins to furnish him with nourishment. It does not appear to me that, before this, there had been either government or idolatry. There had been sin against God, violence without restraint against one another, and corruption; the two perpetual characters of sin, amongst men, and even in Satan as far as may be**. God cared for His creation in mercy; but with Noah new principles were brought out. The sacrifice of Christ (in figure) becomes a ground of dealing with the earth, not alone of accepting man, as in Abel; and on this a covenant is founded. That is, God binds Himself in grace, so that faith has a

sure ground to go upon, that on which it can count. {* Covenant, when used in connection with the Lord, is always, it seems to me, some order established by God and announced to man, according to the terms of which He enters into relationship with man, or according to which man is to approach Him. ** There are three characters of sin — violence, falsehood and corruption. The two first are directly ascribed to Satan; alas, man follows him in them, the third is more properly man's. All three are noticed in Colossians 3:5-9. In fact we get these three characters at the close — the false prophet, the beast, and Babylon.}

Government in the hand of man

Another very important principle introduced was the second referred to — government in the hand of man. Covenant was sure, for God is faithful when He binds Himself. Government was entrusted to the hands of men. Alas! this new trial soon has the same result as before. The government confided to Noah loses immediately its honour. The earth, under mercy, relieved (as Lamech had announced) by agricultural care, becomes in its fruits a snare to Noah, who becomes intoxicated, and his own son dishonours him; on whose race consequently the curse falls. This is given in view of the people opposed to Israel, the centre of God's earthly government, and of the relationship of God with that family.

A beginning on new principles

In these chapters then we have the old earth closed and the new begun on new principles. This lasts till the judgment by fire. Man's failure in the old world is set forth, and God's judgment thereon, in Adam and Cain. Now the special judgment and the special blessing in connection with Israel begins to shew itself, for we are yet on the earth here. The historical course of Noah's family is brought out in connection with these two points, the blessing and the curse in Shem and Ham. This is God's survey of the new world, in its three heads Shem, Ham, and Japheth, in a brief declaration of what characterised their position in the earth. Its whole history is stated in a few words. How mighty in everything is the word! He who knows all can state all briefly and surely. We begin afresh with chapter 10 with the generation or history of Noah's sons.

We have thus the establishment of the new earth and its whole general prophetic history, as this earth, in the first account of Noah, and God's communications with him; Shem being owned as the root of God's family in it, allied to the name of Jehovah, with special judgment on Canaan, whose place, we know, Israel took.

Chapters 10 and 11

The history of the world after the Deluge

Chapters 10, 11 give us the history of the world as peopled and established after the deluge, and the ways of men in this new world; the great platform of all the development of the human race as peopling

this world after the flood, and the principles and judgments on which it is founded. Chapter 10 gives the facts, chapter 11 how it came about in judgment, for chapters 10 and 11 are not to be taken as chronologically consequent; for the division into nations and tongues was consequent on the attempt at unity in human pride in Babel; and then, lastly, we have the family Jehovah owned, to trace the descent in it to the vessel of promise: together with God's orderings of the world. The posterity of Noah is given by families and nations (a new thing in the earth), out of which, from the race of Ham, arises the first power which rules by its own force and founds an empire; for that which is according to flesh comes first. We have then, that the moral history of the world may be known as well as the external form it assumed, the universal association of men to exalt themselves against God, and make to themselves a name independently of Him*, an effort stamped on God's part with the name of Babel (confusion), and which ends in judgment and in the dispersion of the race, thenceforth jealous of and hostile to one another**. Lastly we have the genealogy of the race by which God was pleased to name Himself; for God is Jehovah***, the God of Shem. {* The idea of a building high enough to escape the flood is an idea of which there is not the smallest trace in this passage. It was the pride of man seeking a centre and a name without God, and coalescing together. The rise of imperial power and dominion came after this, in which individual will and energy gained the ascendency. They are two phases of human effort without God. ** Pentecost was a beautiful testimony: God rose there above the confusion and judgment, and found, even in its effects, the means of getting near the heart of man; so that grace overruled judgment, even when it was not exercised in the power which regenerates the world. *** All in chapter 9 is simply Elohim, God, till we get to verse 26, where it is Jehovah, the God of Shem.}

The history of our present world in its great principles, and original sources

The importance of these chapters will be felt. The preceding chapters gave us, after the creation, the great original principles of man's ruin, closing with judgment, in which the old world found its close. Here we have the history of our present world, and, as seen in Genesis (which uncovers the roots of all that was to be for the revelation of God's thoughts and the display of His government), in its great principles and original sources, which imprint their character on the results, till another judgment from God Himself obliterates all but its responsibility, and gives room for another and a better world.

The world set out by families

The result of this history is that the world is set out by families. The fashion of this world has obliterated the memory and the perception of this, but not the power. It is rooted in the judgment of God, and, when the acquired force of this world becomes weak, will be evermore apparent, as it now really works. The fountain heads were three, first named in the order, Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: the first being the family in which the covenant was to be established on earth, and with which God was to be in relationship; then he who was in hostility with God's family; and last, though eldest and proudest, the Gentile Japheth.

Japheth

In the detail Japheth is given first. The isles of the Gentiles in general, that is, the countries with which we are familiar, and much of northern Asia, were peopled by his descendants. But the great moral questions, and power of good and evil in the world, arose elsewhere, and the evil now (for it was man's day) before the good.

Ham

The East, as we call it, Palestine, down the Euphrates, Egypt, &c., was in the hands of Ham. There power first establishes itself by the will of one in Nimrod. A mighty hunter — force and craft — works to bring untamed man, as well as beast, under his yoke. And cities arise; but Babel was the beginning of his kingdom; others he went out and built, or conquered. Then come the well-known Egyptians, Mizraim. Another branch of this family is marked as forming the races in possession of the inheritance destined of God for His people.

Shem

Shem comes last, the father of Hebrews, the brother of him who has long despised him, as possessed of an elder brother's title. Such is the general result in the peopling of the world under God's ordering.

Man seeking a centre for himself

The way was this. Man sought to make a centre for himself. Adam, living in the earth, would have been so, and its link with God; as Christ will be hereafter, and ever was in the purpose of God, for Adam was the image of Him that was to come. But will has none but itself. Noah, whose influence would have been just, has no place in the whole history (after his worship), save that he lost the place of authority by falling into sin, in the loss of self-restraint*. Will characterised all now; but in a multitude of wills, all impotent as centres, what can be done? A common centre and interest is sought independent and exclusive of God. They were to fill the earth; but scattered in peaceful quietness, to be of no importance, they would not. — They must get a name for themselves to be a centre. And God scatters into nations by judgment what would not fill the earth by families in peace. Tongues and nations must be added to families, to designate men on the earth. The judged place becomes the seat of the energetic will of one — of the apostate power. The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel. Tongues were a restraint, and an iron band round men. {* This is a striking fact in the character of the history of man after the flood. We get the full plain statement of what he become.}

God's history beginning in Shem

In Shem God's history begins. He is Jehovah, the God of Shem. We have dates and epochs, for after all God governs, and the world must follow: man belongs to God. Other people's ages were shortened surely besides those here named: here we know when. And when the earth was divided, for God after all disposed of it, men's years lost one-half of what they were, as they had already done immediately after the flood. But of known history God's people have ever been the centre. This comes down to

Abraham. And here again a new element of evil had become universal, at least practically so — idolatry (Joshua 24:2), though it had not been the subject hitherto. It is man in the world; and in Shem, the secret providential ordering of things by God. Still it ended in the power of evil, even in the family of Shem.

Universal idolatry

We have seen the wickedness and violence of man, his rebellion against God, and Satan's craft to bring him into this state: but here an immense step is made, an astonishing condition of evil appears on the scene. Satan thrusts himself, to man's mind, into the place of power, and seizes the idea of God in man's mind, placing himself between God and him, so that men worship demons as God. When it began, scripture does not say; but the passage cited shews that it had contaminated even Shem's family, in the part of it too which scripture itself counts up as God's genealogy in the earth at the time we have arrived at. Individuals might be pious; but in every sense the link of the world with God was gone. They had given themselves up, even in the family which as a race was in relationship with God, to the worship and power of Satan. What a tale all tells of man! What a tale of the patience of God!

A new system: Abraham called and chosen by grace

Here therefore we change entirely the whole system and order of thought; and a principle, in exercise without doubt from the beginning as to individual salvation, but not manifested in the order of things, declares itself, and comes into evidence in the history of the earth. Abraham is called, chosen, and made personally the depositary of the promises. But remark that here, in order that this great principle may be preserved in its own purity as an act of God, the occasion given in the fact we have referred to is not mentioned. We find it in Joshua 24. God comes down, after judgment, in sovereign grace to have a family of His own by the calling of grace — an immense principle.

Abraham the father of the faithful, the head of the accepted race of God on the earth

But it is well to dwell a moment on what was really a most important epoch in the history of God's ways with the world, where the proper history of faith begins, though of course there were believers individually before. But as Adam was the head of the ruined race, so Abraham was the father of the faithful, the head of the race of God on the earth, both after the flesh and after the Spirit. Christ the fulness of all blessing we know, in whom we have far higher blessings than those revealed in Abraham. Still in God's ways upon the earth Abraham was the head of the accepted race. Idolatry, as we have seen, had at this time gained a footing in the family of Shem himself. "Your fathers," says Joshua (24:2), "dwelt in old time beyond the flood, Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods." Now these gods were demons (1 Cor. 10:20; it is a citation of Deut. 32:17). That is (now that God had interfered in judgment* and in power), these demons had possessed themselves of this position in the spirit of man, and taken the place in his mind of the sources of the authority displayed and of blessing still bestowed. They presented themselves to him as authors of

those judgments, of all which drew forth the worship, the gratitude, and the terror of the natural heart of corrupted man, expressed in his worship according to the principles on which he was, on which he alone could be, in relationship with those superior beings, to whom he attributed the power to answer his desires or to avert the things which he feared. It was not merely man corrupted and in rebellion against God, it was his religion itself which corrupted him; and he made of his corruption a religion. The demons had taken the place of God in his mind, and having the ascendency over his conscience, if man did not forget it, hardened or misled it. He was religiously bad; and there is no degradation like that. What a state! What folly! How long, O Lord? {* In the deluge. It does not seem that idolatry had crept in before.}

God introduces us into His own thoughts

But if the human race plunge thus into darkness, taking demons for their god, and, incapable of self-sustainment, substitute for their own rebellion against God servitude to what is more elevated in rebellion, placing themselves in miserable dependence upon it, God raises and lifts us up above all this evil, and by His calling introduces us into His own thoughts — thoughts far more precious than the restoration of what was fallen. He separates a people to hopes which suit the majesty and the love of Him who calls them, and places them in a position of proximity to Himself, which the blessing of the world under His government would never have given them. He is their God. He communicates with them in a way which is in accordance with this intimacy; and we hear speak, for the first time, of faith (Gen. 15:6), based on these communications and these direct testimonies of God, though it may have operated from the beginning.

Chapter 12

A new order of events

From chapter 12 then there is developed altogether a new order of events, which refer to the call of God, to His covenants, to His promises, to the manifestation of His people as a distinct people on the earth, to the counsels of God. Before the deluge, it was man such as he was — fallen before God; and though there was a testimony from the beginning, still no dispensational intervention of God in His own ways, but man, with that testimony as to divine institutions*, left to himself, resulting in such violence and corruption as brought on the deluge in judgment on the world. Afterwards, God having interposed in judgment and begun the world that now is, there was the government of that world and its failure and the consequences of this failure; but, the nations being established and having submitted themselves to the power of demons, the call of God, the deposit of promise in him who was chosen of God, His elect ones (seed of the depositary of the promises), and subsequently His people, rise up to our view. {* Sacrifice may be called an institution of God perhaps, but it was individual. There was no establishment of a people who were God's upon earth.}

The call to separate

Hence we find them at once called upon to separate themselves entirely from all that connected them with their position in nature on the earth, and to belong to God on the ground of promise and confidence in His word. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." This was a solemn event. It was in principle the judgment of the world, though in the way of grace to those called out if it.

The world and its prince, and Abram the root of the tree of promise

That we may fully understand this, we must remember that the world had been constituted by the judgment of God passed upon the enterprise of building the tower. Countries and nations had been formed, as it is to this day. That was the world. Satan had full hold of it, and the very world which God had providentially formed Abram had to leave. God would have a family, a people for Himself, not of it, though out of it. Another fact adds to Abram's importance. There had been saints individually, known and unknown, but no head of a race since Adam. Adam fallen was the head of a fallen race. Abram was called to be the root of the tree of promise, of God's people natural or spiritual. He was the father of the circumcision, and of all them that believe.

A new principle to rule

In the outset however, Abram still held to his family; or at least, if it held to him, he did not break with it; and though he quitted his country on the call of God, he stops as far from the land of promise as before. For, thus called, man must belong wholly to God on a new principle. In fine, he sets out as God had said to him.

Abram called out by the manifestation of the glory of God

We have then here Abram called by the manifestation of the glory of God (compare Acts 7) for the journey of faith. The promises are given to him, whether of a numerous posterity, or of the blessing of all the families on the earth in him*. He sets out, he arrives. There are not many experiences, though there will be deeper knowledge of God, in a path which is purely of faith: power is there, and man walks with God. In the history of Jacob we have many. Arrived in Canaan, Abraham enters into possession of nothing, for his life must still be of faith. And here we see, by comparing this passage with Hebrews 11, the effect of being left as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, not yet in possession of what is promised. Abraham goes in the obedience of faith to the promised land, and there has not so much as to set foot upon; but in virtue of this — as God, though He could prove, could not leave faith without an answer; nor, indeed, where tried, without leading it on to the knowledge of further blessing, for He never does — he has before him the city which has foundations, and the yet better country. The energy of faith through grace put him in a position which, as it was not possession, necessarily set him in connection with higher and better things; for he was under the personal calling of God for blessing: so, practically, we are come into the body and heavenly things below. But there is the path of faith — not possession — and the heavenly scene opens before us. Abraham in Ur could not see the heavenly portion; a stranger in the land of promise, it was his natural object under grace. Such is our own case.

Only Abraham rises above his calling; we enter by the Spirit into what we are called to. {* This last promise is repeated only in chapter 22, during Abraham's history, and then to the seed alone; the promise of his posterity and of the land to him and to his seed is often repeated. It is to this promise given to Abram in chapter 12 and confirmed to the seed in chapter 26, that the apostle refers in Galatians. The earthly seed, on the contrary, was to be numerous. The translation of Galatians 3:16, should be, "now to Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed." And in the following verse, not in Christ but to Christ. He was the seed of promise.

A second revelation of the Lord for communion and worship

But then there is a second revelation of the Lord to him in the land, in the place into which he had been called. The first was to call him out of the place he was in, and make him walk in the path of promise. Now the Lord reveals Himself to him for communion, where he is; speaks with him; unfolds to him how the promise will be accomplished, and Abraham thereon worships Him. He has in the land his tent and his altar. This is the second part of the life of faith. The revelation of God, when far from Him, sets us out on the journey of faith, inspires the walk toward heaven. When in the heavenly position, God reveals Himself for communion and worship and a full revelation of His ways. The Canaanite is in the land; the heir of promise has no possession of the thing promised. We have to do with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, but the Lord reveals Himself, shews the heir and inheritance when the Canaanite will be gone; and so Abram worships by faith, as before he walked by faith. This is the full double function of faith.

Abram's lack of faith

The rest of the chapter is the history of his personal want of it. Pressed by circumstances, he does not consult God, finds himself in the presence of the world, where he has sought help and refuge, and denies his true relationship with his wife (just as has been done in respect of the church), is cherished by the world, which God at last judges, sending Abram again out from it. During this period, and until he was returned to the place from which he started, he had no altar. When he left Egypt and returned to his strangership in Canaan, he had what he had before. But he must return first to the same place and find his altar again. What a warning for Christians as to the relationship of the church with Christ *! And, however the world may be a help for the church, this relationship cannot be maintained when we seek that help. {* There may be a certain typical reference to Israel while in the world and away from God. But these things happened unto them for ensamples (tupoi) and are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come. Abraham was away from his altar at Bethel.}

Chapters 13 and 14

Abram and Lot

After this (Gen. 13) we have, in the conduct of Abram and Lot, the disinterestedness and self-renunciation of true faith on the one hand, and, on the other, him, who, though a believer, had, as

regards the walk of faith, only followed that of another, and was now put to the test by circumstances which arise: and this, remark, is when they have together left their unbelieving connection with the world as an outward refuge. Lot had done so with Abram, but his inward heart and will clung to the ease of it. Abram had returned in spirit genuinely, perhaps with a deeper experience, to his pilgrim portion in Canaan. Yet the advantages he possessed in it led to the difficulty, for treasure here is not heaven, even if the possessor of it be heavenly-minded: an important lesson. Still Abram behaves beautifully. Lot chooses the world, fair in appearance, not as Egypt, the world as such, but as self-ease, and what did not seem, was not outwardly, separated from, Canaan; but which was soon after the scene and object of what did not appear — the sure judgments of God. The renunciation of a present portion down here, and of self in it, by Abram, is the occasion for him of a much clearer knowledge of the extent, and a still firmer assurance of the certainty, of the promise. It is when he gives up all to Lot as he might choose it, that the Lord says to Abram to look north, south, east, west, from where he was, adding he would give if to him and to his seed for ever. In a word, we have the believer acting in the spirit of the heavenly calling — the faithful believer, and the worldly-minded believer.

Abram's own proper portion and the result of Lot's choice

Abram maintains now his own proper portion; he dwells in Canaan, goes here and there as a pilgrim with his tent, and builds his altar. All this was the path of the heavenly man; his characteristic portion here, a pilgrim and a worshipper. Lot had lifted up his eyes, moved by his own will and lust, and sees the plain of Jordan well watered: why should he not enjoy it? God makes Abram lift up his, and shews him all the extent of the promise, and with the promise tells him to walk through it all, to realise, in his experience and knowledge, all the extent of the promise made. The scene soon changes. What is linked with the world must suffer its vicissitudes. Nor can the godly man, though ensnared oft, be content with its evil. Lot (2 Peter 2:7-8) suffers from the iniquity by which he is surrounded, and undergoes the ravages of the power of the world, of which Abram is victor, and of which he will receive nothing to enrich himself. Such are the just discipline and faithful ways of God. Nor was it yet all.

The manifestation of Melchisedec

These last circumstances are the occasion of the manifestation of the kingly Priest, King of righteousness, and King of peace; that is, Christ, millennial King of the world, blessing victorious Abram, and, on Abram's behalf, the Most High God, who had delivered his enemies into his hand.

The final triumph of the Lord and the family of faith over the world

In this picture, then, we have the final triumph of the Lord and the family of faith over the power of the world, realised in spirit by the church (and finally in glory) for a heavenly hope and association with Christ; and literally by the Jews on the earth, for whom Christ will be Melchisedec-priest in full accomplished position; Priest on His throne, Mediator in this character, blessing them, and blessing God for them; God Himself then taking, fully and indeed, the character of possessor of heaven and earth. The Most High God is His proper millennial name; Almighty with the patriarchs, Jehovah with

Israel, and Most High for the millennium. The discussion of where the Most High is found, in connection with the promises to Abraham and the Messiah, is beautifully brought out in Psalm 91, and Jehovah the God of the Jews is recognised as He who is. It is a kind of dialogue. These are connected with the earth. Our place, and the divine name we are in relationship with God by, are outside all these and properly heavenly. It is the Son who has revealed the Father, and now the Holy Ghost, who gives us the consciousness of sonship, and shews a man, the heavenly Christ, at the Father's right hand in glory, when He had by Himself accomplished the purification of our sins.

The victory of faith

But the contrast of the heavenly-minded who do not settle on the earth, and of those who do, with the world's power over the latter, and the entire victory of the former over the power of the world, and then Christ's reign, King and Priest, and God's taking all into His hand by Him, are clearly and wonderfully brought out *. {* This closes the general history of these great elements of God's ways. Heavenly things are, no doubt, out of sight, save we look behind the scene, where Abram's faith went. Still the path of faith, the snare of the world, the moral victory of unselfish faith, which has God and His promises for its portion, and its actual final victory, and God's possession of heaven and earth under the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, Priest on His throne, are fully brought out, and the whole scene completed This makes chapters 12-14 a section by itself.}

Chapter 15

Detailed instruction as to the earthly seed and the land given

When God had thus revealed Himself, according to His establishment of blessing in power on the earth, through the priestly king Melchisedec, naturally the actual blessing of the chosen people finds its place; and we come down to the actual earthly scene, and in chapter 15 have the detailed instruction of the Lord to Abram, regarding the earthly seed and the land given to him, the whole confirmed by a covenant where God, as light to guide and furnace to try, deigns to bind Himself to the accomplishment of the whole. Death makes it sure. Jehovah confirms thus the covenant in going, in grace, through that which bound Him; Abram, heir of the promises, undergoes the terror and shadow of it. It is not here precisely expiation, but what belonged to the confirmation of the promises, by the only thing which could establish them in favour of man a sinner. It is evident that this unfolding of God's ways, and the establishment of the covenant embraces (though the covenant be made in favour of the earthly people) new and important principles. God Himself was Abram's defence and portion. That is the highest portion of all, so far as anything given to man can go. * {* The declaration of God in the beginning of Genesis 15, is in connection with Abram's refusing to take anything from the world, as related in the end of Genesis 14.}

Earthly hopes and God's purposes: unconditional promise as to Israel and the land

But Abram feels yet his connection with the earth as an abiding place in connection with the flesh, and it was indeed God's purpose so to bless him. That is in its nature Jewish, and we have consequently the Jewish portion unfolded. The whole scene descends thus here to earthly hopes, and promises, and covenant, and the land. Abram's mind goes down; for it is going down — when God says (on his having refused everything from the world, in view of the world to come as a future hope), 'I am thy reward,' as He had been his shield — to say, What wilt thou give me? But the divine word uses it, to unfold on God's part His purposes in this respect, which, as regards the government of this world, are of real importance. I have no heir, says Abram; nothing to continue, by a family tie, the possession of my inheritance on earth, according to promise; for on earth, where men die, there must be succession. And so it was to be. But still, — as to the earth, it was to be by dependence on Jehovah, by promise, and by faith. Although connected here with the earth, it was not according to nature: on this footing all was foreclosed against Abram — he had no seed. Hence, the seed of faith and promise comes forth — not indeed the one seed — but the Jews as children of promise. The principle is set forth and faith counted for righteousness while Abram believed God. Thus, for this world, Israel was the seed of promise, the heir. Then comes covenant as to the land, according to promise made in the call of Abram. The Lord binds Himself to Abram according to death, as we have seen (for indeed it is assured in the death of Christ, without which they could have nothing). This is, as to present fulfilment, connected with the suffering of the people in Egypt, and their subsequent deliverance, when the oppressors of the people and the usurpers of the inheritance would both be judged.

The inheritance assured to Abraham's seed by unconditional covenant

The character of the act by which the covenant was made, we have already noticed. The reader may compare Jeremiah 34:18-19, as to the force of this act. It is not here, moreover, a promise by which Abram is called out by faith, but the assuring the inheritance to his seed by covenant, and here without condition. It is the promise to Israel, the seed of promise, the heir in connection with the earth and flesh. Remark, moreover, that the prolonged sorrow and oppression of God's people — the delay of the promised heir — is in connection with the patience of God towards those that are to be judged. (Compare 2 Peter 3:9.) We may remark that the oppressors of Israel are judged for the sake of Israel, the usurpers of his inheritance for him.

Summary of man's state and God's ways with him in it

Here the laying out of God's plans and purposes closes, even as to the earthly people, and man's ways, and God's ways for their fulfilment, begin to be unfolded with chapter 16*, with the paths of those, or hindrances from those, with whom His people may be connected in any way. These are developed up to chapter 23 when Abraham ceases to be the representative of the stem of promise. Sarah dies, the vessel of the seed of promise, and the risen heir comes into notice as the one whom God sets forth. They that are born after the flesh precede those who are born according to promise. {* Chapter 15 stands by itself, between the general principles already treated of and the historical account which follows, but which, though historical, gives great leading principles which, with the exception of Isaac, apply to Israel and the earth. It is the unconditional promise as to Israel, the land, and the covenant. In the subsequent

chapters, however, we find the promised seed.}

We cannot but remark, what gives so striking a character to the book of Genesis, and such freshness to all that is in it (particularly to what we have gone through hitherto), how all the great principles of man's estate and of God's ways are brought out in it. It is a heading and summary of all man's state and God's ways with him in it — not of redemption, though sacrifice and covering of sin be found, nor of its glorious results. Redemption is in Exodus. Man's state and God's ways and fundamental promises are here.

Chapter 16

The covenant of the law in Hagar

— Abram seeking, at Sarah's instigation, to anticipate the will of God and the accomplishment of the promise in its time, we have the covenant of the law in Hagar, the source of distress and disquietude. God, however, takes care of the seed according to the flesh. The application of this as a figure is clear from Galatians 4. The pride of man under the law is marked in Hagar's spirit, yet her son cannot be heir. The haste of man, who will not wait God's time, will not wait on Him as to means of accomplishment (so was it with Jacob for the blessing) is full of moral warning to us; it is ever the source of disquietude and sorrow. Hagar, too, was an Egyptian — a remembrance, also, of the want of faith in Abram. The law and flesh, and indeed sin, ever go together (see John 8: 34-36); and in connection with the unbelief of nature, that is, Egypt.

Order of chapters 12 to 16

As regards the order of these chapters, I may add, 12, 13, 14 go together, and are dependent on the double manifestation of God to Abram; first, to call him, and then in Canaan. We have power, failure, return, and enduring heavenly faith contrasted with worldliness, and thereto the display of earthly power attached, to that faith, closing with victory; God possessor of heaven and earth, and Melchisedec.

Sarah's fleshly attempt to secure the promise, and its failure

Though chapter 15 stands alone as a whole, chapter 16 is so far connected with it, that it is the fleshly attempt on Sarah's part to have the seed which was assured by the word of the Lord to Abram in the beginning of chapter 15. Here all is failure; but the purposes of God will be accomplished according to promise, and not of the flesh and man's will.

Chapter 17

God's new revelation of Himself by name; unfolding of God's purposes with the world

In chapter 17 we have a fresh revelation of the Lord to Abram, and, I think, are upon higher and holier ground. It is not here calling, or worship, or the world and victory over it in Lot (12-14*), or a revelation by the word of how God would accomplish His earthly promises, and what His people should go through (15) — not what God was for Abram, but what He was Himself. It is not, I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward; but I am God Almighty. This is not all He was, but it is what He was — His own name; and Abram is called upon to walk correspondently to this name. Hence, also, he does not worship or request anything from God, however high the privilege, but Elohim talks with him. The various parts of His purposes are unfolded, and what Abram is to be before Him in whom he believed. It is the starting-point of God's history of His connection with, and ways in, the world, Jew and Gentile starting from His original sovereign title. That which brings in the Gentiles as well as Israel is before us. It is not the individual seed of promise, as in chapter 22, to which the promise of chapter 12 was confirmed, but the title of God with the first vessels of promise as root of a people set apart to God. In general God's covenant was with him. It is not a legal binding, but a free engagement of God in grace, according to His own mind, that Abraham should be the father of many nations. It is in three parts. God would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him; the land wherein he was a stranger is to be to him and to his seed after him; and nations and kings should come out of him. {* In chapter 12 it is the path of faith, though with failing, that failing the not owning the separated relationship of God's people (the church) to the heir of the world. Then chapters 13, 14 the believer in a worldly place taken as his portion, the victory of the separated ones, the faith which would not take a shoe-latchet. Chapter 15 the revelation of a numerous seed and Israel's place. Chapter 16 the attempt to have the promise in flesh — Hagar. See Galatians.}

Circumcision, expressive of death, and free sovereign promise of the Seed

All these promises are without condition; but principles are set forth binding on Abraham, and expressive of the character of those who enjoy the privileges of God — circumcision and free sovereign promise. Circumcision in contrast with law (see John 7:22), but expressive of the death of the flesh (compare Rom. 4:10-13)*, and next, the promise of the seed is given; but this when Abraham, as to the body, was now dead; and as the character of circumcision was peremptory — for flesh cannot have to say to God in light — so was it as to the promise; it was to the son of promise. Though God might outwardly bless the seed according to flesh, the covenant was exclusively with the heir of promise. Death of flesh (for we are away from God), and simple sovereign grace, are peremptory. The barren woman must be the mother of thousands. Abraham rejoices in the promise, and acts obediently in the order of God. {* I read verse 12 thus: "And father of circumcision [that is, of true separation to God, such as God owns], not only to those of the circumcision, but to those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." That is, God recognises them (believers from among the Gentiles) as being truly circumcised.}

God gives names to Abram, Sarai and Isaac

There is another element here, a common one to this purport in scripture; God's giving a name to Abram and to Sarai also. It signifies the title of direct authority, and entering into relationship on this

ground. So Adam, so Pharaoh, so Nebuchadnezzar. Here God having revealed His own name gives one to Abram in connection with Himself. Thenceforth He is the God of Abraham, revealing Abraham's place, and the sign of the covenant in separation to Himself too; Abraham is the father of many nations; Ishmael even is preserved and blessed; but the promised seed stands alone, also has his name (laughter), the child of mere promise of her whom God named too, intimating, though not revealing, resurrection (compare Rom. 4:19-22). For this world, Israel as to promise holds the place of Sarah thus named, but when dead according to the flesh.

Chapter 18

The Seed of promise, the Heir of the world, and the present object of hope

Chapter 18 is again a new unfolding of God's ways, here especially in connection with the seed, already in a general way, as part of God's purpose that it should be Abraham's seed according to grace and promise when he had no hope, and not according to the flesh, but now specifically revealed as a present thing to Abraham. This seed of promise is here the main object in view, and the present immediate object of hope. This is so on to the end of chapter 21. But I apprehend, he* is here seen as heir of the world and judge; while Abraham's personal relationship with God is in grace, by promise, where he is not seen; and, so far, has the ground of faith, and, in figure, a christian position. Hence, God Himself being known (not merely His gifts), Abraham rises higher than in chapter 15, and, instead of asking gifts for himself, intercedes for others. All is the effect of the gift of the heir being known. After chapter 22 the proper figures of the church as yet unrevealed come in, because the seed is raised: we get, however, great individual principles here. {* That is, the Seed, but who is withal Jehovah, the First and the Last.}

Abraham's visitors; the rebuke of unbelief

Abraham is accustomed to the divine presence, and it is quickly felt by him; and although he says nothing referring to the divine glory till the Lord is pleased to discover Himself, yet from the first he acts with an instinctive deference which was as fully accepted by Him who came. In verse 3 Abraham addresses himself to One, yet speaks in his hospitality to all, and to this they all answer, and inquire withal for Sarai; but in verse 10 it is again individual, the effectual promise of the Lord. In the rebuke of Sarah's unbelief Jehovah reveals Himself. He judges flesh and its unbelief, as He promises. Abraham accompanies the three on their way; two go on, and Abraham is left alone with Jehovah. In this respect it is a lovely scene of holy consciousness and yet deferential waiting on the good pleasure of God. The immediate promise of the arrival of the seed is given. Abraham enjoys the most intimate communion with Jehovah, who reveals His counsels to him as to His friend. Intercession is the fruit of this revelation (compare Isa. 6). Judgment falls on the world; and whilst Abraham, on the top of the mountain, communes with God of the judgment which was to fall upon the world below, where he was not, Lot, who had taken his place in it, is saved so as by fire. Righteousness which walks with the world puts itself in the position of judge, and is at the same time useless and intolerable. Abraham escapes all judgment, and sees it from on high. Lot is saved from the judgment which falls upon the world in which

he found himself. The place where Abraham enjoyed God is for him a place of 3 sterility and fear: he is forced to take refuge there in the end, because he is afraid to be anywhere else.

Communion and intercession; the patience and perfectness of judgment with God

In general, Abraham has the character here of communion with God, which faith, without sight, gives — not by an indwelling Holy Ghost, no doubt, according to the privilege of the saints now (that was reserved for the time of fuller blessing, when the church's Head should be glorified), but in the general character of the blessing. The promised seed is announced as to come, but not yet brought into the world, that is, in the way of manifested glory. Meanwhile, Abraham knows and believes it. God then treats him, as we have seen, as a friend, and tells him, not what concerns himself, but the world, (with a friend I speak of what I have on my heart, not merely of my business with him); and then, as he has received these communications from God, so he intercedes with God — a stranger in the place of promise, on high in communion with Him. And this is still more the place of the saints now through the Holy Ghost: the full communication of the mind and ways of God in the word, and the Lord's coming to take them up, so that this is the scene they live in by faith, and founded on that comes intercession. Abraham had the promise of the heir for himself already; here he is the vessel of divine knowledge of what concerns the world too. This puts him in the place of full grace, and so of intercession. His faith associates him with the mind and character of God. It brings out, withal, the patience and perfectness of judgment with God.

Chapter 19

Judgment; Lot delivered by providential power, but passes through the tribulation

Lot, in the following chapter, because of his connection with the heavenly man, depositary of God's counsels and wisdom, and intercessor, himself down in the plain of this world, which he had chosen, as the Jews have, is delivered by providential power; but he passes through the tribulation, and suffers the loss of all that for which he had refused the heavenly condition, and sought the earth, as ignorant of the judgment as he was of the heavenly treasure. Such is the position of the people of faith when sunk into the world of judgment. Soon abandoned to the uncertainty of unbelief in the presence of visible judgment, he seeks his refuge in that place of Abraham's blessing to which he had previously been afraid to flee, and which he had earlier abandoned for the ease of the well-watered plain; but he is in miserable darkness, the parent of a perpetual thorn to the people of God. But this last part is only historically given, that Israel might know the origin of Moab and Ammon; and furnishes a general principle for all times.

Thus faith had its place, and the world had been judged. So will it be in the days of the Son of man; but here the heir is not yet actually brought in, but expected, and the path of faith, or the opposite, till He comes depicted.

Chapters 20 and 21

The heir and the path of faith

In chapters 20, 21 we have the question of the heir and of the path of faith in another point of view. Abraham denies his relationship with his wife, and is reproved by the world itself, which knows better than he what she should be. God, however, guards the promises in His faithfulness, and judges that which meddles with her who has to say to them. The heir of promise is born; and the heir according to the flesh, son of the bondwoman or of the law, is entirely rejected. Now Abraham reproves the powerful of the earth, before whom he had previously denied his relationship with his wife.

Unbelief working: God's preservation of Sarah

But these two chapters must be somewhat more developed. Like Abram's going down to Egypt, we have unbelief working in respect of the path into which he had been called by grace, shewn, as it ever is, in reference to walking in the intimacy of the relationship in which God had set him, of which woman is the expression in the types. Here Sarah is the mother of the heir of the world, the wife of Abraham, according to promise, and, for Abraham, according to the church's hope, as we have seen (though Israel were the vessel according to flesh). This position he denies. Sarah is again his sister. This was worse than before, for she is, to faith, mother of the heir of the world. Abimelech was wrong, and acted to please himself, but acted unconscious of it. Abraham before God was in the falser position of the two. God warns Abimelech, and preserves Sarah by His own power, whom Abraham's want of faith had connected with the world; and Abimelech returns her, with the cutting reproof to the church, as here typified, that she at least ought to have known her own relationship to Christ. Still, in the main, Abraham was in the place of faith and blessing; and, as God's prophet, to whom none should do harm, intercedes for the faulty Abimelech, for here all is grace. There is another point to notice here, that this was an arrangement of unbelief when first he started from his father's house (Gen. 20:13), so soon was the germ of unbelief at work in the called of promise. But God maintains the divine title to the allegiance of the church at all times. But now the heir is born, the heir of promise.

The heir of promise born and the heir of the bondwoman cast out

The effect of this is, that not only is the difference known to faith, but the heir of the bondwoman is utterly cast out as to the inheritance. Historically he is preserved according to God's promise, a figure of legal Israel; but, as regards any portion of the inheritance, wholly cast out.

Abraham's title in the world

And here, further, Abraham fears no longer before the prince of this world, but reproves him. He has the world, as well as the heavenly communion, now that the heir is come; and the . world owns that God is with him in all things. Hence the well of the oath is the witness of Abraham's title in the world, and Abimelech's owning God to be with him. There, according to the oath and his title thus owned by

the world, he plants a grove, takes possession of the earth, and worships, calling on the name of the everlasting God — of Him who had once promised to Israel, and never abandoned His purpose, and had now accomplished on the earth what His mouth had spoken: not, indeed, so blessed a portion as the heavenly intercourse and possession of faith, but a proof of the unchangeable faithfulness of the God who had given the promises. There Abraham, in figure, now abides, where the power of the world had been. This will belong to Israel in the letter, but we, on whom the ends of the world are come, have it in a higher and better way. It was the pledge of what should be and will be; our hope is transferred to heaven where Christ is gone. But we reign there in a better way.

Chapters 22 to 24

The heir of the promise sacrificed and raised again in figure; call of the appointed Bride

But on this introduction of the heir, he necessarily becomes the main subject; and chapter 22 opens with it: "It came to pass after these things," for, indeed, a new scene now opens. The heir of the promise is sacrificed and raised again in figure, and the promise is confirmed to the seed*. The ancient depositary or form of the covenant (even that of promise), mother of the heir (Sarah), now disappears. Abraham sends Eliezer, the steward of his house, to seek a wife for the risen heir, for his only son Isaac, from the country whither Isaac was not to return — in the world such as it is: beautiful figure of the mission of the Holy Spirit, who, fulfilling His office (after the Lord's death and resurrection) with the elect of God who are to form the Lamb's wife in the counsels of God, conducts her (already adorned with His gifts, but waiting the moment when she shall see Him who is heir of all things that belong to His Father) across the desert to her heavenly bridegroom. The call and readiness of the appointed bride is beautifully depicted, and she goes with him, who prefigures the Spirit, to the bridegroom who is heir of all. But mark how false and wretched the position of the espoused wife, if Isaac had lost his hold upon her heart — her home in nature left, and she in the wilderness with one who was nothing to her, if not her guide to Isaac. The walk of the Spirit, moreover, in man, is depicted in the most instructive manner in the details of this history, in the conduct of Eliezer: his simple subjection to what was for him the word of God even when all seemed well (vers. 21-23); heart-reference in thankfulness to God the first feeling (ver. 26); purpose of heart in service (ver. 33), and the like. {* This distinct confirmation to (not in) the seed, is what the apostle refers to as the one seed, that is Christ. The general promises as to Israel were of a seed as the stars of heaven for number. This is the confirmation to the one seed, when risen, of the promise given in chapter 12.

Chapter 25

The election of God sets apart His earthly people, shown in Jacob

We have next the election of God which now sets apart the earthly people, Jacob. It is remarkable how little we have of Isaac, nothing but his remaining in heavenly places, I mean of course in the figure, a

wife being sought for him on earth. We are on earth; yet the heavenly thing is to us fully revealed and we have the earnest of all. In Abraham, promise and principles are brightly unfolded to us; and the earthly people of promise in Jacob are fully developed; principles which we have all through. Jacob values the promises of God; but if Lot was attracted by the well-watered plain, the unbelief of Jacob was manifested in the use of carnal means to obtain possession of the promises, instead of waiting upon God. Thus his years were "few and evil"; and he was continually the object of similar deceit too. Remark here, that while the experience of Abraham was altogether higher and better, and he had far fuller communion with God in His mind, as it is with a faithful Christian enjoying the things that are not seen, giving up readily in the world, and interceding for others, yet the unfaithful believer has much more experience in his path, because he is not living with God. This we see in Jacob. He prevails by faith through grace, but he wrestles for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. But if we have in Isaac a risen Christ, bridegroom, as to the figure, of the church which the Holy Ghost has descended to seek here below for Him who is on high; in Jacob we have Israel, driven out of the land of promise, kept of God to enjoy it afterwards. I believe, however, that in his marriages we have the Lord, who, while loving Israel (Rachel), has yet first received the Gentiles or the church, and then the Jews.

Summary of chapters 22-25: The sacrifice and resurrection of Christ shown in Isaac

These subjects conduct us to the end of chapter 25 — the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, the calling of the church in the figure of Rebecca, and the election of Israel, the younger to the promise and blessing in the earth. As regards the first point, the promises were settled in Isaac living on the earth, as they were in the Person of Christ. There Abraham had to give all up in entire and absolute confidence in God, and trust them, with Isaac, in God's hand. So did Christ: all was His in connection with the promises in Israel. He gave up all on the cross to receive it in resurrection from His Father. Here note, no personal sacrifice is ever made without a fresh ground of relationship with God in grace; for God gives that which sustains us in the sacrifice, which was not needed to enjoy the thing sacrificed. God had given promises in Isaac; but to trust God with a sacrificed Isaac, resurrection must be known; and so Abraham trusted that God would raise him from the dead. For God could not fail in His promises.

The promise of the blessing of the families of the earth confined to one Seed, Isaac

In the Epistle to the Galatians the bearing of this part of scripture is considered. I only remark here that the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12) is here confined to the one sacrificed and risen seed, Isaac. There were other promises to a seed numerous as the stars in heaven (itself a promise); but the promise of the blessing of the families of the earth was giver first to Abram alone (Gen. 22). Hence the Apostle Paul speaks of one seed. The promise is not spoken of elsewhere to Abram. It is confirmed to the risen seed. In the end of the chapter, besides the general stem of the nations, Rebecca's origin is set forth.

Sarah disappears to make way for Rebecca, the church in figure

In Genesis 23, as we have said, the vessel of promise, Sarah disappears, to make way for Rebecca, the son's bride; but with it, while Abraham has no portion in the land and must buy his sepulchre, he has the sure pledge that he will hereafter have it He buries his dead there.

And now the heir's bride must be sought. Remark, first that she receives tokens of grace; then, as an espoused one gifts. She shews her willing mind through grace, and is led of Eliezer in loneliness across the desert, leaving her father's house to possess all with Isaac, to whom his father has given everything We have here fully the church in a figure: Isaac, who is the risen man — between the man of promise, Abraham, and Jacob when Israel the earthly people comes into the scene — must no on any account go back to the country of nature, out of which his wife was to be called. He is exclusively the heavenly man Rebecca must go to him. With him before her, her journey was blessed; he once out of her mind, she was a stranger who had left all to be homeless and portionless for nothing. Such is the church. But to return was to give up Isaac.

The work of the Holy Ghost

Next mark, in the working of the Holy Ghost presented in Eliezer, entire confidence in God. he asks, and is answered, but it must be entirely according to the word (here Abraham's), "Is she of the kindred?" Next, when the blessing is known, thanksgiving comes before joy; and next, entire and exclusive consecration to the service he had to perform. He will not eat till he has told his errand, and then no hesitation: he has one work and nothing else. Would it were so with all who are Christ's! Eliezer conducts her to Isaac, who is gone out and comes to meet her; and there, to the son's comfort, she replaces Sarah, the vessel of promise, in the yet better place of the risen heir s wife.

Abraham's finished course; Isaac heir of all

Abraham's course was finished. Promises have given place to the church called by grace. But all that spring from him have a place in the record of God; but Isaac is heir of all, though Ishmael be great and have princes before him*. {* Though the subjects in general follow, chapter 25 is not in historical sequence. The "then" has no real force. It is a general gathering up of the different families of Abraham. Isaac was heir of his possessions, he gave gifts to his concubines' sons and sent them away. Then we have his death, and his two well-known sons, but Ishmael, the son after the flesh, first; but Isaac and then Jacob carry on the divine history.}

Esau and Jacob: their character and spring of conduct

Genesis 25:19 begins, in a measure, a new scene. We are returned from the glimpse of heavenly things in Isaac, to earthly and Jewish things in Jacob. From the barren woman — for all must be grace and divine power — spring two, in whom election, not only in the grace of calling, but in sovereignty and in contrast with works, is brought out. We have the purpose of God revealed to Rebecca, but of the history we have only so much as gives the character and spring of conduct in Esau and Jacob. In Jacob there was nothing naturally attractive; but Esau despised the gift of God; his judgment of what was valuable had its origin from self. He was profane; though God in His secret counsels, had ordained the blessing

in Jacob. Esau saw nothing beyond the earthly advantage of the gift, and nothing of the Giver or relationship with Him. Present things governed him, his own present enjoyment; and God's promise had no further importance. Jacob, however wretched his way of getting it, valued the promise for its own sake; gave up present things, poor things no doubt, but enough to govern Esau's heart, to get it. In this we have merely the presentation of the character of the two sons. God's dealings with them will come later, for Isaac's history now only begins. He is here the designated heir of the world, but was to have, as such heir, the proper portion of Israel in the earth. Genesis 24 gave, in figure, the secret history of the church in connection with the risen heir.

Chapter 26

God's new revelation to Isaac

Here (Gen. 26) Isaac replaces Abraham as heir upon the earth. It is a new revelation, when Isaac is himself in a strange land, like the one made to Abraham at the first; only that Isaac was already in connection with the calling of God, but not in enjoyment of the promise. There was a famine in the land, and Isaac could not dwell in it, and he goes to those who had part of the land in possession, but had no title — the future enemies and oppressors of his people. But God appears to him there, and tells him not to return into the world, but to dwell in the land which He should tell him of. He is maintained in the heavenly places, but still as a place of promise, though not now seeking it as unknown, but still as an object of faith. It was a fresh calling under different circumstances (the Lord appearing to him anew), not indeed to journey to a land, but to dwell where He should shew him, and not to seek natural resources (Egypt). He was not to go back, but to live by faith. But the land is also shewn and the promises renewed, both as to Israel, and the nations, and the land. For the moment he was to sojourn in the land where he was, that is, where the Philistines were. Thus the whole land, Philistines and all, was given to him, and he dwelt in Gerar.

Isaac's personal walk as to faith

This is the position of Isaac; as the first half of chapter 12 is the position of Abraham. From verse 7 to the end we have his personal walk as to faith, as Abraham's in the latter part of chapter 12; and the settlement of what should be his portion in his posterity according to the faith that he had. He fails like Abraham, and yet more as to energy. He denies his wife, as Abraham had done, and he leaves in the hand of the enemy the wells which Abraham had dug: he had failed in faith in God before Abimelech, and, though God had said to him "Sojourn in this land," he has to recede before the will of Abimelech, then driven from well to well, and has room only where the Philistine has room. In Beersheba he meets with God, where he has pitched his tent, where Abraham had set his bounds with Abimelech when Isaac was born. But Abraham had not received direction as to sojourning in the land, and had reproved Abimelech, whose servants had taken the well and Abimelech had given it up. Abraham had dug all these wells as he needed, as a stranger, and they were not taken away: the only one contended for was Beersheba, and that Abimelech gave up. However Beersheba was, in divine providence, the limit of the land according to the faith of Israel. The Philistines did remain till David came, the representative of

Christ. The otherwise heirs of the land possessed it not fully. There the Lord appeared and blessed Isaac: there Israel reposed and worshipped. This chapter is Isaac's history; it answers to Abraham's (Gen. 12, Gen. 20).

Esau's ways and thoughts governed by present enjoyment

Esau's ways were as careless, as his thoughts as to the birthright were profane. He marries with the women of the land.

Chapter 27

Jacob as heir of the promises he values, but uses evil means to secure

Jacob's history now begins*. Heir of the promises, and valuing them, he uses means to have them, evil and low in character. God answers his faith, and chastens his evil and unbelief. God could have brought the blessing in His own way (or made Isaac cross his hands as He did Jacob); Jacob, led by his mother, followed his own way, and did not wait for God. But the blessing was prophetic, and not to be recalled. The ways of God and His purpose were not to be changed. Isaac was guilty, and Jacob more so: all was overruled to answer faith and chasten evil in the believer. Esau had deliberately given up the right, when he had the choice: God was not in his thoughts: he cannot receive the blessing when the consequences are there. Man must act by faith alone, when the consequences are not seen, in order to be blessed, when the time for blessing comes. {* In general, Abraham is the root of all promise and the picture of the life of faith: Isaac, of the heavenly man, who receives the church; and Jacob, of Israel, heir of the promises according to the flesh.}

Chapter 28

Jacob's wanderings, a picture of Israel watched over but an outcast

Jacob becomes now the picture of cast-out and wandering Israel, heir of the promises, watched over, but an outcast. The wanderings of Abraham were in the land of promise; those of Jacob, out of it: two things very different one from another. God, indeed, was with Jacob, and never left him but Abraham walked with God: in the realisation of His presence he built his altar. Jacob had no altar; he was not in the place of promise. For such a path takes us out of communion. Although God in His faithfulness be with us, we are not with Him. However, so soon as he bows to the chastisement — destitute, and with his staff, and a stone for his pillow, God reveals Himself to him, and assures to him all the promises, not in the full revelation of communion, but in a dream. And here all the promises are renewed, but with a notable difference from all before; for now the promise of the blessings to the nations is to him and his seed; for here we are in connection with Israel and the blessing of the earth. Thus it is not merely the one seed, Christ; but the seed of Israel in possession of the land — the millennial possession of the earth.

But another promise was added, a precious and important one, that, outcast and a wanderer as he was, God would keep him in all places whither he went, and bring him back to the land, and fulfil all without fail, not leaving him till he had accomplished all. God was above; Jacob, the object of promise and blessing, of the earth; but earth was all under the providential control of heaven; and the angels had Jacob for their care, ascended and descended, accomplishing the will of God*. Awoke up, Jacob binds himself to Jehovah as his God — for Jehovah stood at the top of the ladder; and thus He became, prophetically, the God of a restored Israel, with whom, though far from heaven, was the house of God on earth in connection with heaven. It was a legal though just vow, and all prophetic. He is now a stranger, and in many things represents Christ afflicted in the affliction of His people. {* Christ is the object in John; the ladder is merely to connect the scene.}

Chapters 29 to 35

Jacob's two wives — the Gentiles and Israel

I have no doubt that in the two wives, as I have said, we have the Gentiles and Israel: Rachel first loved on the earth, but not possessed; but Leah the fruitful mother of children. Rachel had children also afterwards on the earth. Rachel, as representing the Jews, is the mother of Joseph, and later of Benjamin, that is, of a suffering Christ glorified among the Gentiles, while rejected of Israel; and of a reigning Christ, the son of his mother's sorrow, but of his father's right hand.

The deceiver deceived, but preserved according to God's promise

Jacob's personal history is the sad tale of deceit and wrong done to him; but God, as He had promised, preserving him throughout. What a difference from Eliezer and Abraham, where the power and character of the Holy Ghost is seen! Here providence preserves, but it is Jacob's history. He is bitterly deceived as he had deceived, but preserved according to promise. At the return of Jacob the hosts of God came to meet him. He receives a new and wondrous proof of God's mighty and gracious care, which should have recalled Bethel to him. But this does not remove his terror. He must anew use the means of unbelief, and sends children and wives and all on before, and presents after presents to appease Esau; but his strength was not there. God would not leave him in the hands of Esau, but He deals with him Himself. He wrestles with him, sustaining at the same time his faith in the wrestling; and, after making him feel his weakness, and that for all his life, gives him, in weakness, the place and part of victor. He is a prince with God, and prevails with God and with men — victory in conflict with a God who is dealing with him, but no revelation of, or communion with Him.

The dealings of God with a soul who does not walk with Him

This is a wonderful scene: the dealings of God with a soul that does not walk with Him. It is not, however, the calm communion of Abraham with Jehovah: Abraham intercedes for others, instead of wrestling for himself. So also, though God gives Jacob a name and so far recognises his relationship with Himself, He does not reveal to Jacob His name, as He had done to Abraham. Jacob, too, still

employs his deceitful ways; for he had no thought of going to Seir, as he said. But he is delivered from Esau, as from Laban, and at last establishes himself at Shechem, buying lands where he ought to have remained a stranger. God removes him out of it, but by strange and humbling circumstances; still God's fear on the nations preserves him. He is not yet back to the point where God had given him the promises and assured the blessing; that was at Bethel. Here, however, he was able to build an altar, using, at the same time, the name which exalted his own position, and which took the ground of the blessing which had been granted to him; an act of faith, it is true, but which confined itself to the blessing, instead of rising up to the Blesser. This, indeed, he was not properly able to do yet. God was dealing with him, and he was, in a measure, thinking on God; but proper communion was not there: so is it in like case with us.

However, God led him onward, and now tells him to go up to the place whence he had set out, and there build an altar, where he had entered into covenant with God, the faithful God, who had been with him all the way in which he went. But what a discovery is made here! He must now meet God Himself, and not simply be dealt with for his good — God's name still unknown, no full revelation of Him. And this is a great difference. Now he must meet Him.

He remembers — he knew it well, although he paid no attention to it until he had to meet God — there were false gods in his family. Meeting God Himself — not in secret and mysterious struggle, but face to face, so to speak — brings all to light. He purifies himself, and the false gods are removed, and he goes up to Bethel. There God reveals Himself openly to him, in grace making known His name, unasked, to him as to Abraham, and confers upon him anew the name of Israel, as if he had not received it before. Rachel gives birth to him who, child of his mother's sorrow, is the son of his father's right hand (remarkable type of Christ the Lord); for this is, figuratively, the establishment of the promise in power in his person, though the former standing of Israel, represented by Rachel, must disappear; but her remembrance is kept up in the land.

Chapter 36

The apostate world in power; the heirs of promise as pilgrims on the earth

The apostate world establishes itself in power, while the heirs of promise are still poor pilgrims upon the earth. This last is a distinct point of revelation.

Chapters 37 to 41

Joseph, the beloved of his father, in humiliation

What follows from chapter 37 is the interesting history of Joseph, to which even children ever yield a ready ear, although ignorant of all the beauties which the believer finds who knows Jesus, and recognises Him as prefigured there: for there is an intrinsic beauty, where the heart is not yet hardened, in all that reveals Him. Joseph, as revealed in his dreams (faith alone could thus own it), is, in the

counsels of God, heir of the glory and chief of all the family. His brothers are jealous of this; so much the more that he is the beloved of his father. He is sold to the Gentiles by his brethren, and, in the figure, instead of being put to death, as the Jews did to the true Joseph (that being not possible), is passed for dead. Meanwhile Judah falls into every kind of shame and sin, which does not deprive him, however, of the royal genealogy. Joseph is brought low among the Gentiles, through false accusations put in prison, his "feet made fast in the stocks." "The iron enters into his soul:" "till the time came that his cause was known, the word of the Lord tried him."

All power committed to Joseph in his elevation

Rising out of his humiliation, he is elevated, unknown now of his brethren, to the right hand of the throne; and the administration of all power over the Gentiles committed to him. In his humiliation, interpreter of the thoughts and counsels of God; in his elevation, he administers with power according to the same wisdom, and reduces all under the immediate authority of him who was seated on the throne.

Chapters 42 to 47

Repentance and humiliation bring blessing through the once-rejected One

At the same time another scene presents itself. His brethren, who had rejected him, forced by famine, are brought, by the path of repentance and humiliation, to own him at length in glory, whom they had once rejected when connected with themselves. Benjamin, type of the power of the Lord upon earth among the Jews, is united to him who, unknown, had the power of the throne among the Gentiles; that is, Christ unites these two characters. But this brings all the brethren into connection with Joseph.

Finally, Jacob and his family are placed, as a people apart, in the most favoured country of all that was under the power of the throne of the great king. Nothing can be more touching than the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren; but I must leave these reflections to the hearts of my readers, placing them as far as my hearty desires can, under the precious influence of the Spirit of God. The rapid survey I have given, gives the type a clearer application than more detail would, and that is what is of the deepest interest here.

Joseph revelaed to his brethren in glory and grace

Only remark that here the repentance is immediately in connection with the rejection of Joseph; this is brought on the conscience of Joseph's brethren. So in the end will it be with Israel. It is not here in reference to the law — that we shall have after Sinai — but in typical connection with the Messiah Their consciences are fully convinced, and they go back to all the circumstances of his rejection. It is only gradually that Joseph reveals himself, and with many exercises of heart, which his dealings work in his brethren. In the end Judah is brought into prominence in connection with Benjamin. It is when Judah takes the sorrow of Israel to heart, in connection with Benjamin, and the loss of Joseph, and puts

himself into it, that Joseph, in his glory, is revealed to them as their brother it is a lovely scene. The perfect grace of Joseph at the end is a wonderful picture of Christ's revelation of Himself (Gen. 45:4-8, et seq.).

God's children and the world

It is touching to remark, when Jacob is presented to Pharaoh, though acknowledging that, compared with those of his fathers, his life had been a sad one, he can bless the monarch of all the country, himself a despised shepherd; and "without contradiction the less is blessed of the greater." The least and most faltering of God's children has the superiority, and is conscious of it, in presence of the most elevated men of the world.

Israel blessed in grace in connection with a risen Saviour

The coming down to Egypt was according to God. so we have here Israel viewed as abiding God's time, even when oppressed, not as cast out and wandering as the effect of disobedience. Both are true. God, remark, appears to him as the God of Isaac his father, not of Abraham: his blessing comes under the risen Christ. What hangs on promises Israel has lost by the rejection of Christ; but God can appear for him in pure grace, in connection with a risen Saviour, and fulfil them according to His own faithfulness*; and so it is in figure here. Therefore is Israel blessed in spite of all, though long oppressed and a stranger. When he is in connection with Joseph, the scene changes; that is, in his connection, in the world, with a glorified Christ revealed to him there, he has the best of the land, which is brought into universal order and subjection as belonging to Pharaoh, whom Joseph represented, and whose authority he exercised over it. Beersheba, the border of Israel — from henceforward he was a stranger — is the place of this revelation of God. {* This is the subject of Romans 11:28-33. In verse 31 read "even so have these not now believed in your mercy that they also might be objects of mercy." They had forfeited the promises, and take them now on no higher ground than a Gentile; that is, pure mercy.}

One cannot fail to see in the history of Joseph one of the most remarkable types of the Lord Jesus, and that, in many details of the ways of God in regard to the Jews and Gentiles.

Chapters 48 to 50

Joseph as heir in Canaan

Lastly, in chapter 48 besides the prophetical character — important in the history of Israel — we see Joseph as heir; the double portion (mark of the eldest, heir of the father, among the Jews) being given to him (see 1 Chron. 5:1-2); and not only as heir, but as heir in Canaan — Jacob's heir there where Rachel had died; that is, where Israel, as the Jewish beloved one of God, had failed and gone. Here, too, all is ordered according to the purpose and counsel of God, not according to nature; and Joseph, in his children, possesses, as heir, the portion taken from the hand of the enemy by power; for Joseph, after

his rejection, is ever Christ as glorified, and then heir of the world.

The pledge of Israel's re-establishment in the land; God's patience with evil

We have then the lot of the children of Jacob; and two facts, the burying of Jacob, and the commandment concerning the bones of Joseph, given as a certain pledge of the re-establishment of Israel, left, according to what had been said to Abraham, and in appearance abandoned, in a strange country, whilst the patience of God bore yet with the iniquity of the Amorites, a patience which strikes only when it is impossible to bear the evil any longer (Gen. 49, 50).

Remark the beauty of the grace in Joseph (Gen. 45:7-8, and Gen. 50:17, 19, 20).

The difference between the prophetic blessings of Jacob and Moses

It seems to me that there is this difference between the prophecies of Jacob and Moses as to the tribes. Here the prophecy refers to the responsibility of the first parent-source of the tribe, as Reuben, Simeon, Levi; and to the counsels of God, which put forward Judah (the stock from which the Lord sprang as regards the royalty), and Joseph (type of Christ as Nazarene, separated from his brethren, and afterwards exalted). The rest, if we except Benjamin who ravages with power, gives the general characters of the position and conduct of the tribes of Israel; Dan, of his wickedness, and even of his character of traitor. I may add that besides the royal place of Judah maintained as a distinct tribe till Christ came, up to the end of Issachar, it is the sad history of Israel in its responsibility and what befell them. Dan adds to this traitorous unfaithfulness, as indeed he set up, we may say, tribal idolatry. This casts the faith of Jacob on waiting for God's salvation, and grace comes in. All that follows is blessing, and Christ the shepherd and stone of Israel. Moses gives rather the history of the people as entering into the country on leaving the wilderness; and we find the priesthood and people to be the two points brought into prominence, although power and a special blessing be given to Judah.

The moral character and failure of Israel, and the purposes of God

I add a few details as to this prophetic blessing, hoping to make it more clear. We may remark, in the tribes, responsibility and the future of Israel as firstborn according to nature. Reuben represents Israel in this character; Simeon and Levi, who come after and will maintain their right by nature's force, are no better. Then we have the purpose of God in the king and the whole of the royal tribe till Christ come, to whom the gathering of the peoples shall be. Joseph comes with Benjamin at the end, the representative of Christ personally glorified, as Benjamin of Christ in judgment on earth. Joseph is a personal representative of Christ, separated from His brethren, glorious and blessed as the heir of all the resources of God. Dan, before this, though owned as a judging tribe and so Israel in him, yet marks out that apostasy and power of Satan in Israel which led the remnant to look beyond the portion of the people, unfaithful in every way, to Him who was the salvation: "We have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah."

Salvation will come with the true Joseph

I rather think, as already noticed, that in the other tribes we have a distinct contrast of what Israel is as oppressed, before Christ — who has taken the full Joseph character in glory, and has answered the faith of the remnant expressed in verse 18 — and after; and that thus, in these characters of the tribes, we have the whole history of Israel. Judah and Joseph have been already marked out and distinguished in the history — Judah as surety for and connected with Benjamin, and Joseph in all his history. Thus, after Judah, in Zebulun and Issachar we have Israel mixed with the world, busied in its waters to seek profit, and a slave to it for rest and quiet; but this ends in Dan and apostasy, so that the remnant, in the spirit of prophecy, wait for the salvation which is to come with the true Joseph. All is prosperity when this is looked to. Once overcome, he overcomes at the last: his bread is fat and yields royal dainties in his own land, not seeking them by mixture with, and subjection to, the world. And Naphtali is in the liberty of God, and full of goodly words. In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all.

So that the whole series would be thus: — Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the moral character and failure of responsible Israel. It will be found, as ever, corruption and violence: such is man. Next, the purpose of God in Judah: he remains till Shiloh come, to whom the gathering of the peoples belongs. But He was rejected when He came to Judah, and there was no gathering: "beauty" and "bands" were broken.

Deliverance and blessing through Christ as once separated and now the heavenly glorified Man

Next, the state of Israel being such, intercourse with nations (which, when not in the power of God, is corruption), subjection to their yoke for ease, and apostasy: still owned as a people, however; and then the remnant looking to the only source, and waiting, not for good in Israel, but salvation from Jehovah Elohim. Thereon deliverance and blessing for Israel; and finally (what we have already seen as the double character of Christ — separated from His brethren*, and then glorified) Joseph and Benjamin present Him to us as the heavenly glorified Man to whom all is entrusted, and the all-conquering Lord on the earth. {* Joseph is so characterised in Deuteronomy also.}

Israel's past and future history in Jacob's prophetic blessing

On the whole, I think we have a complete history of Israel in this way. First his failure: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, corruption and violence, as already remarked. Then Judah, God s purpose in His people, in connection with the royal stock and Shiloh. This is plain enough. To Him the gathering of the peoples was to be. Zebulun and Issachar then shew their mixture with, and subjection to, the Gentiles for gain and prosperity; Dan, the treachery of Satanic power, when faith waits for Jehovah's salvation. Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Joseph and Benjamin, the fruit and power of this salvation when the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, shall be also there when prosperity full in Israel shall overpass its bounds, and victorious power shall belong to them.

The fear of God shown in Joseph the true basis of power and blessing

Personally the fear of God was in Joseph from beginning to end: a mighty principle, and the true basis of power. Whatever his glory, he does not forget Canaan or the earthly promise — he sends his bones there: nor has Christ. So Joseph, when Israel is gone, forgives his brethren their wrong, and nourishes them with his riches. So is it with Christ: He is above the wrong and the just fears of them that rejected Him; He will bless Israel from His own stores of heavenly glory. The Lord hasten it in its day!