

Genesis - Commentaries by S.L. Jacob

Creation, Creation: Man

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At the latter part of the sixth day we come to the culminating point of Creation, and here for the first time we find counsel: "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

Here in the counsel of God man appears in the image and after the likeness of God, and dominion over all is given not to him but to them, that is, the kingdom.

The great theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is without doubt the Kingdom. Not that that is its only theme; for there is for instance the revelation of the Father in the Son Himself, and this brings in what is entirely beyond the range even of the far reaching truth of the Kingdom. The revelation of the Father in the Son is the most blessed theme of all; but necessarily Scripture says very little about it; it could only be in the gospels that it is set forth, and practically only in a portion of the Gospel of John. It is the theme for special meditation, but there is no language to set it forth.

The Kingdom, on the other hand, sets forth the ways of God in Christ; these ways are very varied, exhibiting infinite variety in unity. Everything wrong, but everything to be won for God, all enemies overcome, every foe brought low, everything that exalts itself cast down, all rule and authority subjugated by Him who must fill everything, and hand over the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

If we think of the city, either the heavenly or the earthly, the house, the sanctuary, of Israel, or of the Gentiles, of the angels, or of any other created intelligences, they are all included in the heavenly or earthly aspects of the kingdom. If in an earthly kingdom there is great variety, what must be the variety of God's kingdom of which Christ is the Creator and Head, the supreme Ruler and He whose impress and character must be seen in the whole?

Surely all this is set forth in parable in this 26th verse, explained by Psalm 8, and further in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Ephesians 1:9, 10; and Hebrews 2:8, 9.

But it is implied that things are wrong and have to be set right, and this is confirmed in verse 28, where it is written: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion" etc. Now there is no need to subdue what is all right; the loyal subject needs no subjugation, therefore lawlessness is implied; a devastated earth needs replenishing, otherwise where the need? It is not perfection that is implied, but all creation stretching out its hands to the hope God has set before it in Christ.

But the 27th verse says: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." It is remarkable that "likeness" is not mentioned in this verse, though we do get likeness in Genesis 5:1, and in James 3:9.

Here again we must remember that God never begins with that which shall be, with the object of His purpose, but always with something inferior, which serves as a platform for the bringing in of that which shall abide, because it is that, and only that, which He has had before Him from the beginning.

What then does this man in God's image and likeness really signify? Is it Christ? Well here again, the answer is both yes and no. It is, yes, because no one but Christ can ever fully and absolutely be the man in God's image and likeness; and it is so explained in the verses we have alluded to in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and Hebrews. And yet in a sense it is not Christ personally; because in the first place Christ was not made, but begotten; and because there is a male and a female, and the mention of them. Therefore while it is Christ, and must be Christ, it is specially what Scripture speaks of, as "the Christ" (that is, Christ formed in His own) that is in view in this glorious passage; and in truth the Church is this: it is both man and woman (compare 1 Cor. 12:12, where "Christ" should properly be translated "the Christ").

It is man, for Christ died to make in Himself "one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:15), and the gifts are given "till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

The Church is also the woman, for is not this the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church? (Eph. 5:25-32). God is therefore still making what is figured in Genesis 1:27, and how beautiful it must all be! Shall not the saints judge the world? shall they not judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). Shall they not have power over the nations? (Rev. 2:26, 27). Shall they not sit upon Christ's throne? (Rev. 3:21). All is the work of Christ, and the glory is all His own, but He associates His own with Himself; and God's object, having set Christ on high, is to make, by His Holy Spirit, a complete answer in His own people to the Christ He has set in glory. The subjective must be a perfect answer to the objective. Christ, the last Adam, must have no unworthy mate in the Eve whom God is preparing as a helpmeet for Him. All, all will be perfect when the antitype of all the beginning is accomplished; but in the meantime the war is dreadful and the strife very dire, and oftentimes it seems as if the evil would prevail. Thank God this is impossible, for Christ has all in His own hands and He cannot fail. Blessed be His name.

Yet so far we are only at the sixth day, and six does not mean perfection, but imperfection. Why is this? Still there is an evening and a morning, telling of future exercise and something that is beyond. Yet God sees everything which He has made, and behold it is very good. Yes, Christ is there, and that which is of Christ is there: it must be very good, though all is not yet subjugated. Moreover, the picture must necessarily fall far short of the reality it pictures, though indeed the picture is very good, for it speaks of God's ways in Christ, and of Christ Himself.

The Seventh Day

It is always stated in Scripture that God made everything in six days. For instance, it is written, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11), and so in each mention thereof. But here in chapter 2:2 it says, "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made." Why is this? Creation was completed in the six days, but in order to have a true picture of God's ways and purpose, the seventh day is required.

Not until all is subjugated to God can He rest, then the day can be blest, then there is no more an evening and a morning, but the morning knows no evening, God has reached His heart's desire, the day is hallowed, Christ is supreme, His likeness and image all completed, all is subjugated, God is glorified, Christ is exalted, His people shine in His effulgence, the universe resounds with the praises of God. The story is thus told us, God always reveals His purpose before carrying it out. But when creation was being accomplished there was no prophet to speak to about it, therefore the prophetic word had to be written right across the earth, sky and sea, and all portrayed there; but in due time when a prophet was found, God told to him the secret that he might write it down for our learning. And here we see the meaning of the words of the wise man: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us" (Eccl. 1:9,10). Everything has been thought of by God, all has been embodied in Creation, every idea, every thought has been portrayed there. Man may find out, as he thinks, something new, but lo! it was there before. Man invents nothing, even Satan invents nothing really new. All is there. Who can fight against such a God who knew every device of devil and man, anticipated it, made provision for it, told him all would be overcome and all turned to blessing, and that all would culminate in the rest of God, when God would no longer have to be occupied with overcoming evil, but be able to apply all His blessed activities of love (and nothing is so active as love) in the unspeakable blessing of those whom He has won for Himself.

Who could not believe in such a God: who would not long for the bringing of the First begotten into the world, to accomplish all for God, so that even the Creation may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God? Blessed be God, all, all is assured. No wonder it is said, when poor puny man opposes, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." He has set His king on His holy hill of Zion. Faith can say "all is well," the day of rejoicing for all Creation is at hand.

But what a place have His well-beloved saints of this dispensation — the Church, given to Him by the Father in the day of His rejection — theirs is the special nearness, theirs the peculiar association, theirs the supreme bliss of giving the most intense joy to Him who is Lord, Master, and Bridegroom. The hope is certain, the bliss is unspeakable.

Well may the saints rejoice, and the everlasting song break forth in anticipation of the day of triumph, so near at hand. We have the secret of it all, while the world still abides in darkness.

Conclusion

Thus have we briefly, feebly, imperfectly, sought to set forth a tiny bit of the imperishable record told in the sketch of Creation given us as the purpose of God in this first chapter of God's book. A wonderful preface indeed, as we think all must see, for however poorly the story is interpreted by us, we doubt not sufficient has been told to make clear that we have indeed in these few pregnant words an epitome of all God's work during this period of sin till the day when all is set right for God, and He can rest. The story of the whole Creation and of God's dealings therewith told out, and the history, too, of each individual soul under the blessed hand of God's love and discipline, that He may bring about the desires of His heart, not only for the whole, but for each individual soul. He is so great that the greatness of the whole work never for a moment stays its progress towards its perfect fulfillment; so great, too, that He can pay as much attention to the perfecting of the individual as if there were nothing else in the universe for Him to do. What a God is ours, and He is our God and Father revealed to us in the Son.

And this is not all, though it is as much as we can learn at one time, and it is what we are set to learn now, thereafter there is infinitely more which will be told. We talk of eternity, God the all wise, speaks of the ages of the ages. Eternity suggests monotony, ages upon ages tell of infinite variety. Not in the seven days can all the glories of Christ be set forth, not in the seven days can all God's answer to the cross be given. These will require "the age of the ages" and still the story will never be told, for Christ and the cross are infinite. Yet, blessed be God, nothing accomplished will be lost. All the work of God abides, the blessed place of the Church can never be forfeited, but all being perfected will be the platform for the things yet to come.

The seven days being completed, the lesson learned, the contemplated work finished, that lesson book can be closed, of these things and of that time it is said: "They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shall Thou fold them up and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail!" (Heb. 1:11, 12).

A new lesson book will then be provided, for creation does not cease to be, only all is changed for the new conditions. There must be a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth will have passed away, and there will be no more sea.

Here we must close, with hearts filled with deep thankfulness, adoration and praise.

Creation, Creation: The Fifth and Sixth Days

19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Fifth and Sixth Days

Here we come to the filling of the earth with life; the waters, the air and the earth were to be filled with living souls; for the same words are used in the 21st and 24th verses which are used for man in Genesis 2:7, though the animal is not the subject of God's counsel as man is in chapter 1:26, nor did God breathe into the nostrils of the animals the breath of life, as He did to man. Still the whole created sphere of this world is filled with living souls. It is remarkable how God blessed them (verse 22) and reiterated the command that they should multiply and bring forth abundantly. This is specially the case with reference to the waters, for the 20th verse should read, "And God said, let the water swarm with swarms."

It is assumed by many that there was no death of any sort or description on the earth, at all events subsequent to verse 3 of this chapter, until Adam fell, and that until that event the world was a deathless world. Is there any scriptural ground for this belief? Will then the reader kindly judge dispassionately what is here said as to this.

We read, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Now the word "men" is emphatic, and this is most important. The natural way in the Greek language would have been to say, "death passed upon all," and to have left us then to supply either the word "men" or the word "things," as is usually done in English translations, but here Scripture seemed to go out of the way to definitely say death passed upon all men.

Just to quote at random, there is no noun in the original after "all," or "every," in the following passages, John 3:26; 11:48, 12:32; Acts 2:45; 17:30; Romans 3:23; Hebrews 2:9; where, therefore, a noun occurs, it is emphatic. And why say, "So death passed on all men for that all have sinned," if it included the animal world which has not sinned? No, it is passed upon men, mankind: not man in contrast with woman, but men in contrast with animals. Scripture, therefore, is not against the idea of death in the animal world, but the inference is all the other way.

But does not Romans 8:19-22 show that death came upon animals through the fall? It does not say so. Who can doubt that the fall wrought sad consequences on the animal world? This is not in question; but that there was a deathless animal world before the fall is nowhere hinted at. We must not take the "him" in Romans 8:20 as referring to Adam but to God: it is He who subjected creation, and He who gave it hope; and it is not the original state that God means to bring in, but something much better, when the restitution of all things takes place.

Moreover we have overlooked the plainest inferences of Genesis 1 That death was in the vegetable kingdom is clearly involved (verses 11:29-30; cf. John 12:24); and the creation of living creatures is stated in the same way as the production of the grass, thus, "Let the earth bring forth grass"; "Let the waters bring forth abundantly"; "Let the earth bring forth the living creature." The inference is that the animal world follows the vegetable.

We may also consider what the result would have been (miracle apart) were it otherwise. Multiplication is spoken of in the case of all, and especially of the denizens of the sea, and fish are accordingly extremely prolific. Now if it were possible for fish to multiply their offspring indefinitely without check, it is probable that the progeny of one single fish (a small fish, say, like the mackerel or herring) would fill up all the seas solid in an incredibly short space of time. Even a single flesh fly will breed so quickly that, were there no check, the offspring of one such fly in six months would probably be greater than the mass of the whole world, and so on; and in a few days life would be impossible on the earth by the very fact of there being no death. It is only through death that life is possible. This has been the parable lesson all through. Oh that we all saw this! The language of the heavens and the earth, of the rocks and of the field, and of the beasts of the earth is, "Oh may the Deliverer come!" There can be no lasting paradise without Christ.

Where we have erred is in thinking that we are in an altogether different world to that mentioned in Genesis 1; whereas, as we have seen time after time, what is portrayed is this very world of good and evil, with God at work overcoming the evil with the good, until the ultimate triumph of good shall be complete. But in the meantime we see here the good and there the evil gains an immediate victory; now light breaks in, then again darkness succeeds; now there is life, and again there is death; an unceasing struggle, an implacable warfare, which must go on day and night until complete victory is attained. The lovers of truth and goodness ever seeming to be worsted, but even in death more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us.

In the great sheet of Acts 10:11 There were the four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Here in strange medley are all men portrayed, for we have our links with the animal world through the dust of earth, as well as with heaven by the breath of God; all our passions, our lusts and propensities are pictured in the animal world. We may be like the fierce tiger or venomous snake, the timid sheep or harmless dove. So also as to that which is good: the remains of what God has implanted, that is, natural affection, the mother's love, the love of wife and children, kindness, gentleness, all is pictured in and stamped upon the original creation from the first, that man may have this wondrous object lesson spread before him, and that he may understand that till the God-Man comes and takes all things into His own hands even God's creation will not (cannot) be at all what God means it to be.

If it is not this, then we must imagine another creation of the present animal world since the fall, either by an absolutely new creation, or else by the complete remodeling of the structure of almost all beasts, birds, fishes and creeping things. For neither of these suppositions have we the slightest proof, either direct or indirect, whereas what we have herein stated is in perfect accord with the teaching of the whole chapter, and brings into prominence God's original great object lesson: that all things wait for their great Deliverer, and have waited for Him since their original creation, and nothing can be right until He comes. God has never had any other thought, and from the beginning all things and all creation have (unconsciously it may be) cried out for Christ. Do not let us miss this lesson. The proof will yet become more and more plain as we proceed. It is so important that we venture to reiterate it often.

Editors' Note — These papers are intended to be suggestive rather than dogmatic, to be stimulative of study rather than to present its final and completed results as to the detail of a subject at once so great and so seldom considered.

Creation, Creation: The Fourth Day

Genesis 1:14, 25.

14. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons and for days, and years:

15. And let them for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth,

18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

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The truth embodied in the fourth day's work did not come into manifestation early in the history of God's dealings with men, nor is it early in a soul's history that it enters into the same. The light of God must in some measure be received at the start, but this falls short of heaven's order and rule. Christ is, when this is received, seen as the sun — the center of the moral universe according to God. He becomes in actuality the Head; He gives light and heat to all; He governs and He controls; and all in that universe takes character from Him.

The moon, too, whether we look at it as Israel (one figure) or as the Church (another figure), is closely connected with the sun, derives all her light from him, and can only shine upon the earth as she turns her face to him, and in that measure. Hence she may be very light, or may be very dark and not shine at all, and generally is part light and part dark. How suggestive is all this as picturing what actually exists.

There is here, as it were, a second division between the day and the night, and the lights are "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." On them depend God's periods, they tell us whither we have arrived in the dealings of God with men. They give us summer and winter each in its due time and season, for there is the summer and winter as well as day and night.

It is still the world's winter, as it was in John 10:22, and the world yet waits for the passing of its winter — when the time of the singing birds shall come and the fig tree shall put forth leaves and green figs, and the voice of the turtle shall be heard in the land (Song of Sol. 2:12, 13); for this the earth must wait, until the Jew repents and turns to God, and thus gets Christ back, and with Him the times of restitution of all things (Acts 3:19-21).

But the Christian need not wait for that day of glory, for he that has the Spirit, and can hear the voice of Christ, is allowed to anticipate the coming day and enter by faith into its glories beforehand; and however much the Church may have failed in that which was committed to her, every blessing and joy is still open to him who overcometh. God grant us to understand the place that Christ has as the mighty Sun of Righteousness who will one day arise to shine for this world; and understand, too, His place as the Center and Head of all things; and the place of the Church also, as associated with Him, that we may walk in the power and reality of these heavenly things in our own souls, even though heavenly order is not yet publicly realized on earth.

Hebrews 12:22-24 brings before us some of these heavenly realities. Heavenly rule is the source of great blessings; without it we are lawless; with it we are in attachment to Christ, we abide in Him, we do not practice sin, we are kept in the Father and in the Son, and this is the promise He has promised, even life eternal.: His commandment is life eternal.

But just as on earth, so in the heavens, there is variety. The earth revolves round the sun, yet its distance from the sun varies from day to day. Everywhere there is variety, everywhere there is change, but the sun maintains its sway, and the moon still gives its light when its face is turned to the mighty sun. One star differeth from another star in glory. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.

It is a great day in the soul's history when divine order is thus in measure apprehended. As always the evening has to precede the morning; the time of exercise, the time of longing desire, the time of waiting, must come before the time of entrance into blessing: this is always God's way. He creates the desire and He satisfies the longing, He leads the soul along and fills the hungry soul with goodness, He brings His people out of darkness and the shadow of death and breaks their bands asunder. May our souls wait for the Lord for His mornings, more than they watch for the (literal) morning; then shall we be blessed indeed.

We cannot get redemption in this chapter, yet the fact that darkness and night are portrayed therein points to the necessity of it, and is in a way a prophecy that it must be. We know that no one can be brought out of his evil plight unless the Creator take His place among His creatures and enter into his condition, which Jesus did in all its reality (sin apart as to His nature, and yet being made sin upon the cross) in order to bring men out of all that sin had plunged them into; so that between the lines we read how all creation cries out for its Deliverer to put all upon a new footing. The world pictured here is a world over which darkness passes and which looks for the light, a creation which cries out for Christ.

Till 400 years ago it was almost universally held that the earth was the center of the universe, yet in this creation chapter the sun's controlling place is clearly given, and that 6000 years ago. How knew Moses these things? The civilized world recognizes today that the sun is the center of the visible universe (that is, this solar system with all its attendant planets, etc.), yet how few acknowledge that Jesus is the Sun and Center of all the moral universe according to God, and that till He gets His right place as Head of every man, Head of all principality and power, Head of His body the Church, Head over all things to the Church, nothing can be right, for it is only in right relationship to Him that anybody (or anything) can be right, yet it is all portrayed here in a figure for him who has eyes to see.

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Prayer

In London an enterprising newspaper has a private wire connecting with Edinburgh, in order to command the latest and freshest news from the Scottish Athens. One night the clerk who had been out to collect local items, returned late and could not get in — he had forgotten to take his night key. He thought a moment. It was of no use to knock at the door — the only other fellow-clerk in the building was too far away to hear him. He stepped around to a neighboring telegraph office and sent a message to Edinburgh: "Tell — that I am down at the street door and cannot get in." In twenty minutes the door was unfastened and he was at his desk in the office. The shortest way to get at the man in the fourth story was by way of Edinburgh!

How long will it take us to learn that our shortest route to the man next door is the way of God's Throne! God has no greater controversy with His people today than this, that with boundless promises to believing prayer there are so few who give themselves to intercession. This is represented as being a matter even of divine wonderment "And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee" (Isa. 64:7).

Prayerless work will soon slacken, and never bear fruit.

If you would stand straight in the presence of sin, bow low in the presence of God.

Creation, Creation: Further Proofs

6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second' day.

9. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

12. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

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On the second day God speaks as before (His word is the source of all the good), and the waters are divided from the waters by an expanse (as in the margin, for firmament does not seem to be the right word).

In connection with the second day's work there is the remarkable omission of the words "And God saw that it was good." This omission alone would prove the point we have pressed. The apparent reason for this is that nothing was actually formed at this time, only the expanse was caused to divide between the waters. But further, the region of the air — the expanse — is evidently Satan's seat, for he is called "the prince

of the power of the air;" it is probable that this region is peopled with evil spirits, which occupy the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12), and that for this reason God could not pronounce it good. Moreover historically it was in the period symbolized in the second day that God had to destroy the world by the flood.

What we get in this chapter is not the purpose of God pure and simple, but the ways of God for the working out of that purpose. In this work innumerable hindrances are allowed by God, but these are all overcome and the blessedness of the result enhanced thereby.

As there was a division on the first day so there was also a division on the second day; and every Christian knows that experimentally this is the case in the history of the soul. There was a time when these divisions had not taken place, and we knew not what was within us. But when the light began to shine, then we began to discriminate, to see what was of Christ and what of Satan, what of the Father, and what of the world, what of the Spirit and what of the flesh. Each bit of increased light, and each further step in the gracious work of God, emphasized these distinctions, often at great pain to ourselves; for the painful character of the experience of Romans 7 is due to learning one of these distinctions, and the first result of these divisions within must necessarily be painful and give rise to great exercise of soul. Yet painful as they are, the soul must travel by this road in order to enter into the blessedness which lies beyond.

We have already seen that the history of the soul is in miniature the history of what is collective; and God's dealings with men show that though He is working to gather in, not to divide, yet He must divide what is of Himself from what is not, in order to gather what is of Himself into one. Yet He is very patient and full of long-suffering: good and evil will be found together in the world till the end, and then the final severance between them will be effected by those more capable of doing this than poor fallible man (Matt. 13:28-30, 39 and 40). There is a division now which is right, as in 2 Corinthians 6:17; and there is division which is wrong, as in 1 Corinthians 12:25 and Jude 19.

The Third Day

On the third day it is twice repeated: "and God saw that it was good!" and the progress is now rapid. The waters are gathered together into one place and are called Seas, the dry ("land" is in italics) appears and is called Earth. Here again the same character of opposites can be noted. Earth in this chapter has a double meaning. In the first verse it is earth in contrast with heaven: meaning not what is bad, but inferior to the other, and therefore liable to be superseded. This is the whole argument of 1 Corinthians 15:47-49. Fallen man is not there in question; not sin, but only origin; an earthly origin is defective by reason of the glory which attaches to the heavenly, therefore is the earthly image unsuited to the heirs of the kingdom of God whose origin is heavenly, and who thus must bear the heavenly image. Blessed be God, this must be our portion through Christ the heavenly One.

However in the portion we are now considering, verse 10, it is different, here the earth signifies what is stable, in contrast with the seas which are unstable. In the eternal state there will be more sea, it will not be needed. Now the seas are needed: for physical reasons we could not do without them. Nor can we do without what they signify spiritually: that is needful for the carrying out of the education of our souls. In the Lord's prayer to His Father for His own, He said "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:5). How often has this been forgotten. How fearful were, the results of asceticism and monasticism, and the withdrawing from the world in the early centuries of Christendom. And though we do not fall into the error in the same shape in this day of ease and luxury, yet there is another phase of it into which we may easily fall, even that of seeking to seclude ourselves within the barriers of a specially selected company of saints all conforming to our own mind and standard.

The result of such seclusion might be a certain quietude, arising from escape from much of that disciplinary exercise which should properly be ours as, on the one hand, passing through an evil world, and, on the other hand, as having our part in the professing church into which evil has been permitted to enter. But that kind of quietude is anything but desirable and can only issue in stagnation and spiritual death. As to fact we are in the midst of evil on every hand, and we must be found actively resisting the evil, or we shall die. When Christ comes, and we are changed into His likeness, it will be different; but now imperfect beings such as we are, having within us the flesh as well as the Spirit, need such a world as this is, for our souls' education; and every attempt to form special companies must certainly defeat the object aimed at. It has been well said, we have not to make or seek a company, but we find company (a very different thing) if we follow on the lines of 2 Timothy 2:22.

The earth then is stable and is often used symbolically for Israel under the government of God in contrast with the lawless Gentiles, or the wicked who are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. The kingdom of grace gives us solid ground under our feet, in contrast to what existed before we saw or entered the kingdom (compare Heb. 12:26-28). The same thing was presented in figure in Israel's history when the throne of David was established in Zion, in contrast to what was before, when in the days of the judges every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Our hearts are to be established with grace, and we are not to be occupied with meats (outward things) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Heb. 13:9).

Upon this, the third day, the earth is made to bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth. Here is almost infinite variety, yet a most blessed unity. What a contrast we see in the ways of men. They will either be lawless or legal, either allow any kind of license or else attempt to conform all to one rigid pattern, whereas God's way is unity in extraordinary diversity. Yet all are alike in this, each has the seed in itself, each must yield fruit after its own kind, and each must reproduce itself. The penalty of failure in reproduction is extinction.

Thank God for this. How badly we should have fared but for this comprehensive law of God. The Christian must conquer or be conquered. There is but one step as it were from the victories of Joshua to the miseries of the times of the judges. To cease to advance is to rapidly retrograde. To cease to evangelize is to stagnate. To build up ourselves alone, and to pay little heed to feeding the flock of God, is to call down judgment on ourselves (Ezek. 33:8-10). May we take heed to these parables. God must have fruit, or we must make room for others (see John 15:2). In a sense we may say with Rachel "Give me children or I die." No splendid light, no wondrous talents, will exempt us from these blessed laws of God. Everything which God has given He has given to be used, and woe to him who seeks to evade these responsibilities.

All nature, whether in the vegetable or animal world, speaks of reproduction. Nations which, like France, seek to evade these principles, will deteriorate and die. Let the Christian take heed to it also: there must be spiritual fruit and reproduction, not in the sphere of a select company, but in the Church and in the world. God saw that it was good. May He see this with us also. He is looking for fruit, namely, the reproduction of Christ. Are we willing to lose our lives and die that we may bring forth fruit unto God? In all these things Christ is alone the key.

Moreover there is no room for selfishness in connection with our subject: every herb and every tree yielding fruit was to be meat for others (verses 29, 30). Are we prepared for this? We must suffer if others are to be nourished. No evasion of this is possible. Bread corn must be crushed to be food for the eater. In this world all life comes out of death, and goes into death again that life may be reproduced; and it is well. All speaks to us of God's ways in Christ, and one single plant of coarse grass may teach us more lessons than we can assimilate in a life time.

There had to be the formation of the earth before the herb and the tree could be produced. Yet when the earth appeared then these appeared also. So when God's king (David) appeared, then in him was found God's sweet singer of Israel, and in figure we have the "light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the, earth by clear shining after rain" (2 Sam. 23: 4). Blessed are they who have seen this morning in their own souls.

Creation, Creation: The General Idea of the Preface

Genesis commences with the words "In the beginning GOD." God precedes all things, and by His word were all things brought into being. Next we come to the original act of creation: of this nothing is said but that God created. We know not in what far distant ages this may have been, nor what interval of time separates verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1. In other scriptures we are given just a glimmering of what may set forth some long past terrific cataclysm which followed on the inception of sin in angelic beings, and which overwhelmed the fair creation of God.

Into those secrets of the ages past we are not initiated, but in verse 2 is brought to view a world in a condition other than that in which it was created. At this point begin the dealings of God with the earth and the heavens in view of man, and in particular in view of the Man of His counsels, in whom the whole conflict between good and evil should be brought to a triumphant issue in the eternal victory of good.

In verse 2 we read "the earth was without form." In Isaiah 45:18 the inspired statement is made, "He created it not in vain." The word translated "without form" in Genesis 1 is the same word as is translated "in vain" in Isaiah 45. Unmistakably, then, the earth was not, in the second verse of Genesis 1, as God created it. Moreover, unrelieved darkness was upon the face of the deep: this was not of God. According to the universal meaning of the symbol, "darkness" here presents the state of a lost world (similarly elsewhere of a lost soul), fallen under the power of sin, alienated from God, and without remedy unless God intervened.

But the next sentence speaks of God's work, for "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." God being at work, all must be well eventually; but everything must be done thoroughly, deliberately; there must be no haste, for spiritual and moral work is portrayed, and such work cannot be hurried. He that believeth shall not make haste, because God does not make haste. The word for "moved" in this passage is remarkable; it is quite different to the word "moving" in the 10th verse, or "moveth" in verses 21 and 28; it is only used twice elsewhere in Scripture, viz., in Deuteronomy 32:11, "As an eagle... fluttereth over her young," and in Jeremiah 23:9, "All my bones shake"; so that it is evident the motion is not progressive as in the other cases in Genesis 1, but vibratory or oscillatory. God moved and continued moving. What a change from the stillness of death! God is a living God; by Him all things are preserved in life (1 Tim. 6:13 JnD); all is activity with Him, and He impresses activity on all things. Nothing is still in Nature; even the most rigid body, such as a steel blade, is composed of particles in rapid vibratory motion. Otherwise there is nothing but death and dissolution for things animate or inanimate; and rest is not cessation from motion, which would be stagnation, but by the triumph of good over evil, so that conflict may cease, and the activities of love flow on unchecked.

The Proof — The First Day

The proof that good and evil are here symbolized comes out clearly in the first day's work. "And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Before, it was all dark; now the light had come in: and the light was good, very good, whilst the darkness speaks of evil.

The passages are numerous by which it could be proved that this is the meaning of these symbolic words: that is, light always speaks of good, and darkness invariably refers to evil, either directly or indirectly. Thus, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). Again read 2 Corinthians 4:4 (which we quote from JND Trans. as more correct): "In whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them., ... Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the radiancy (see marginal note) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Here is the darkness — moral and spiritual — but the light must shine brighter and brighter till in the end those in whose hearts it has shone shall appear in all the beauty and glory of Him who has shone upon them, in that heavenly city where there will be no darkness and no night, "For there shall be no night there," for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.

In the meantime, however, there is the darkness as well as the light, the night as well as the day, the evening as well as the morning, and one must succeed the other until the light completely triumphs. It is still the night in the world's history, though "the night is far spent and the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12). True "the darkness is passing (not past as in the A.V.) and the true light already shines" (1 John 2:8, New Trans.); but still both are here, and in the history of each individual soul there will be many evenings before the many mornings, till the last grand morning dawn. There must be many nights before the various days of the many experiences through which God has to pass us till night be no more.

Weeping must still endure in the evening (margin) if joy (or singing) is to come in the morning (Psa. 30:5), for we are still in the veil of tears; sorrow there must be, and pain and deep grief; death is still here, and death must work in us if life is to work in others; and there is no growth, no blessing, save through the various exercises through which our Lord passes us. The valleys must be crossed before we reach the hills, and each hill leads to another valley, to lead again to a higher height of Christian joy and experience. There is no such thing as one unbroken pathway ever upward in the Christian's experience; the most placid life (judged externally) has still its storms and its calms, its depths and its heights, its tears and its joys, its agonies as well as its ecstasies. This is God's order in this fallen world, and he who seeks to evade the sorrows will not participate in the joys. If there be not the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, how can there be a share in the reigning?

All this, and much more, is spoken to us from the opening verses of the Bible.

What is true of the individual is also true of the world; Zion must travail before she brings forth her children; it is the barren woman, or the desolate wife, who has suffered, that brings forth the most and best children for God. There must be the travail that effects nothing (that is, darkness and night in sorrow), Isaiah 26:17-18, before the travailing where a nation is born at once (that is, light and day) Isaiah 66:8. It is thus we learn how bitter and how evil a thing it is for a soul, or a world, to have departed from God; and how exquisitely sweet it is to see the blessed light of the glory of God, which shines in all its beauty in the face of Jesus Christ, dispel and overthrow the darkness; and then to know that we are to go out from that light into the darkness no more. For though there must be at present the darkness as well as the light, the night as well as the day, yet once the light has shone upon us, it is never the same darkness as before, and the second evening and morning is an advance on the first, and so on until the glorious consummation at the end.

We are children of the light, and sons of the day (Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5 JND), and God our Father is taking great pains with our education, for as of the light we are to share in the glories of the reign of our beloved Lord, so that all that is being worked out in us in much sorrow here, is to come out in all its value in that day, for the glory of Him who has redeemed us.

Thus these few opening verses are quite sufficient to prove our point, but there is much more. It is better to have thus portrayed before us the actual world in which we live, with its ups and downs, its sorrows and its joys, its training and its progress under the hand of God, than a world which none, save Adam and Eve for a brief moment, ever saw. If we want to see God's world we must learn to see the world of God's purpose, not a world which was lost in one brief moment and can never be again; the former excels the latter as much as Christ excels Adam; the difference is infinite, immeasurable, but God is working all out in His own matchless way, and in these seven days of God we see how He does it all.

All is effected by the Word of God; eight times in this first chapter we get, "And God said;" "He commanded, and it was done," "He commanded, and it stood fast." Yet as one has well said, the nulls of God, grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small, for He must do the work so thoroughly; and when He has finished, evil and darkness shall never raise their heads again, and the accomplished glory will be of such a character that it will never be tarnished, for it must be such that it will satisfy the heart of God the Father, and be an adequate expression (as far as God Himself can effect this) of the work and Person of God's beloved Son, and of the agony He endured for the glory of God and the unspeakable blessing of the creature, especially of man.

EDITORS' NOTE. — These papers are intended to be suggestive rather than dogmatic, to be stimulative of study rather than to present its final and completed results as to the detail of a subject at once so great and so seldom considered.

Beware in your prayers, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, above all that you ask or think.

Obedience is in the present tense.

It is not the bee's touching on the flowers that gathers the honey, but her abiding for a time upon them, drawing out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most on divine truth, that will prove the choicest, strongest Christian.

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