

nature of this defilement? If we accept the theory that this occurred on the 14th we have no explanation, for by sunset they could be purified ready for the Passover; but if on the 15th, the explanation is as clear as day to those who are familiar with Jewish customs. With the sunset of the 14th, *i.e.* the beginning of the 15th, began that period in which it was, and is, sin for any Jew to come in contact with the slightest *leaven*. Those who know the extreme precautions taken by the Jews of to-day to avoid the slightest chance of defilement during this feast, can easily understand that a heathen law court would be the last place 'the chief priests and rulers of the synagogues' would dare to enter. Defilement then would mar their whole feast. Defilement on the 14th, however, would not be too late for them, by changes of raiment and ablutions, to prepare themselves for keeping the feast.

And now lastly, though this cannot be perhaps used as an argument, What bearing has the date on the typical fulfilment of the Passover institution? Those who maintain that our Lord was crucified on the 14th, point out that he was the Paschal Lamb, and therefore died when they were slain—which even then would not be exactly the case. But it should be remembered that the 15th was the Passover Day—the day of the great deliverance. It was in the night of the 15th (which *preceded* the day, as always in Eastern reckoning) that the angel of the Lord smote those whose doors were not sprinkled. The lamb was killed, it is true, shortly before the 15th, but only, as it seems, to be sure that it should be ready for

the great day. It was killed in ancient times by the head of each household. It was the sprinkling of the blood and the consuming of the lamb which were the essentials of deliverance, as in the temple sacrifices it was the consumption and burning, not the killing, on which stress was laid. Now that no lamb is killed, the 14th has lost all significance, but the 15th remains to-day as the great day of Israel's deliverance.

Further, it is interesting to observe that the new symbols of the body and blood which our Lord instituted were to be the perpetual representatives of this new Passover. The new institution took place at the very day and hour of the old. In both cases the *feast* was the essential, only the symbols of the bread and wine were a higher development of the idea.

It would thus seem that our Lord's Last Supper, agony, arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion, death, and burial all occurred on the 15th of Nisan, the great day of the Passover in past ages and at the present time. 'For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Co 5<sup>1</sup>).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Full popular discussions of this subject will be found in Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, special note 'On the Day of the Crucifixion'; Plummer, *St. John's Gospel* ('Cambridge Bible for Schools'), special appendix; Farrar, *Life of Christ*, special appendix. All these support a view different from the above. Also Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services* and *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, in favour of the 15th of Nisan view. In Andrews' *Life of our Lord*, the arguments on both sides are quoted and discussed, the decision being left open. See also Turner's article, 'Chronology of the New Testament,' in *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 411.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF GENESIS.

#### GENESIS xii. 1-3.

'Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

THE historian has reached the end of the first chief portion of his narrative; he has completed the introductory

section of his grand composition; he has shown the origin of the world through the omnipotence of God, and the descent of the nations of the earth from one common ancestor; he has, by a universal pedigree, disclosed the beautiful hope that, however dispersed and inimical to each other the nations may be, they will, in a happier future, be reunited in brotherhood; but before the human family reaches this aim, it has to pass through a long and wearisome career: during unnumbered ages the various tribes will continue in hostility and warfare; for unmeasured periods the omnipotent Creator will be forgotten, and darkness will shroud the earth. In one tribe alone the spark of truth will be preserved, and through that tribe 'all the

families of the earth will be blessed.' In Abraham's race lives the hope of the world. This is the Hebrew writer's avowed principle; and henceforth he devotes his narrative exclusively to the destinies of that race.—KALISCH.

'Now the Lord said unto Abram.'—The former chapter had carried the history down to the death of Terah. The present chapter returns to the date of the call of Abram. In Ac 7<sup>2</sup> St. Stephen tells us, what also appears most likely from the history in Genesis, that God appeared to Abram, 'when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.' This led our translators (A.V.) to render '*had said.*' The Hebrew lacks the pluperfect tense; but the continuous character of the narrative from this point marks the propriety of adopting a simple perfect, which is also the rendering of the ancient versions. The recounting briefly of events up to the death of Terah in the last chapter was by a prolepsis.—HAROLD BROWNE.

WE must not conceive of this speaking of God to Abraham as external; he heard the voice of God within him, in the inmost depth of his soul, which the New Testament calls *πνεῦμα τοῦ νοῦς*, and to which man must ever retire if he would hear the voice of God. The scene of this chiefly internal occurrence was, according to the meaning of the Toledoth of Terah, as we now have them, Haran (4b, xi. 31b); but the speech of Stephen (Ac 7<sup>2</sup>), and many expositors who are not influenced by it (*e.g.* Kimchi), assume that the narrative reaches back to the time when the family of Abram still dwelt in Ur Casdim, and according to the prevailing view (15<sup>7</sup>, Neh 9<sup>7</sup>) the Divine intervention certainly dates thence.—DELITZSCH.

'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house.'—The expressions are accumulated in order to point out that God made no small demand of him when He required him to sever his family ties, and wander forth as a stranger into a land as yet unknown to him.—DILLMANN.

'The land that I will show thee.'—Definite information regarding the goal of the journey is reserved to a later time. This makes God's demand appear all the harder. It was therefore the more necessary to intimate the purpose and object of the demand in the form of a promise, and this follows in v. 2<sup>6</sup>.—DILLMANN.

'I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse.'—Abram becomes a mediator of blessings for those in his neighbourhood, in that they, while acknowledging him as blessed of God, are themselves blessed, and for those remote in time and place, in that the report of Abram's blessing impels them to desire or share it. קָלַל (prop. *vilipendere*) was the more appropriate word for the blasphemous cursing of men; אָרַר for the judicial infliction of a curse on the part of God. And how significant it is, that they who bless are spoken of in the plural, and they who curse only in the singular! They who curse are only individuals who isolate themselves from that humanity which is destined to inherit the blessing.—DELITZSCH.

'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'—Not bless themselves by thee or in thy name; but in thee, as the progenitor of the promised seed, shall all the families of the ground (which was cursed on account of sin, chap. 3<sup>17</sup>) be spiritually blessed; cf. Gal 3<sup>8</sup>. Thus

the second sense in which Abram was constituted a blessing lay in this, that the whole fulness of the Divine promise of salvation for the world was narrowed up to his line, by which it was in future to be carried forward, and at the appointed season, when the woman's seed was born, distributed among mankind.—WHITELOW.

## METHODS OF TREATMENT.

### I.

#### Abraham's Call.

*By the Rev. W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*

I. THE Call.—(1) Abram appears to have received the call in Haran, though he may have received a previous call in Mesopotamia (Ac 7<sup>2</sup>). We may not know the precise place or number of times of God's appearance to Abram, but the call is clear.

(2) God's calls have always involved sacrifice. Religion must cost us something. It cost Abram country and kindred.

(3) Why should this be required of him? (a) His departure from the idolatrous Chaldees betokened separation from the world, such as Christ's religion would require (2 Co 6<sup>17</sup>). (b) Leaving land and kindred betokened self-surrender, and the yielding up of possessions and affections to God.

(4) Christ laid down this law when He said, 'If any man come after Me, and hate not his father and mother and wife, he cannot be My disciple.'

II. THE RESPONSE.—(1) Abraham responded with faith and prompt obedience, the greater that he had not the example of Christ to aid him. Such faith and obedience entitled him to the name of 'the friend' of God.

III. THE PROMISE.—(1) All families of the earth should be blessed in him, that is, through Christ his descendant. St. Augustine says, 'Two promises were made to Abraham; one concerned Canaan; the other was far greater, and had relation to, not carnal, but spiritual seed, by which he is the father, not of one Israelite nation, but of all nations which follow in the footsteps of his faith.'

(2) The election of the chosen family was not an act of favouritism. Their sins were not overlooked, but the more severely judged (Am 3<sup>2</sup>). They were not chosen to the exclusion of others, but in order to reach others. There is a danger of thinking of the privilege of the Divine choice apart from its duties and responsibilities.

## II.

## Be Thou a Blessing.

*By the Rev. Morris Joseph.*

The words are a command and a promise. Abraham is offered the Divine love, but from him human love must go out to the world. A life blessed of God must be a blessing to others. Abraham is represented in Jewish and Mussulman tradition as an apostle of truth and righteousness, and his life-work as of a missionary character. He breaks his father's idols, and calls upon the idolatrous Nimrod to acknowledge the true God. He has also a beautiful garden and guest-house, open to all wayfarers, where they are fed, clothed, and tended; for which Abraham will receive no reward, but bids them thank God.

The command and twofold duty is to us also. If we are religious, we may deepen the religious life of others; and, on the other hand, by our sympathy may refresh those who are weary and sad.

(1) Every religious man and woman must be a missionary for God. They must win souls, if not by active warfare, by the force of example. Their faith is itself a witness for religion, and when to that is clearly due the virtues of their everyday life, it is the strongest argument against the indifferent and the unbelieving. Let us not think it matters only to ourselves what we believe. We cannot live our lives alone. We all have the power of being an example, for good or for evil. If we are careless in religion, we injure others, just as, if our religion is a real thing to us, we may bless them by our example.

(2) We may also bless by loving deeds. Here also example is a blessing stirring others to imitation. As the rays of a solitary candle set in a window lighten the path and cheer the wayfarer, the effects of a simple deed of love may travel far. It may give peace and strength to those in need; it may be the turning-point of a life. We have not far to seek for such opportunities of blessing. We have first the demands of home-life that we should deny ourselves for the happiness of those dear to us. Beyond that there are wider possibilities in the misery of the world. The miseries crying for alleviation are often those that money cannot reach. What is wanted is helpfulness, energy, sympathy, and love.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE passage is typical of many, addressed sometimes to Abraham, sometimes to one of the other patriarchs. All breathe the same spirit; most are expressed nearly in the same words. In part, the promises relate only to the nation of which the patriarchs are to be the ancestors; its numbers as the stars of heaven, or as the sand which is upon the seashore; the certainty with which it will enter into possession of Canaan, even to the ideal limits reached by the dominion of Solomon; the blessings of external prosperity which will flow to it. Elsewhere, a wider prospect is opened, and the nations of the earth are brought within the sphere of Israel's influence. Three times, it is said, through the patriarchs (or their seed) shall the families of the earth be blessed; twice, in passages due perhaps to another hand, it is said that they will bless themselves by it, *i.e.* will own it as a source of good, and desire for themselves the blessings proceeding from it. Objectively, in other words, the truth of which Israel is the organ and channel is to become a blessing to the world; and, subjectively, it is to be recognized by the world as such.—S. R. DRIVER.

WHEN Abraham, not by human interest but by a Divine call, and even with an effort to overcome the struggling sympathies of his heart, left the paternal house, and his aged father, he was encouraged, not by promises of personal wealth and glory, but of a blessing which would ultimately prove the benediction of the human family. Abraham's emigration was a sacrifice unhesitatingly brought for an end concealed in an indefinite future, and scarcely fully understood by himself. Whilst the address of God was explicit and emphatic in describing the domestic felicity which he was commanded to renounce, it did not point out the least social compensation which he might expect in the strange land. No allusion was made to the possession of Canaan; it was only after he had reached the aim of his long journey that God for the first time promised it *to his descendants* (v.7); whilst Abraham himself, seeing it was in the hands of mighty heathen tribes, could during his life call no part of it his own, and was obliged to secure, by a heavy sum, a resting-place after his death.—M. M. KALISCH.

ABRAHAM knew next to nothing of the vast plan of Providence of which his call was the initiatory step. We, however, can trace its development. Before he died he was a rich and powerful chieftain, though a sojourner in a strange land; before his grandson died, his tribe, already numerous, occupied an important district in Egypt, and a great-grandson was lord over all the land; before many centuries had elapsed, his posterity, increased to a great nation, returned to conquer the very Canaan which he was about to enter as a foreigner. The kingdom of David and Solomon sprang from his obedience. In process of time, also, the kingdom of One greater than Solomon, and both Abraham's and David's Lord, was established as an everlasting dominion, under which all nations of the earth

are to be blessed. Thus has it ever been. The greatest and happiest consequences have flowed from single acts of righteousness and faith.—E. W. SHALDERS.

SOME of us are as dead to the perception of God's gracious call, just because it has been sounding on uninterruptedly, as are the dwellers by a waterfall to its unremitting voice.—A. MACLAREN.

How the revelation of God came to Abraham we do not know, but there is a charming legend known to most of us. The scene, according to Dean Stanley, is laid, sometimes in Ur, sometimes in the celebrated hill above Damascus. He gives the story in the form in which it is preserved in the Koran. "When night overshadowed him, Abraham saw a star, and said, "This is my Lord." But when the star set, he said, "I like not those who set." And when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, he answered, "Verily, if my Lord direct me not in the right way, I shall be as one of those who err." And when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord. This is greater than the star or moon." But when the sun went down, he said, "O my people, I am clear of these things. I turn my face to Him who hath made the heaven and the earth."

The legend becomes more impressive when we remember that on the great plains of Central Asia, from the earliest times, the heavenly hosts received worship. But however the knowledge of the one true living God came

to him, it was not a doubtful inference of his own from what he saw in the natural order of the world, or from the sovereignty of conscience. It was a revelation—not a hypothesis constructed by his own logical skill.—R. W. DALE.

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## Recent Foreign Theology.

### Dalman's 'Die Worte Jesu.'

DR. FAIRBAIRN has pointed out that the great difference between the library of a present-day theologian, as compared with one of the past generation, consists in the number of Lives of Christ, by men of all schools, tendencies, and Churches, which now abound. Younger men, who are so indebted to Farrar, Geikie, Edersheim, etc., can scarcely realize that such works are an entirely new feature in theological literature. This desire for the recovery of the historical Christ has given birth to valuable histories of New Testament

<sup>1</sup> *Die Worte Jesu.* Mit Berücksichtigung des nachkanonischen jüdischen Schrifttums und der Aramäischen Sprache. Erörtert von Gustaf Dalman. Band i. Einleitung und wichtige Begriffe. Nebst anhang: Messianische texte. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs. Price M. 8.50. Messianische texte allein. M., 50.

times, and also, during the present decade more particularly, to a desire to know something of the actual language which Jesus spoke, and to apply modern methods to the study of contemporary Jewish literature. Several young men, ten or fifteen years ago, quite unknown to one another, seem to have been seized with a strong desire to ascertain what was the state of Jewish theology in the first century. We would like to know what of Christianity was the creation of our Lord and His apostles, and what was *appropriated* from current theological and eschatological beliefs, thus receiving the imprimatur and sanction of the founders of Christian theology. And in cases when our Lord and the Apostle Paul were in antagonism to Jewish creeds, many of us have felt that we should understand our New Testament better, if we knew what were the precise beliefs which are there opposed. To all who realize the value of these lines of investigation the appearance of Dalman's