

The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part III.



Continued from [Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part II.](#)

We noted, when considering the Noahic programme, the prediction that religious supremacy would run in the race of Shem. The call of his descendant Abraham and the selection of his seed to be the special custodians of the knowledge of the true God, and thus in the highest sense a blessing to all nations, confirmed this previous prediction; but the fact that such a call and such a remarkable providential training as that given to the patriarchs was needful to the preservation of true religion in the earth, even in the race of Shem, is most suggestive, and its bearings must in passing be indicated.

Modern infidelity has among its other theories started one which is virtually an endeavour to account for the widespread and beneficial influence of the faith of Abraham *apart from any supernatural influence*. It is argued by Renan and others that the Shemites, or Semitic races, have "a natural genius" for and tendency to monotheism, and that therefore the bud of Judaism, with its flower of Christianity, grew naturally on this stock. No assertion could well be more contrary to fact, nor could any theory be more utterly baseless. As in the case of many other rationalistic schemes, history must be blotted out or ignored before it can be received.

We have already mentioned that with the earliest dawn of monumental records gross idolatry is found already prevailing, not only among the Hamitic, but equally among the Semitic peoples of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Elam, Chaldea, and Egypt.¹

¹ "Among the deities they worshipped were Moloch, Nisroch, Rimmon, Necho, Dagon, Ashtaroth, Baal-Chemosh, Milcom, Adrammelech, . . . Nergal, the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven."— (Max Muller: "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 345.)

If there was any difference, the Shemites would seem almost to have exceeded. Professor Ebrard, in his "Apologetik," has a section which gives A.D.e proof of this. He says:—

"Those Euphrates-Semites must have been given over to a spirit of confusion out of the abyss, as they declared everything which the conscience forbids and condemns as infamous and horrible to be precisely

that which belonged to the service of the Godhead.”

And again:

“It was no gradual declension from A.D. knowledge of God to a knowledge less clear, as with the Persians, Indians, Greeks, and Egyptians. The rise of this religion—the primitive Semitic heathenism—presupposes a willful repetition of the original fall, a fall out of a state of simple sinfulness into a diabolic and demoniac hardness of heart, *an accursed revolt against both God and the conscience.*”

Even Jews, when their faith is undermined by rationalism, take the ground that they arrived “intuitively in A.D. historic age at” the sublime conception of “the unity of the creative force”—in other words, at a knowledge of the one living and true God—“by the genius of the race.”¹ So far from this, we see that Terah and his family had fallen into idolatry, and that the Semitic people who were their contemporaries were distinguished, as Professor Zockler says, by “a natural inclination to a gross, sensual, idolatrous superstition, and a strong tendency to polytheism, instead of the monotheistic instinct which is claimed for them.”

¹ See article on “The Jewish Problem” in the *Century Magazine* for February, 1883, p. 609.

History moreover shows us that the Jews themselves, in spite of all the numerous Divine interventions recorded in their annals, in violation of their own covenant and in defiance of their own law, and even in face of the living voices of the prophets, were so strongly and so persistently inclined to idolatry that, right down to the day of the captivity of the land, they persisted in returning at intervals to debasing, licentious, and cruel idolatry, to the obscene worship of “the queen of heaven” or the unnatural sacrifices to Moloch. Nothing can be more certain than that during the whole thirteen hundred years from the call of Abram to the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites themselves were constantly falling back into the idolatry from which they had been rescued, and that it was only by frequently renewed Divine intervention, by the severest providential chastenings, and by the earnest remonstrances of inspired prophets, that the Jews were at last cured of the inveterate Semitic tendency to polytheism.

Of their ultimate national testimony against idolatry, no explanation which is purely natural can be accepted, or made to fit with the acknowledged facts of the case. *The Divine choice of Abraham’s seed to be A.D. culiar people*, to be the medium of conveying to the world the knowledge of the true God, is the only account which can honestly be given of the monotheism of the Jewish people amid the gross polytheism of the Gentiles.

II. As to the second point of the prediction—the fortunes of Ishmael and his descendants—three points especially were stated:

1. That God would make him a great nation.
2. That there should be a marked antagonism between it and other nations;

that, in contrast to the seed of Isaac, which should be a blessing to the world, the seed of Ishmael would be a foe to all other peoples, and other peoples to it.

3. That Ishmael should “dwell in the presence of his brethren,” or continue to enjoy an independent existence in spite of the constant opposition of neighbouring nations.

Though not the promised seed, Ishmael was a son of Abraham and a descendant of Shem, and was to inherit to some extent the blessing of his forefathers. His mother Hagar, however, was an Egyptian, a descendant of Cush, and therefore a Hamite, and she is an early illustration of the fulfilment of the Noahic prediction about the servitude of the descendants of Ham to their brethren. She was a bondwoman or slave in the family of Abraham, and her child was consequently a slave also; he was the offspring, not of faith and Divine power, but of nature. He was, however, his father's firstborn, and shared in Abraham's affection and prayers. He was promised A.D.r.t in the blessing of multiplication and increase common to all Abraham's seed, and that he should partake to some extent of the distinction of Abraham's children; but his lot was in *other* respects to be markedly contrasted to theirs.

He was to be the father of twelve princes, and ultimately to “become”—not beget—a great nation. To his mother it had been predicted that while the posterity of her son should not be numbered for multitude, he would always be a wild man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. Yet he was to continue to “dwell in the presence of his brethren.” This portrait of the unborn race is drawn with such a bold individuality of touch that the race itself must be easy of recognition. The expression employed in the original to characterize Ishmael's seed is stronger than that in our version. He was to be “a wild ass of a man,”—the race would be a wild, lawless, independent one, impatient of restraint, inclined to run free in the wilderness, and to live by plunder and robbery, “his hand against every man,” leading to the natural result that every man's hand would be against him. Ishmael's seed, unlike Israel, would not be a blessing in the earth, but rather a woe to mankind, ever warring and warred against, yet inextinguishable as the Jews themselves, and continuing to the end a distinct people.

Has this remarkable prediction been falsified by the course of history, or has it been, on the other hand, strikingly fulfilled? *The Arabs are almost as much a living miracle as the Jews themselves.* To the letter, and in the most wonderful manner, and for thousands of years in succession, this part of the programme has been realized on the stage of history.

Did Ishmael beget twelve princes? 1 Chronicles 1:29-31 gives the answer: “The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.”

Did these sons become princes? Genesis 25:16 gives the answer: “These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their

castles; *twelve princes* according to their nations." It is added that they occupied the country "between Havilah and Shur;" that is, districts in Arabia between Egypt and Assyria.¹ Nebajoth ("heights"), the eldest son of Ishmael, was the father of the Nebathians, a people of Northern Arabia who lived by merchandise and rapine (plunder), according to Diodorus. Kedar ("black skin") was the father of the Cedric, characterized as good bowmen, dwelling between Arabia and Babylon. Dumah ("silence") dwelt on the edge of the Assyrian desert. Hadad was father of the Arabs of Yemen; Tema of the tribes on the Persian Gulf; and so on.

¹ The Arabian peninsula had been originally peopled by the descendants of Joktan, the son of Heber, of the posterity of Shem, and certain Cushite (Hamitic) races had also settled there. No histories but only certain fabulous traditions of these "old Arab" races are available. The "pure Arabs" are Joktan's descendants, and the "mixed Arabs" are the children of Ishmael. Mohammed traced his own descent from the marriage of Ishmael with Modad, a daughter of the king of Hejaz. The Arabs regard this branch of their pedigree as the most important, and boast as much as the Jews that they are "children of Abraham." The Nabathean Arabs, under a race of native princes, long preserved a distinct name as a nation, and maintained their independence against the hosts of Egypt and Ethiopia, of the Jews, the Assyrians, the Greeks, and the Romans, all of whom in turn tried in vain to subdue them. (See Chrichton's "Arabia and its People.")

Archaeology has identified the early history of most of these twelve tribes. The expression "towns and castles" would be better translated by "unwalled encampments and fortified keeps." They were nomadic tribes, and lived to a large extent by rapine, though possessed of abundant flocks and addicted to some extent to merchandise. They are often alluded to in later scriptures. "The mighty men of Kedar" and the "glory of Kedar" are expressions used by Isaiah, and Ezekiel speaks of "the princes of Kedar." Strabo and other ancient writers distinctly connect the origin of the Arabian "Pylachs," or heads of tribes, with Hagar and Ishmael. Psalm 83:6 speaks of "the tabernacles of the Ishmaelites and the Hagarenes," or descendants of Hagar. The promise of rapid multiplication was conspicuously fulfilled, for already in the days of Jacob we read of a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead, trading with camels to Egypt, where they carried spicery, balm, and myrrh. (See Gen. xxxvii. 27-36.)

The posterity of Abraham by his concubine Keturah, especially through his sons Medan and Midian, fraternized and united to some extent with the sons of Ishmael, so that in this passage the names of Ishmaelites and Midianites are used interchangeably. (See also Jud. viii. 12 and 24.)

The Idumeans and Amalekites, or descendants of Isaac's son Esau, also mingled with the Ishmaelites, and were comprised under the common name "the children of the East." In the days of Gideon these Ishmaelites were so numerous that they are described as "lying in the valley, like grasshoppers for multitude, their camels without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude" (Jud. vii. 12). Mention is made of the hosts of the "children of the East," and of *one hundred and twenty thousand of their warriors falling in one battle*. These "children of the East" were all, as Josephus distinctly says, regarded as Ishmaelites, though Arabs descended from the younger sons of Abraham were numbered among them, as well as the Edomites.

The subsequent history of the Arab tribes and peoples is most remarkable.

They have retained their freedom from the first day until now. Neither the Egyptians nor any of the four great empires were ever able to subdue them. At one time they themselves subdued the larger part of the then known world, but never have they been subdued to any other power. Sesostris, the great king of Egypt, was obliged to erect a wall to secure Egypt from the incursions of the Arabs, whom he had endeavoured in vain to conquer. They remained enemies to the Egyptians rather than subjects, in spite of all his efforts, and assisted the Assyrians in overturning the kingdom, lending their aid freely and independently.

When the Persian Cyrus and his followers became the great conquerors of the East, they never could subdue Ishmael's descendants. Herodotus says: "The Arabs were never reduced by the Persians to the condition of subjects, but were considered by them as friends, and opened to them a passage into Egypt, which without the assistance and permission of the Arabs would have been utterly impracticable." All other countries paid tribute to the Persians, but the Arabian territories were free.

When Alexander the Great overturned the Persian empire and conquered Asia, the Arabs alone refused to make submission or send ambassadors to acknowledge the victor; they simply took no notice of him. This so angered Alexander that he was meditating a terrible expedition against them, the preparations for which showed what he thought of their prowess, when death put a stop to all his schemes and saved the Arabians from his onslaught.

Diodorus Siculus mentions that Antigonus, one of Alexander's successors, made two attempts to subjugate the Arabians, both of which were defeated; and he adds:

"Neither the Assyrians formerly nor the kings of the Medes and Persians, nor yet of the Macedonians, were able to subdue them; nay, though they led many and great forces against them, yet they could not accomplish their attempts."

They sometimes joined the Assyrians and sometimes the Egyptians, sometimes helped the Jews, and at others plundered them; but throughout their history they always acted as a free and independent people, who cared neither for the favour nor for the opposition of any other nation.

But the Romans surely reduced them to subjection? No, not even they! Pompey, though he conquered three-quarters of the world, failed to subdue Arabia. He obtained some victories there, but was obliged to retire before he had gained any solid footing, and directly he was gone the Arabs undertook reprisals into the Roman provinces. One of the generals of Augustus penetrated farther into the country, firmly resolved to subdue it; but a strange and unaccountable sickness broke out among his troops, so that after two years he was glad to escape with the small remainder of his army.

Trajan tried and failed to subdue Arabia, and the historian Dion gives a strange account of his reason for raising the siege of the city of the Hagarenes: "His soldiers were repelled by lightnings, thunderings, hail and whirlwinds, and other prodigies; they were *constantly* so repelled, as often

as they renewed their assaults. At the same time great swarms of flies infested his c.A.D. and he was at last forced to retire with disgrace into his own dominions,"

Eighty years later the Emperor Severus twice besieged the same city with a numerous army and a formidable train of military engines, but he had no better success than Trajan. No subsequent Roman emperor attempted the task, and the Arabs continued their incursions into Syria and their depredations in other Roman provinces with absolute impunity.

Then came the most remarkable phase of Arabian history, the time when Ishmael beyond all doubt became "a great nation"—so great as to make the world tremble. After the rise of Mohammed in Arabia, in A.D. 622, and the establishment of his monotheistic faith in place of the idolatry which was at that time beginning to prevail among the Arabians, they, under the better known name of Saracens, emerging from their desert home, conquered with the most amazing rapidity a vast extent both of Asiatic and European territory. They overran in the course of a few years more countries and subdued more nations than the Romans did in the course of *centuries*, and then for three hundred years they were not only free and independent of all other kingdoms, but they were themselves masters of the most important part of the earth. Their dominion extended from the walls of China to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Sahara to the Pyrenees; and in the exercise of this wide rule they exhibited still their characteristic peculiarities. Nowhere did they reign as conquerors accepted and welcomed by other peoples, but always as tyrants who exacted either conversion to their faith and confession of their false creed, or tribute and slavery. They were a "woe" to the corrupt Christian countries they overran.

After this period, when the flood of their invasion subsided and they were once more confined within the limits of Arabia, they still maintained their independence. Tartars, Mamelukes, and Turks alike failed to subjugate them. The rest of Asia might fall under Napoleon-like conquerors, but they remained free, and as usual employed their liberty for the injury of their neighbours. The Turks even in the height of their power were obliged to pay them a tribute for the protection of the pilgrims to Mecca, and do so still. No traveller in the East has failed to be struck with the marvellous coincidences still observable between the Bedaween of the desert and the Scripture predictions as to the children of Ishmael.

It should be borne in mind that those predictions were given before Hagar's child was born, and when no human wisdom could possibly have foreseen either his character or that of his descendants. It should be remembered also that a similar identity of characteristics extending over thousands of years cannot be traced in the history of any other nation if we except the Jews. The modern Italians are not what the old Romans were, and the English of to-day are utterly unlike the Britons of a thousand years ago.

As a rule, men and manners change with the lapse of ages, but the Arabians maintain still in our nineteenth century the family and national characteristics predicted four thousand years ago. Nor can this be accounted for by the fact that they dwell in Arabia, isolated to some extent from the

rest of mankind. They have trafficked with the neighbouring nations from the earliest days. When they overran the earth by their conquests, they possessed most of the learning that was then in the world, and did some service to mankind in extending and diffusing it; but they remained *then*, and remain *still*, the same fierce, intractable people, like their father Ishmael, and unlike all other nations.

Ishmael was circumcised at thirteen, and they still observe the Abrahamic ordinance at the same age; they still live in tents as he did, still trade with Egypt as he did, and exist in clans and tribes and in a state of warfare and antagonism with all their brethren precisely as foretold. *How*, apart from Divine inspiration, can these things have been foreseen? And how, apart from the providential power of God, can such a nation have been maintained in such a condition for four thousand years? Is not this the finger of God ?

III. The third point of the Abrahamic programme was that "*all* the nations of the earth," and even "*all* the families" of the earth, should be blessed through Abraham's seed. Has this prediction been fulfilled?

For answer let us glance at the world of A.D. 1888. We will divide all its nations and families into two parts, including in the one all those which have directly or indirectly been brought under the influence of his seed, and on the other hand all those which have not. The prophecy, it must be remembered, is only partially fulfilled at present. Successive ages as they have rolled away have been evermore fulfilling it, but not until "*the dispensation of the fulness of times*" will it be wholly accomplished. But the fulfilment has already gone quite far enough to afford the most ample proof of the inspiration of the prophetic programme.

How are we to decide which of earth's nations have been influenced by Abraham's seed, and which have not? The question is easily answered. *All the monotheism in the world is distinctly traceable to Abraham*. Wherever we find a nation or a family which worships the one living and true God, there we find a nation and a family which has been blessed through the patriarch and his seed. Hence not Jews only, but all professing Christian nations and the entire Mohammedan world as well, must form our first group of nations; while the second will consist of all those professing polytheistic, pantheistic, and other forms of religion, as well as those which have none; including thus *all idolaters*, and all the fetish and devil worshippers of every kind. All the theistic religions that have ever existed are distinctly and *historically connected with the Old and New Testaments*: the ancient forms with the *Jewish Scriptures*, and the more modern ones with the *Christian* writings of later date. Hence we may say that, but for the influence of Abraham's seed, the world this day would have been without any true knowledge of the existence and moral government of one personal God, creator and judge of all. The influence which this knowledge has had on the development of the human race is the measure of the beneficial influence exerted among the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham. We will therefore call the two groups into which we proceed to divide the nations of the earth, the Abrahamic and the non-Abrahamic respectively.

In the Abrahamic group we should have some 600 millions of the human race who

are monotheists, and in the second a rather larger number, about 800 millions, who have no knowledge of Abraham nor of his God, but are still polytheists and, like the old Chaldeans from whose midst he was called out, idolaters. Now, in the first place, is it not a very wonderful fact that nearly half the human race have actually already been influenced by Abraham's seed and Abraham's faith—that 600 millions of mankind know his name and revere his character, and hold sacred the cave of Machpelah at Hebron where rest his remains? But what of the *blessedness* of this half of humanity compared with that of the larger half which has not yet come under the influence of Abraham and his seed? By *blessedness* we at present mean only the evident outward manifestations of happiness, prosperity, and hopeful prospects for the future; that mental illumination and physical well-being which we include in the one comprehensive expression, *progressive civilization*.

Which of the two halves of humanity is in these senses the most "blessed"? In the monotheistic or Abrahamic group we should have the English, Scotch and Irish, the Norwegians, Swedes and Danes, the Dutch, Belgian and French, the Spaniards, Portuguese and Italians, the Swiss, Austrians and Greeks, the Germans, Poles and Russians; the hundred millions of similar races in America, Africa and Australia, and seven millions of Christianized Negroes in the United States and those in the West Indies, the eight millions of Jews scattered throughout the world; the Eastern Christians of the Armenian, Nestorian, Maronite and Coptic Churches of Syria and Egypt, and in addition to these the entire Mohammedan world numbering 170 millions, and including Arabs, Sikhs, Persians, Turks, Egyptians, Moors and Berbers, extending from India and Arabia to the Atlantic; together with all the converts from heathenism gathered in of late years through missionary efforts.

In the other group, the non-Abrahamic or polytheistic group, we should have such families and nations as the Japanese and Chinese, including the black hairy Ainus of the former, and the wild Shan and Miautse tribes of the latter; the dark Buddhistic Mongols, Tibetans, and Tartars, the wild and cruel Calmucs and Kurds, the superstitious and caste-ridden Tamils, Telegus and Bengalis, the Singhalese, Burmans and Siamese, the wretched and degraded Gonds, Bhils and Sauthals of India; the Malays and Papuans, the blood-thirsty Dyaks of Borneo and the animal-like native Australians; the (heathen) Malagasy, the fierce Zulus and naked Kaffirs, the warlike Griquas and Matabele, the Hottentots and Namaquas, the monkey-like Bushmen of the Kalihari desert, who have lost almost the semblance of humanity; the countless Bantu tribes and nations of Central Africa, with their cannibalism, slavery, and cruel inter-tribal warfare; the Ashanti and Fanti nations of West Africa; Dinka, Monbutto and other heathen nations of the Sudan; the Somali, Gallas and Masai of East Africa; together with the some sixteen millions of degraded and fast dying out American Indians, the Patagonians and the Terra del Fuegians, the cannibals of the Pacific Islands, and the Maori of New Zealand.

We say nothing of the past or of the future, but these two lists recall roughly *the world of the nineteenth century*. Can any one hesitate for a single moment in deciding as to which of these two groups of the nations of

the earth is the "blessed" or happy one? There are degrees of light in the first, and degrees of darkness in the second; but, taken as groups, is not the progress and prosperity of the world found in the first? Does not the future lie with it, ay, and with the most enlightened section of it too? Which are the foremost and most rapidly advancing races of mankind? Not those which profess the faith of Islam, monotheistic though it be; but those which profess the faith of **Abraham's great seed, which is Christ**. The Christian nations take the lead this day in the world, and especially those which hold the purest forms of Christianity. Foremost among all the races of the human family stand the Protestant Saxons, German and English, the two mightiest nations of Europe, and the latter, with its American representative, the dominant power in the Western world.

Surely then the most superficial and cursory glance at the present condition of the human race affords a proof of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic programme, the strength and conclusiveness of which cannot be over-estimated—a demonstration of its Divine inspiration which no candid mind can fail to perceive. The announcement of a future event whose occurrence could not possibly be foreseen by any natural human sagacity must be an inspired prophecy. In this case it cannot be for a moment questioned that the Abrahamic programme was promulgated several thousand years before any such fulfilment could be perceived. Even the most extravagant critics cannot postdate the Pentateuch more than a few centuries, and it was at least *twenty-three hundred years* before this fulfilment which we have indicated became even dimly visible, much longer before it became clear, while it has only been *conspicuous* within the last three centuries. Yet *now* none can deny or even question it.

The contrast in freedom, independence, power, wealth, light and leading, peace and prosperity, between the two groups we have presented is startling; but this present condition of the world could by no human sagacity have been foreseen four, or even three, thousand years ago. It could not possibly have been anticipated by man. The correspondence between prediction and fulfilment is close, the scale of the fulfilment is gigantic, the interval since the prophecy was published enormous.

For ages Israel treasured the prediction, but saw no signs of its accomplishment. Abraham was the father of their nation, and of the Arab nations, but there was no sign of all nations being blessed through him. Even when Christ came, the state of the Roman world, as contrasted with their own condition, showed that no blessing had yet flowed to mankind through Abraham's seed. The Israelites had the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law, and the service of God, and the promises; the fathers and the prophets belonged to them; the Scriptures were their sacred books; and they felt that they, and they only, were the children of promise and counted for the seed. As to the rest of mankind, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, afar off from Him, walking in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, and being alienated from the life of God through ignorance and blindness of heart. But now we may boldly say, there is not a blessed nation on earth whose blessing has not

come to it through Abraham's seed, and every passing year makes this strange fact only more apparent.

This view, however, is but a superficial one; we must go deeper. In His promise to the patriarch, "God," says Paul, "*preached before the gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed. . . . He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is CHRIST." *The great promise to Abraham was the promise of Christ.* It was a second and more emphatic repetition of the hope held out in Eden, that the salvation of a sin-ruined race should be wrought out by the woman's seed. That seed, it was now revealed, was to be Abraham's seed, and He would not only crush the serpent's head, but bring blessing to the wide world. What blessing? Not merely the outward blessing to which we have alluded, but the deepest and richest of all blessings—"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 7, 8).

The great blessing of the Abrahamic covenant was spiritual not temporal, and it promised to man all that is included in that fathomless word SALVATION. How far Abraham understood this we know not, nor is it important to our argument to decide. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," said Christ, "and he saw it and was glad." How did he see it? Was it in the strangely typical action to which he himself was constrained in the providence of God—the offering up of his well-beloved son? One can hardly refrain from the conviction that he must have seen in that sacred scene on Mount Moriah more than met the eye! But whether Abraham understood or no, He who made the promises to Abraham, and "because He could swear by no greater, sware by Himself"—He understood the profound and comprehensive nature of the prediction, that Israel should be the universal centre of blessing to mankind, that salvation should be of the Jews, that humanity at large—the whole race, Jew and Gentile alike—should through Abraham be blessed for ever, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ.

The Christian Church is in a sense Abraham's seed, as it is written: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Who shall estimate the blessing which that Church, in spite of all its failures, has been to the world—the blessing that it is this day? Who can express what the gift of Christ has done for the Gentiles? How has He illuminated, emancipated, elevated, sanctified, transformed? The results of His mission include justification by faith, and the gift of the Holy Spirit—a gift not visible to the world save in its effects, the lives and the deeds of the justified and indwelt Church of God. These are sufficiently visible. The Church is a city set on a hill; *the* light of the world, which owes all its blessing instrumentally to her.

The great and all-important series of events which date from the incarnation, embracing the existence and all the effects of the Christian Church in the world, and all the unknown yet revealed and glorious future lying before redeemed humanity—all is foretold in embryo in this brief, simple sentence of the Abraham programme. Repeatedly and plainly it is predicted that Abraham's seed was to be the salvation of mankind. Can there be any doubt as to the meaning of the prediction, and has it not been in process of fulfilment for

the last two thousand years, at any rate? Does not every year make this fulfilment more evident? Eternal ages alone will unfold its full meaning, but do not we see already millions of mankind enjoying the promised blessing, and rejoicing in their spiritual relation to Abraham even more than the Jews glory in their natural descent from him? Has not the bud already opened into a blossom, and is not that blossom an earnest of the glory and beauty of the ancient stem when it shall be covered with such blossoms, when not *half* the world shall be *partially* blessed through Christ, but the *whole* world *perfectly* and for evermore?

How easily this prophecy might have failed of fulfilment in one or all of its particulars! The Jews might have become merged with the Egyptians, and never have escaped from the land of their bondage. They might have perished in the wilderness, or, more likely still, have become a mere tribe of uninfluential Bedaween. Still more likely, they might have failed in their attempt to conquer Canaan, or have been permanently corrupted by the gross polytheisms of their neighbours, into which they were so prone to fall. Or again, judging from the first four thousand years of human history, how utterly improbable an event was it that the Jewish nation, when it had lost all independence and even a ruler of its own—when it had become a mere province of the Roman empire—should become the centre of a movement which should revolutionize civilized society, and give birth to One who in less than three centuries should be recognised and worshipped as a *Divine* being by the entire Roman world, and then by degrees win the adoration and obedience of half the human race, as Christ, the son of Abraham, has done at this day. How very easily all this might not have been as it has been,—nay, how *exceedingly* improbable that the fact should have been what it is, and thus have fulfilled the ancient prediction.

Look again at the case of Ishmael's seed. How perfectly natural it would have been that they should have shared the fate of all other nations, and been subjugated by the four great empires which subdued all else, in succession. How easily it might have happened that they should have remained always what they were for ages, and what they have long since become again—utterly uninfluential in the world's history. What strange and unlikely episodes those wonderful Saracenic conquests, and that widespread Saracenic empire, those centuries in which Ishmael became indeed "a great nation"!

And it must be noted that none of these great events could have been brought about by any human *intention* to fulfil the Abrahamic programme. Even supposing the Jews had set their hearts on its fulfilment, and been as anxious as they were careless about it and even opposed to it (as witness their indignant refusal to believe in the call of the Gentiles), had they wished to bring all nations into their covenant with Jehovah, what could *they* have done? How could *they* have overthrown the pantheon of the Roman mythology, they who had just been themselves utterly overthrown by Roman power? It has been by no effort of the Jewish nation that Christ has become the acknowledged Saviour of the world and supreme King of humanity! As a nation they rejected and slew Him, and they have hated and spurned His name ever since.

As to the Gentiles who received Him, they most assuredly did not do so

because of any knowledge they had of the Abrahamic programme! They were for the most part in total ignorance both of it and of the Scriptures which contained it. These facts are so wide in their scope, so ancient in their duration, so enduring in their character, that there is no accounting for them at all by any theory save the true one, that He who foresaw the end from the beginning was the author of that section of the programme of the world's history given to Abraham.

To conclude; we challenge the infidel to blot out, if he can, the name of ABRAHAM, with the promise and the prophecy it contains, from the pages of the Pentateuch and of the entire Bible. If he cannot do that, we challenge him to blot out the four thousand years of Jewish, Arabian, and Gentile history which have fulfilled that prophecy, and made good that promise. If he can do neither the one nor the other –if it be beyond his power either to obliterate the name or to alter the history–let him confess with all honesty that the history was anticipated, that what has happened was foreseen and foretold; or, in other words, that there is here *an unquestionable miracle of foreknowledge*, and a proof of inspiration so conclusive that it cannot be gainsaid.

“I AM JEHOVAH: THAT IS MY NAME: AND MY GLORY WILL I NOT GIVE TO ANOTHER, NEITHER MY PRAISE TO GRAVEN IMAGES. BEHOLD, THE FORMER THINGS ARE COME TO PASS, AND NEW THINGS DO I DECLARE BEFORE THEY SPRING FORTH I TELL YOU OR THEM” (Isa. xlii. 8, 9). “KNOWN UNTO GOD ARE ALL HIS WORKS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD” (Acts xv. 18).

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