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Christian Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham

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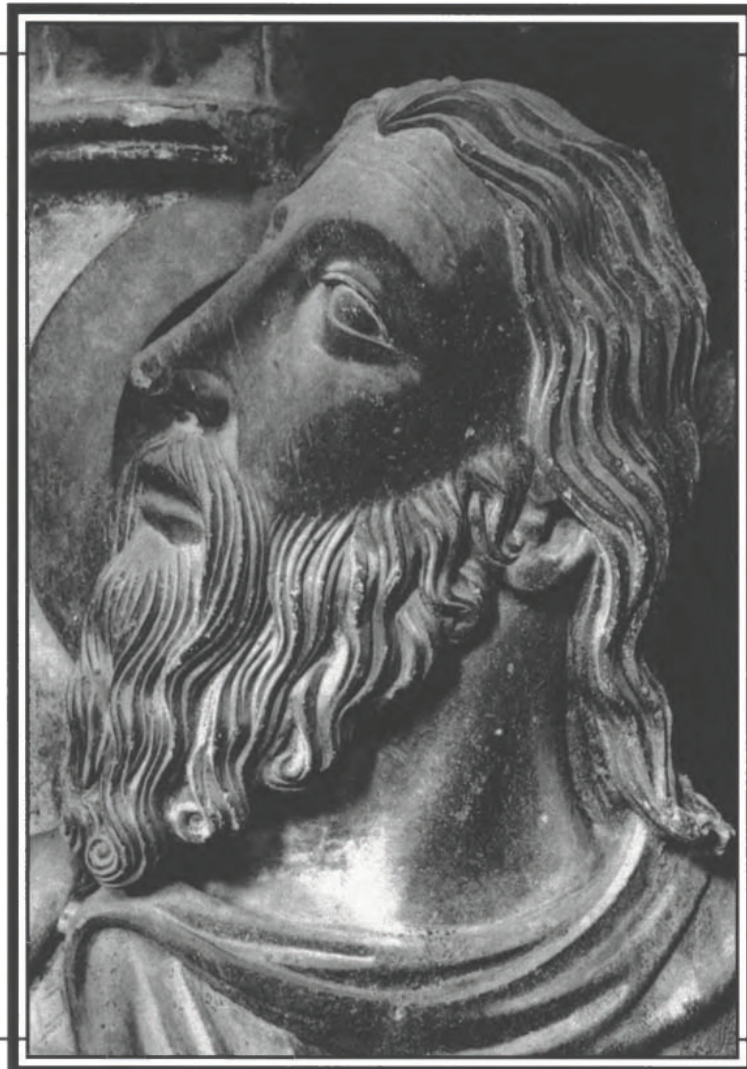
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CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 3



AN EXTRACT FROM THE CLEMENTINE RECOGNITIONS

Traditionally, the *Clementine Recognitions* was attributed to Clement of Rome (late first century), although he probably didn't author it. The date of the text is uncertain, but must predate Origen's quotation of a passage in A.D. 231. Originally written in Greek, the entire work has come down to us only in a Latin translation by Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 410), who was notorious for adding, deleting, and altering passages that disagreed with his dogmatic views. Large portions of the text also exist in Syriac, a drastically revised version exists in Greek, and some Arabic fragments have also come to light. The first English translation, by Thomas Smith, was published in Edinburgh in 1886; we use it here: *Recognitions of Clement*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1886; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:86.

Chapter 32—Abraham

In the twenty-first generation there was a certain wise man of the race of those who were expelled, of the family of Noah's eldest son, by name Abraham, from whom our Hebrew nation is derived. When the whole world was again overspread with errors, and when for the hideousness of its crimes destruction was ready for it, this time not by water, but fire, and when already the scourge was hanging over the whole earth, beginning with Sodom, this man, by reason of his friendship with God, who was well pleased with him, obtained from God that the whole world should not equally perish. From the first this same man, being an astrologer,¹ was able, from the account and order of the stars, to recognise the Creator,² while all others were in error, and understood that all things are regulated by His providence. Whence also an angel, standing by him in a vision, instructed him more fully concerning those things which he was beginning to perceive. He

1. In the ancient world, astrology was not distinguished from astronomy.

2. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

showed him also what belonged to his race and posterity, and promised him that those districts should be restored rather than given to them.

Chapter 33—Abraham: His Posterity

Therefore Abraham, when he was desirous to learn the causes of things, and was intently pondering upon what had been told him, the true Prophet³ appeared to him, who alone knows the hearts and purpose of men, and disclosed to him all things which he desired. He taught him the knowledge of the Divinity;⁴ intimated the origin of the world,⁵ and likewise its end; showed him the immortality of the soul,⁶ and the manner of life which was pleasing to God; declared also the resurrection of the dead, the future judgment, the reward of the good, the punishment of the evil,—all to be regulated by righteous judgment: and having given him all this information plainly and sufficiently, He departed again to the invisible abodes. But while Abraham was still in ignorance, as we said to you before, two sons were born to him, of whom the one was called Ismael, and the other Heliesdros.⁷ From the one are descended the barbarous nations, from the other the people of the Persians, some of whom have adopted the manner of living and the institutions of their neighbours, the Brachmans. Others settled in Arabia, of whose posterity some also have spread into Egypt. From them some of the Indians and of the Egyptians have learned to be circumcised, and to be of purer observance than others, although in process of time most of them have turned to impiety what was the proof and sign of purity.

3. In Christian tradition, this refers to Jesus Christ; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22–23; see also 1 Nephi 22:21; 3 Nephi 20:23; Joseph Smith—History 1:40.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

5. Cf. Abraham 3:11–12; 4–5.

6. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

7. Biblical Eliezer, normally considered a servant of Abraham.

AN EXTRACT FROM
GREGORY OF NYSSA

Brother to Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa was born A.D. 335 or 336 in Cappadocia (in modern Turkey). He authored more than thirty works that have been preserved through the centuries. The extract that follows is from his *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*. Written in Greek, the work's intent is to refute Eunomius's view of God the Father. Eunomius was an Arian who had attacked Basil in his writings. Translated by William Moore and Henry A. Wilson, the extract below is from the first English version, published in 1893: Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., ed. Philip Schaf and Henry Wace (1893; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:259.

Therefore also the Lord of all creation, as though He were a discovery of Abraham, is called specially the God of Abraham. Yet what saith the Scripture respecting him? That he went out not knowing whither he went, no, nor even being capable of learning the name of Him whom he loved, yet in no wise impatient or ashamed on account of such ignorance.

This, then, was the meaning of his safe guidance on the way to what he sought¹—that he was not blindly led by any of the means ready to hand for his instruction in the things of God, and that his mind, unimpeded by any object of sense, was never hindered from its journeying in quest of what lies beyond all that is known, but having gone by reasoning far beyond the wisdom of his countrymen, (I mean the philosophy of the Chaldees, limited as it was to the things which do appear,) and soaring above the things which are cognizable by sense, from the beauty of the objects of contemplation, and the harmony of the heavenly wonders, he desired to behold the archetype of all beauty.² And so, too, all the other things which in the course of his reasoning he was led to apprehend as he advanced, whether the power of God, or His goodness, or His being without beginning, or His infinity, or whatever else is conceivable in respect to the divine nature, using them all as supplies and appliances for his onward journey, ever making one discovery a stepping-stone to another, ever reaching forth unto those things which were before, and setting in his heart, as saith the Prophet, each fair stage of his advance, and passing by all knowledge acquired by his own ability as falling short of that which he was in quest, when he

1. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

2. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

had gone beyond every conjecture respecting the divine nature which is suggested by any name amongst all our conceptions of God, having purged his reason of all such fancies, and arrived at a faith unalloyed and free from all prejudice, he made this a sure and manifest token of the knowledge of God, viz. the belief that He is greater and more sublime than any token by which He may be known.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE CAVE OF TREASURES

The *Book of the Cave of Treasures* is an anonymous Syriac work, the oldest form of which is thought to have been composed in the fourth century A.D. In its present form, however, it can be no older than the sixth century. It shares a common source with other traditions included in this collection: the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* and the *Book of the Rolls* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. It was first translated into German in 1883. Here, we employ the English text from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1927), 135–44, 148–49, 153. The text retains the folio (page) and column numbering of the original manuscript; we have broken the text into paragraphs by folio and column. Further, most of Budge’s bracketed notes have been deleted, and we have removed the diacritics.

Folio 22b.1. And Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug. And in the days of Reu, in his one hundred

Folio 22b.2. and thirtieth year, Nimrod, the mighty man, the first king on the earth, reigned, and he reigned sixty-nine years; and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. This Nimrod saw the figure of a crown in the heavens, and he called Sisan, the weaver, who wore [*sic*] a crown like unto it, and he set it on his head. And because of this men used to say that the crown came down to him from heaven. . . .

And in the days of Reu the Mesraye,¹ who are the Egyptians, appointed their first king; his name was Puntos,² and he reigned over them sixty-eight years.

Folio 23a.1. And Reu died, being two hundred and thirty-nine years old, and Serug his son, and Nahor and Tarah (Terah) buried him in Aor’in,³ the city which he built after his own name.

And Serug lived thirty years and begot Nahor, and all the days of his life were two hundred and thirty years. And in the days of Serug the worship of idols entered the world. And in his days the children of men began to make themselves graven images,

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1. Cf. the Hebrew name for Egypt, Miṣraïm, spelled Mizraim in the KJV (Genesis 10:6, 13; 1 Chronicles 1:8, 11).
 2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. The name Puntos seems to be taken from the country *Pwnt*, an occasional trading partner with Egypt that seems to have been located in Somalia or Eritrea. It may also reflect the name Phut in Genesis 10:6.
 3. Biblical Ur.

and it was at this time that the introduction of idols into the world took place.⁴ For the children of men were scattered all over the earth, and they had neither teachers nor law-givers, and no one to show them

Folio 23a.2. the way of truth wherein they should walk, and for this reason they became confused and fell into error. Some of them through their error adored the heavens, and some of them worshipped the sun, and moon and stars, and some of them the earth, and wild beasts, and birds, and creeping things, and trees, and stones,⁵ and the creatures of the sea, and the waters, and the winds. Now Satan had blinded their eyes so that they might walk in the darkness of error, because they had no hope of a resurrection. For when one of them died they used to make an image of him, and set it up upon his grave, so that the remembrance [of his appearance] might not pass from before their eyes. And error having been sown broadcast in all the earth, the land became filled with idols in the form of men and women. And then Serug died, being two hundred and thirty years old, and Nahor, and Tarah,

Folio 23b.1. and Abraham his sons, buried him in Sarghin, the city which he built after his own name.

And Nahor was twenty-nine years old when he begot Terah. And in the days of Nahor, in the seventieth year of his life, when God looked upon the children of men, and saw that they were worshipping idols, a great earthquake took place, and all their houses were overturned and fell down;⁶ but the people did not understand within themselves, and they added to their wickedness. And Nahor died when he was one hundred and forty-seven years old, and Terah his son and Abraham buried him. . . .

And Terah was seventy-five years old when he begat Abraham. And in the days of Terah, in his ninetieth year, sorcery appeared on the earth in the city of Aor [Ur], which Horon, the son of 'Abhar, built. Now, there was in the city a certain man who was very rich, and he died at that time. And his son made an image of him in gold,

Folio 23b.2. and set it up upon his grave, and he appointed there a young man to keep guard over it. And Satan went and took up his abode in that image, and he spake to that youth (*i.e.* the son of the rich man) after the manner of his father. And thieves went into [his house], and took everything that the youth possessed, and he went out to the tomb of his father weeping. And Satan spake unto him, saying, "Weep not in my presence, but go and fetch thy little son, and slay him here as a sacrifice to me, and forthwith everything which thou hast lost shall be returned to me here." And straightway the youth did as Satan told him, and he slew his son, and bathed in his blood. And Satan went forth immediately from that image [of gold], and entered into the youth, and taught him sorcery, and enchantments, and divination, and the lore of the Chaldeans, and [how to tell] fortunes, and [how to forecast] events, and [how to foretell] destinies. And behold, from that time the children of men began to sacrifice their sons to devils and to worship idols, for the devils entered into the images, and took up their abodes therein.⁷

4. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

And in the one hundredth year of the life of Nahor, when God saw that the children of men were sacrificing their sons to devils,

Folio 24a.1. and worshipping idols, He opened the storehouses of the wind, and the gate of the whirlwind, and a blast of wind went forth in all the earth. And it uprooted the images, and the places where offerings were made to devils, and it swept together the idols, and the images, and the pillared buildings in a heap, and piled up great mounds [of earth] over them; [and they are there] to this day.⁸ Now to this blast of wind learned men have given the name of "Wind-Flood"; but certain who have erred have said, "These mounds existed [already] in the days of the Flood [of waters]." Now those who have said these things have erred greatly from the truth; for before the Flood [of waters] there were no idols in the earth, and it was not because of idols that the Flood came, but because of the fornication of the daughters of Cain. And, moreover, at that time there were no men on this earth, which was a waste and a desert. And our fathers were cast forth in days of old, as it were, into exile, because they were not worthy to be

Folio 24a.2. neighbours of Paradise. And through the Ark they were driven forth to the mountains of Kardo, and from there they were scattered about throughout all the earth. For these mounds came into being because of idols, and in them are buried all the idols of that time, and all the devils also who dwell in them are in these mounds, and there is no mound which hath not devils in it.

And in the days of Nimrod, the mighty man (or giant), a fire appeared which ascended from the earth, and Nimrod went down, and looked at it, and worshipped it, and he established priests to minister there, and to cast incense into it. From that day the Persians began to worship fire, [and they do so] to this day.⁹

And Sisan, the king, found a spring of water in Droghin, and he made a white horse and set it over it, and those who bathed in the water used to worship the horse.

Folio 24b.1. And from that time the Persians began to worship that (*sic*) horse.

And Nimrod went to Yokdora of Nodh, and when he arrived at the Lake (or Sea) of Atlas, he found there Yonton, the son of Noah. [A marginal note in the Syriac MS. adds, "Noah begot this Yonton after the Flood, and he honoured him in many things, and sent him to the east to dwell there."] And Nimrod went down and bathed in the Lake, and he came to Yonton and did homage unto him. And Yonton said, "Thou art a king; doest thou homage unto me?" And Nimrod said unto him, "It is because of thee that I have come down here"; and he remained with him for three years. And Yonton taught Nimrod wisdom, and the art of revelation (divining?), and he said unto him, "Come not back again to me."¹⁰

And when Nimrod went up from the east, and began to practise the art of divining, very many men marvelled at him. And when Idhashir (Ardeshir?), the priest who ministered to the fire that ascended from the earth, saw that Nimrod was practising these exalted courses, he entreated the devil, who appeared in connection with that fire, to teach him

8. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

9. The ancient Persians, followers of Zoroaster, maintained a sacred fire. The practice continues today among those who still follow Zoroaster, the Parsis (meaning "Persians") of India.

10. This story seems to be based on the Gilgamesh Epic, tablets X–XI.

Folio 24b.2. the wisdom of Nimrod. And as the devils were in the habit of destroying those who came nigh unto them by sin, the devil said unto the priest, "A man cannot become a priest and a Magian until he hath known carnally his mother, and his daughter, and his sister." And Idhashir the priest did this, and from that time the priests, and the Magians, and the Persians take their mothers, and their sisters, and their daughters [to wife]. And this Idhashir, the Magian, was the first to begin to study the Signs of the Zodiac, and [omens concerning] luck, and fate, and happenings, and motions of the eyes and eyelids, as well as all the other arts of the learning of the Chaldees. Now, all this learning is the error of devils, and those who practise it shall receive, together with the devils, the doom of the Judgment. And because this art of divination, which was employed by Nimrod, was taught to him

Folio 25a.1. by Yonton, none of the orthodox doctors have suppressed it; nay, they have even practised it. Now the Persians call it "Gelyana" (*i.e.* "Revelation") and the Romans "Estromion" (*i.e.* "Astronomy"). But that [knowledge] which the Magians have, *viz.* astrology, is sorcery and the teaching of devils. . . .

And Terah, the father of Abraham, lived two hundred and fifty years, and he died, and Abraham and Lot buried him in Harran. And there God spoke unto Abraham, and said unto him, "Get thee forth from thy land, and from among thy people, and come to the land which I will show thee." And Abraham took his household, Sara his wife,

Folio 25a.2. and Lot, his brother's son, and he went up to the land of the Amoraye (Amorites); and he was seventy-five years old when he crossed the desert from the Euphrates. . . .

Folio 25b.1. And when Abraham was eighty-six years old Ishmael was born to him by Hagar, the Egyptian woman, whom Pharaoh had given to Sara as a handmaiden. Now Sara was the sister of Abraham on the father's side, because Terah took two women to wife. When Yawnu, the mother of Abraham died, Terah took to wife a woman whose name was "Naharyath" (or Shalmath, or Tona, or Tahdif), and of her Sara was born. It was because of this [fact] that Abraham said, "She is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother."¹¹

Folio 27a.1. And in the fiftieth year of [the life of] Reu, Nimrod went up and built Nisibis, and Edessa, and Harran, which is Edessa. And Harranith, the wife of Dasan, the priest of the mountain, surrounded it with a wall, and the people of Harran made a statue of her and worshipped her. And Baltin, who was given to Tamuza (Tammuz)¹²—now because B'elshemin loved her, Tammuz fled before him—set fire to Harran and burned it.

11. Citing Genesis 20:12.

12. Sumerian Dumuzi.

AN EXTRACT FROM
JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

John Chrysostom (A.D. 347–407) was one of the most prolific writers among the early church fathers. The extract that follows is from his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*. This, the first English translation, by J. Walker, J. Sheppard, and H. Browne, was published in 1851. The version we use here was revised by George B. Stevens and republished in John Chrysostom, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st ser., ed. Philip Schaf (1889; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 11:97.

Homily 15

Also, that these were figures, and (so was) both the leaving his country at God's command—not against the law (for home and country is where God shall lead): "Then came he out," it says, "of the land of the Chaldeans":¹ —and that if one look closely into the matter, the Jews are of Persian origin:² and that, without miracles, one must do as God bids, whatever hardships be the consequence; since the Patriarch left both the grave of his father and all that he had, in obedience to God's command. But if Abraham's father was not allowed to take part with him in the privilege of migrating to Palestine, because he was unworthy:³ much more shall the children (be excluded at last), for all that they may have gone a good distance on the way.

1. Cf. Genesis 12:4.

2. This, of course, is untrue, though it is to be noted that the Persians controlled Abraham's homeland from the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. and again during much of the Roman era. In Chrysostom's day, Persia was one of the main enemies of the Roman Empire.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:4–5; 2:5.

EXTRACTS FROM JEROME

Jerome (A.D. 345?–420) has left a substantial corpus of writings, including several commentaries on the Bible, although he is best known as the scholar who translated the Bible into the Latin version known as the Vulgate. His works have been extremely influential in Latin Christianity, and later Latin writers usually quoted verbatim his extracanonical Abraham traditions, which he explicitly identifies as coming from Jewish sources. The first selection comes from the Vulgate, in which the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a single book, and corresponds to Nehemiah 9:7–8 in our Bible. These translations were prepared by John Gee from the texts in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–1864). The parenthetical references after the passages are to the page numbers in the *Patrologia*.

2 Ezras 9:7–8 (=KJV Neh. 9:7–8)

Thou thyself, O Lord God, who chose Abraham, and led him from the fire of the Chaldeans,¹ and made his name Abraham, and found his heart faithful before thee, who drove out every evil by him, so that thou mightest give him the land of the Canaanite, Hittite, and Amorite, and Pherezite, and Jebusite, and Gergesite, so that thou mightest give to his seed, and accomplish thy word, which is just. (*PL*, 28:1496)

Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim

[Commenting on Genesis 11:28:]

“And Aran² died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in the region of the Chaldeans.”³ Instead of that which we say, “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has “in Ur Chesdim” (בְּאֹרֶךְ כְּשָׁדִים), that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition⁴ from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham

1. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

2. Biblical Haran.

3. Following the Vulgate of Genesis 11:29.

4. The editor of the Latin text includes this note here: “This story is told in *Pirke R. Eliezer* chapter 26, which is said to be the second of the ten trials of Abraham, which follows ten years in prison; which are in another order in *Pirke R. Nathan*, and *R. Eliezer the German* in *Mahase Aboth* chapter 2, and many others from Hebrew, a nation born composing stories. Less true is that related by R. Maimonides, who on the authority of R. Abrabanel, who is said to have related the trial of Abraham to Maimonides one at a time, observed this: . . . Behold, the Rabbi does not mention this deliverance

was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,⁵ and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.⁶ Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aram died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently⁷ did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.⁸ But later the Lord said to Abraham: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”⁹ (PL, 23:1005)

[Commenting on Genesis 12:4:]

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”¹⁰ The question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara,¹¹ the father of Abraham, when he had heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Charra¹² at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departed from Charra, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,¹³ was freed by the help of God;¹⁴ and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains

from the fiery furnace of the Chaldeans, among the other trials related because it is never mentioned in scripture. Furthermore Abraham plotted a revolt among the Chaldeans and Mesopotamians, that he preached there is one true God of all conditions, Josephus, a most trustworthy author, mentions in *Antiquities* 1.7. From which Eustathius of Antioch and Georgius Syncellus, and others of the Greeks exaggerate, that Abraham himself burned down the idols of his father in the house, and Aram his brother burned trying to put out the fire. See the following note.” Most of these other texts are included in this collection.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
6. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
7. The editor of the Latin text includes the following note here: “Furthermore, R. Solomon Jarki refers to a commentary on this place in Genesis from an ancient Midrash: Thara set fire to Abraham, his son, in the presence of Nemrod, because he smashed his idols, and the punishment for this act was to be thrown into a furnace of fire. Therefore, Aram, the brother of Abraham, said to him, if Abraham survives, I will be his; if Nemrod is right, I will adhere to him. God, therefore having saved Abraham from danger, when Aram was asked on which side he stood, he answered ‘Abraham’s,’ for which reason he was thrown in the furnace and consumed in the fire.”
8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.
9. Citing Genesis 15:7.
10. Citing Genesis 12:4.
11. Biblical Terah.
12. Biblical Haran.
13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
14. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran,¹⁵ where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this explanation, he desires another solution, and he justly rejects that which we have spoken. (*PL*, 23:1006)

Commentarium in Isaiam

[Commenting on Isaiah 65:8:]

Enoch also alone among many multitudes of sinners was taken to God.¹⁶ And the flood could not obliterate Noah and his children just because all flesh declined to serve the Lord.¹⁷ But also Abraham was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans by the integrity of his faith.¹⁸ (*PL*, 24:636)

15. The change of spelling from Charra to Charran occurs in the Latin text.

16. See Genesis 5.

17. See Genesis 7.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

EXTRACTS FROM EPIPHANIUS

After a long career as a monk in Palestine, Epiphanius (d. A.D. 403) became bishop of Salamis on the isle of Cyprus. Epiphanius studied (Greek) classics in Egypt and knew Coptic and Hebrew as well as Greek and his native Syriac. He was friends with both Jerome and Basil the Great. (Some of the writings of Jerome and of Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, are included in this collection.) The text that follows is taken from his *Panarion*, book 1, chapter 1, written during 374–76. This work is a heresiology, attacking the heresies of his and previous days. Ecclesiastical scholars took notice of the work in the sixteenth century, resulting in Latin translations. Karl Holl published a critical edition of the Greek text beginning in 1915. All eleven extant manuscripts come from one poor copy; none of the manuscripts is complete. The English translation is from Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1–46)* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 8, 17. The angle brackets (<>) denote restorations by Karl Holl to the Greek text. The numbering of Epiphanius starts over with each new heresy discussed.

Anacephalaeosis 1

3.1. <3.> A third [sect]¹ is Hellenism. This began in Serug's time with idolatry and the submission to it by the people of the era²—each in accordance with some superstition—for the sake of a higher civilization and fixed customs and laws.

3.2. However, when idols were first instituted the various peoples made gods for <the leaders> whose rule they <were> then accepting, originally by painting pictures and portraying the autocrats or sorcerers they had always honored, or persons who had done something that appeared memorable in their lifetimes, <and stood out> for their courage and physical strength.

3.3. But then, from the time of Terah the father of Abraham, they also introduced the imposture of idolatry by way of the statuary.³ They honored their forefathers, and those who had died before them, with images, at first with the potter's art, then by depicting them with every technique—builders by carving stone, silversmiths and goldsmiths by making them with their media, and so with the woodcarvers and the rest.⁴

1. Our addition.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

Proem 2

<3. *Hellenism*>

3.3. Every transgression in the world was disseminated at this time, for Nimrod was an originator of wrong teaching, astrology and magic. . . .

3.4. Peleg was the father of Reu, and Reu was the father of Serug, which means “provocation”; and, as I was taught, idolatry and Hellenism began among men with him. . . .⁵

3.5. Nahor was born as a son to Serug and was the father of Terah. Image-making with clay and pottery began at this point,⁶ with the craft of this person, Terah. . . .⁷

3.6. And no one of the previous generations ever died before his father; fathers died before their children and left their sons to succeed them. (Never mind Abel—he did not die a natural death.)

3.7. But since Terah had set up a rival to God by making one with his own sculpture he was rightly repaid with the equivalent and provoked to jealousy himself, through his own son.

3.8. Hence sacred scripture remarked with astonishment, “And Haran died before his father, Terah, in the land of his nativity.”⁸

<4. *Judaism*>

4.1.1. And God made choice of Abraham, . . .

4.1.2. For he had lived at home honoring his father.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

AN EXTRACT FROM
PHILASTER OF BRESCIA

Philaster (d. A.D. 397), bishop of Brescia (in modern Italy), wrote a work against heretics. Largely based on the work of Irenaeus and his contemporary Epiphanius (whose work is previously quoted in this volume), Philaster's book, *De haeresibus*, was a major source for Augustine's work of the same name. In chapter 147 of his work, he cites Abraham as one of a number of examples of dealing with idolatry, which, for Philaster, is the same as dealing with heresy. The Latin text first appeared in print as early as 1528 in Hamburg. John Gee translated the text found in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 12:1281, for this publication.

[Commenting on how Exodus 22:28, "Thou shalt not revile the gods," does not apply to persecuting idolatry or heretics:]

For as Moses said: "Ye shall destroy their temples; ye shall break the idols,"¹ and most blessed Abraham who smashed the idols² was justified; and Gideon, who burned the idols at night and smashed them,³ deserved to obtain such virtue from God, so that with a few he conquered uncountable foes, and all were righteous, and Elijah,⁴ and others likewise.

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1. Citing Exodus 34:13, Vulgate.
 2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.
 3. See Judges 6:25–29.
 4. See 1 Kings 18:40.

EXTRACTS FROM AUGUSTINE

Following his conversion from Manichaeism to Christianity, Augustine (A.D. 354–430) became bishop of Hippo, in North Africa (Tunisia). The following extracts are from *The City of God*, which he wrote to defend Christianity to the heathens after the sack of Rome (written 413–26). The first English translation of this work was published in 1620. The translation below is from Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st ser., ed. Philip Schaf (1887; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:203, 318–320. The selection at the end of this extract, from Augustine’s *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 7, was translated by John Gee from *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 34:553.

Book 10

32. The faithful Abraham received the divine assurance, “In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.”¹ He, indeed, was by birth a Chaldæan; but, that he might receive these great promises, and that there might be propagated from him a seed “disposed by angels in the hand of a Mediator,”² in whom this universal way, thrown open to all nations for the deliverance of the soul, might be found, he was ordered to leave his country, and kindred, and father’s house. Then was he himself, first of all, delivered from the Chaldæan superstitions, and by his obedience worshipped the one true God, whose promises he faithfully trusted.³

Book 16

12. Let us now survey the progress of the city of God from the era of the patriarch Abraham,⁴ from whose time it begins to be more conspicuous, and the divine promises which are now fulfilled in Christ are more fully revealed.

We learn, then, from the intimations of holy Scripture, that Abraham was born in the country of the Chaldeans, a land belonging to the Assyrian empire.⁵ Now, even at that

1. Citing Genesis 22:18.

2. Citing Galatians 3:19.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

4. Cf. Hebrews 11:8–10.

5. This statement is anachronistic, since the Assyrian empire didn’t exist until a millennium after Abraham’s time. But it does suggest that Abraham was born in the territory that later became Assyria.

time impious superstitions were rife with the Chaldeans, as with other nations. The family of Terah, to which Abraham belonged, was the only one in which the worship of the true God survived, and the only one, we may suppose, in which the Hebrew language was preserved; although Joshua the son of Nun tells us that even this family served other gods in Mesopotamia.⁶

The other descendants of Heber gradually became absorbed in other races and other languages. And thus, as the single family of Noah was preserved through the deluge of water to renew the human race, so, in the deluge of superstition that flooded the whole world, there remained but one family of Terah in which the seed of God's city was preserved.⁷ And as, when Scripture has enumerated the generations prior to Noah, with their ages, and explained the cause of the flood before God began to speak to Noah about the building of the ark, it is said, "These are the generations of Noah;"⁸ so also now, after enumerating the generations from Shem, Noah's son, down to Abraham,⁹ it then signals an era by saying, "These are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah."¹⁰ This Iscah is supposed to be the same as Sarah, Abraham's wife.

13. Next it is related how Terah with his family left the region of the Chaldeans and came into Mesopotamia, and dwelt in Haran. But nothing is said about one of his sons called Nahor, as if he had not taken him along with him. For the narrative runs thus: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and led them forth out of the region of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; and he came into Haran, and dwelt there."¹¹

Nahor and Milcah his wife are nowhere named here. But afterwards, when Abraham sent his servant to take a wife for his son Isaac, we find it thus written: "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his lord, and of all the goods of his lord, with him; and arose, and went into Mesopotamia, into the city of Nahor."¹² This and other testimonies of this sacred history show that Nahor, Abraham's brother, had also left the region of the Chaldeans, and fixed his abode in Mesopotamia, where Abraham dwelt with his father. Why, then, did the Scripture not mention him, when Terah with his family went forth out of the Chaldean nation and dwelt in Haran, since it mentions that he took with him not only Abraham his son, but also Sarah his daughter-in-law, and Lot his grandson? The only reason we can think of is, that perhaps he had lapsed from the piety of his father and

6. Referring to Joshua 24:2. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:19.

8. Citing Genesis 6:9.

9. Referring to Genesis 11:10–26.

10. Citing Genesis 11:27–29.

11. Citing Genesis 11:31.

12. Citing Genesis 24:10.

brother, and adhered to the superstition of the Chaldeans, and had afterwards emigrated thence, either through penitence, or because he was persecuted as a suspected person.

For in the book called *Judith*,¹³ when Holofernes, the enemy of the Israelites, inquired what kind of nation that might be, and whether war should be made against them, Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, answered him thus: "Let our lord now hear a word from the mouth of thy servant, and I will declare unto thee the truth concerning the people which dwelleth near thee in this hill country, and there shall no lie come out of the mouth of thy servant. For this people is descended from the Chaldeans, and they dwelt heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, which were glorious in the land of the Chaldeans, but went out of the way of their ancestors, and adored the God of heaven, whom they knew; and they cast them out from the face of their gods, and they fled into Mesopotamia, and dwelt there many days. And their God said to them, that they should depart from their habitation, and go into the land of Canaan; and they dwelt,"¹⁴ etc., as Achior the Ammonite narrates.

Whence it is manifest that the house of Terah had suffered persecution from the Chaldeans for the true piety with which they worshipped the one and true God.¹⁵

14. On Terah's death in Mesopotamia, where he is said to have lived 205 years, the promises of God made to Abraham now begin to be pointed out; for thus it is written: "And the days of Terah in Haran were two hundred and five years, and he died in Haran."¹⁶

[Here, Augustine discusses the ages assigned to the patriarchs in Genesis.]

15. When, after the record of the death of Terah, the father of Abraham, we next read, "And the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,"¹⁷ etc., it is not to be supposed, because this follows in the order of the narrative, that it also followed in the chronological order of events. For if it were so, there would be an insoluble difficulty. For after these words of God which were spoken to Abraham, the Scripture says: "And Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him. Now Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran."¹⁸

How can this be true if he departed from Haran after his father's death? For when Terah was seventy years old, as is intimated above, he begat Abraham; and if to this number we add the seventy-five years which Abraham reckoned when he went out of Haran, we get 145 years. Therefore that was the number of the years of Terah, when

13. *Judith* is one of the twelve books of the Apocrypha. Early editions of the KJV included these books. An extract is included in this collection.

14. Citing *Judith* 5:5–9.

15. Cf. *Abraham* 2:12.

16. Citing *Genesis* 11:32.

17. Citing *Genesis* 12:1.

18. Citing *Genesis* 12:4.

Abraham departed out of that city of Mesopotamia; for he had reached the seventy-fifth year of his life, and thus his father, who begat him in the seventieth year of his life, had reached, as was said, his 145th. Therefore he did not depart thence after his father's death, that is, after the 205 years his father lived; but the year of his departure from that place, seeing it was his seventy-fifth, is inferred beyond a doubt to have been the 145th of his father, who begat him in his seventieth year.

And thus it is to be understood that the Scripture, according to its custom, has gone back to the time which had already been passed by the narrative; just as above, when it had mentioned the grandsons of Noah, it said that they were in their nations and tongues;¹⁹ and yet afterwards, as if this also had followed in order of time, it says, "And the whole earth was of one lip, and one speech for all."²⁰ How, then, could they be said to be in their own nations and according to their own tongues, if there was one for all; except because the narrative goes back to gather up what it had passed over?

Here, too, in the same way, after saying, "And the days of Terah in Haran were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran," the Scripture, going back to what had been passed over in order to complete what had been begun about Terah, says, "And the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country,"²¹ etc. After which words of God it is added, "And Abram departed, as the Lord spake unto him; and Lot went with him. But Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran."²² Therefore it was done when his father was in the 145th year of his age; for it was then the seventy-fifth of his own.

But this question is also solved in another way, that the seventy-five years of Abraham when he departed out of Haran are reckoned from the year in which he was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans,²³ not from that of his birth, as if he was rather to be held as having been born then.

Now the blessed Stephen, in narrating these things in the Acts of the Apostles, says: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and come into the land which I will show thee."²⁴ According to these words of Stephen, God spoke to Abraham, not after the death of his father, who certainly died in Haran, where his son also dwelt with him, but before he dwelt in that city, although he was already in Mesopotamia. Therefore he had already departed from the Chaldeans. So that when Stephen adds, "Then Abraham went out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran,"²⁵ this does not point out what took place after God spoke to him (for it was not after these words of God that he went out

19. Referring to Genesis 10:5, 20, 31–32.

20. Citing Genesis 11:1.

21. Citing Genesis 12:1.

22. Citing Genesis 12:4.

23. The Hebrew *ʾur kasdîm*, rendered "Ur of the Chaldees" in the KJV, is generally understood in Jewish tradition to be the "fire of the Chaldeans." For Abraham's delivery from death, cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

24. Citing Acts 7:2–3.

25. Citing Acts 7:4.

of the land of the Chaldeans, since he says that God spoke to him in Mesopotamia), but the word “*then*” which he uses refers to that whole period from his going out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelling in Haran. Likewise in what follows, “And thenceforth, when his father was dead, he settled him in this land, wherein ye now dwell, and your fathers,”²⁶ he does not say, after his father was dead he went out from Haran; but thenceforth he settled him here, after his father was dead. It is to be understood, therefore, that God had spoken to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran; but that he came to Haran with his father, keeping in mind the precept of God, and that he went out thence in his own seventy-fifth year, which was his father’s 145th. But he says that his settlement in the land of Canaan, not his going forth from Haran, took place after his father’s death; because his father was already dead when he purchased the land,²⁷ and personally entered on possession of it.

But when, on his having already settled in Mesopotamia, that is, already gone out of the land of the Chaldeans, God says, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house,”²⁸ this means, not that he should cast out his body from thence, for he had already done that, but that he should tear away his soul. For he had not gone out from thence in mind, if he was held by the hope and desire of returning,—a hope and desire which was to be cut off by God’s command and help, and by his own obedience. It would indeed be no incredible supposition that afterwards, when Nahor followed his father, Abraham then fulfilled the precept of the Lord, that he should depart out of Haran with Sarah his wife and Lot his brother’s son.

[In chapter 16, Augustine continues his discussion of the supposed chronological problems, including the opinions of Eusebius on the matter.]

Quaestiones in Heptateuchum 7

[Commenting on Genesis 11:26:]

Although this question has been somewhat resolved in another way, by computing the year of the life of Abraham from the time when he was delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans, in which he was cast to be burned²⁹ because he did not want to worship fire according to the superstition of the Chaldeans, whence he was rescued, although it is not recounted in the scriptures, but is passed down in a Jewish story, it is possible to solve it thus, from the scripture which said, “When Thara³⁰ lived seventy years, and begat Abraham,³¹ Nachor, and Arran,”³² it should not be understood that in the seventieth year of his life he begat all three, but from which year he began to beget, and that year is commemorated in scripture.

26. Ibid.

27. Abraham, of course, did not purchase the land of Canaan, but only a plot and a cave for the burial of his family (Genesis 23).

28. Citing Genesis 12:1.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

30. Biblical Terah.

31. The Hebrew has Abram for this passage.

32. Biblical Nahor and Haran. Citing Genesis 11:26, Vulgate.

AN EXTRACT FROM A COMMENTARIUM IN GENESIM

This commentary on Genesis has been attributed (probably wrongly) to Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who died in A.D. 450. This passage is a slightly revised quotation of some of Jerome's *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* cited elsewhere in this volume. The translation of the Latin from *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 50:944, by John Gee, is published here for the first time.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:27–28:]

“These are the generations of Thare:¹ Thare begat Abram, and Nachor, and Aran.”² It is followed by “Then Aran begat Loth.³ And Aran died before Thare, his father, in the land of his nativity in Hur⁴ of the Chaldees.”⁵ Instead of that which we say, “in the land of his nativity,” in Hebrew [the passage] is “in Hur Chesdim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story: That Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire⁶ and that he was surrounded by the conflagration by the Babylonians and, being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.⁷ Consequently, it is written: “And Thara with his progeny went out of the region of the Chaldeans,” instead of what it has in Hebrew: “from Hur,” that is, “from the fire of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of Thare his father, in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans” because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.⁸

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1. Biblical Terah.
 2. Biblical Nahor and Haran. Citing Genesis 11:27, Vulgate.
 3. Biblical Lot.
 4. Biblical Ur.
 5. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate.
 6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
 7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
 8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

AN EXTRACT FROM
JOHN MALALAS

John Malalas (ca. A.D. 491–ca. 578) was an early Byzantine chronographer from Antioch. His *Chronographia* covers the history of the world from the creation to 563, emphasizing the importance of Antioch. The Greek text of his *Chronographia* was published in the second volume of J. A. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca* (Oxford, 1839). The extract used here, from 92.18 to 94.21, is taken from the English translation in William Adler, “Abraham and the Burning of the Temple of Idols: Jubilees’ Traditions in Christian Chronography,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 77/2–3 (October 1986–January 1987): 101.

And Abraham attained knowledge of God, and determined that the statues which his father Terah was making¹ were of mortal humans, and that it was not necessary to worship them as gods in heaven, since they were of earth and dust. And he criticized his own father Terah, saying, “Why do you lead astray men because of greed? There is no other God, except for the One who is in heaven, who created all things visible.” *And he took all the statues and broke them,² and he departed from him and went out to Mesopotamia, as Eusebius “son” of Pamphilus, the wise chronographer, has recounted.³*

1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

3. The account of Eusebius is also included in this collection.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE ROLLS

The *Book of the Rolls* (*Kitāb al-Magall*) is an Arabic text that claims to have been “one of the hidden books of Saint Clement the Apostle, disciple of Simon Cepha” (fol. 89b), or Clement of Rome. It was probably written in Greek somewhere between the sixth and twelfth centuries by a Christian seeking to defend Mary the mother of Jesus from Jewish criticisms, although only the Arabic version is known. Margaret D. Gibson discovered the only known manuscript in 1893 in St. Catherine’s monastery at the base of Mount Sinai. It seems to share a common source with other texts included in this collection, notably the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. We use the English translation by Margaret D. Gibson, trans., *Kitab al-Magall, or the Book of the Rolls*, in *Apocrypha Arabica* (London: Clay, 1901), 34–39. We have removed the diacritics from the text.

Folio 118a. At the end of 163 years of the life of Reu, Nimrod the giant reigned over the whole earth. The beginning of his kingdom was from Babel. It was he who saw in the sky a piece of black cloth and a crown; he called Sasan the weaver to his presence, and commanded him to make him a crown like it; and he set jewels in it and wore it. He was the first king who wore a crown.

Folio 118b. For this reason people who knew nothing about it, said that a crown came down to him from heaven. The length of his reign was sixty-nine years. He died in the days of Reu, and the third thousand since Adam was completed. In his days the people of Egypt set up a king over them called Firnifs.¹ He reigned over them for sixty-eight years. In his days also a king reigned over the town of Saba and annexed to his kingdom the cities of Ophir and Havilah, his name was Pharaoh.² He built Ophir with stones of gold, for the stones of its mountains are pure gold. After him there reigned over Havilah a king called Hayul. He built it and cemented it, and after the death of Pharaoh women reigned over Saba until the time of Solomon son of David.³ When he (Reu) was 239 years

1. No such pharaoh is attested in Egyptian inscriptions.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

3. Saba, located in southern Arabia (today Yemen) is the country over which the biblical queen of Sheba ruled (1 Kings 10:1–13). Josephus, however, makes Solomon’s visitor queen of Egypt and Ethiopia (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8.6.5).

old, he died. Serug his son and Nahor buried him in the town called Oaʿnan, which Reu had built for himself. When Serug was thirty years old, his son Nahor was born to him. In the days of Serug idols were worshipped, and they were adored instead of God,⁴ and the people in that day were scattered in the earth;

Folio 119a. there was not among them a teacher nor a lawgiver, nor a guide to the way of truth, nor even a right way. They wandered and were rebellious and became a sect. Some of them worshipped the Sun and the Moon, some of them worshipped the sky, some of them worshipped images, some of them worshipped the stars, some of them worshipped the earth, some of them worshipped beasts, some of them worshipped trees, and some of them worshipped waters and winds and such like,⁵ for the Devil blinded their hearts and left them in darkness without light. No one among them believed in the Last Day and the Resurrection. When one of them died, his people made an image in his likeness, and put it upon his tomb, lest his memory should be cut off. The earth was filled with sins, and idols were multiplied in it, made in the likenesses of males and females.

Folio 119b. When Serug was 230 years old he died. His son Nahor, and Terah and Abraham buried him in the town which Serug had built and called it Serug. Terah was born to Nahor when he was twenty-nine years old. In the third year of the life of Nahor, God looked up through His remembrance at His creatures, and they were worshipping idols. He sent upon them earthquakes which destroyed all the idols.⁶ Their worshippers did not turn from their error, but persevered in their godlessness. In the twenty-sixth year of the rule of Terah appeared witchcraft. The beginning of it was that a rich man died; his son made a golden image of him and placed it upon his tomb as a mark [to] the people of his age, and appointed a young man to guard it. The Devil entered into the image, and spoke to its guardian from the tongue of the deceased and [with] his voice. The guardian told the son of the deceased about it. After some days robbers entered the dwelling of the deceased, and took all that belonged to his son, and his grief was greater at this, and they bewailed him beside the grave of his father.

Folio 120a. The Devil called to him from the image with a voice like his father, and said, "O my son, weep not. Bring me thy little son, to sacrifice him to me, and I will restore to thee all that has been taken from thee." He brought his son to the tomb and sacrificed him to the Devil. When he had done this, the Devil entered him and taught him witchcraft, unveiled his mysteries, and taught him omens and auguries. Since that time people offer their children to Devils.⁷ At the completion of a hundred years of the life of Nahor, God, may His name be exalted! looked on the godlessness of men, and their sacrificing of their children to the Devils, and their adoration of images. God, may His names be sanctified, sent them raging winds which tore away the images and their worship-

4. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

pers, and buried them in the earth and strewed over them great mounds and towering hills, and they are below these unto this day.⁸ Some assert on this account that in the time of Terah there was a Deluge of wind.

[Here follows a comparison with the destruction at the time of the flood.]

Folios 120b–121a. In the days of Nimrod the giant, he looked at fire from heaven, and fire came up from the earth. When Nimrod saw it he adored it, and appointed in the place where he saw it people to worship it, and to throw incense into it. . . . Nimrod travelled till he arrived at the land of Mariun. When he entered the city of Alturas he found there Bouniter the fourth son of Noah. Nimrod's army was on a lake, and he went down there one day to bathe in it. When Nimrod saw Bouniter the son of Noah, he did obeisance to him. Bouniter said to him, "O giant king, why do you adore me?" Nimrod said to him, "I did thee homage because thou didst meet me." Nimrod stayed with him three years that he might teach him wisdom and strategy, then he wandered away from him. He said to Nimrod, "Thou shalt not return a second time."⁹

Folio 121b. When Nimrod was passing through the East, he deposited books making known what Bouniter the son of Noah had taught him. The people were astonished at his wisdom. There was among the people entrusted with the worship of fire a man called Ardashir. When Ardashir saw the wisdom of Nimrod and the excellency of his star-gazing (Nimrod had a perfect genius), he envied him for this, and implored a Devil who had appeared to him beside the fire to teach him the wisdom of Nimrod. The Devil said to him, "Thou canst not do this until thou have fulfilled the magic rite, and its perfection is the marriage of mothers, daughters and sisters." Ardashir answered him concerning this, and did what he commanded him about it. Since that time the Magi allow the wedlock of mothers, sisters and daughters. The Devil also taught Ardashir the knowledge of omens and auguries, and physiognomy, and fortune-telling, and divining and witchcraft, which were doctrines of the Devil, and the Chaldaeans gave one another this doctrine;

Folio 122a. these were the Syrians, and some people say that it is the tongue of the Nabataeans. Every one who uses aught of these doctrines, his guilt before God is great. But the knowledge which Nimrod learned from Bounitar, verily Bounitar the son of Noah learned it from God, the great and glorious, for it is the counting of the stars, and the years and the months; the Greeks call this science Astronomy, and the Persians call it Astrology.¹⁰ Nimrod built great towns in the East, namely, Hadaniun, Ellasar, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Ruhin, and the towns of Atrapatene, and Telalon, and others that he chose for himself.

When Terah, father of Abraham, reached two hundred and three years he died. Abraham and Lot buried him in the city of Haran. [God] commanded him that he should

8. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

9. This story seems to be based on the Gilgamesh Epic, tablets X–XI.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

travel to the Holy Land. Abraham took with him Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and journeyed to the land of the Amorites. Abraham the Just was then seventy-five years old. . . .

[Here follows the story of Abraham's rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, known from Genesis 14.]

Folio 123a. . . . Hagar the Egyptian bond-maid. Pharaoh of Egypt had given her to Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who was his sister by his father but not by his mother, for Terah married two wives; the name of the one was Yuta, she was the mother of Abraham, and she died when she gave birth to him; the name of the other was Nahdeef,¹¹ and she was the mother of Sarah. Therefore Abraham answered as he said to the king of Egypt when he wished to do violence to Sarah, that "she is my sister."

11. Nahdeef نهديف is possibly a pointing mistake for the Tahdif تهديف of the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, or from Naharyath نارهث to Nahdeef نهدهث.

EXTRACTS FROM JACOB OF EDESSA

Jacob of Edessa (d. A.D. 708) was a Christian scholar who lived in the Syrian city of Edessa. In a letter written to John of Litarba, he recounted a story about Abraham that is a variant of the one found in the book of *Jubilees*, which is also included in this collection. That Jacob's source for the story was Greek is suggested by the fact that he spells the name of Abraham's brother Haran as *hʿrʿn* rather than in the normal Syriac fashion, *hrn*, thus representing the vowel *a* of the Greek. The Syriac letter, from a manuscript in the British Library (Add. 12172), was published in W. Wright, "Two Epistles of Mar Jacob, Bishop of Edessa," *Journal of Sacred Literature*, n.s. 10 (1867), 4*–5*. A French translation was published by F. Nau in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 10 (1905): 197–208, 258–82. The English translation used here is from Sebastian P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11–12 and Its Implications," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 9/2 (1978): 137–39. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

1. "From Ur of the Chaldeans":¹ because it was here that the sons of the great Eber were living—those who had been left over from the people that had been scattered by the division of tongues, and who alone spoke that original language of Adam. This is the reason (he left) Ur of the Chaldeans.

2. God's summons to Abraham happened as follows: there was a great famine over the earth in the time of Terah,² and the people then were barely able to save any of the seed that was sown in the ground because of the multitude of ravens and birds that God sent upon the land, and which used to gather (the seed) up. When he was fifteen his father Terah sent him to drive away the ravens from the field, as the Jewish histories indicate.³ Being exhausted by the work he was defeated by the large number of the ravens—though he had chased them away in front and behind and in every direction, yet he was still defeated.

3. Not knowing what to do he stretched out his hands to heaven with urgency and agitation, and said in a loud voice: "O God, who made heaven and earth through his word, drive off and kill these ravens." God speedily and without delay drove the ravens off

1. Citing Genesis 11:31.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

3. Jacob evidently has in mind *Jubilees* 11, a text that is included in this collection.

Abraham's field, saying to Abraham gently and kindly: "Abraham, Abraham, I am he whom you called; see, I have heard you and driven off the ravens from your field. For just as you said, I am the God who has made heaven and earth, and to me belongs everything in them: the wild animals are mine, and so are the birds of the sky, and it is I who brought these ravens upon you, and because you called on me and knew my name, I heard you and drove the ravens off your field."⁴

4. This was Abraham's first calling from God. Having gone in to Terah his father and told him what had been said to him by God, he counselled him to remove himself from Qainan,⁵ the deity of the Chaldeans, and (instead) reverence and worship the God who alone is true.

5. Thus Abraham, at the age of fifteen, was called by God, and was thus truly confirmed in the fear of God, so that he endeavoured to teach and warn Terah his father and Nahor his brother to remove themselves from false (worship) and recognize the true God.

6. In the sixtieth year of his life, burning with zeal, he secretly took fire by night and burnt the temple where the idol of the god Qainan stood.

7. Now when the Chaldeans collected to put out the fire, Haran, Abraham's eldest brother rushed up to put it out, but he fell into the fire and died.⁶ This is the reason that the sacred book says that "Haran died before of [sic]⁷ Terah his father in the land in which he had been born, in Ur of the Chaldeans."⁸

8. When the Chaldeans learnt that what had happened had been done by Abraham, they were compelling Terah, saying: "Either hand over your son Abraham that we may kill him, seeing that he has burnt the house of our god, or we will kill you and burn your house." Terah, being thus compelled, fled by night from Ur, secretly taking his son Abraham with him,⁹ as well as Lot, Haran's son and his grandson, and Sarah his daughter-in-law. And he came to Harran, to the land of Mesopotamia, and lived there. And afterwards Nahor, Abraham's brother, also came to them.

9. And after fourteen years Terah died. This is the reason why Terah and Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

5. This name corresponds to biblical Cainan, a name borne by two men, though it is not known from the Bible as the name of a false god. For Terah's worship of idols, cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

6. This portion of Jacob's account seems to derive from the story in *Jubilees* 12. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

7. Our insertion.

8. Citing Genesis 11:28.

9. This account differs from most stories, which have Terah turning Abraham over to be killed and Abraham being rescued by God or an angel. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VENERABLE BEDE

The Venerable Bede (A.D. 672–735) was an English monk most noted for his ecclesiastical history of England. He wrote a number of works in Latin, mostly Bible commentaries that were highly valued throughout the Middle Ages. His complete works were published in London, 1843–44. The English versions here were translated for the first time by John Gee from the Latin texts published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–64). The author of *Quaestiones super Genesim* is uncertain, but it may have been Bede; therefore, an extract from the work is included here. Each passage cited includes a verbatim quotation of Jerome. The parenthetical references after each passage are to the pages in the *Patrologia*.

Hexaemeron 3

“Then Aran begat Loth, and Aran died before Thare¹ his father in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”² When it says “before Thare” it [the phrase] can designate both “in the presence of” and time; it [the phrase] appears temporal, because he died before his father did, but it is really “in the presence” because it is in his presence, that is, in his [Thare’s] presence his [Aran’s] life departed. Furthermore, certain codices have [the reading] “because he died in the sight of Thara his father.” When it [the text] really says “in Ur of the Chaldeans,” it appears to be the name of a place, in which the tomb is, which today, as Josephus refers to, a mound³ is shown which appears to belong to a certain great and excellent dignitary, being the same Aran is to be found. Because among the Hebrews, truly, Ur means fire. They tell that he would have been consumed in the fire of the Chaldeans because it seemed that when Abraham, knowing the true God more than his brother, he refused to worship the fire, which they worshiped; and therefore both were cast into the fire by the Chaldeans,⁴ who [Aran] was consumed by the fire; Abraham truly by virtue of his exalted faith was rescued by the Lord.⁵ Whence afterwards was said to him: “I, the Lord, who led thee out of the fire of the Chaldeans,”⁶ and thanks

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1. These three names are biblical Haran, Lot, and Terah.
 2. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate.
 3. The edition has *tumultus*, “insurrection,” for *tumulus*, “mound.”
 4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
 5. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
 6. Citing Genesis 15:7.

to this dissension Abraham escaped the fire; therefore, he was unable to live among the Chaldeans, but when he learned that his father was moving elsewhere in the land . . . (PL, 91:133–34)

Hexaemeron 4

“And he said to him: I am the Lord, who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans, that I might give thee this land, and that thou mayest possess it.”⁷ They assert that Ur is the name of a place, but because Ur is interpreted “fire,” it is better to understand the tradition of the Hebrews, of which we have spoken above: that he was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans. Because at the time they [the Chaldeans] worshiped fire itself instead of God, and he [Abraham] refused to worship and adore, they desired that he be consumed by fire,⁸ but God protected him and they could not kill him.⁹ (PL, 91:155)

Commentarium in Pentateuchem

[Genesis 11]

“And Aram died before Thara,¹⁰ his father, in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldeans.”¹¹ The Hebrews pass on the tradition that Aram was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped, and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry. And this is what it now says: he died in the presence of Thara his father in Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, in the fire of the Chaldeans. Ur, therefore, means fire; whoever apparently did not want to worship the fire was consumed by the fire.¹² (PL, 91:229)

Quaestiones super Genesim

“Phaleg, the son of Heber, begat Reu. Reu begat Sarug. Sarug begat Nachor. Nachor begat Thare.¹³ These are the generations of Thare. Thare begat Abram, and Nachor and Aran. And Aran begat Loth,¹⁴ and Aran died before Thare his father, in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldeans.” About this we import the following: according to the chapter which Jerome observed in the book *Quaestiones Hebraicae*, “And Aran died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in the region of the Chaldeans.”¹⁵ Instead of that which we say, “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew is “in Ur Chesdim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story: That Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to

7. Ibid.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

10. Biblical Haran and Terah.

11. Genesis 11:27–28, Vulgate. The following passage quotes Jerome, but the quotation garbles the story, leaving out a couple of lines and substituting Aram for Abraham.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

13. From Phaleg, these are biblical Peleg, Eber, Serug, Nahor, and Terah.

14. From Nachor, these are biblical Nahor, Haran, and Lot.

15. Following the Vulgate version.

worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,¹⁶ and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.¹⁷ Thus it is written afterwards, that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in the Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.¹⁸ But later the Lord said to Abraham: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”¹⁹ . . .

Student (Jerome):

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.” The question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara,²⁰ the father of Abraham, when he had heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70, and afterwards dies in Charra²¹ at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departs from Charra, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years?

Teacher:

Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, which we spoke of above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon; because he did not want to worship it,²² he was freed by the help of God.²³ And from that moment from which he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of this life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran, where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this explanation, or desires another solution, then he justly rejects that which we have spoken. (*PL*, 93:301–2)

16. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

19. Citing Genesis 15:7.

20. Biblical Terah.

21. Biblical Haran.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

23. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

EXTRACTS FROM
ALCUIN

A deacon from Northumbria, Alcuin was a major influence in the Carolingian Renaissance, which was caused in part by contact with invading Muslims. He lived from ca. A.D. 740 to 804, spending much of his adult life in France. Much of his writing is still extant and includes correspondence, biblical exegesis, heresiology, hagiography, and manuals of grammar, rhetoric, and mathematics. His Latin works were first published in 1617 in Paris; the little translated into English has come in the twentieth century. Below, we draw our selections from a letter and his *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim*. The English text of these extracts, published here for the first time, is a translation prepared by John Gee from the Latin text in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–64). The parenthetical references after each passage are to the pages in the *Patrologia*.

Epistola 83

For philosophers were not the authors of these arts, but the discoverers. For the Creator of all things authored them in nature as he wished. True, they who were wise in the world were the discoverers of these arts in the things of nature, as you can easily understand from the sun and the moon and the stars. How else should we ponder and wonder at the sun and moon and constellations, if not the wisdom of the Creator and their natural courses? So consider the patriarch Abraham, [who], from the reasoning of astrology,¹ understood and worshiped God the creator and from that was called “the friend of God” and endured in the faith [and] was found strong. For the Hebrews say that he went out of Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, from the fire of the Chaldeans, which Chaldeans worshiped fire instead of God. My wise master used to say: “The wisest of men were those who discovered the arts in the things of nature. It is a great disgrace for us to say they died in our days. But now the small-mindedness of the masses does not care to know the reason of things which the Creator left in nature.” You know best how sweet arithmetic is in reason, how necessary for understanding the holy scriptures, how delightful is the knowledge of the stars of heaven and their courses. But it is rare that such [the masses] care to know, and what is worse, students find fault with knowing this; and whosoever does not know these things of nature hold them to be guiltless, if they themselves desire to pass on the holy scriptures, and the work among those by whom is considered the knowledge of eternal life. (*PL*, 100:271–72)

1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim

Question 152: What is that which is said about Aran, the brother of Abraham: "And Aran² died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans."³ Answer: Ur [truly] is called fire, and the Chaldeans worshiped fire as God; Thare⁴ truly, as the Hebrews pass down, was cast with his sons into the fire of the Chaldeans because he did not want to worship the fire, and in that fire Aran was consumed.⁵ And this is what it now says, "He died in the presence of his father,"⁶ just as Jerome in *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* refers saying thus:⁷ "that tradition of the Hebrews is true that Thare and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,⁸ was freed by the help of God.⁹ And from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned." And thus is solved the most obscure question about Abraham. For it is said that when Thare was seventy¹⁰ years old he begat Abraham and lived after he begat Abraham 130 years, and all the years of Thare were 205.¹¹ For it says in Genesis: "And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran,"¹² which is apparently the death of his father Thare. Therefore from the year of the birth of Abraham until the year in which he departed from Charra¹³ are 135 years: but the years are not calculated that he lived before he went out of the fire of the Chaldeans, freed by the protection of God. Thus Jerome. (*PL*, 100:534)

2. Biblical Haran.

3. Citing Genesis 11:28.

4. Biblical Terah.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

6. Citing Genesis 11:28.

7. It is ironic that Alcuin, one of the only Latin authors to acknowledge Jerome as his source and to give the work of Jerome that he is quoting, quotes the text more freely than most other Latin authors.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

10. The editor in the *PL* notes that the manuscript has seventy-five.

11. Citing Genesis 11:26, 32.

12. Citing Genesis 12:2.

13. Biblical Haran.

EXTRACTS FROM THE
EXPOSITIO SUPER SEPTEM VISIONES
LIBRI APOCALYPSIS

The author of the *Explanation of the Seven Visions in the Book of Revelation* is unknown, although the manuscript attributes the writing to Ambrose, bishop of Milan (A.D. 340–97). The manuscript was found in a monastery in Durham, England; references within the work to certain Carolingian writings date the text to after 774, although no sure date can be ascertained. The earliest mentioned edition of the text was in 1548. We have used the Latin text found in the *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 17:851, 904–5. This previously unpublished translation was prepared by John Gee.

[Commenting on Revelation 1:13:]

But by the girdle¹ are designated the patriarchs and other just men who lived before the law, who are called gold because of many tribulations, so as gold is known to be tried in the furnace: so Abraham, who was brought out of the fire of the Chaldees;² so Lot, whom the Sodomites distressed; so Isaac, who endured blindness; so Jacob, who was distressed by the persecution of a brother and father-in-law; so Joseph, who suffered captivity and prison; so Job, who endured the loss of goods, and the curse.

[Commenting on Revelation 6:4:]³

“And that they should kill one another.”⁴ From such has peace been taken away, so that one is killed by another, for often the just kill the unjust and the unjust kill the just; so Aram,⁵ the brother of Abraham, according to a tradition of the Jews, was killed in the fire of the Chaldees because he did not want to worship fire.⁶

1. Referring to the “golden girdle” in Revelation 1:13.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

3. This extract apparently relies on Jerome, extracts of whose writings are included in this volume.

4. Citing Revelation 6:4.

5. Biblical Haran.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CONFLICT OF ADAM AND EVE WITH SATAN

The *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* is thought to have been composed in Egypt in the fifth or sixth century, but it is known only in a later Arabic translation and a still later Ethiopic translation. It cannot be any later than the ninth century because Saʿīd ibn Batrīq (whose work appears elsewhere in this collection) quotes it extensively. The book first came to the attention of Western scholarship in 1625, at the same time that Ethiopic manuscripts first came to the attention of Western scholarship, although it was not translated into English until the late nineteenth century. A French translation appeared in 1856. It seems to share a common source with other texts included in this collection, notably the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* and the *Book of the Rolls* and, to a lesser extent, the *Book of the Bee*. Here, we draw on the only English translation of the Ethiopic (with reference to the Arabic): S. C. Malan, trans., *The Book of Adam and Eve, Also Called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), 173–76, 179–82. Malan divided the text into four books; we extract portions of 3 and 4 Adam and Eve and have numbered Malan’s paragraphs for easier reference.

3 Adam and Eve

Chapter 23

1. Then Ragu, Phalek’s son, lived two hundred and thirty-two years, and died. But when Ragu, Phalek’s first-born son, was one hundred and thirty years old, there reigned one of the first kings that ever reigned on the earth, whose name was Nimrud,¹ a giant.

2. That Nimrud saw a cloud of light under heaven; a mere apparition of Satan. And he inclined his heart to it, and coveted its beauty; and then called to one whose name was Santal, a carver, and said to him, “Carve me a crown of gold, after the pattern of that cloud.”

3. Then Santal made him a crown [of gold] which Nimrud took and placed upon his own head. Wherefore was it said that a cloud had come [down] from heaven, and overshadowed him. And he became so wicked, as to think within himself that he was God.

4. And in those days Ragu was one hundred and eighty years old, and in his one hundred and fortieth year, Yanuf reigned over the land of Egypt.²

1. These are, from Ragu, biblical Reu, Peleg, and Nimrod.

2. No pharaoh named Yanuf is known from Egyptian inscriptions.

5. He is the first king that reigned over it;³ and he built the city of Memphis, and named it after his own name. That is Misr; whose name is rendered Masrin.⁴

6. This Yanuf died; and in his stead, in the days of Ragu, one from the land of India reigned, whose name was Sasen; and who built the city of Saba.⁵ And all the kings who reigned over that country were called Sabæans, after the name of the city.

7. And it was so, until the days of Solomon, son of David.

8. Then again Phar'an⁶ reigned over the children of Saphir, and built the city of Saphir with stones of gold; and that is the land of Sar'ania, and because of these stones of gold, they say that the mountains of that country and the stones thereof are all of gold.

Chapter 24

1. After [him] came Serok⁷ his son, in whose days idol-gods of stone, were openly worshipped in the world. The children of men began to make idols of stone,⁸ the first of which were Kalithon and Helodon.

2. And the children of men multiplied upon the earth, and their wickedness increased also; for they had neither law nor order; and no teachers to guide them in the way of righteousness; nor any one to be judge among them.

3. Wherefore they grew worse and worse, and wandered farther from the way of God; every one of them did what he himself listed; and they made for themselves idol-gods, which they worshipped.⁹

4. They had no hope in the resurrection of the dead. But whenever one of them died, they buried him, and set up an idol over his grave; and said, that was his god, that would show him mercy in his grave. They said also, as regards the dead, that when his god was set up over his grave, the remembrance of him, would not be cut off from the face of the earth.

5. This was a common saying brought out by Satan; and the earth was thus filled with idols; and those idols were of divers kinds, men and women.

6. After this Serok died two hundred and thirty years old; and they embalmed him in Sar'ania his city, that was built in his name.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

4. The Arabic name for Egypt is Miṣr, while the Hebrew is Miṣra'im, a dual form ("two Misrs"), denoting the ancient Egyptian name for itself, *t3.wy* "the two lands." The name is spelled Mizraim in the KJV (Genesis 10:6, 13; 1 Chronicles 1:8, 11).

5. This is the country over which the biblical queen of Sheba ruled (1 Kings 10:1–13), which explains why Solomon is mentioned in the next verse. Saba was located in southern Arabia, in the area known today as Yemen. But Josephus makes Solomon's visitor queen of Egypt and Ethiopia (*Antiquities of the Jews* 8.6.5).

6. I.e., Pharaoh, taken from the Arabic rendering.

7. Biblical Serug.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

7. After that Nahor, when twenty-nine years old begat Terah. And when Nahor was eighty-six years of age, God looked down upon the children of men, [and saw] that they were ruined and worshipped idols.

8. Then God sent forth winds, and the whirlwind, and earthquakes on the earth, until the idols were broken one against another.¹⁰ Yet the children of men did not repent of their sins, neither did they turn to God from their iniquities that He might save them; but rather increased in wickedness.

9. And in the twentieth year of Terah's life, the worship of idols spread over the earth¹¹ in the city of Aarat,¹² which Barwin, the son of Eber, had built.

10. And at that time there was a rich man living in it, who died; and his son made an idol of gold in the likeness of his father, and set it up on his [father's] grave.

11. He then ordered one of his servants, to stand by the idol, and to minister unto it; to sweep the ground around it, to pour water to it and to burn incense.

12. But when Satan saw this he entered into the idol of gold, and talked to the servant, like his master's father that was dead; and said to him, "Thou doest well thus."

13. After this a thief took by surprise the house of the youth, son of the man who was dead; who then came to his father's grave, weeping.

14. And he said, "O my father, they have carried away all my goods."

15. Then Satan answered him from within the idol, and said, "Do not stay here, but go and bring thy son, and offer him up in oblation to me, and then I will return to thee all thy goods."

16. Then that youth went, and did with his son, as Satan had commanded him. And at that time Satan entered into him, and taught him to practise enchantments, and magic, the mixture of drugs, and divination.

17. That was the first evil example [of the kind] set to men, to take their children and to offer them up in oblation to idols and to devils.¹³

Chapter 25

1. Then in the hundredth year of Nahor, God looked down upon the children of men [and saw] that they sacrificed their children to idols.

2. Then God commanded the stores of winds to open, and to send forth the whirlwind, and gales, and darkness upon the whole face of the earth, until all the idols and images, and figures were brought together [by the winds] in mountains upon mountains high. And the idols remained buried under them until this day.¹⁴ . . .

[Here follows a comparison with the destruction at the time of the flood.]

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

12. Evidently Ararat, the name of the ancient kingdom of Urartu.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

7. Then in those days, king Nimrud saw a flaming fire in the east, which arose from the earth.

8. Then said Nimrud, "What is that fire?" He then went towards it; and when he saw it, he bowed to it in worship, and appointed a priest to minister before it, to burn incense to it, and to sacrifice victims to it.¹⁵ From that day the men of Fars¹⁶ began to fill the earth.

9. Then Satan the worker of idols saw a fountain of water near the fire-pit, and he came to it, and looked at it, and made a horse of gold, and set it up on the edge of the fountain of water; and it so happened that all those who came to wash in that fountain of water, bowed in worship to that golden horse; and from that time, the people of Fars began to worship horses.

10. But the priest whom Nimrud appointed to minister to the fire and to burn incense to it, wished to be a teacher, and wise of the same wisdom as Nimrud, whom Barwin, Noah's fourth son had taught.

11. The priest, therefore, kept on asking Satan, while standing before the fire, to teach him this evil ministry and abominable wisdom. So, when Satan saw him doing his best in the service [of the fire], he talked to him, and said, "No man can become a teacher, or wise, or great before me, unless he hearkens to me, and goes and weds his mother, his sister and his daughter."

12. Then that priest hearkened to Satan in all that he commanded him, and taught him all manner of wisdom and of wickednesses. And from that time, the people of Fars have committed like sins unto this day.

13. And Nimrud built great cities in the east; and wrought all manner of iniquities in them.

4 Adam and Eve

Chapter 1

1. Then when Terah was two hundred and thirty years old, he fell sick, and called Abraham his son, and said unto him, "O my son, I wish to die."

2. But Abraham stood up and comforted him, paid him all due honour, and did not aggrieve him about his being a maker of idols.¹⁷

3. For Abraham his son, was a righteous man, and could not bear idols; but he paid him all due respect, as being his father.

4. Then Terah died; and Abraham and Nahor buried him in a mountain.

5. But when Abraham was grown up, God said unto him, "O Abraham, come out of thy land, of thy kindred and of thy father's house, and go to the land that I will show thee."

15. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

16. The Arabic name for Persia. In connection with the information given here, it should be noted that the ancient Persians, followers of Zoroaster, maintained a sacred fire. The practice continues today among those who still follow Zoroaster, the Parsis (meaning "Persians") of India.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

6. Then Abraham arose, and took Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and they came to the land of the Amorites. And Abraham was seventy years old when he saw this vision;¹⁸ and this was his first wandering from the land of the east, to the western side of the river Euphrates.

[Here follows the story of Abraham's rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, known from Genesis 14.]

Chapter 2

1. After this there was a famine in the land of Palestine; and Abraham went down into the land of Egypt.

2. And Sarah his wife was with him, and she was good-looking.

3. So Abraham said to her, "Say not, I am Abraham's wife, lest they kill me, and take thee from me. But say, I am his sister."

4. Then when they came into the land of Egypt, men spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and said to him, "Behold a man has come hither; and with him is his beautiful sister."

5. Then Pharaoh sent and took her from Abraham, who remained weeping.

6. But God in His mercy sent an angel who smote Pharaoh, and said to him, "Send back to Abraham his wife, lest God kill thee."

7. Then in the morning, Pharaoh called Abraham, and said unto him, "Forgive me." He then gave him his wife Sarah; and gave to Sarah, Hagar the Egyptian, and gave her many presents.

8. After this Abraham took Sarah his wife, with Hagar her maid-servant, and returned to Palestine.

9. And after that, Abraham took to himself Hagar to wife, who bare him Ishmael, when Abraham was eighty-seven years old.

10. But in that Abraham said, "Sarah is my sister," he did not lie; inasmuch as Terah, his father, married two wives; one of which was called Tona, the mother of Abraham, who died shortly after he was born.

11. Then Terah married again another wife whose name was Tahdif, who bare him Sarah, whom Abraham married, and who, for that reason, said, "She is my sister"—on my father's side, but not on my mother's.

18. According to Genesis 12:4, Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran, though Abraham 2:14 makes him sixty-two. The book of *Jasher* has him leaving Haran more than once, the last time at age seventy-five (*Jasher* 13:5, 26).

EXTRACTS FROM GEORGE SYNCELLUS

George Syncellus was a Byzantine scholar who lived for some time in Palestine. About A.D. 800 he wrote a history, the *Chronographia*, compiled from a number of earlier sources, including Eusebius (whose work is also cited in this collection). Two versions of his *Chronographia* (a chronological history of the world) exist, differing somewhat in wording. The Greek text of his *Chronographia* was published in Bonn in 1829. The translation from the Greek used here is by James E. (Dimitri) Williams and Catherine S. Williams and was prepared especially for this compilation from Georgius Syncellus, *Chronographia*, 2 vols., ed. Wilhelm Dindorf (Bonn: Weber, 1829). Numbers in parentheses following each extract denote the page(s) on which the material is found in the published Greek text. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. Thus, for those who have a desire, it is possible to search the scriptural knowledge at hand and to understand that the spiritual death happens before the physical. For which if you accept idol worship, you swallow up also greediness. Terah being an idol worshiper¹ and probably not going with Abraham and therefore not leaving out of the land, but as it is written Terah received Abraham, Nahor, Lot, and Sarah and led them out of the land of the Chaldeans. And they came to the land of Canaan and resided there. (1:176)

2. Henceforth, to us it appears that before the death of Terah, God told Abraham to exit out of the land of Terah. But from that which was written by the first witness,² before Abraham lived in Haran, God saw Abraham in Mesopotamia, which is found in the land of the Chaldeans. (1:177)

3. Therefore, it is easily understood that Abraham could be instructed correctly only after the death of Terah. But in his own homeland he yet had to truly offer a sacrifice to God and turn away from his father's idols, which he burned during the night.³ Haran, Abraham's brother, also was burned up with the idols while trying to put out the fire before his father Terah, as has been told, just as hinted in the scriptures, that Haran died

1. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

2. I.e., Moses, to whom the first books of the Bible are attributed.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

before his father Terah,⁴ in the land in which he was born. This was the land of the Chaldeans, in the city of Sur.⁵ (1:178)

4. And Abraham was one hundred years old in the year of the world 3313. The Chaldean Abraham from birth had his upbringing among the Chaldeans, and from them he was taught in their astrology and in all the rest of their wisdom.⁶ He became a friend to God by them with the founding of his own ideas, and he did not permit his environment to change him. He had been changed by the Creator and from the beauty of the creation (world). Thus, he became worthy to receive upon himself divine light. Still, he lived in his homeland, as has been written in the words of the first witness and as has been heard by way of tradition. Seeing that the Chaldeans descend from Shem and from them descends Abraham, it is said that Abraham was called "little birth"⁷ by his mother's grandfather. And Sarah was the sister of Abraham by the same father. (1:183)

5. Abraham was the first to encompass the altar with branches of palm and olive trees.⁸ The first time a holy messenger (angel) is named in the scriptures is in the time of Abraham. From him, the Egyptians learned the place of the stars and their movements and the mathematical science.⁹ When Abraham was fourteen years of age, he learned about the God of all, and he worshiped him. The idols of his father he destroyed and burned in the house.¹⁰ Haran was burned with them, trying to put out the fire.¹¹ Josephus¹² says that Abraham tried to educate his father to abandon idol worship and abandon his building of idols.¹³ At that time, Melchizedek flourished as first high priest and first king in Salem.¹⁴ Thus it is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures. He was a virgin and of unrecorded descent. And among the wisest men he always won with words. With bread and wine, and without the shedding of blood, he made sacrifices to the Christ of the true God, the same who (Christ) is saved, to this same Christ, who had not a mother above nor a father here on earth, who was the prototype of us all. In this way he (Melchizedek) blessed Abraham, and Abraham learned the most important worship service, by the law, for us, in the spirit and in truth. He was one of the most important of the people and the only one who manifested himself to the patriarch Abraham. (1:184)

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

5. Biblical Ur. Sur is the usual form for the city Tyre.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

7. The Greek term, *little Genesis*, is a strange one, used elsewhere to denote the book of *Jubilees*, in which Abraham plays an important role.

8. Abraham's circumambulation of the altar is also noted in *Kebra Nagast* 105, included in this collection. See the note there.

9. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

12. The account of Josephus is included in this collection.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27; 2:5.

14. Cf. Alma 13:14–19; Doctrine and Covenants 107:2–4. According to Doctrine and Covenants 84:14, Abraham was ordained by Melchizedek.

AN EXTRACT FROM DE COMPUTO

The author of this astrological text, from a codex found in the Ambrosian library in Milan, is unknown. Quotations of Alcuin, who died in A.D. 804, indicate that the text could not be older than that date. The previously unpublished translation used here was provided by Edward Stratford from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 129:1344. The section quoted follows immediately after a discussion of the progression of the sun through the zodiac; compare Vettius Valens, who is also included in this book.

What indeed else in the sun and the moon and the stars do we consider, and wonder, if not the wisdom of the Creator? And the running course of them is born by nature. Thus Abraham the patriarch had known from the calculation of astrology,¹ the Creator God, and worshiped [him], and thereupon was called a friend to God and tested in faith now he came to strength. For instance, the Hebrews say that he left from Ur of Chaldees, which is the fire of Chaldees, which fire the Chaldeans worshiped as God.² My master was often accustomed to say to me, "The wisest men were those who discovered arts in things of nature. Because of great prosperity, as we have dismissed these things on our days to perish, but now the timidity of men does not pay attention to matters of calculation, which the Creator set up in nature."

1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

EXTRACTS FROM AN ANONYMOUS CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

The account that follows is from an anonymous Christian chronicle, written in Syriac and dated to the middle of the ninth century and running through the year 819. The text has affinities with the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, the *Book of the Rolls*, and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. The chronicle was discovered in 1911. Miles Lallemand prepared the translation from the Latin version of this work included in *Anonymi Auctoris Chronicon*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Chabot (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1965), 34–39. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

The Building of the Tower and the Confusion of Tongues

1. At the beginning of the life of Ragavus,¹ Noah's descendants began to build a tower in the land of Sennaar,² explaining their reason thus: Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower; and let us make a name for ourselves before we are scattered and let us go away into our inheritance.³ And Nemrod⁴ sustained the builders with his hunting. Now the construction time dragged on to forty years. And this tower was raised so that when a beast of burden weighed down with rocks and limestone was climbing up skillfully with renewed steps on the place [tower], it took the same time to get there [the top] as it did to lay the materials. Behold, how high and firm was that tower!

2. In the fortieth year of Ragavus, the Lord confused the tongues in Babel. And ten years after the confusion of tongues, Nemrod girded himself with a regal crown and was the first king in the land after the flood. And twenty years after the confusion of tongues, all the people went out from Babel and went away each into the land of his inheritance. And the sons of Canaan saw the land of Palestine, right up to the borders of Egypt, to be very good and delightful. The land of Palestine, however, belonged to the sons of Iectanus,⁵ the descendants of Chamus (Ham). And it was pleasing to them, and in it they made their abode; and they did not want to go away into their inheritance, and they broke the commandment of Noah and brought upon themselves the curse that he had pronounced upon them by prophecy.

1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Shinar, ancient Sumer.

3. Citing Genesis 11:4.

4. Biblical Nimrod.

5. This seems to be the biblical Joktan, who was a descendant of Shem, not Ham. Joktan's descendants settled in southern Arabia.

3. Phalegus (Peleg) died and in the utmost grief and in tears because in his days the land was divided. And Ragavus, his son, buried him in his city, Phalegis.

4. There were, in the land, seventy-two languages.

5. In the days of Ragavus, the third millennium unfolded, according to the chronicle.

6. There was from the flood up until the confusion of tongues 642 years according to the Hebrews; however, it was 340 years. The book of the Hebrews states that Abraham was born 40 years after the time of the confusion of tongues. And Nemrod threw Abraham into a fiery furnace⁶ because he did not approve the worship of idols,⁷ but the flame of the furnace was changed into pleasant dew. The chronicles, however, say that Abraham was born in the years following the confusion of tongues, in the days of king Ninus. In the days of Nemrod, however, a fire arose out of the earth and they worshiped and these people appointed priests and from this time the Persians began to worship the fire. And so Nimrod built the city of Edessa and other cities.⁸

7. There was, however, in this time, in the orient, a lonely man among the descendants of Noah, who was called Ioniton. He, by dying, made peace for himself and retired from work, worry, and trouble for which men were changed. And he firmly persevered in the works of excellent virtue and lived in self-abnegation. And he was the first man in the world to point out the folly of the way of asceticism. On that account, wisdom, favor, and knowledge of all things were given him; and he handed down to posterity other teachings and the knowledge of the circuits of the spheres, of the motions of stars, and of the whole plan of the virtues which are in the firmament,⁹ and also a study of the goodness of roots out of the earth and the uses of these along with many other things worthy of mention. By men of this generation, he was considered a great prophet and a most famous priest.

8. And in the 109th year of Ragavus, the Lord sent a strong wind which threw down the tower; and in it Nimrod died¹⁰ along with many others.

9. Ragavus begat Sarugus¹¹ when he was a 130 years old; according to the Hebrews, however, he was 32.

10. In the days of Sarugus, idolatry arose in the land,¹² and the name of the one God vanished from the hearts of men because they did not have teachers and lawmakers, and on account of their deviation they worshiped the sun and the moon and sculptures¹³ and whatever figure in heaven or in earth pleased them. And since they had no hope of the resurrection, they made statues for their dead and worshiped them, lest they forget about them. Now when a certain rich man died, his son made a statue for him, and into

6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

8. Edessa, the former Urfa, is identified by tradition with the city Ur, Abraham's birthplace.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

11. Biblical Serug.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

this statue entered Satan, and he spoke with the young man. On a certain day, brigands came along and stole whatever the young man owned. Now he went forth to the tomb of his father and wept. And Satan said to the young man, "Do not weep in my presence, but take your little son and offer him to me as a sacrifice,¹⁴ and I will restore to you whatever you have lost." And he led forth his son and sacrificed him and was himself in his blood. And Satan taught him magic and prophecy and augury and all kinds of demonic things. And then men began to sacrifice their sons to demons and to worship statues.

11. In this time, when the descendants of Shem saw that their part of the inheritance did not fall to them, they appointed for themselves three kings from their brothers: Saba, Ophir, and Havilah. These three most brave kings of the household of Iectanus began to make weapons, and they advanced in war against the people who inhabited their land. And they prevailed against all because they fought with arms, and none up until then had learned to prepare instruments of war. Therefore, they fled before those men and built citadels for themselves. And when the people saw that they had been defeated by these men, they handed to them the region of their inheritance. And then the people began to prepare instruments of war for themselves and to rise, people against people, tribe against tribe, and to capture one another and to buy and sell slaves and maidservants.

12. At this time, women themselves became illustrious in war, and they even ruled.¹⁵ And accordingly, they observed a law not to march out male troops, but women. In the same year, they lay with their husbands and sent back their male sons to their husbands. And up to the time of King Solomon, women ruled.

13. At this time, they made standard measures and weights and silk garments and all kinds of textures.

14. And Ragavus died and Sarugus his son buried him in his city Aru'un.¹⁶

15. Saragus begat Nachorus¹⁷ when he was 130 years old; according to the Hebrews, he was 30. The book of the Hebrews from Adam to Nachorus removes a hundred years from each patriarch, except Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech.

16. In the twelfth year of Nachorus, Pharaoh ruled in Egypt, the fourth king, and from this Pharaoh all the Egyptians began to be called Pharaohs.¹⁸

17. At this time was the struggle of Job with Satan for seven years, and he lived and triumphed. Some say that his struggle was serious after sixty years.

18. At this time books of astrology were brought to Egypt.¹⁹

14. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

15. This may refer to the fact that, in the early first millennium B.C., women ruled in the southern Arabian peninsula, where Joktan (here Iectan) had settled. This is the region whence came the queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–13; 2 Chronicles 9:1–12). Note that our text says that women ruled until Solomon's time.

16. Evidently Ur.

17. Biblical Nahor.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

19. Armonius the Canaanite had sons: Sodom and Gomorrah, who built cities and called them by their own names.²⁰

20. And Sarugus died and his son Nachorus buried him.

21. Nachorus was twenty-nine, according to the chronicles, when he begat Thara.²¹

22. At that time, the city of Damascus was built.

23. In the hundredth year of Nachorus, God sent a great storm that knocked over all the images and obliterated them from the earth.²² The ancient scriptures call it a typhonic whirlwind. And hills were made and God thrust down into them the demons who lived in the images and in the idols. For those hills were made for the idols, and in them they were destroyed,²³ and there is not a hill in which there is not a demon. And this was the reason for the onset of the wind at this time. Some say the hills were made at the time of the flood, but in this they have erred, for before the flood there was no idolatry in the land, but because of the extravagance of the house of Cain, God caused the flood.

24. Thara begat Abraham when he was seventy years old.

25. According to the opinion of the chroniclers, there were 3,329 years from Adam to Abraham; according to the Hebrews, however, there were 2,002 years.

26. Abraham, when he was twelve years old, began to understand the aberrations of the world, for all men were occupied exclusively in being led astray by carvings and the use of molten images. And in the time of sowing, the whole people went out, each to protect his seed from the ravens. Now, Abraham went out with the rest. And he shouted to the ravens, saying, "Turn back, turn back to the place from whence you have come." And they turned back. And on that day he drove away seventy ravens. And he called upon the God of heaven, and he heard him and freed him from the ravens.²⁴ And then Abraham knew God and promised to worship him. And he separated himself from his father. And the name of Abraham increased in fame throughout the whole region of the Chaldees. And he taught the craftsmen to make shore-beams to deepen the ploughs they used for planting seed, and the seed went down and was covered by the earth. And they were no longer bothered by ravens.

27. At one point, Abraham said to his father Thara, "What use of help is there in those idols which you worship? They are such a great service of senselessness and deception to the heart. They are the work of hands, and there is no spirit in them. Worship the God of heaven, who makes the rain fall and the dew and does whatever he wills in heaven and in earth." And he replied to him, "I know that too, my son. But what am I to do, for all the people have appointed me to minister for them in their presence. And if I speak to them, they will kill me, because their souls are pledged to idolatry.²⁵ But be silent, my

20. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in the days of Abraham (see Genesis 19).

21. Biblical Terah.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

23. Ibid.

24. This version of the famine in Ur of the Chaldees is known from other traditions included in this collection. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5, 17.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

son, lest they murder you." And when Abraham was fifty-six years old, he set the temple of Cainan²⁶ aflame. And Haran, the brother of Abraham, went in to save the temple from fire, but he was consumed by fire and died.²⁷

28. And when Abraham was sixty years old, he went with his father Thara, his brother Nachorus, and Lot the son of Haran, out of Ur of the Chaldees, and they came to live in Harran for fourteen years.²⁸

29. And in the fifth year, on the first day of the seventh month, when Abraham was in Harran, he sat by night to study the stars from sunset to sunrise²⁹ in order to see how they organized the rain throughout the year.³⁰ And while he was contemplating, speech came into his mouth and he said, "All the signs of the stars and of the moon and of the sun are in the hand of God. What am I looking for? For if the Lord wished, he could send down rain prematurely or after the time, and if he did not wish, the rains would not come down." And Abraham prayed that night and said, "God, my God, thou only art the most high God.³¹ Deliver me from the error of this people and direct me to the life which pleases thee."³² And when he finished praying, a voice came to him, saying, "Go away from your land, and from your people, and from the house of your father, into the land which I will show to you. And I will make you a great people and in you shall all the people of the earth be blessed."³³ And after two years Abraham asked his father that he might go to the land of Canaan. And he said to him, "Go in peace; the God of ages will make your way sure, and nothing wicked shall prevail against you."³⁴ And Abraham went from Harran to the land of Canaan when he was seventy-five years old,³⁵ with his wife Sarah and Lot the son of his brother. And after they had been there for twenty years, Ishmael was born to him by Hagar, his Egyptian handmaid, who was given him by Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

26. Other texts make clear that this Cainan is an idol.

27. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

28. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

29. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

30. This activity may reflect Abraham's concern about the famine. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

31. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

32. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

33. Citing Genesis 12:1–2.

34. This suggests that Terah had come to believe in Abraham's God. Cf. Abraham 2:5, which implies the same.

35. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

EXTRACTS FROM
RABANUS MAURUS

Rabanus Maurus (ca. A.D. 780–856) studied with Alcuin while at Tours, and later he was made abbot of Fulda (in modern Germany) from 824 to 842. Rabanus wrote commentaries on nearly every book in the Bible. He also had great success as a poet. He trained Walafrius Strabo and corresponded with Freculphus Lexoviensis, both of whose works appear in this collection. His works began to be published in Latin as early as 1626 but are still not all published. This previously unpublished translation, from book 2 of Maurus's *Commentaria in Genesim*, was made by John Gee from the Latin text in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 107:531–32, 534.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:27–28, 32; 12:1:]

“Now these are the generations of Thare:¹ Thare begat Abram, Nachor,² and Aran,³ and Aran begat Loth.⁴ And Aran died before his father Thare in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.”⁵ Furthermore that which we read in the Septuagint “in the region of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has in “Ur Casdim,” אור-כשדים, that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,⁶ and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.⁷ Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew is “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” But later the Lord said to Abram: “I am he who led thee from the fire of the Chaldeans.”⁸ . . .

“And the days of Thara were two hundred and five years in Haran,”⁹ because there he finished all the days of his life. The question is therefore solved by recapitulation, that

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1. Biblical Terah.
 2. Biblical Nahor.
 3. Biblical Haran.
 4. Biblical Lot.
 5. Citing Genesis 11:27–28.
 6. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
 7. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.
 8. Citing Genesis 15:7.
 9. Citing Genesis 11:32.

inevitably remains, if we accept that after the death of Thara, God spoke to Abram, so that he would depart from Haran, because it is not possible for there to be 75 years until his father died, since he was born in his 70th year, so that Abram, after the death of his father, would be 135 if all the years of his father were 205. Therefore that recapitulation that is noticed in the scripture answers many difficulties that could be seen as insoluble. According to the explication of the above inquiry, by the same recapitulation of events, although otherwise that question is solved to some extent, from that computation of the years of Abraham's life, from when he was rescued from the fire of the Chaldeans into which he was cast to burn because he did not want to worship the fire according to the superstition of the Chaldeans;¹⁰ therefore, he was rescued,¹¹ which is not read in the scriptures, but the Jews pass down the story. It can therefore be solved thus: since the scripture which says "and Thara lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nachor, and Aran,"¹² it does not, in any case, mean to be understood that the same 70th year he begat all three, but at which year he began to beget; this is the year the scripture commemorates. . . .

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran."¹³ Therefore that tradition of the Hebrews of which we spoke above is not to be esteemed lightly, that Thara and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans,¹⁴ and that Abram, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,¹⁵ was freed by the help of God;¹⁶ and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Haran, where he died; but certainly he came to Haran, and there later he died.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

12. Citing Genesis 11:26.

13. Citing Genesis 12:4.

14. Citing Genesis 11:31.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

16. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

EXTRACTS FROM
FRECVLPVUS LEXOVIVENSIS

Freculphus was a Benedictine monk at the Abbey of Fulda (in modern Germany) in the early ninth century; he later became bishop of Lisieux in Normandy, holding that position from A.D. 823 to 851. He wrote two series of his *Chronicon*, one from the beginning of the world to the birth of Christ and the second from the birth of Christ to the reign of Bonifacium III (ca. 607). His works were first published in 1539. Freculphus used the works of Josephus and Jerome in his writings. He also corresponded with Rabanus Maurus, whose work is included in this volume. The previously unpublished translation below, from *Chronicon* 1.1.36, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 106:941.

How Thara¹ and Abraham and Loth² and Aran³ went out of Chaldea, and came in the land of Chanaan.⁴

“And Thara took Abram, his son, and Loth the son of Aran, his son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Chanaan; and they came unto Aran, and dwelt there.”⁵ Furthermore, Josephus said that Ur was the city of the Chaldeans, out of which Thara departed with his family and his house and came to Aran, which other translations usually call Charra. Jerome, however, explained this place in the history as follows, concerning the death of Aran before the death of his father and in Ur of the Chaldeans: “And Aran died before his father, in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans.”⁶ Instead of that which we say, “in the land in which he was born, in Ur of the Chaldeans,” in Hebrew it has “in Ur Cestim,” that is, “in the fire of the Chaldeans.” For the Hebrews pass on the tradition from this incident, this sort of story wherein Abraham was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire, and because the Babylonians wor-

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1. Biblical Terah.
 2. Biblical Lot.
 3. Biblical Haran.
 4. Biblical Canaan.
 5. Citing Genesis 11:31.
 6. Citing Genesis 11:28.

shipped fire,⁷ and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry.⁸ Thus it is afterwards written that Thara departed with his progeny from the land of the Chaldeans, for which in Hebrew it has from Ur, that is, “from the conflagration of the Chaldeans.” And this is what it now says: “Aran died in the presence of his father in the land of his nativity, in the fire of the Chaldeans”; because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured by the fire.⁹

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

a heart that loved God sought out the God who really exists.⁶ And in this way, seeing the heaven at one time shining, at another time darkened, he said to himself: This is not a god. Similarly seeing the sun and the moon, the one often being hidden and becoming dark, the other waning and falling, he said: Nor are these gods. But inquiring closely into the course and movement of the stars (for he was an astronomer extremely well trained by his father)⁷ and not finding the Creator either through these or through some other phenomena, he became extremely downcast and despairing. Having seen his desire and enthusiasm, the Creator . . . appeared to him and urged him to make the journey to the land of promise, saying: "Go forth from your land and your kin and from the house of your father, and go forth to the land which I will show to you."⁸ And immediately taking the idols of his father, and having broken some and burning others,⁹ went out from the land of the Chaldeans with his father. And when he had gone forth to Haran his father died.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

8. Citing Genesis 12:1.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

EXTRACTS FROM
ANGELOMUS LUXOVIENSIS

Angelomus Luxoviensis was a Benedictine who wrote his works around A.D. 855. He resided at Lexueil in Burgundy. He wrote three exegetical treatises, relying heavily on previous church fathers, and although his commentary was known to exist, it did not actually come to light until 1721. The text is complete, although only later copies of the manuscript exist. The previously unpublished translation used here is from Angelomus's *Commentarium in Genesim* made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 115:169–70.

[Commenting on Genesis 11:14–28:]

“And Sale¹ begat Heber,”² and the rest until it says, “And Aran³ died before his father Thare⁴ in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.”⁵ Heber means “one who passes over,” which signifies the future church, which passes over from faithlessness to faithfulness, from vice to virtue. But it is necessary to ask what is that which is written about Aran, the brother of Abraham: “And Aran died before his father Thare in Ur of the Chaldees;”⁶ for Ur means fire. Thus in Hebrew it is said “in Ur of the Chesdi,”⁷ that is, in the fire of the Chaldeans. And the Chaldeans worshiped the fire as a god. Thare truly, according to Chaldean tradition⁸ was sent into the fire with his sons, because he did not want to worship the fire,⁹ in which fire Aran was devoured. And this is what it says that he died in the view of Thare, his father, of which we will speak more later.

[Commenting on Genesis 12:4:]

“And Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Charran.”¹⁰ This question inevitably arises: If, therefore, Thara, the father of Abraham, when he had

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1. Biblical Salah.
 2. Biblical Eber. Citing Genesis 11:14.
 3. Biblical Haran.
 4. Biblical Terah.
 5. Citing Genesis 11:25.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Variant manuscripts spell this last word *casdim* or *cesi*.
 8. One manuscript reads “according to the Hebrew tradition.”
 9. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.
 10. Biblical Haran. Citing Genesis 12:4.

heretofore been in the region of Chaldea, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Charan at the age of 205, how, now, after the death of Thara, when Abraham departed from Chara, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abraham until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thara and his son came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abraham, surrounded by the conflagration in Babylon because he did not want to worship it,¹¹ was freed by the help of God.¹² And later the Lord said to Abraham: "I am he who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans";¹³ and from that moment when he confessed the Lord, rejecting the idols of the Chaldeans, the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be because the scripture remains ambiguous: before many years Thara leaving Chaldea came to Charran, where he died; but certainly he came to Charran immediately after persecution, and there later he died. If, therefore, someone opposes this solution, he desires another solution and he justly rejects that which we have spoken.¹⁴

11. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

13. Citing Genesis 15:7.

14. This passage is an almost verbatim quotation of Jerome.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CATENA SEVERI

In A.D. 861, a Syrian monk named Severus compiled a biblical commentary known today as the *Catena Severi*. One of his major sources was Jacob of Edessa, whose parallel account of Abraham's early life is included in this collection. The Syriac text, known from a ninth- or tenth-century document in the Vatican Library (Vat. Syr. 103), was first published alongside St. Ephrem Syrus's *Commentary on Genesis* in P. Benedictus (Mubarrak), *Ephraimi Syri Opera Omnia* (Rome: n.p., 1737), 1:156–57, with a rather free Latin translation that rendered the ravens in the story as locusts. The English translation used here is from Sebastian P. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to Jubilees 11–12 and Its Implications," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 9/2 (1978): 137–39. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

1. It is written then that Terah had three children, Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot and Melka and Iska, who is Sarah; Abraham and Nahor married their brother's daughters, Melka and Sarah. And when they were in the land of the Chaldeans there was a famous and large temple belonging to the Chaldeans, in which was placed the sculpted deity Qainan, whom they worshipped, while the true God they did not know.¹

2. And while they were there God sent against them, as though in chastisement, birds called ravens, which ate their seed.²

3. Terah sent Abraham while he was a young child to drive the ravens from their fields. Abraham, being greatly worn out and unable to drive away the birds, cried out in a loud voice: "O God who made heaven and earth, help me and drive off these ravens." And immediately God answered him saying:

4. "Abraham, behold I, whom you called on, have heard you and driven off the ravens from your field."³

5. When Abraham heard this and saw what had happened, he immediately went in to Terah his father and related to him what had happened. And he counselled him to despise Qainan, the deity of vanity of the Chaldeans and to worship the God of heaven and earth.⁴

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1. Qainan corresponds to biblical Cainan, a name borne by two men, though it is not known from the Bible as the name of a false god. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.
 2. Jacob of Edessa, Severus's source, evidently drew the story from *Jubilees* 11, which is also included in this collection. For the famine in Abraham's birthplace, cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.
 3. Cf. Abraham 2:17.
 4. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

6. Seeing that Terah for the moment neglected to do this, Abraham took fire in his zeal and burnt that famous temple of Qainan, the graven image of the Chaldeans.

7. But Abraham's brother Haran entered to put out (the fire) and save the carved (idol) from burning, but he fell down there and died.⁵ For this reason it was necessary to indicate his death before Terah his father.

8. When the Chaldeans realized what Abraham had done, they were compelling Terah to hand over his son Abraham to them to [put to] death.⁶

9. Then he began his flight thence with all his household, and they left Ur of the Chaldeans, for that was the name of the place where they were residing. And they came to Harran, where Terah died.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

6. We supply the words "put to," not included in Brock's translation. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

EXTRACTS FROM A SYRIAC COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

The following account is from a Syriac commentary on the book of Genesis. The commentary quotes Syriac fathers from the fourth to the seventh century A.D., while the script of the manuscript indicates that it was prepared before the twelfth century. It is thought to have been written by a Nestorian Christian in the ninth century, somewhere in Eastern Mesopotamia. Three manuscripts are known, though one was destroyed in World War I. The first publication, in 1951, is of a manuscript (Mingana 553) brought from Asia Minor after World War I and now housed at the Woodbroke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham, England. The English translation used here, Abraham Levene, trans., *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951), 86–87, accompanied the original publication of the Syriac text. We have removed the diacritics from the names.

Chapter 7

According to the tradition of all the teachers, we report that from Serug, idolatry was spread throughout the world¹ and therefore vanity explains his name. "Haran died in the life-time of Terah."² This Haran was not the father of Milcah and Sarah, but the father of Lot. The name Ur is the same as Uruk. Ur according to Rabban is the name given to Beth Aramaye which is Mahoze.

Michael applies the name Iscah to Sarah because of her beauty; and Iscah means "silver." Milcah and Iscah were the daughters of Haran the elder, the brother of Terah, i.e. the uncle of Abraham. Babai the Persian, on the other hand, says that this Haran was the brother of Abraham and that he was older than the latter and Nahor. But Holy Writ, on account of his importance, places Abraham before Haran and Nahor; and this is just as the commentary of Matthew the Interpreter elucidates it: that Abraham was the uncle of Sarah, whilst he shews that Sarah was the daughter of Haran the father of Lot.

Chapter 8

Rabban said that, when Pharaoh was about to draw nigh unto her, that he and his household were immediately seized with a fever. And in a dream was it shown to him by God—"that this illness which is in thy house, is on account of this woman whom thou

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.
2. Citing Genesis 11:28.

hast taken.”³ Now that same day he restored her to Abraham and said to him—“Behold thy wife which was guarded for thee is without hurt; for I did not come nigh unto her, because of an illness into which I fell.” It is probable that at this time Hagar the Egyptian was given to him as a handmaiden. With regard to “He called upon the name of the Lord,”⁴—i.e. he regarded God as the cause of all goodness, and he recompensed Him, as it were, with thanks, because of His saving acts towards him. Now all these things, which happened to Abraham, his descent into Egypt because of the famine, or the trial which came upon him there because of his wife, or his departure thence with great possessions, are a likeness and a type of the things which happened to the children of Israel. For they also went down to Egypt on account of famine, and there, there came upon them the trial of slavery and they departed thence with great possessions.

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3. Unless this is from an independent source, it must be seen as a paraphrase of Genesis 20:3, in which God speaks not to Pharaoh but to Abimelech, who had taken Sarah from Abraham. No such dream is recounted in the story of Pharaoh and Sarah in Genesis 12.
 4. Citing Genesis 13:4, which takes place when Abraham had returned from Egypt to the land of Canaan.

EXTRACTS FROM SAʿID IBN BATRIQ (EUTYCHIUS)

The Arab Christian writer Saʿid ibn Batriq (son of Patrick), known by the Greek name Eutychius (A.D. 877–940), was the patriarch of Alexandria. He wrote an annalistic history of the world (*Nazm al-Jawhar*), which was continued to the year 938 by his relative, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿid the Antiochian. Although written in Arabic, this history became a popular source for other historians. It was translated into Latin in 1658, but no English edition is available. The English translation of this extract, prepared by Brian M. Hauglid for this collection, is taken from the Arabic text found in L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales* (Paris: E. Typographeo Catholico, 1949), 20–21. To facilitate referencing, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. When Tārah¹ was seventy years old, Ibrahīm [Abraham] was born to him. And in [Ibrahīm’s] time, Nimrūd² the tyrant ruled Bābal.³ It is said he was the first king who ruled Bābal. [Nimrūd] saw the likeness of a crown in the clouds of heaven. He summoned a jeweler, who fashioned a crown for him and placed it upon his head, and because of this the people say a crown came down to him from heaven. It is said that he was the first one to worship fire because he saw fire far away in the east rise from the earth. Nimrūd went down and saw the fire. He bowed down to it and appointed a man there to serve the fire by throwing wood into it. From that time the Majūs began to worship the fire and kneel before it.⁴ The name of the man whom Nimrūd appointed to serve the fire was Andashān. Shaiṭān⁵ talked to [Andashān] from inside the fire and said to him, “There is not anyone able to serve the fire nor study my religion until he has intercourse with his mother, sister, and daughter.” So Andashān did as Shaiṭān had said to him. Since that time, the priests of the Majūs began to have intercourse with their mothers, their sisters, and their daughters. This Andashān was the first to begin with this notion. Nimrūd built Adrabijān, Bābal, Nīnwā,⁶ Rāsin, and many cities.

1. Biblical Terah.

2. Biblical Nimrod.

3. Biblical Babel or Babylon.

4. The Majūs or Magi were priests in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia, in which fire was considered to be sacred.

5. This is translated from the Arabic as Satan.

6. Biblical Nineveh.

2. The entire life of Tārah was 265 years, and he died. From Fālliḳ⁷ to Ibrahīm was 541 years. From the flood to Ibrahīm was 1,270 years. From Ādam to Ibrahīm was 3,328 years.

3. When Ibrahīm was 75 years old, God commanded him to leave Ḥarrān, the land of his father,⁸ and to dwell in the land of Karʿān⁹ called al-Shām.¹⁰ Ibrahīm took Sāra to wife, and she is his sister from his father. For Tārah, the father of Ibrahīm, when Yūnā, the mother of Ibrahīm died, had married another woman called Tahwīth. She gave birth to Sāra for [Tārah], and Ibrahīm married her [Sāra]. Prior to the marriage, Ibrahīm had said, “She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother.”

7. Biblical Peleg, when the earth divided.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:14.

9. Biblical Canaan.

10. Or Syria.

EXTRACTS FROM MAHBUB OF MENBIDJ (AGAPIUS)

Maḥbūb ibn Qustantin of Menbidj (in Syria), called by the Greek name Agapius, was bishop of the Egyptian city of Hierapolis in the tenth century. He was a contemporary of Ibn Batriq (Eutychius) of Alexandria, whom he outlived. His work is independent of Eutychius's *Annals*, but he did occasionally use Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. He relies heavily on popular legend and apocryphal materials for the first part of his history, *Kitāb al-ʿUnwān* (Book of the Title). Manuscripts of his writings have been known in the West as early as 1742. The original Arabic of his *Kitāb al-ʿUnwān*, along with a French translation by Alexandre Vasiliev, was published in 1910. The English translation used here is by John A. Tvedtnes, who used both the French and Arabic, with a preference to the Arabic, in A. Vasiliev, *Kitab al-ʿUnwan, Histoire Universelle écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj*, in *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 5:592, 628, 631, 636. We have numbered each selection for reference purposes.

1. All the Harranians . . . worship idols and the stars.

2. It is written that when the languages of the tribes of the children of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, sons of Noah, were divided into all climes on the face of the earth, when they had occupied their regions and when each language, each people, and tribe had journeyed into whatever country of the earth, as we have described it, the people began to wage war against each other. Each tribe and each people selected for itself an army leader who led their troops and brought them into battle, marching at their head. It is said that at the end of some time, when some of the leaders of the warriors and the commanders of the troops returned victorious and triumphant to their country, their people, and their tribe, the people took them for lords because of their victory and erected to their renowned and celebrated leaders, for their exploits, their wars, and their success, idols bearing their names and their image, in order that these idols commemorate he who made these conquests for them and who returned to them victorious. Long afterward, they began to venerate them [the idols] and to offer them sacrifices, first as a witness of veneration for them and as a memorial of the victories that they had brought. Then, when bad things happened, when their enemies, wanting to avenge themselves, inflicted all sorts of evil and wounds, they came to these idols to plead for their help. It is

for this reason that, after a time, the veneration of idols was introduced even in the lifetime of the heroes.¹ Devils, according to what is written, spoke to men from inside these idols.

3. It is written that in the year 84 after the birth of Ar^cu,² ten years after the third thousand years, the first king who reigned over all the earth appeared at Babel, Nimrod, son of Canaan, son of Ham,³ the giant king, who reigned sixty-nine years. His crown was sewn and was not of gold. Nimrod built three cities, Arakh, Adja, and Kila,⁴ which is Edessa (ar-Roha), Nisibe, and Seleucia.⁵ In the hundredth year and one of Ar^cu, the Egyptians, following the Babylonians, gave themselves a king whose name was Manouphis,⁶ who reigned over them for sixty-eight years. He was called Mesraim after the name of Mesraim,⁷ their father. It is certain that it is from the name Mesraim that (Egypt) was called Misr.⁸

[Writing of the time of Abraham:]

4. At this time in Egypt reigned a king named Antoutis (Aphintos)⁹ for thirty-two years. He was the first who invented books, science, astronomy, [and] arithmetic from the books of the Chaldeans and the eastern sages and introduced them into Egypt.¹⁰ He learned the science of sorcery and magic.

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.
 2. Biblical Reu.
 3. According to Genesis 10:8, Nimrod was the son of Canaan's brother Cush. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.
 4. Biblical Erech, Accad, and Calah.
 5. The city could not have been named Seleucia until the time of the Greek-Syrian king Seleucus.
 6. Evidently derived from Egyptian *mn-nfr*, which in Greek is Memphis.
 7. Biblical Mizraim, from the Hebrew word for "Egypt," which is also the name of the Egyptians' eponymous ancestor, the son of Ham.
 8. Misr is the Arabic form; the Hebrew has the dual ending *-aim* because Egypt was considered to be two parts—upper and lower—joined together. For all of this, cf. Abraham 1:21–27.
 9. Several First Intermediate Period (Eleventh Dynasty) kings are named Intf, which might be the source of Antoutis. Aphintos seems to be a corruption of Phuntos from the *Book of the Bee*.
 10. Other traditions included in this collection say that it was Abraham who introduced astronomy into Egypt. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

EXTRACTS FROM SYMEON LOGOTHETES

The chronicle of Symeon Logothetes (mid-tenth century) has been published under various names, including Theodosios of Melitene (or Melissenos) and Leo the Grammarian. Symeon relies heavily on George Hamartolos (extracts of whose work are included in this collection) in his chronicle. Three versions of the chronicle have been preserved. Immanuel Bekker published a Greek edition in 1842. The selections below were translated by John Gee from *Leonis Grammatici Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1842), 18–20. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. When Ragau¹ became 132 years old, he begat Serouch.² At this time men, growing blind toward each other, appointed themselves generals and kings, and then, creating the first war machine, began to wage war on each other. And straightway those from Canaan were worsted and first fell under the yoke of slavery according to the curse of Noah.³ When Serouch became 130 years old, he begat Nechor.⁴ Serouch dwelt in the land of the Chaldeans and in the city Or.⁵ When Nachor grew, his father taught him all the interpretation of the omens and the distinguishing of all the signs in heaven and of all things on the earth,⁶ and all the Chaldean divination. And when Nachor was 89 years old, he begat Tharra.⁷ When Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians, was in the forty-sixth year of his reign, Abraham was born. He, marrying his own mother Semiramis,⁸ who is also

1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Serug.

3. See Genesis 9:24–26.

4. Biblical Nahor.

5. Biblical Ur.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

7. Biblical Terah.

8. The name Semiramis is thought by many scholars to derive from the name of the Babylonian Sammu-
amat, consort of an Assyrian king of the ninth century B.C.; see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvedt-
nes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

Rhea,⁹ built the city Nineveh, which is also called Ninus;¹⁰ whence comes a Persian¹¹ law to marry their own mothers and sisters, as Zeus did his own sister Hera. After him, his wife Semiramis ruled the Assyrians, who created the dikes because of flooding. According to their own records, it was the Sixteenth Dynasty among the Egyptians, during which time the Thebans ruled.¹²

2. When Tharra became seventy years old, he begat—from his wife, Edna, the daughter of Abraham, his uncle—Abraham, whom his mother called after the name of her own father; for it is said that he died before his birth. And Tharra yet begat Arran and Nachor.¹³ Abraham received from his father a wife, Sarra.¹⁴ He alone, of those everywhere suffering from the error of idols,¹⁵ recognized the true God. And Arran, taking a wife, begat a son, Lot, and a daughter, Melcham.¹⁶ This one Nachor took to wife for himself. Already when he was in his sixtieth year, Abraham, since he did not think his father to be persuaded and the others of the house being superstitiously aloof because of idols,¹⁷ secretly burned the shrine of the idols at night.¹⁸ When they were already utterly destroyed, realizing this, his brothers jumped up desiring to rescue the idols from the midst of the fire. Arran, the most vainglorious in offering up what was required, perished in the fire,¹⁹ and his father, burying him, being near the city of the Chaldeans, moved, uprooting all his household, to Harran of Mesopotamia. There, after living with his father fifteen years, one night Abraham pondered the movement of the stars, considering the quality of the affixed time, for he was thoroughly instructed in all such learning by his father.²⁰ And with the mastery of each thing sought after, he understands such needless questioning to be greater than the universe; for God could again, if he wished, change the fate prognosticated for the household. Therefore by means of all this, and all other such things, from all appointed souls²¹ and the perfections of reverence toward divine things giving proof, he heard from God: “Come forth out of thy land and from thy fa-

9. Rhea is a Greek goddess, wife of Chronos and mother of Zeus, who became head of the divine council on Mount Olympus.

10. Byzantine writers often identified Ninus with the biblical Nimrod; cf. Genesis 10:9–12, noting that Assur is Assyria and that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The name Ninus evidently derives from Ninua, the Assyrian name for Nineveh.

11. By the time this account was written, the Persians had conquered Babylon, which is the Babel founded by Nimrod or Ninus.

12. Currently, historians working with the Sixteenth Dynasty do not consider this information accurate.

13. Biblical Haran and Nahor.

14. Biblical Sarah.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

16. Biblical Milcah.

17. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

19. *Ibid.*, 29.

20. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

21. Cf. Abraham 3:21–24.

ther's house."²² And after he came forth with his wife, Sarra, and Lot, his nephew, he moved to the portion of his father Arphaxad, which the Canaanites who possessed it called the land of the Canaanites, being seventy-five years old.

3. All together the years until the sojourn of Abraham are as follows: The division of the earth happened at the beginning of the days of Phalek,²³ from the division of the earth 1,006 years, from the flood 1,015 years, and from Adam 3,277 years.

22. Citing Genesis 12:1.

23. Biblical Peleg.

EXTRACTS FROM IBN AL-TAYYIB

Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ṭayyib al-‘Irāqī (d. A.D. 1043), an Arabic Nestorian Christian theologian, lived and worked in Baghdad during the first half of the eleventh century. He was a doctor and philosopher as well as a priest and so wrote on medicine and philosophy as well as religion. He produced the largest collection of exegetical work on the scriptures in Christian Arabic literature, including a commentary on the book of Genesis in Arabic. The English translation used here is from the French and the Arabic (with a preference to the Arabic) and was prepared specially for this collection by John A. Tvedtnes from J. C. J. Sanders, *Ibn al-Ṭayyib: Commentaire sur la Genèse*, CSCO 274–75, *Scriptores Arabici* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1967), 24* and 25:54–59. For indexing purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

Section 6

1. *The sons of Ham* (comprised) thirty families. Their lot is in the southwest. The valiant Nimrod was one of them; he was blessed by God¹ and he fought those who built the Tower (of Babel)² in order that each of them go to the land that God had designated for him. The total (number) of the families of Noah is seventy-two; it is also said that they comprised the seventy-two languages that were separated at Babel. Nimrod was the first who reigned at Babel. The crown of his head was of woven material; thus it was not of gold. He built the cities of Orrhoa (Edessa), Nisibe, and the cities (Seleucia-Ctesiphon). Ninos, one of the sons of Nimrod, built Nineveh for himself. After Nimrod, Qoumberos reigned at Babylon for eighty-five years; he built cities in Babylonia. After him reigned Semarius;³ it is he who began to issue measures and weights. The brother of Terah, Hesron, slew him; this Hesron was a son of Nahor. Royalty disappeared from Babylon.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:26.

2. Usually, Nimrod is depicted as the one who ordered the construction of the Tower of Babel.

3. Though here a male, the name evidently corresponds to that of queen Semiramis, who is often associated with Nimrod in early Christian traditions. For some of these traditions, see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvedtnes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

2. Over Assyria reigned first Belos⁴ for sixty-two years; he constructed numerous cities. After him came Ninus who built Nineveh. The curse⁵ took effect on the posterity of Ham, and not on himself, for he had been previously blessed by God,⁶ by the blessing come upon him in the ark.

Section 7

[Regarding the building of the Tower of Babel:]

1. It is said that Eber, the father of Peleg, did not agree with them; also he kept his original language, that is, Hebrew.⁷ It is said that it was from the time of Sarug that idolatry began by the worship of idols.⁸ This is why his name is a name of nothing.⁹ Others say that the devils were held in the abyss from the time of Adam's sin until the days of Serug. We have an indication of that in the words that the devil addressed to the Lord from between the sepulchers: "*Don't send me to the abyss!*" God allowed the devils to leave the abyss to see if their opinion might not change, but on condition that they not introduce men to error.

2. Saint Ephrem says, "When the languages were divided and men were scattered on the earth, wars broke out between them, and those who fought in the first wars brought victory by making statues (of their leaders) in the guise of a memorial, but ultimately they even bowed down (before them). Thus the idols were made."¹⁰

3. Noah saw Abraham again¹¹ and told him the history of the tribes back to Adam¹² as he had heard it from his father Lamech. Noah died in the land of the Chaldeans at the age of 950 years, when Abraham was in his 58th year.¹³ Noah had seen eighteen generations.

4. God chose Abraham because of his faith and his righteousness; through him the people of Israel would be formed, from which would come the Messiah. *Ur* means the land of the Nabateans, that is, the cities (Seleucia-Ctesiphon), but in truth it is Kashkar.¹⁴ *Milcah*, the wife of Nahor, and *Iscah*, who is Sarah, are two sisters.¹⁵ According to the Expositor, they were the daughters of Haran, brother of Abraham's brother. According to Henana, they were the sisters of Lot. It was because of her beauty that Sarah is called Iscah. (But) the truth is that Sarah was the daughter of Haran, Abraham's uncle. Babai

4. The name corresponds to that of the god Baal (Bel).

5. Cf. Genesis 9:25; Abraham 1:21–27.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:26.

7. Cf. Ether 1:33–37.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

9. I.e., the name Serug has no etymology in Arabic.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:9; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

13. Sanders notes that he corrected the text's 250 years to 58.

14. The text replaces the Chaldeans of Genesis 11:28 with the later Nabateans.

15. Referring to Genesis 11:29.

the Persian says that Haran was the brother of Abraham and that he was older than him and than Nahor.

5. That Abraham supercedes these two is because of his virtue, as (in the case of) Judas who superseded his brothers, and (of) Jacob. In that case, Sarah is the daughter of Haran, the father of Lot, and Abraham is her paternal uncle. But the Scripture does not tell us of a brother of Terah named Haran. There was another Haran of whom Sarah was the daughter: Haran the younger; this is again evidenced by the word the servant addressed to Rebecca: *I am here to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son.*¹⁶

6. After he had taken Abraham up from Babel and from the land of the Nabateans, God did not ask him to remain in this place to accomplish his plan of salvation in this land,¹⁷ for Jerusalem is the center of the world and functions like the body's head; it is therefore in such a place that the true plan (of salvation) should be accomplished; it is there that the Lord would be crucified, for it is there that he should ascend to heaven to return thence. God made Abraham emigrate to distance him from his fathers and to end his contact with the beliefs of yore. Henana says that Abraham was a high priest and son of a high priest;¹⁸ he detested the beliefs of the Nabateans;¹⁹ the people of his region rose against him to chase him away after having inflicted on him all sorts of troubles.²⁰ With his father Terah he left for Mesopotamia. It is said, according to the scripture, that Terah begat Abraham in his 75th year²¹ and he died in his 205th year at Haran.²² (At that time) Abraham was thus 135 years old,²³ but how can the scripture maintain that *Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran?*²⁴ One can say (to that) that God already appeared to Abraham during his sojourn at Kashkar, thus before he left for the land of the Canaanites; for he and his father did not leave their land without being commanded by God; again: that he left for Canaan before the death of his father, when he was the age mentioned, but that he returned (to Kashkar) at the death of his father to emigrate another time at the age of 135 years.²⁵ Terah had already started for the promised land, and yet he remained at Haran, because his intention was not pure²⁶ like that of Abraham, who

16. Based on Genesis 24:48.

17. Meaning Syria.

18. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 18.

19. Sanders notes that these beliefs included the practice of astrology.

20. These troubles may have included an attempted sacrifice, but the text does not say so. The account is unusual in that Abraham is expelled by the people rather than commanded by God to depart, as in the Bible and other accounts (including what Ibn al-Ṭayyib has just said).

21. According to Genesis 11:26, he was seventy years of age. The author has evidently erred by taking Abraham's age (seventy-five years) at the time he left Haran from Genesis 12:4.

22. From Genesis 11:32.

23. Since Abraham died at the age of 175 (see Genesis 25:7), this statement would make Terah 40 years old when Abraham was born, which is contradicted by Genesis 11:26.

24. Citing Genesis 12:4.

25. The *Book of Jasher*, in this collection, also has Abraham emigrating to Canaan, then returning to Haran and leaving again for Canaan. See the note to *Jasher* 13:5.

26. Cf. Abraham 2:5.

was the first to turn away from the cultic objects, that is, the idols. Neither Nahor nor Bethuel nor Laban converted perfectly, even after having learned that God had helped Abraham so magnificently. But Lot had similar intentions to Abraham, so he left with him.²⁷ God appeared to Abraham (when he arrived) at Shechem because it was the center of the promised land. *Abraham called on the name of the Lord*²⁸ means he gave himself to God. *Bethel*²⁹ means “house of God.” *He left toward the south*:³⁰ he went toward a desolate land for fear of being deceived by the people of the land (where he was).

Section 8

1. The time when Pharaoh was seized—he and his people—with fever because he had taken Sarah (into his house) was when he tried to approach her; this was manifest to him in a dream; the illness (was of) the sciatic nerve. When Sarah was returned, Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, was given to her.

27. Referring to Genesis 12:4.

28. Citing Genesis 12:8.

29. Also mentioned in Genesis 12:8.

30. Citing Genesis 12:9.

EXTRACTS FROM
RUPERTUS TUITENSIS

Rupertus Tuitensis (ca. A.D. 1075–1129/30), also known as Rupert of Deutz, was a monastic theologian and a prolific author. These extracts are from two of his works and were written in Liege between 1111 and 1116. His Latin works were first published in the sixteenth century. The first part of the previously unpublished translation used here was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64). Edward Stratford translated the last paragraph of this selection from the same text.

De Trinitate et operibus ejus 42.5.2

Concerning Abraham, who (as the majority assert) by the help of God was rescued from Ur of the Chaldeans, that is, from the fire.

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’”¹

Abram, which means “exalted father,” was a Hebrew from Heber²—in whose house or rather family the primitive language was preserved, which was called Hebrew from then until now—born in the beginning of the 190th year from the birth of Phaleg,³ in whose days the earth was divided, therefore 292 years from the flood, the tenth generation from Sem,⁴ son of Noah. For Sem begat Arphaxad; Arphaxad begat Sale; Sale begat Heber; Heber begat Phaleg; Phaleg begat Reu; Reu begat Sarug; Sarug begat Nachor; Nachor begat Thare;⁵ and Thare begat Abram. Cainan, who, of course, is placed between Arphaxad and Sale by the evangelist Luke,⁶ is not in the Hebrew. This is, moreover, the reason the Hebrews pass down (and many distinguished men of the church assert it to be true) why such a man was not honored in his land, that is, in the land of the Chal-

1. Citing Genesis 12:1–3, Vulgate.

2. Biblical Eber.

3. Biblical Peleg.

4. Biblical Shem.

5. Biblical Terah.

6. Luke 3:36. The Hebrew text of Genesis 10:24 does not have this individual.

deans, is that Abram was sent to the fire because he did not want to worship the fire that the Chaldeans worshiped,⁷ and being rescued by the help of God, escaped the fire of idolatry,⁸ and this is what it says: “And Abram⁹ died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees”;¹⁰ because he apparently did not want to worship the fire, he was devoured.¹¹ For Abraham, they say, being surrounded by the same flames¹² was rescued by the help of God.¹³ Wherefore, later the Lord said to him: “I,” said the Lord, “am he who led thee from Ur of the Chaldeans.”¹⁴

Inevitably, they say, there is a question in that which is said thus “Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”¹⁵ If, therefore, Thara,¹⁶ the father of Abram, when he had heretofore been in the region of the Chaldeans, begat Abram at the age of 70 years old, and afterwards died in Haran at the the age of 205, how, now, after his death, when Abram departed from Haran, is he said to be 75 years old, when from the birth of Abram until the death of his father is thought to have been 135 years? Therefore, that tradition of the Hebrews is true, of which we spoke above, that Thare and his sons came out of the fire of the Chaldeans and that Abram was freed by the help of God, and from that moment the days of his life and the time of his life is reckoned. It could, however, be correctly understood, that Thare with all his possessions came to Haran immediately after persecution, and when he began for Chanaan¹⁷ he remained there. Abram, however, got out praising God that he was led out of his country and his kindred. Thus is the order of the story. (*PL*, 167:367–68)

Commentarium in Joannem 4

Did indeed Abraham never believe because of signs and omens? Did [Abraham] never, when God said to him, “Go out from your land and family, and I will bless you and multiply you, and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed,”¹⁸ did, I say, Abraham never say, “What sign do you show me whereby you teach this, or promise this to me that I may believe you?” What if you object to certain writings, which are not authentic, in accordance with which [Abraham] was carried out of the fire of the Chaldeans to be led out by divine providence,¹⁹ and you say that this was able to suffice

7. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

9. *Sic*. This is clearly a mistake by Rupertus or the editor for Aran or Haran.

10. Genesis 11:28 with a scribal error.

11. Cf. Abaham 1:11.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

14. Genesis 15:7.

15. Genesis 12:4.

16. Spelling change is in the original text.

17. Biblical Canaan.

18. Paraphrase of Genesis 12:1–3.

19. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

for him as a sign, say what signs and omens God showed to him, that having faith the brave [Abraham] permitted himself to be thrown into the fire?²⁰ What sign or omen did he accept? That God often promised seed, in which all the clans of the earth were blessed; was he not fixed by faith, did he neither take thought for his mortal body, and the sterility of Sarah? (*PL*, 169:384)

20. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

AN EXTRACT FROM
HUGH OF ST. VICTOR

Hugh of St. Victor (d. A.D. 1142) was a theologian who lived in the monastery of St. Victor in Paris, where he stayed from 1115 to his death. His writings cover subjects from geometry to grammar. His biblical commentaries emphasized historical study and a literal approach to the scriptures. His collected works were first published in 1518 in Latin. This previously unpublished translation from Hugh's *In ecclesiastem homiliae*, chapter 19, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 175:176.

And how many were there from the beginning, who desired to so turn to the contemplation of wisdom? First Abraham, that great patriarch, went out from the fire of the Chaldeans,¹ and turned to the contemplation of wisdom, and came into the land of visions, which God showed him,² and he saw the clarity of wisdom and was dignified.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

2. Cf. Abraham 2:15–19; 3–5.

AN EXTRACT FROM
HERVEUS BURGIDOLENSIS

Herveus Burgidolensis (fl. A.D. 1134), a monk revered for his theological prowess, lived in what is now France. Among other things, he wrote a commentary on Isaiah. This previously unpublished English translation was made by John Gee from the Latin text *Commentarium in Isaiam*, book 4, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 181:281, which, in turn, is based on a twelfth-century codex from an Austrian Cistercian monastery.

[Commenting on Isaiah 29:24:]

Because the poor were rejoicing in the Holy One of Israel,¹ and guarded against iniquity, he continued: “therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham.”² An old tradition, however, holds that the Chaldeans catapulted Abraham and Aram³ into the fire, which in their language is called Ur, and which they themselves did not want to worship.⁴ The Chaldeans, of course, worshiped fire. Therefore, Aram died there in Ur of the Chaldeans, and Abraham went out unharmed. Wherefore God also is said to have said: “I am he who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees,”⁵ that is, from the fire of the Chaldeans. Thus in the book of Ezra it is clearly said that the Lord freed Abraham “from the fire of the Chaldeans.”⁶ That was therefore said to commemorate this, so it is said: “thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham concerning the house of Jacob.”⁷

1. This is an allusion to Isaiah 29:19.

2. Isaiah 29:22.

3. Biblical Haran.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

5. Genesis 15:7.

6. Nehemiah 9:7–8. In the Vulgate, which is what Herveus is citing, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a single book.

7. Isaiah 29:22.

AN EXTRACT FROM
IOANNES ZONARAS

Ioannes Zonaras (d. after 1159), a twelfth-century Byzantine historian, theologian, high-ranking official, and canonist, became a monk in 1118. He had lost his position in the court of Alexios I after criticizing the emperor's taxation, spending, and military policies. Zonaras wrote commentaries on church fathers, hagiographies, and homilies. His chronicle is mostly based on written sources and was eventually translated into Church Slavonic. Jerome W. Basila edited the Greek text in 1557. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text published in *Ioannis Zonarae Annales*, ed. Maurice Pinder (Bonn: Weber, 1841), 1:33–34.

The forefather and patriarch of the family of the Hebrews, Abraham, became the greatest of his own nation, which was the tribe of the Chaldeans, being the tenth from Noah, years having passed since God flooded the entire earth with rain. He, being of impious ancestors, first recognized one God the creator of the universe, comprehending the creator from the creations,¹ and said upon him only must the honor be bestowed. Since there were therefore attacks against him among the Chaldeans,² he moved thence, knowing that God had commanded him, and possessed the land of Canaan. When a famine distressed, he moved on to Egypt. And since they marveled over his understanding, he taught the Egyptians arithmetic and about astronomy,³ for they were unlearned in these. For it is said that these things were imported from the Chaldeans to Egypt and from thence to Greece.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 4–5.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

EXTRACTS FROM MICHAEL THE SYRIAN

Michael the Syrian (A.D. 1126–99) was the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch from 1166 to 1199. The Syriac text of his *Chronicle* was first published in 1899, along with a French translation, by Jean-Baptist Chabot. John A. Tvedtnes made the English translation used here from the French in Jean-Baptiste Chabot, trans., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)* (1899; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), 1:21, 25–27, 33–34. We have numbered the paragraphs for reference purposes.

Book 2, Chapter 3

1. Ragau¹ begat Saroug² at the age of 132 years, according to the Syriac at the age of 52 years; he lived 339 years, and according to the Syriac, 239.

2. According to the Septuagint, the third millennium came to an end in Ragau's 74th year.

3. The Tower [of Babel] was constructed in the 70th year of Ragau; it was completed 40 years afterward, and men were dispersed across the surface of the earth. They increased in wars and struggles. The conquerers erected monuments of victory, and afterwards they worshiped these statues. Thus the worship of idols multiplied.³ The tower fell in Ragau's 110th year.

4. Nimrod, the first to reign at Babylon, was made prince in the 40th year of Ragau. When God sent the wind that overturned the tower and made it fall, Nimrod died in the tower.⁴

Book 2, Chapter 5

Caharon, brother of Terah, one day killed by stratagem Kisonos, king of Babylon, who was Parthian, and wanted to expel the Parthians from their own country. In another history, we find that he killed him because of a gold statue that he had removed from the house of Nahor, for Nahor was priest of the idol Cainan.⁵

1. Biblical Reu.

2. Biblical Serug.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

Book 2, Chapter 6

1. Thus died Nahor, and Abraham was born of Malkatoum. Twenty-two years later, Sara, daughter of Terah, was born of Zamrot.⁶ . . .

2. Abraham, at age fifteen, began on his own to pray and to worship God.⁷ He chased away the crows that had been sent by God upon the land of the Chaldeans to destroy and devour their seeds.⁸

3. At this time died Belos, the first king of the Assyrians. His son Ninus reigned fifty-two years.

4. This Ninus, second king of the Assyrians, built in the land a city that he called Ninus and that the Hebrews call Nineveh. He made a statue of his father Belos in molten gold and wrote upon it "Great God" and had it proclaimed throughout Assyria, and many worshiped it. After the construction of Nineveh were built Rahabot, Rasan, and Calneh.

5. Then Jerusalem was built by Melchizedek the Canaanite, who called it Oreb.

6. Abraham set fire to the temple of the idols that was at Ur of the Chaldeans. His brother Haron⁹ went in to extinguish it and to save the idols so they would not burn, and he was consumed.¹⁰

7. Abraham, at the age of sixty, brought his father Terah, his brother Nahor, and Lot, son of Haron, and they came to live in Harran for fourteen years; then he left his father at Harran and came into the land of Canaan.¹¹

Book 3, Chapter 1

1. Abraham went into Egypt at the age of 81 years. He begat Ishmael of Hagar. Ishmael lived 130 years, until the 62nd year of Jacob. At this period Samiram¹² began to reign over the Assyrians for 46 years, and she built mounds against the flood.¹³ In another place, we have found, regarding these mounds, that after the flood, men having multiplied on the earth, allowed themselves to go worship devils who gave oracles in the idols, the stars of the firmament, the birds, the animals, and even springs. They made statues to the dead, placing them atop their tombs, and worshiped them. Seeing such iniquity, God ordered a great tempest that destroyed the images of the demonic and perverse cults and buried them under the dust. There had been many mounds, and many villages

6. The Bible makes Abraham only ten years older than Sarah.

7. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

9. Biblical Haran.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

11. Cf. Abraham 2:14, which indicates that Abraham left Haran at the age of sixty-two.

12. The name Samiram is thought by many scholars to derive from the name of the Babylonian Sammuramat, consort of an Assyrian king of the ninth century B.C.; see Bruce W. Warren and John A. Tvednes, "In Search of Historic Nimrod," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA* 155 (November 1983).

13. I.e., if another flood should ever come, these mounds would serve to rescue the people. The same story is found in various early Jewish accounts.

with their inhabitants were thus buried beneath the mounds with the devils they adored. They are now enclosed therein and sometimes they appear atop these mounds to those who, in their errant ways, resort to them.¹⁴

2. Nevertheless, Samiram became the wife of Ninus, king of the Assyrians; she built mounds, in order to provide for humans refuges against the waters of the flood.

14. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

EXTRACTS FROM MICHAEL GLYCAS

Michael Glycas (fl. A.D. 1159–64) was a Byzantine historian deeply involved in the political intrigues of his day. His *Annals* condemned astrology, historical determinism, and all ancient philosophers except Aristotle. Parts of his chronicle borrow heavily from the *Physiologos*, a bestiary. His work has been well preserved. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text in *Michaelis Glycae Annales*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1836), 244. For reference purposes we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. After the building of the tower, as is told, having spread out thence, and from there men plunged headlong into unnatural acts, and at last were led away to idolatry, the wretches being deceived this way by their demons. For the eighth from Noah, Serouch¹ found those of the images from the beginning; for he is said to honor those who showed whatever brilliant work in statues and stelae. After that, since they were ignorant of the opinions of the ancestors and because they set up statues for a memorial, little by little they were led astray by the conspiracy of the chief of evil, so that they made offerings to the immortal gods who had similar passions, and to corruptible men (and invented offerings to them), and to animals possessed by demons. Hence the human race worshiped various other gods.² The Egyptians more than others were driven headlong into atheism; for they revered cats and apes, and goats, likewise, and bulls, and crocodiles.³ Most of all, they revered the Apis,⁴ which was a variegated bull himself. For when such a bull was born with these, and bearing a seal in the tongue and in the tail, with the moon in the forehead as if a divided copy, they danced joyously and celebrated, since a god dwelt anew among them. And it was thus with them.

1. Biblical Serug.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 1, figure 9.

4. The Apis (the Greek form of Egyptian Hapi) was a bull who was worshiped in the area of Memphis. His movements were used for oracular purposes. After the burial of the Apis bull, at the Serapeum at Memphis, a new bull with the same markings was sought out and, when found, was installed amid great celebration.

2. The eighth from Noah is said to be Serouch, for Cainan begat Sala; Sala, Eber; Eber, Phalek; Phalek, Ragau; and Ragau, Serouch. This Serouch begat Nachor; Nachor, Thara;⁵ and Thara the divine Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; Isaac, Jacob; and Jacob, the twelve patriarchs: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and the rest, from whom descended the twelve tribes of Israel. And Josephus said the following about Abraham, that when he went down into Egypt, he began to give them mathematics and taught them about astronomy.⁶ For before Abraham went there, the Egyptians were ignorant about such things. Therefore these things were transplanted from the Chaldeans to Egypt, and from there to Greece. Georgios⁷ passed that story down and this: When Abraham was fourteen years old, he began to know God, and first preached God the creator. For when he saw the heavens, first the lights, then the zodiac, he said to himself: "Even if others worship that, it is not God." He said the same thing about the sun, the moon, and the rest of the stars. For he was a consummate astronomer.⁸ Therefore, seeing such things, God called him. But also he says that at the time of Abimelech he went down into Egypt because of the famine, and he shamed the wise and those who believed in fate. For after knowing God, he no longer desired to heed the stars, and thereby fulfilling the word which was spoken by the apostle: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen."⁹ For the most godly Abraham comprehended the God who created from the things created. Therefore Plutarch also said: "He received the understanding of God; for the sun and moon and the rest of the stars retained under the earth likewise rise with their same colors and magnitudes, and in their own places."

3. Abraham was a great man, for hearing God saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and come into a land that I will show thee,"¹⁰ he obeyed immediately, ignoring all the difficulties in the meantime, and not knowing where he was going. But we, when we each call, and hearing the Lord, we want neither to divest ourselves of earthly things, nor to come to that land of promise.

5. For this genealogy in the Bible, see Genesis 11:10–15. Note that Cainan is not included in Genesis. Sala is biblical Salah; Phalek, Peleg; Ragau, Reu; Serouch, Serug; Nachor, Nahor; and Thara, Terah.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

7. I.e., George Hamartolos.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

9. Citing Romans 1:20.

10. Citing Genesis 12:1.

EXTRACTS FROM PETRUS COMESTOR

A native of Troyes, Petrus (Peter) Comestor (d. A.D. 1178) was a biblical scholar and chancellor of Notre Dame of Paris. The *Historia scholastica* was his best-known work, an unbroken history from the creation to the ascension. He relied heavily on the scriptures, making literal and allegorical interpretations in accordance with contemporary scientific thinking. His work was first printed around 1473 in Strasbourg. The previously unpublished translation used here, from *Historia scholastica, in actus apostolorum*, chapter 32, was made by John Gee from the Latin text published in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64), 198:1663–64.

[Discussing the speech of Stephen in Acts 6–7:]

“Men,” he said, “brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,¹ and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred.”² A third item is added in Genesis, “and from thy father’s house,”³ but it is omitted by Stephen because he was speaking to those who knew [the scripture]; therefore, he touched on the history briefly or went on as though it were noted. But it is clear that it is accompanied by the book of Genesis, where it is seen to continue how after the death of his father, that is, Thare,⁴ it was said that he, that is, Abraham, after which he continued because he [Thare] died in Charan,⁵ where also his son lived with him, and therefore it is said in Charan. Which is therefore what this says, before he died in Charan, it could be said of him in both cases. For example, where it says “and said unto him,”⁶ supply “after that he was in Charan.” But whether it was in Mesopotamia, or in Charan, or wherever it was said to him, the question is just how it was said to him, “Get thee out of thy country.”⁷ Did he not therefore go out of Chaldea? Certainly, but hitherto he had faith, and was restored by the desire.

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1. Biblical Haran.
 2. Citing Acts 7:2–3, which in turn cites Genesis 12:1.
 3. Citing Genesis 12:1.
 4. Biblical Terah.
 5. The change in spelling is in the original.
 6. Citing Acts 7:3, which cites Genesis 12:1.
 7. Ibid.

The injunction to him was therefore to go out in mind, and then he went out in body. Or it could be said that both Mesopotamia and Charan are in Chaldea, and therefore, he went out of Chaldea, that is, from that part of Chaldea, and he came into Mesopotamia, in another part of Chaldea, and thence he came in Charan which previously was Mesopotamia. "Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans,"⁸ and from Mesopotamia so far as it says "and from thence,"⁹ because it apparently is said twice, "and came afterwards in Charan."¹⁰ And then similarly from Charan, "when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."¹¹ Or rather, he went from the land of the Chaldeans in mind, and then, that is, eventually, that is to say after the resignation of his will, after the death of his father, he moved into this land. Or if it is read to say he came in Charan, as this writing plainly reads. And see because in Hebrew it is said "from Ur of the Chaldees," that is, "from the fire of the Chaldeans."¹² And the Hebrews pass on the tradition that because Thare, and his sons, when they were in Chaldea, did not want to worship the fire,¹³ they were thrown into the fire by the Chaldeans, and Aram,¹⁴ the brother of Abraham was burned. Abraham was truly rescued by the Lord.¹⁵ Therefore he was told by the Lord, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees."¹⁶

8. Citing Acts 7:4.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Citing Genesis 11:28.

13. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

14. Biblical Haran.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

16. Citing Genesis 15:7.

EXTRACTS FROM GEORGIUS CEDRENUS

Georgius Cedrenus was a twelfth-century Byzantine historian. His *Historiarum Compendium* is based on earlier chronographers such as George Hamartolos, Theophanes, and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros; he also cites Josephus and *Jubilees* as well as the Bible. His passages about Abraham are often direct quotations of Symeon Logothetes' treatment of the same subject, which is included earlier in this volume. This previously unpublished translation from his *Compendium* used here is by John Gee from the original Greek text edited by Immanuel Bekker, *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae Ope* (Bonn: Weber, 1838), 1:47–50. The reference numbers in parentheses are from the Greek edition. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs.

1. (26B) When Seruch was one hundred thirty years old, he begat Nachor.¹ Seruch lived in the land of the Chaldeans, in the city of Or. (26C) When Nachor grew, his father taught him all the interpretation of all omens, and the distinguishing of all the signs in heaven and of all things on the earth, and all the Chaldean divination. When Nachor was eighty-nine years old, he begat Tharra. When Ninus, the first king of the Assyrians, was in his forty-third year, Abraham was born. During those years, it was the Sixteenth Dynasty to the Egyptians, during which the Thebans ruled. When Tharra was eighty years old, he begat from his wife Edna (the daughter of Abraham, his uncle) Abraham, whom his mother called with the name of her own father; for she said that he died before his birth. Tharra also begat Aram² and Nachor. Abraham received a wife, Sarra, from his father.³ (26D) He alone, of those everywhere suffering from the error of idols, recognized the true God and preached the Creator of all things. And he first encircled the altar with palm and olive branches,⁴ and by him first is the angel in holy scripture named.

1. Biblical Serug and Nahor.

2. This seems to be a corruption of Arran, the form of Haran found in the Septuagint.

3. Cf. Abraham 2:2.

4. The same information is given in the account of Syncellus, which is included earlier in this collection. Abraham's actions suggest the Jewish circumambulation of the altar with palm fronds at the Feast of Tabernacles. In the Bodleian Aramaic Fragment (col. c) and 4QTL^{vi} ar (MS B, Frag. 1) of *Testament of Levi* 9:11, as part of Levi's initiation into the priesthood, Abraham taught him the use of sacred woods at the altar, including the palm and the cedar. See also Abraham's instructions to Isaac in *Jubilees* 21:12–14 and cf. Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:2. For Abraham and the priesthood, see Abraham 1:3, 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 3; Facsimile 3, figure 1; Doctrine and Covenants 84:14.

And from him, the Egyptians learned the position and creation of the stars, and the arithmetical science.

2. For in the twenty-fourth year of his life, Abraham discovered and worshiped the God of the universe. The angel of the Lord taught him the Hebrew language, as that same angel told Moses, and as is written in the book of *Jubilees*. (27A) And Aram, taking a wife, begot Lot, and a daughter Melcha. This one Nachor took to wife.⁵

3. Already when he was in his sixtieth year,⁶ Abraham, since he did not think his father to be persuaded and the others of his house being superstitiously aloof because of idols, secretly burned the shrine of the idols at night. When they were utterly destroyed, realizing [this], his brothers jumped up, desiring to rescue the idols from the midst of the fire. The most ambitious one in offering to the things, Aram, perished in the fire.⁷ After his idol-making father buried him in Or, (27B) the city of the Chaldeans, he moved, and came to Harran of Mesopotamia. Thence, after living with his father fifteen years, one night Abraham was pondering the quality of the affixed time of the movement of the stars, for he was thoroughly instructed in all such learning by his father. And with the mastery of each thing sought after, he understands such needless questioning to be greater than the universe, for God could again, if he wished, change the fate prognosticated for the household. Therefore, by means of this and all other such things, from all appointed souls and study, and the perfection of reverence toward divine things giving the proof, he heard from God: (27C) "Come forth out of thy land and from thy kindred and from thy father's house."⁸ And after he came forth with his wife, Sarra, and Lot, his nephew, he moved to Arphaxad, the portion of his father, which the Canaanites, possessing, called the land of the Canaanites, being seventy-five years old and in the 3,387th year of the world. When Abraham came to Sechem,⁹ according to the oracle of God, he established an altar between Bethel and Hai.¹⁰ Having crossed the Euphrates, he received his surname, for those who cross are called Hebrews, but those who are descendants of Hebir say that they themselves are called Hebrews. And in his eighty-first year, which was the seventh year of his sojourn, (27D) he went down to Egypt with Sarra.

4. At this time Melchizedek, a virgin priest without genealogy, flourished, foreshadowing by bread and wine the bloodless sacrifice of Christ, our God. Melchizedek was the son of the king of Sidon, the son of Egypt, who also built the city of Sidon. Fatherless and motherless and without genealogy means that he does not descend from the Jewish genealogy, and because his parents, being wicked, are not counted among the pious. And because being a leader of the Canaanites, he ruled Jerusalem, for *melchi* means king, and *zedek*, righteous. And Jerusalem is also the name of the town, (28A) originally being

5. Cf. Abraham 2:2.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:14. Note that Cedrenus places Abraham's age as sixty when he went to Haran, while the Book of Abraham places his age as sixty-two when he left Haran.

7. Contrast Abraham 2:1.

8. Cf. Abraham 2:3, 6.

9. Cf. Abraham 2:18.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:20.

called Jebus, because the Jebusites lived in it. For Jebus, by change of the *b* into an *r*, becomes Jeru; and the Salem being added, completes the name Jerusalem. For *salem* means peace. And it was called this because Melchizedek worshiped God in it, or because the temple will be in the place of God. And this is also upon the Jordan; for two rivers, both the Jor and the Dan, are mixed, and the one resultant river also carries the combined name. Because Melchizedek derives from a gentile nation and not from Abraham, it is not written that he was ever born and from what father and mother, or that he ever died; it may be justly said that he had neither beginning of days or end of years; for he is not able to be genealogized, having descended from nations left out.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF THE BEE

The *Book of the Bee*, written in Syriac by the Armenian-born bishop Shelemon (Solomon) of Basra (fl. A.D. 1222), uses the Bible and early commentaries on the Bible. It is closely related to other texts included in this collection, the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, the *Book of the Rolls*, and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. The English translation used here is taken from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1886); Budge used manuscripts in London, Munich, and Oxford (the Oxford manuscript is an Arabic version). The numbers following each entry are the pages from which the information was taken. We have removed the diacritics from the text.

Chapter 23

Serug was a hundred and thirty years old, and begat Nahor; the sum of his years was a hundred and thirty years. In the days of Serug, men worshipped idols and graven images.¹ Nahor was seventy and nine years old, and begat Terah; the sum of his years was one hundred and forty-eight. In the days of Nahor magic began in the world. And God opened the storehouse of the winds and whirlwinds, and they uprooted the idols and graven images, and they collected them together and buried them under the earth, and they reared over them these mounds that are in the world.² This was called “the Wind Flood.” Terah was seventy years old, and begat Abraham; the sum of his years was one hundred and five years. (39–41)

Chapter 25

Terah the father of Abraham took two wives; the one called Yona, by whom he begat Abraham; the other called Shelmath, by whom he begat Sarah. Mar Theodore says that Sarah was the daughter of Abraham’s uncle, and puts the uncle in the place of the father. When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God commanded him to cross the river Euphrates and to dwell in Harran. And he took Sarah his wife and Lot his nephew, and crossed the river Euphrates and dwelt in Harran. (42)

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.
2. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

Chapter 30

When Adam and Eve went forth from Paradise, Adam, as if knowing that he was never to return to his place, cut off a branch from the tree of good and evil—which is the fig-tree—and took it with him and went forth; and it served him as a staff all the days of his life. After the death of Adam, his son Seth took it, for there were no weapons as yet at that time. This rod was passed on from hand to hand unto Noah, and from Noah to Shem; and it was handed down from Shem to Abraham as a blessed thing from the Paradise of God.³ With this rod Abraham broke the images and graven idols which his father made,⁴ and therefore God said to him, “Get thee out of thy father’s house,” etc. It was in his hand in every country as far as Egypt, and from Egypt to Palestine. (50)

3. In Jewish tradition, the rod is seen as a symbol of authority, passed down by the patriarchs. Thus, one could suggest that the transmission of the rod represents the transmission of priesthood authority. Cf. Abraham 1:2–3, 9, 18; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

EXTRACTS FROM BAR HEBRAEUS

Gregory Yuhanna Abū al-Faraj (A.D. 1226–86), better known as Bar Hebraeus (meaning “son of a Hebrew”), was said to be the son of a Jewish convert to Christianity. Like Simeon Logothetes, he was born in Melitene in modern Turkey. Traveling widely, he studied other faiths and religions as well as all the sciences and wrote extensively. When the Tartars attacked Melitene in 1243, he left Melitene, settling in Antioch in 1244. In 1252, he became archbishop of Aleppo, and after the Tartars sacked that city, he became Maphryono (or Catholicos) of the East in 1264. Among his many works is a chronology of the world in Syriac, *Makhtbānuth Zavneʿ*, which he was translating into Arabic at the time of his death. A critical text of this work was produced in 1890 and first translated into English in 1932. Here, we extract portions of that work from the English translation by E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Chronography of Gregory Abūʿl Faraj the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 8–10. For reference purposes, we have numbered the paragraphs. We have removed the diacritics and small capitals in the selections.

1. And in the seventieth year of Reu the building of the Great Tower in the land of Seʿnar (Shinar) began, and Nemrodh (Nimrod), the son of Kush fed the builders on the beasts which he hunted. And forty years after the Tower was finished God sent a wind and the Tower was overturned, and Nemrodh died in it.¹ It was he who after the Flood reigned in Babil. . . .

2. After Reu [came] Serugh his son. When he was one hundred and thirty years old he begot Nahor, and all [the days of] his life were three hundred and thirty years. Now in his days money and [women’s] chains (i.e. jewellery) appeared from Ophir. And men made idols for the devils, and they relied for help upon demons.² . . .

3. After Serugh [came] Nahor his son. . . .

4. And there rose up also a sixth king in Egypt, Pharaoh ʿApintos; [he reigned] thirty and two years. This king sent to Kasaronos, the Parthian king, and he brought the writings and the doctrine (religion?) of the Chaldees to Egypt.³ And ʿApintos⁴ also built a city

1. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:8, 20.

4. The name is the same as that used by Michael the Syrian. This name may be related to the ruler Pontipos mentioned in the Armenian *Question*.

on the river Nile, and he named it “Babhulon,”⁵ that is to say Babel. And Asaph also saith that in the days of Tarh the Egyptians learned Chaldeeism, and they made an image of gold in honour of Kinos, the idol.⁶

5. After Nahor [came] Tarh⁷ his son. When he was seventy years old he begot Abraham; and all [the days of] his life was [*sic were*]⁸ two hundred and seventy-five years. And in the fifth year of Tarh a fifth king rose up in Babil,⁹ ‘Arpazadh;¹⁰ [he reigned] eighteen years, and then the kingdom of Babil came to an end for seven years, until Bilos (Belus), the Assyrian, rebelled against the Chaldeans. And he made war upon them and upon the Medes and conquered them, and he reigned over Assyria and Babil, and over the whole of Asia, with the exception of India, for sixty and two years. . . .

6. After Tarh (Terah) [came] Abraham his son. He was one hundred years old when he begot Isaac; all [the days of] his life were one hundred and seventy-five years. And when Abraham was fifteen years of age he entreated God and drove away the ‘*karḳasê*’ (ravens? locusts?) which were destroying the country of the Chaldeans and eating up their crops.¹¹ At this time Bilos (Belus) died, and a second king rose up in Assyria, viz. his son Ninos (Ninus). . . .

7. And Abraham burned the temple of idols which was in Ur of the Chaldees, and Haran his brother went to quench the fire, and he was burned to death therein.¹² And for this reason Abraham, when he was sixty years old, fled to Harran with Tarh his father, and Nahor his brother, and Lot the brother of Haran, who was burnt to death; and he dwelt therein for fourteen years. And then he departed from his father from Harran and came to the land of Canaan. And in his seventy-first year the war of Kardl‘mar (Chedarlaomer) took place.¹³ And when he was eighty and five years old, that is to say in the first year of the promise concerning Egypt, he begot Ishmael by Hagar. . . .

8. And a tenth king rose up in Egypt, Parandos, the Theban; he reigned forty and three years. And after him rose up in Egypt the eleventh king, Pharaoh Panos.¹⁴ This king snatched from Abraham his wife Sara, and he returned her to him afterwards with gold, and silver, and stuffs, and sent him away from Egypt.

5. Biblical Babylon. However, the Babylon in Egypt (Old Cairo) is distinct from the one in Mesopotamia.

6. In other Christian texts, this idol is called Cainan. Nibley suggested comparing this name with that of the god Elkenah in Abraham 1:6–7, 13, 17, 20, 29; 2:13; 3:20. See Hugh Nibley, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price,” *Improvement Era* 72/8 (1969): 85.

7. Biblical Terah.

8. Our insertion.

9. Biblical Babel.

10. Biblical Arphaxad.

11. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5, 17.

12. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29; 2:1.

13. This war, recorded in Genesis 14, took place after Abraham had already left Haran and had been to Egypt and returned to the land of Canaan. Bar Hebraeus makes Abraham seventy-one years of age at the time of this war and sixty when he went to Haran. This suggests indirect support for Abraham 2:14, which makes him sixty-two when he left Haran, as opposed to the seventy-five years of Genesis 12:4. In *Conflict of Adam and Eve* IV, 1:6 (included in this collection), he was seventy years of age at the time. The book of *Jasher* has him leaving Haran more than once, the last time at age seventy-five (*Jasher* 13:26).

14. Neither Parandos nor Panos is attested in Egyptian inscriptions.

AN EXTRACT FROM
NICOPHORUS GREGORAS

The Byzantine historian Nicophorus Gregoras (A.D. 1290?–1360?) was one of the most versatile scholars of the fourteenth century, writing history, hagiography, mathematics, astronomy, and other scientific works. His calendar reforms presaged the Gregorian reform of 1582 but were not adopted. Gregoras also rejected historical determinism. Jerome W. Basila first brought the Greek text of Gregoras's *Historiae Byzantinae* to light in 1562, but publication of the work did not begin until 1829 and was not completed until 1855. A German translation was produced from 1973 to 1988. The previously unpublished English translation used here was made by John Gee from the Greek text in *Nicophori Gregorae Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1829–55), 3:125–26.

For Abraham the patriarch was crowned not for being executed,¹ but because he became faithful to God. And the other holy fathers and those with them, concerning all of whom Paul said that time would fail him to tell of,² were perfected without the shedding of blood, but by faith, and until now they are wondered at, because they were prepared to endure even death because of their piety toward God.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

2. Referring to Hebrews 11:32.

EXTRACTS FROM THE KEBRA NAGAST

The *Kebra Nagast*, or the “Glory of the Kings [of Ethiopia],” is a fourteenth-century Ethiopic document that claims to be based on an earlier Coptic text supposedly translated into Ethiopic by a man named Isaac. The colophons of manuscripts of the text held in the British Museum, Oxford, and Paris claim that an Arabic version was translated from Coptic in the 409th “year of mercy,” when Gabra Maskal (also called Lalibala) was king of Ethiopia (1314–44). The work was known in Western Europe by the sixteenth century, but the first reference to the text in a European language was published by James Bruce in 1813 and consisted only of a summary of the book’s contents. The translation used here is the first in English; E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London: Medici Society, 1922). The page numbers are indicated following each entry, and we have removed all diacritics.

Chapter 12

And after the death of Shem Arphaxad reigned, and after the death of Arphaxad Kaynan (Cainan) reigned, and after the death of Kaynan Sala (Salah) reigned, and after him Eber reigned, and after him Palek (Peleg) reigned, and after him Ragaw (Reu) reigned, and after him Seroh (Serug) reigned, and after him Nakhor (Nahor) reigned, and after him Tara (Terah) reigned. And these are they who made magical images, and they went to the tombs of their fathers and made an image (or, picture) of gold, and silver, and brass,¹ and a devil used to hold converse with them out of each of the images of their fathers, and say unto them, “O my son So-and-so, offer up unto me as a sacrifice the son whom thou lovest.” And they slaughtered their sons and their daughters to the devils, and they poured out innocent blood to filthy devils.² (9)

Chapter 13

And Tara (Terah) begot a son and called him “Abraham” (or, Abram). And when Abraham was twelve years old his father Terah sent him to sell idols.³ And Abraham said, “These are not gods that can make deliverance”; and he took away the idols to sell even

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 11.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17, 27.

as his father had commanded him. And he said unto those unto whom he would sell them, "Do ye wish to buy gods that cannot make deliverance, [things] made of wood, and stone, and iron, and brass, which the hand of an artificer hath made?"⁴ And they refused to buy the idols from Abraham because he himself had defamed the images of his father. And as he was returning he stepped aside from the road, and he set the images down, and looked at them, and said unto them, "I wonder now if ye are able to do what I ask you at this moment, and whether ye are able to give me bread to eat or water to drink?" And none of them answered him, for they were pieces of stone and wood; and he abused them and heaped revilings upon them, and they spake never a word. And he buffeted the face of one, and kicked another with his feet, and a third he knocked over and broke to pieces with stones,⁵ and he said unto them, "If ye are unable to deliver yourselves from him that buffeted you, and ye cannot requite with injury him that injureth you, how can ye be called 'gods'? Those who worship you do so in vain, and as for myself I utterly despise you, and ye shall not be my gods." Then he turned his face to the East, and he stretched out his hands and said, "Be Thou my God, O Lord, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Creator of the sun and the moon, Creator of the sea and the dry land, Maker of the majesty of the heavens and the earth, and of that which is visible and that which is invisible; O Maker of the universe, be Thou my God. I place my trust in Thee, and from this day forth I will place my trust in no other save Thyself." And then there appeared unto him a chariot of fire which blazed,⁶ and Abraham was afraid and fell on his face on the ground; and [God] said unto him, "Fear thou not, stand upright." And He removed fear from him. (9–10)

Chapter 14

And God held converse with Abram, and He said unto him, "Fear thou not. From this day thou art My servant, and I will establish My Covenant with thee and with thy seed after thee, and I will multiply thy seed, and I will magnify thy name exceedingly. And I will bring down the Tabernacle of My Covenant upon the earth seven generations after thee, and it shall go round about with thy seed, and shall be salvation unto thy race; and afterwards I will send My Word for the salvation of Adam and his sons for ever. And at this moment these who are of thy kinsmen are evil men (or, rebels), and My divinity, which is true, they have rejected. And as for thee, that day by day they may not seduce thee, come, get thee forth out of this land, the land of thy fathers, into the land which I will show thee, and I will give it unto thy seed after thee." And Abram made obeisance to God, and was subject to his God.⁷ And [God] said unto him, "Thy name shall be Abraham"; and He gave him the salutation of peace and went up into heaven. And Abraham returned to his abode, and he took Sara (Sarah) his wife, and went forth and did not go back to his father, and his mother, and his house, and his kinsfolk; and he for-

4. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:7.

7. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

sook them all for God's sake. And he arrived in the city of Salem, and dwelt there and reigned in righteousness, and did not transgress the commandment of God. (10–11)

Chapter 82

And we could also inform you that when God had given unto Abraham glory and riches, he lacked a son. And Sarah and Abraham talked together on their bed, and he said unto her, "Thou art barren," and she said unto him, "It is not I who am barren but thyself"; and they continued to discuss the matter and to dispute together about it. And there came a famine in the land of Canaan, and Abraham heard that there was some food in the land of Egypt, the country of Pharaoh. And when he had spent all his possessions in charity to the poor during the days of the famine,⁸ without providing for the morrow, the famine waxed strong in the land of Canaan, and he lacked food to eat. And he said, "I give thanks unto God that what He hath given unto me I have expended on my servants. But as for thee, my sister Sarah, come, let us go into the land of Egypt in order to save ourselves from death by famine." And she said unto him, "Thy will be done, O my lord, and if thou die I will die with thee, and if thou live I will live with thee; it is not for me to gainsay thy word for ever." And then they rose up and set out on their journey.

And when they drew nigh [to Egypt] Abraham said unto Sarah, "One thing I must ask of thee, and do thou what I ask of thee"; and Sarah said, "Speak, my lord." And he said unto her, "I have heard that the habits of the Egyptians are lawless, and that they live in idolatry⁹ and fornication. And when they have seen thee they will plot evil against me, and slay me because of the goodliness of thy beautiful form; for there is among them no one that can be compared unto thee. And now, in order that thou mayest save my life, do thou say, if they happen to ask thee questions about me, 'I am his sister,' so that thou mayest save my soul from death by the hand of the strangers." And Sarah said, "Thy will shall be done. The word which thou tellest me I will speak, and what thou tellest me to do I will do." And they wept and worshipped God, and they came into the great city of the King of Egypt.

And when the Egyptians saw Abraham and Sarah they marvelled at the beauty of their appearance, for they imagined that they had been brought forth by the same mother. And they said unto Abraham, "What is this woman to thee?" And Abraham said unto them, "She is my sister." And they also asked Sarah "What is this man to thee?" And she said unto them, "He is my brother." Therefore did the people make a report to Pharaoh that a pair of goodly form had arrived, one a woman and the other a young man, and that there was no one like unto them in all the land. And Pharaoh rejoiced, and he sent a message to Abraham, saying, "Give me thy sister that I may betroth her to myself." And Abraham pondered in his mind, saying, "If I keep her back he will kill me and take her"; and he said, "Do so, provided that thou dost make me well content." And Pharaoh gave him one thousand silver *aflâhet*, and took Sarah to make her his wife. And he brought

8. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:11; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

her into his house, and set her upon his bed and Pharaoh the King of Egypt would have companied with her. But the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him by night carrying a sword of fire, and he drew nigh unto him, and he lighted up the whole chamber with his fiery flame, and he wished to slay Pharaoh. And Pharaoh fled from one wall of the chamber to the other, and from one corner of the chamber to the other; wheresoever he went the Angel followed him; and there was no place left whereto he could flee and hide himself. Then Pharaoh stretched out his hands and said unto the Angel, "O lord, forgive me this my sin." And the Angel said unto him, "Why dost thou attack the wife of [another] man?" And Pharaoh said unto him, "O lord, slay thou not innocent blood. For he said unto me 'She is my sister,' and therefore I took her to myself innocently. What shall I do to deliver myself from thy hands?" And the Angel said unto him, "Give Abraham's wife back to him, and give him a gift, and send him away to his own country." And straightway Pharaoh called Abraham, and gave unto him his wife Sarah, together with a handmaiden whose name was 'Agar (Hagar), and he gave unto him gold, and silver, and costly apparel, and sent him away in peace.

And Abraham and his wife returned to their country in peace. And Sarah said unto Abraham, "I know that I am barren. Go thou in to this my handmaiden whom Pharaoh gave unto me; peradventure God will give thee seed in her." (141–43)

Chapter 105

And thou dost not understand that they were justified by faith—Abraham, and David and all the Prophets, one after the other, who prophesied concerning the coming of the Son of God. And Abraham said, "Wilt Thou in my days, O Lord, cast Thy word upon the ground?" And God said unto him, "By no means. His time hath not yet come, but I will shew thee a similitude of His coming. Get thee over the Jordan, and dip thyself in the water as thou goest over, and arrive at the city of Salem, where thou shalt meet Melchizedek, and I will command him to show thee the sign and similitude of Him." And Abraham did this and he found Melchizedek, and he gave him the mystery of the bread and wine, that same which is celebrated in our Passover for our salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the desire and the joy of Abraham as he went round the altar which Melchizedek had made, carrying branch and palm on the day of the Sabbath.¹⁰ See how he rejoiced in his belief, and see how he was justified by his belief." (200)

10. The same information is given in the account of Syncellus, which is included earlier in this collection. Abraham's actions suggest the Jewish circumambulation of the altar with palm fronds at the Feast of Tabernacles. In the Bodleian Aramaic Fragment (col. c) and 4QTL^v ar (MS B, Frag. 1) of *Testament of Levi* 9:11, as part of Levi's initiation into the priesthood, Abraham taught him the use of sacred woods at the altar, including the palm and the cedar. See also Abraham's instructions to Isaac in *Jubilees* 21:12–14 and cf. Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:2. For Abraham and the priesthood, see Abraham 2:9, 11; Facsimile 2, figure 1; Doctrine and Covenants 84:14.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE ETHIOPIC STORY OF JOSEPH

The Ethiopic document known as *Zênâhu La-Yosêf* (Story of Joseph) was discovered in a manuscript at the Dabra Bizon monastery near the Red Sea. The manuscript dates to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, but the translator of the text postulates a late Second Temple period Jewish provenance for the work. The manuscript came to the attention of Western scholarship in 1973, although a translation was not actually published until 1990. The work gives a more theatrical version of the biblical story of Joseph. The brief passage cited here is from the English translation by E. Isaac, "The Ethiopic *History of Joseph*: Translation with Introduction and Notes," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 6 (April 1990): 50. Although we have written this selection out as prose, the translator has it in verse.

[From the prayer Joseph offered when cast by his brothers into the pit:]
You are the Lord who saved your servant Abraham, from Nimrod's fire and judgment.¹

1. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

EXTRACTS FROM
BAKHAYLA MIKA'EL (ZOSIMAS)

The *Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth* was authored by Bakhayla Mîkâ'êl, also known as Zôsîmâs. Two Ethiopic clerics of that name are known, one from the thirteenth century and one from the fifteenth century. Though this unique manuscript (now housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris) first came to light between 1633 and 1637, it was not given much attention. The manuscript has many lacunae and unintelligible words, partly because of later damage, but, fortunately, a copy of it was made in 1670. This and the original served as the basis for the first English translation, used here: E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and Other Works of Bakhayla Mîkâ'êl (Zôsîmâs)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 33–34. The number following the folio number denotes the column; in Budge's edition, these numbers are run into the text. We have removed Budge's diacritics and small capitals.

Folio 16b.1. And at a subsequent period Abraham the believer was famous. On the day of his birth the house shone with a bright light. Very many things (*or*, persons) fell down,

Folio 16b.2. and there was an outcry in a mighty voice, which said, "Woe is me! Woe is me! There hath just been born him that shall crush my Kingdom to dust." And [he who uttered] the voice wept, and described events which would take place, and said, "This is he who shall overturn my habitation."

And among [those present] there were some who said, "Kill this child forthwith"; and those who said this knew full well that [divine] grace would be given to Abraham. And God poured compassion into the heart [of the father of] Abraham, and he said unto the Satans¹ [who advised him thus]: "Whence come ye, ye who say unto me that I must kill my child, an act pleasing to God?"² And he reared the child.

And at the beginning of the seventh month Abraham went forth by night and he saw the moon and the stars, and he said, "[Who art] Thou God who

Folio 17a.1. hast created these?" And straightway God said unto him, "I am the God

1. The term means "adversary" or "opponent."

2. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.

of thy Fathers. I will make thee to be justified and I will magnify thee." And he gave him the covenant of the Law and an ordinance (*or*, rules for social life).

And Abraham was circumcised by the hand of Gabriel, and Michael who assisted him. [Here follows a brief discussion of God's covenant with Abraham.]

Folio 17a.2. But God told

Folio 17b.1. Abraham when he made an offering to Him [and] He informed him that [he] should go down into Egypt,³ a stranger, [and] that he should be in a foreign land and that he should serve them (i.e. the Egyptians) for twelve years. And this took place because Sara laughed and did not believe the word of God.

3. Both the Bible (Genesis 12:10) and the Book of Abraham (Abraham 2:21) suggest that it was Abraham's idea to go to Egypt. Once he had so decided, God gave him instructions to teach the people there (Abraham 3:15).

EXTRACTS FROM AN
ARMENIAN PARAPHRASE OF GENESIS

This text comprises the Armenian version of the book of Genesis interspersed with additional text not found in the Bible. It is known from two fifteenth-century manuscripts that are housed in Erevan, Armenia, and which vary from each other. They are designated below as A and B. These selections are from the first English translation, Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha: Relating to the Patriarchs and Prophets* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 93–94 (version A), and 93, 95–96 (version B).

A

B

After Genesis 11:21

[not in text]

In his day men fall into sin.¹**After Genesis 11:25**

And in his day all the earth was worshipping idols.

[not in text]

After Genesis 11:30

And at that time men did not know God, for they were worshippers of idols²—some of the air and others of the water. And Abraham looked at the stars and thought that they are God. When the moon came, he said, “This it is which is great.” When the sun came, he said, “This is God, which is greater than the other and more light-giving.” When he saw that all these came and went, they seemed to him like servants, and he said this, “They are

And at that time, men did not know God, for they were idol-worshippers.

And Abraham said, “The sun is God, and the moon.”

And he saw that they came and went, and he said, “They are servants of God.” And

1. This sentence and the first sentence in version A are both found in the commentary for paragraph 10 on p. 93 of *Armenian Apocrypha*.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

not God but servants.”³ Then he held his hands on high and said, “O God! who are hidden and not seen, and all these are your servants, show me yourself.”⁴ And God appeared immediately unto him and said, “I have given this land to your seed.” And Abraham built an altar where the Lord had appeared to him. Behold! He was an idol worshipper and unlearned, but he recognized God. He found God and he became like God⁵ and the father of all believers,⁶ in whose bosom all the worthy rest.⁷

then he held his hands on high and said, “God, who are hidden and not seen, and all these are your servants, show yourself to me.” And immediately God appeared to him and said, “I will give this land to your seed.” And Abraham built an altar where the Lord appeared to him.

And when he recognized God by means of wisdom, he became a father of faith for all the Christians. Those who are worthy rest in his bosom.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

4. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

5. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 132:29, 37, 49.

6. Cf. Abraham 2:10–11.

7. Cf. Luke 16:22.

EXTRACTS FROM
ARMENIAN QUESTION

The Armenian document known simply as *Question* has a story that, while not mentioning Abraham, parallels information found in some of the other Abraham tales. The document comes from a miscellany that was copied or compiled by one Markos in 1686. The text is a narrative of primordial Christian history, and some stories have ideas that connect to Alexander the Great. This selection is drawn from the first English translation, in Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 124–26.

15. And after the death of Noah in the year 690 in the third millennium, Noah's sons went forth and built a tower in the land of Senayar.¹ And there the tongues were confused.

16. But Maniton² <held>³ Oveayn up to the sea, which is called the region of the Sun. In this place, {Canan}⁴ went forth and dwelt there. This Maniton received God's gift of wisdom, such as the skill of astrology.

17. Nebrovťa⁵ went to him. He received a secret from him. This Nebrovť first ruled over the earth. But in the ninth year of the fourth millennium great Babylon was built and Nebrovť ruled in it.

18. And after this, the sons of Ham made a king for themselves, whose name was Pontipos.⁶

19. In the 99th year of the fourth millennium, in the third year of the rule of Nebrovť, he sent wise men from the sons of Japheth, architects, to go to Maniton, according to his appellation.

20a. And there was peace between Maniton and Nebrovť.

1. Biblical Shinar.

2. Maniton seems to be the individual called Bounitar in other traditions, being the man from whom Nimrod gained his knowledge.

3. The braces ({}) indicate evident corruptions in the text, and the angle brackets (<>) indicate corrections of evident corruptions.

4. Biblical Canaan.

5. Biblical Nimrod. The spelling change in the following mentions of the name is in the text.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27. This name may perhaps be related to the Pharaoh Apintos mentioned in Bar Hebraeus.

AN EXTRACT FROM
ABEL AND OTHER PIECES

Although the author of this Armenian text is unknown, the scribes of the miscellany from which it is taken were Sargis and Amiras of Erznka, who copied the manuscript in 1624, 1634, and 1666. This selection from *Abel and Other Pieces* draws upon book 1, chapter 32 of the *Clementine Recognitions*, also cited in this collection. The excerpt is part of a section entitled "From Adam to the Flood," taken from the first English translation, in Michael E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 156–57.

7.5. Moses records Abraham as the 20th from Adam, and Luke (records him) as the 21st. Peter the apostle says, according to Clement, according to his own successor, that in the 15th generation men worshipped fire and set up idols.¹ This was the time of Eber.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.