

a ram of three years old, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon." The former were all severed, and the birds laid on entire. After the sun set, "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp," or fire from heaven fell upon these carcasses and consumed them. To such offerings as these promises or covenants were usually appended. Thus after Noah had offered a similar sacrifice, God promised a continuation of the seasons without the intervention of a flood—and here to Abraham the promises concerning Canaan were confirmed.

Jacob, in confirmation of his vow, Gen. xxxv. 14, poured oil upon the stone which he had set up. And on another occasion "he set up a pillar in the place where God talked with him, even a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon." Such were the positive acts of patriarchal worship of the sacrificial kind—sin-offerings, thank-offerings, vow or dedication-offerings.

Some sorts of ablutions or washings were also practised among the patriarchs before the Mosaic economy. Jacob, in order to prepare his family to offer sacrifice with him upon the altar, erected at Bethel, commands them to "change their garments" and "be clean," which, as the most learned critics have proved, is equivalent to "wash yourselves." All sorts of ancient writers, sacred and profane, viewed the deluge as a purification, or washing, or immersion of the earth. Philo the Jew, and Plato the Greek philosopher, give credit to this idea. It was so referred to by the Apostle Peter. And it is not improbable but the ablutions of the pagan world originated from this view of the deluge—sanctioned by the practice of the patriarchs.

It would appear also that the *proseuchæ* of which we read in the New Testament, or places of prayer built on hills or by brooks of water, in retired situations, may be traced back as far as the time of Abraham. (Gen. xxi. 35.) And Abraham planted a grove (or tree) in Beersheba, and there (or under it) he called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." From this custom unquestionably arose the corruptions of the pagan world in consecrating groves and high places to their gods. Such were the religious institutions, and such the venerable customs of the holy men of the Patriarchal Age.

In forming a correct view of the religious character of the ancient nations, it is necessary here to inquire how far the inhabitants of Persia, Assyria, Arabia, Canaan and Egypt, were affected or influenced by the religious institutions of this period: for these were the first nations whose institutions gave a character to all the nations of the world.

Abraham was the son of Shem by Arphaxad. The Persians were the descendants of Shem by Elam. The common parentage of Abraham and the Persians laid a foundation for some similarity in their religion. Abraham's ancestors dwelt in Chaldea, and at the time that God signalized Abraham, the Chaldeans began to apostatize from the service of the true God. Hence the expulsion of Abraham from among them. But Dr. Hyde and the most learned antiquarians presented documentary proof that the Persians retained the true history of the Creation and the Antediluvian Age; and so attached were the Persians to the religion of Abraham, that the sacred book which contained their re-