

ABRAHAM, GOD'S PIONEER.

"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;" Genesis 12:1.

Abraham was a preacher of righteousness. Josephas says he was persecuted in his own land for the purity of his religion. Who can tell what the world owes to men like him? The Prophet Isaiah says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."

Paul says he went out not knowing whither he went. Perhaps he did not know the exact location of the land he was going to. But he knew who was leading him. He knew why he was going. He knew what he was looking for.

Some wit said Columbus was a Democrat. When he started out he did not know where he was going, when he got there he did not know where he was, when he got back he did not know where he had been, and he did it all on borrowed money. Do not tell this joke where there are Republicans to hear it. They like it too well.

Columbus said the world is round; it is. He thought the nearest way to India was to sail west; he was wrong. A new world lay between him and India. But he made a path across the sea to this new world. What he found was far greater than what he was looking for. How often this happens to men with a great vision and faith. He always finds far more than he was looking for.

All that Abraham lacked being a Democrat was the borrowed money. If he borrowed any, nothing is said about it. But he knew what he was looking for. He knew what the world needed more than anything else, a pure and holy religion. To find this he was ready to leave the world that he knew. But the God he learned to know was far greater than he had dreamed. Great as was his vision, the truth he became acquainted with was far greater.

Abraham was no iconoclast. If he smashed a pagan altar, he erected one to Jehovah in its place. Some people think all they need to do to make this world better is to go through life smashing images and altars they do not like. If they see a tree bearing fruit that does not suit their taste, they chop it down. But they plant no good tree in its place. If they see an altar to a deity they do not believe in, they tear it down. But they do not erect a holy altar in its place. If they see a temple to Diana, they tear it down. But they build no temples to Christ.

In our day the shortest road to popularity is to be against some one or some cause. We do not vote for great men for office; we vote against the men we do not like. If a man is against something we do not like, we do not ask what he stands for. Most of the politicians of our day are afraid to say what they stand for. But they shout very loudly what they are against. If a man endorses some progressive idea he is sure to be called upon to explain why. But he can shout his objection to some unpopular man or cause till he is hoarse, and he will never be asked why. What we need in politics is a positive campaign.

Abraham stood for something, something very great and good. He staked his all on one great truth; that truth was God. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." No man ever staked his all on God and lost.

In Abraham's day the means of life were slender, primitive and hard. Abraham's tent did not have running water, it had no bath room or toilet, it did not have air conditioning or steam heat. He had no telephone, radio, or television set. He did not have a newspaper thrown on his porch before he got up in the morning. He had no refrigeration for his food or gas to cook it with. He had no electric lights to read by at night.

At the Hermitage near Nashville they have the old carriage that Andrew Jackson rode to Washington in when he was inaugurated President. It took him twenty-eight days in the dead of winter. If some of the politicians of our day had to make a trip like that at his age, they probably would not live to get there.

But a man who lives solely for the means of life has missed living. A man was boasting of the insurance he had for his wife when he died. "That is a lot of dough", said his friend, and he spelled out the letters on paper, "D-O-U-G-H", and called the letters over. "The D is for the doctor; he will get his. U is for the undertaker; he will get his. H is for the hospital; they will get theirs. G is for the gravedigger; he will get his."

"But you left out the O" said the boaster. "What does that stand for?"

"That is what your wife will get waffer the others get theirs," answered the friend.

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The O in dough is what the man gets who lives solely for the means of life. But the man who lives for the ends of life has truly lived.

The ends of life in Abraham's day were as wonderful, as inspiring, as full of hope and promise as they are today. The first man who ever lived on this earth had as much to live for as any man living today. What were the ends of life in Abraham's day? To build a civilization based on righteous laws. The civilizations of the Chaldees and Egypt had already begun. Why did they decay so quickly? Their tools and science were as good as Abraham's. But their laws and religion were rotten and unjust. They had the tools to build a great civilization. But they lacked the one thing to make it last.

A young man said he preferred science to religion because in science he could be sure of what he was going after. No scientist has ever been sure of what he was going after. Most scientists have found the truth exactly as Abraham found it. Every man who has looked beyond the horizon of his day, whether in science, medicine, or religion, has staked his all on some great truth. That truth, when he found it, has always been far greater than he dreamed.

What did Abraham give to civilization? He gave it a pure and holy religion out of which grew just laws. He gave it the one thing that made it last. Without these just laws civilization would be as fragile and transient as the civilizations of the Chaldees and Egypt. He left the world the truth that produced the Bible; the Bible pointed the way to Christ and the Christian religion. A civilization based on this foundation will endure.