

be exceedingly great. Whereupon Abraham said, O sovereign Lord, what will you give me, seeing I die childless, and the son of Masek my servant, this Damascus Eliezer? Then Abraham said, Seeing you have not given me seed, this servant of mine is to be my heir.—And immediately there came a voice of the Lord to him saying, He shall not be your heir, but one who shall spring from you shall be your heir. Then he led him out and said to him, Look up now to the heaven, and count the stars if you can number them. Then he said, So shall your seed be. And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." So reads Genesis, xv. in the Septuagint, which is not materially different from the common version.

Here we find the reason why Abraham became the father of all who believe. The promise made to him and believed so fully by him, is this—"So shall your seed be"—as innumerable as the stars of heaven. This faith in this promise was accounted to him for righteousness.—So says Moses, and so says Paul; but so does not say John Calvin nor John Wesley. One says, his system says that it was Abraham's faith in a future Messiah which was accounted to him for righteousness; and the other says it was Abraham's obedience which made him righteous. I am not to argue the case with them. We shall let their ashes rest in peace. But as for this Moses and Paul, they teach us to consider that Abraham was distinguished, honoured, and accounted righteous, through believing that his seed should be as numerous as the stars of the firmament. Some Necedemus methinks, says, How can this be? Let us endeavour to find out this mystery.

There was nothing more extraordinary ever believed by any man, than that he, an old man, ninety-nine years old, and his wife ninety, who had in her youth, and through all the years of parturition, been barren, should by this woman, become the father of many nations, and have a progeny as innumerable as the countless myriads of the host of heaven. This was contrary to nature. When Abraham considered his own body as good as dead to these matters, and when he looked at the poor, wrinkled, shrivelled, and drooping old Sarah, and thought that they two, old and faded as they were, should become the parents of immense nations, it transcended all the powers of reason to believe it upon any other premises than the omnipotence and inviolate truth and faithfulness of God. To these he gave glory, and rested assured that God would make good his promise. "Therefore," says the prince of commentators, Paul, "he staggered not at the promise of God by calling in question either his veracity or power, and was strong in faith, giving all the glory to God's power and truth. Therefore it was accounted to him (i. e. his belief in this promise) for righteousness." It brought him into a state of favor and acceptance with God. This faith was so unprecedented, so new, so simple, so strong, as to exalt Abraham to become not only the natural progenitor of nations, but also the covenant, instituted, or spiritual father of all believers in all ages and nations. His faith, then, becomes the model of "saving faith," or of that faith which terminates in the salvation of the whole man.—For he that believes that God raised up the crucified, dead, and buried