

true knowledge and worship of God, but even the observance of the law of nature was almost banished from among them; and instead of God, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the elements, the wicked spirits who deluded them, nay even brute beasts and senseless idols, in which they imagined a divinity to reside, became the object of their adoration; the true religion only remaining with some few holy persons, chiefly of the race of Sem, and of the branch of Heber.

§ 6. *Of the Patriarch Abraham, and of Melchisedech.*

When idolary had begun to corrupt the family of Heber, God was pleased to order Abraham, a man of that family, the tenth in a lineal descent from Noah, to depart from his country and kindred in Mesopotamia, and to come into the land of Chanaan, which he promised to give to his seed, and that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*; as the Saviour of the world should be born of his posterity. Abraham, walking always in the presence of God, and ever attentive to please him and worship him in every place, readily obeyed the call. God, pleased with his faith and obedience, protected him on all occasions, showered down his blessings upon him, and entered into a solemn covenant with him, that from him should come a numerous people, who should possess the promised land; and that from his seed, blessing and grace should be diffused over the whole earth: and for a mark of his covenant, he enjoined him and his posterity the ceremony of circumcision. He also, by a miracle, gave him a son, when he was an hundred years old, of Sarah his wife, (who had been always barren, and was then past the age of child-bearing,) whom he named *Isaac*; and on whom he declared all the promises should be entailed, which