

Abraham

Abraham and his forefathers belonged to a very peculiar type of a mighty race. They led a pastoral life. They were not really natives of Dr, in Chaldea, but they had removed there. They exercised special authority and jurisdiction. Here and there, they took possession of certain regions where good pasturage was found. They marked off the boundaries, erected an altar of stones, and the land thus enclosed became their property. Something happened to Abraham in his early childhood similar to that which occurred to



the child Moses by which his nurse saved his life. The ruler took measures accordingly, on which account Abraham's mother concealed herself before his birth in the same cave in which Seth had been hidden by Eve. There Abraham was born, and there secretly reared by his nurse, Maraha. She passed for a poor slave who worked in the wilderness. Her hut was near this cave, which was named after her the She was, after her death and in accordance with her own request, buried there by Abraham.

Abraham was a remarkably large child. When, on account of his unusual size, he was of an age to pass for a child born before the prophecy alluded to, his parents took him home. But his precocious wisdom exposed him to danger, so the nurse fled with him, and again concealed him a long time in the same cave. Many children of his age were massacred at that time. Abraham tenderly loved Maraha, his nurse. In after years, in all his peregrinations he took her with him on a camel. She also dwelt with him at Socoth. She died at the age of one hundred years. Abraham hewed out a tomb for her in the white stone which, like a hill, enclosed the cave in which he was born. The cave became a place of devotion, especially for mothers. Throughout the whole of this history, we discover a mysterious prefiguring of the early persecutions which Mary with the Child Jesus had to endure. It was, too, in this same cave that they hid from Herod's soldiers when they sought the Child.

The father of Abraham received great graces from Heaven, and understood many mysteries. His race possessed the gift of discovering gold in the earth, and he fabricated out of it little idols similar to those that Rachel purloined from Laban. Dr is a place in the north of Chaldea. I perceived in many parts of this region, on mountains and plains, white flames arising, as if the ground

were on fire. I know not whether this fire was spontaneous or kindled by man.

Abraham was a great astronomer. He understood the properties of things, and the influence of the stars upon birth. He saw all kinds of things in the stars, but he turned all to God. He followed God in all things and served Him alone. He imparted his knowledge to others in Chaldea, but he traced all back to God.

I saw that in a vision he received from God the order to depart from his own country. God showed him another land, and Abraham next morning, without asking any questions, led forth all his people and departed. I afterward saw him pitching his tent in a region of Palestine which seemed to me to lie around the place where Nazareth subsequently stood. Abraham himself erected here an oblong altar of stone with a tent over it. Once when kneeling before the altar, a light descended from Heaven upon him. An angel, a messenger from God, appeared, said something to him, and presented to him a shining, transparent gift. The angel spoke with Abraham, and the latter received the mysterious Blessing, the Holy Thing from Heaven; he opened his garment and laid it upon his breast. I was told that this was the Sacrament of the Old Testament. Abraham, as yet, knew not what it contained. It was hidden from him, as from us is concealed the substance of the Most Holy Sacrament. But it was given to him as a sacred thing, as a pledge of the promised posterity. The angel was exactly of the same kind as the one that announced to the Blessed Virgin the conception of the Messiah. He was also as gentle and tranquil as Gabriel in the execution of his commission, not so hasty and rapid as I see other angels under similar circumstances. I think Abraham always carried the mysterious gift about with him. The angel spoke to him of Melchisedech who was to celebrate before him the sacrifice which, after the coming of the Messiah, would be accomplished, and which should be continued forever.

Abraham then took from a casket five large bones which he laid upon the altar in the form of a cross. A light burned before it, and he offered sacrifice.

The fire burned like a star, the center white and the rays red.

I also saw Abraham with Sara in Egypt. He went thither in obedience to a command from God; first, on account of the famine; and, secondly, to take possession of a treasure which had been carried there by one of Sara's relatives. The treasure consisted of triangular pieces of gold strung together to form a genealogical table of the children of Noe, and especially of Sem down to Abraham's own time. It had been taken into Egypt by a daughter of Sara's maternal aunt, who had gone thither with a pastoral tribe, some of Job's lateral descendants, who afterward degenerated into a wild state. She

had there hired herself as a servant. She had stolen that treasure as later on Rachel did the gods of Laban. The genealogical table was made like the scales of a balance hang-ing on cords. The latter consisted of small triangular pieces strung together, and from them depended single collateral strings. On the gold pieces were figures and letters denoting Noe's, and especially Sem's descendants. When the cords were let down, the various pieces all lay together in the dish. I heard, but I have forgotten, the number of shekels (so the sum is called) to which the whole amounted. This family register had fallen into the hands of Pharao and the priests. They made on it various reckonings connected with their own unending chronological calculations, but they never rightly understood it.

When Pharao was visited by heavy afflictions he consulted with his idolatrous priests, and granted to Abraham all he demanded.

Upon Abraham's return to Palestine, I saw Lot by him in a tent. Abraham was pointing all around with his hand. In his bearing there was something of the deportment of the Three Kings. He wore a long white, woolen garment with sleeves; a plaited white girdle with tassels; and a sort of cowl hanging down the back. On his head was a small cap, and upon his breast a shield in the shape of a heart made of metal or precious stones. His beard was long. I have no words to say how kind and generous Abraham was. If he had anything that pleased another, especially if it were cattle, he offered it to him at once, for he was a declared enemy to envy and covetousness. Lot's clothing was almost like that of Abraham, but he was not so tall, nor so noble-looking. He was indeed, good, but at the same time a little covetous. I often saw the servants of the two disputing, and I saw Lot separating from Abraham. But as he went, I saw him enveloped in fog. Over Abraham, I saw light. I saw him take down his tents and wander about. He built an altar of field stones, and raised a tent over it. The people of that time were skillful in building out of rough stones, and the master with the servant put his hand to the work. The altar just mentioned was in the region of Hebron, the subsequent dwelling place of Zacharias, the father of the Baptist. The region to which Lot removed was very good, as was all this part of the country toward the Jordan. I saw the cities around Lot's dwelling place plundered, and Lot himself with all his goods and chattels carried off. I saw a fugitive bear the news to Abraham, who immediately invoked the aid of Heaven. Then gathering his servants together, he surprised the enemy and freed his brother. The latter thanked him gratefully, and was full of regret for having separated from him. The enemy and the warriors in general, especially the giants, were not clothed like Abraham's followers. Their garments were narrower and shorter; their dress was in many pieces, covered with buttons, stars, and other ornaments.

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The giants were extraordinarily large people. They brutally and insolently carried off all they could lay their hands upon, but they were often obliged to yield their booty to others who plundered them in turn.