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THE FIRST HEBREW STORY OF CREATION.

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The significant expressions in the first chapter of Genesis: The Literary Structure of the first story.—The Characteristics of Style.—The Teachings of the Passage.—The great Purpose of the Story.—Other Creation Stories.—The Harmonizing of the story with the results of Science.—A general Estimate of the Story.

The author of Genesis has introduced two stories of the creation of the world, the first contained in Gen. 1:1—2:4^a, the second in Gen. 2:4b—25. These stories treat of the same subject, but from entirely different points of view. It will be the purpose of this article and of that which follows to indicate in a general way the teachings and purpose of the two stories as contrasted with each other and as supplementing each other. It is not without significance that in the Divine Providence there have been given us two witnesses, rather than one, of the truths contained in these wonderful stories.²

In even a hasty survey of the material of our first story, one

¹That is, through the first half of the fourth verse.

²*Dods*, Genesis; *Kalisch*, Genesis; *Dillmann*, Die Genesis; *Deliusch*, Genesis; *Driver*, the Cosmogony of Genesis, Andover Review, vol. 8, Dec. 1887; *Dawson*, Origin of the World according to Revelation and Science; *Dana*, The first chapter of Genesis, and Science; *Guyot*, Creation; *Pritchard*, Hulsean Lectures for 1867; *Reusch*, Nature and the Bible; *A presbyter*, Genesis in advance of present Science; *Kinn*, Harmony of the Bible with Science; *Hackel*, History of Creation (translated); *Lenormant*, Beginnings of History; *Smith*, The Chaldean account of Genesis; *Schrader*, The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament; *Lefebvre*, TSBA, IV.; *Chabas*, Études sur l'antiquité historique; *Spiegel*, Erânische Alterthumskunde; *Harper and Green*, The Pentateuchal Question, Genesis I-XII, Vol. V.; *Lenormant*, The Book of Genesis; *Briggs*, The Hebrew Poem of the Creation, in Old Test. Student, Vol. III.; *Ewald*, Old and New Testament Theology, pp. 113-139; *Perowne*, Notes on Genesis, beginning in The Expositor, Oct. 1890; *Geikie*, Hours with the Bible, Vol. I., chaps. I-VI; *Godel*, Biblical Studies (Old Testament), pp. 65-139.

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meets certain significant expressions which deserve at least passing notice. Among these are the following:

1. The first three verses of the chapter—which for comprehensiveness, sublimity, and strength have never been surpassed—translated in strict accordance with Hebrew syntax would read: "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth being waste and void . . . then God said, let there be light, and there was light."

2. The word "created" does not of itself signify creation out of nothing. It is in this chapter used synonymously with "make" or "form."

3. The phrase "heaven and earth" was not, in the writer's mind, a chaotic mass, but rather the visible heavens and earth.

4. In the phrase, "and there was light," the writer evidently has in mind the same light which we now have, for it was declared good, and from this time light and darkness are distinguished.

5. The first day closes with the coming on of the second darkness. Those for whom the narrative was first prepared, and, indeed, all men until recently, understood this day, including the night, to be one of twenty-four hours. Marcus Dods¹ has truly said that "rationalism may twist scripture into any meaning it pleases, if it may put a geologist's meaning into the word 'day.'" The writer's meaning is fixed by his use of the word in the sixteenth verse, where he speaks of the greater light as intended to rule the day. The writer, as will appear more clearly later on, seeks to represent not "second causes and physical processes, but God directly creating." If we substitute the modern interpretation suggested for these five verses, it would read, "Then elapsed one hundred thousand years, which was the first day." It will be seen at a glance that this introduces "an incongruous and irrelevant element, suggesting the slow and long continued action of second causes, when the writer means to suggest the immediate action of God's creative fiat."

6. In verse 14 the writer does not say, "let the luminaries appear," as, a little earlier, he said, "let the dry land appear;" in

¹In *Hand-book for Bible Classes, Genesis, in loc.*

other words, he does not teach that luminaries which have been in existence are now brought forth, just as the land which had already been created is now made to appear. He says, "let there be luminaries," and then afterward, "and God made the luminaries." The efforts of harmonists to interpret these words otherwise in order to avoid the difficulty arising from the fact that vegetation had appeared the day before, are well enough meant, but without foundation.

7. From the order of creation in vs. 16 one gains a clear idea of the method of representation—"the greater light," "the lesser light," "the stars." The order shows that it is a representation of things as they appeared, rather than as they really are.

8. In the phrase, "let us make man," in vs. 26, the writer tells us that God here associates with himself the heavenly intelligences—the sons of God, who, we are told elsewhere, shouted for joy on the morning of creation. There can be no reference to the trinity, as some have naturally enough suggested, nor may we explain the plural form by understanding that it is something like the editorial plural.

9. In the second member of the phrase, vs. 26, "in our image, after our likeness," we are not to look for any deep theological meaning, since it is but an emphatic repetition of the first member.

10. The words "and let them have dominion," vs. 26, might be rendered "that they may have dominion," thus indicating the great purpose of man's creation and his divine destiny.

11. The expression in vs. 27, "male and female he created them," is so terse that one is not surprised at the various interpretations which have been suggested. Does it mean that man and woman were created simultaneously, or that originally they were one being; or that the first creation was hermaphrodite?

12. In vs. 29 the meaning seems to be that man is assigned only vegetable food. It is not until some time after this that permission is given him to eat flesh. Is it the writer's view that animals also were originally eaters of grain and not of flesh?

13. From the emphasis laid upon the seventh day in 2:1-4, and its relation to the preceding six days, it is evident that this

is the climax of the narrative. The seventh day of rest stands between the creation and all subsequent history.

14. The phrase "these are the generation of the heavens and the earth" (2:4b) is similar in form to the introductory titles of nine other sections of the Book of Genesis. cf. Gen. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2. Since in these other passages the title precedes, it has been suggested that perhaps originally the first half of vs. 4 stood at the beginning of the first chapter.

The structure of this first story of creation is clear and definite. It demands but a cursory examination of the passage to discover the following among other facts:

1. The work of creation is arranged in six days, with a day of rest.

2. These six days are divided into two closely parallel sections:

First day, light.	Fourth day, luminaries.
Second day, air and water.	Fifth day, the animals of air and water.
Third day, the dry land and vegetation.	Sixth day, land animals and man.

3. A study of these two sections discloses a remarkable correspondence between them. While the first tells us of light the second indicates the source of light to the earth. The first describes the origin of air and water, the second the inhabitants of air and water. The first section deals with the separation of land and water, the growth of grass, herbs, food; the second presents the creation of wild beasts, cattle, etc., and finally man. In other words, the first section presents the idea of preparation; the second that of accomplishment. It is to be noted, however, that the parallelism does not hold good in the case of birds.

4. The artistic structure appears, moreover, in the admirable manner in which the whole narrative is made to culminate in man, who is the outcome of the creation. Everything else has been created beforehand, in order to prepare the way for the coming of man, and, at the same time, to permit the divine destiny of man as ruler of the world to be carried out.

5. Reuss has said that "the plan of the week is adopted in order to bring under the eyes of his readers all the parts of this immense work, and especially to give prominence to that great and definite idea of gradation which manifests itself therein as regards the importance and even the relative perfection of the different groups of creatures."

6. A careful examination of the chapter shows also the use of the symbolical numbers, 3, 7 and 10. God speaks ten times. Seven times he approves what has been done, and three times the divine blessing is given. This cannot be said to be accidental.

In close connection with the structure of the passage we may note *the characteristics of style* which it presents.

1. The prominent use made of the days of the week; the continually recurring phrase "and it was evening and it was morning;" the gradual leading up of the whole story to the Sabbath, indicate a method of expression that is systematic.

2. The seven-fold division, and the strict order of creation, indicate the chronological and statistical style.

3. From a reading of vss. 11 and 12, 24 and 25, 29 and 30, and of 2:2, 3, one surely is impressed with the fact that the style is minute, precise, scientific.

4. From the frequent recurrence of the phrases, "and it was evening and it was morning," "and God saw that it was good," "and it was so," the style is seen to be rigid, stereotyped.

5. It will be granted that thirty-five verses are none too many in which to tell so great a story as that of the creation of the world, and yet when one notes the fact that vs. 12 is a repetition almost word for word of vs. 11, and that the same is true in large measure of vss. 17 and 18 as compared with vss. 14 and 15, of vs. 21 as compared with vs. 20, of vs. 25 as compared with vs. 24, and when one notes the many repetitions in vss. 28 to 30, and in chapter 2:1-3, the conclusion must be drawn that the style of the writer is verbose and repetitious.

6. It is clear that the writer is dealing with the human race and not with any member of it; with the world and not with a portion of it. He is accounting for the origin of every tree,

every herb and not a particular tree or a particular class of herbs; in other words, the style is generic and not particular.

Some have suggested that the whole passage is a poem. Much may be said in favor of this position, but when all has been said the position is one which does not maintain itself.

It is manifestly impossible to present as one section of a single article *the teachings* of so great and important a passage. It is possible, however, to suggest the main teachings sought to be conveyed by the writer. These may be put in the form of propositions, and some of the more important are the following:

1. The origin of all things in the universe is God.

2. This God who created all things is an intelligent personal being.

3. The world was created in a systematic order, beginning at the lowest and rising to the highest—man.

4. Man was not only the last and the highest act of creation, but all that preceded him prepared the way for his creation.

5. Thus man, the outcome of all creation, was created in the image of God and endowed with divine intelligence.

6. The purpose of man's creation was that he should be the lord of all creation.

7. Man and animals were intended to be graminiverous. The world which came from God's hand, like the ideal world of the future, cf. Isa. 11:6-9, was one of "painlessness, bloodlessness, and peace."

8. Every stage of progress was "good," and everything which God created was "very good."

9. God himself having worked six days, rested on the seventh. The law of rest and the seventh day as a day of rest are divine.

At this point we may stop for a moment to consider *the purpose of the story*. The writer, led by the spirit of God, is seeking to teach man certain truths which God would have man know. But in connection with this desire to teach religious truths there is a purpose; to accomplish this the writer selects certain material from the abundance which was at his disposal, and arranges this material in a form which will best serve the purpose. If now we recall the order of the arrangement of the story, the

six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, the repeated and emphatic statements made in the last verse of the story about the Sabbath,—it would seem that the great purpose of the writer, the climax towards which he was working from the first, that for which he was all along preparing the way, and that with which the story closes completely and satisfactorily, is the institution of the Sabbath. The purpose is therefore a pronouncedly religious one. It is not primarily how the world had its origin, but how the Sabbath originated that the writer tells us, and if we examine the material which connects itself with this story of creation, as distinguished from the material which connects itself with the second story of creation,² we find that after ten generations there is a leading up to the institution of the covenant of Noah, of the law of bloodshed. After still another decade of generations we have the institution of circumcision; still later, the covenant with Israel as a nation, and the institution of the Mosaic ceremonial, and finally the fulfilment of the divine obligations in these covenants in the apportionment of the promised land. In other words, our writer has before him a definitely constructed plan, and this story, culminating in the institution of the Sabbath, is the first step in the realization of his plan. When we consider the part which this institution has played in the history of the world we need not hesitate to say that the wisdom which guided him was more than human.

One's task in the study of this story is far from finished when he has examined the Hebrew account alone. It is necessary to explain the existence of other creation stories in the world's literatures. One of these stories, the Chaldean, is published elsewhere in this issue of THE WORLD. This narrative, arranged in a series of tablets which seem to correspond to the Hebrew days, contains expressions which show a close connection with the Hebrew stories. The acts of creation are successive, and strangely enough the order is the same, although each

² For just as there are different stories of creation so there are two stories of the descendants of Adam; two stories of the deluge; two stories of the peopling of the earth after the deluge; and although we may explain this and other similar facts, the material of Genesis is seen to have its origin in different stories.

act is attributed to a different God. In the Phœnician account, the name of the mother of the first human pair is *Baan*, the same word found in vs. 2 of the Hebrew story, and translated waste or chaos.

According to the Persian account Ahuramazda created the universe and man in six successive periods. The last creation was that of man. It was a Vedic idea that man was created double and afterwards divided. The Asiatic idea introduced into Greece in Plato's banquet, represented man originally as of three sexes, male, female and hermaphrodite. The person of the third sex was separated into two halves and made into male and female, who desired to come together again in order to return to their primitive unity. There is not space to describe in detail these sister creation stories.¹

Supposing the details of them to be tolerably familiar, it is not unfair to contrast them as a whole with the Hebrew story which we have studied. They are polytheistic throughout; the Hebrew story strictly monotheistic. They are everywhere extravagant and ridiculous; the Hebrew story pure and simple. Nowhere in these stories is there to be found to any degree the presence of the element of sublimity, whereas the Hebrew story is, of all writings known to man, one of the most sublime and beautiful. The parallel stories are really degrading in their influence, while the Hebrew story is elevating. No particular religious teaching worthy of the name can be found in the others, while the Hebrew story abounds, as we have already seen, in teachings of the highest order. At once the question suggests itself, What relation exists between the stories outside of the Bible and the Hebrew story? To this question three answers may be given:

1) They are departures far removed from the Hebrew story itself, the latter being the original.

2) The Hebrew story is itself derived from the Babylonian, or Chaldean, obtained by the Hebrews through Abraham who came out of Ur of the Chaldees; or later, when the whole Hebrew nation lived as captives in the land of Babylon.

¹ Full details will be found in *Lenormant's* Beginnings of History.

3) The outside stories and the Hebrew story are sisters, all derived from an earlier mother.

It will be granted that before any decision is reached, it is our duty first to study the other Hebrew story found in Genesis 2:4b-25, and the outside stories which associate themselves with it. Clearly no satisfactory opinion can be reached until all the material has been examined. But still further, it is necessary to place side by side with the several stories which are found in Genesis 1-11 the parallel stories coming from the outside. Whatever is true of one group of stories, for example, the creation stories, will be true also of another group, such as the deluge stories. It is better, therefore, to leave this question unanswered until we shall be able, from a point of view obtained as a result of the study of all this material, to reach a conclusion based upon all the facts.

A subsequent article of the series will consider the question in detail.

A still more difficult question connected with this story of creation is that of its reconciliation, as it is commonly termed, with science. In discussing this question, the writer desires to point out two or three principles in accordance with which, as it seems to him, the discussion must be undertaken:

1) The extent and character of agreement is not to be determined by any a priori arguments. If the Bible story of creation is divine in its origin and is true, it must agree with the assured results of science; but there is room for difference of opinion as to the kind of agreement which should be accepted. "Why should we argue," says Bishop Perowne, "as if we knew in what precise way God ought to convey to us a revelation." Shall we set limits to the work of the Almighty? It is here that the mistake has been made. The believer in revelation has maintained that the agreement must be minute, and has twisted the record into a new meaning with every fresh discovery of science. The scientist has failed to find this agreement, and has too frequently declared against the revelation. The apologist and scientist have both been wrong.

2) Revelation is limited to what man could not otherwise

know. Quarry has stated this principle as follows: "Matters which are discoverable by human reason and the means of human investigation which God has put within the reach of man's faculties, are not the proper subjects of divine revelation." Matters which do not concern morals, or bear on man's spiritual relations toward God, are not within the province of revealed religion. If, then, a person writing by inspiration of God on things pertaining to religion, should have occasion to speak of the things about him, it might be expected beforehand that he would speak of them as phenomenal, that is, according to his own existing conceptions or the imperfect apprehension of those for whose use he might have been more immediately writing. Hugh Miller has said: "The Scriptures have never yet revealed a single scientific truth. Those who defend the literal and exclusively correct acceptance of the text are men who labor to pledge revelation to an astronomy as false as that of the Buddhist Hindoo or the old Teuton."

3) In the Bible revelation, not science, is to be looked for; in nature science, not revelation. The statement of this principle is justified by the history of exegesis. Most discussions of the subject before us ignore it. Too much time has been spent in the effort to find in the Bible scientific truth in a scientific form. Too frequently have men tested the affirmations of nature by the biblical record. Does the sun really rise and set? Yes, the church answered, or the Bible is a lie. Were the days of creation days of twenty-four hours? Yes, said the men of twenty-five years ago, or there is no truth in the Bible.

The acceptance of these principles rules out at one stroke the great majority of the so-called theories of reconciliation; theories which it is manifestly impossible even to undertake to refute at this time.

The best attempt yet made is that of Professor Dana in his pamphlet, "The First Chapter of Genesis and Science," and by Guyot in his monograph on Creation. But the explanations here offered without a doubt demand interpretations of Hebrew words which no competent Hebraist will concede. There is no question that the order of creation indicated in the story is in

general that which science teaches. With this we should be satisfied. It is not possible to press the reconciliation further. Professor Dana himself acknowledges that, while the accordance is exact with the succession made out for the earliest species of the grand divisions, in the case of the division of the birds there is doubt. In the main we may say with Sir G. G. Stokes, M.P., F.R.S.,² that if we "are to suppose that it was intended to work a miracle in the nineteenth century for the conviction of gain-sayers, we might expect to find complete accordance even in detail. But if we suppose that the record in Genesis was meant for the people of the time and designed to give them ideas correct from a theological, or rather religious, point of view, it would be preposterous to demand scientific accuracy of detail."

The question of the origin of this story and its value is so closely connected with that of the second story which will be treated in the second article of the series, that it seems best to withhold a final estimate until the second story has been studied. In anticipation, however, it may be said that, if viewed as literature, the story has no superior in sublimity, force, and beauty; if regarded as the introduction to the institution of the Sabbath it contains no fault or blemish. It is sacrilege to treat this material as a scientific treatise and to apply to it the scientific test. The Bible knows no science. These things are spoken of as they optically appear to the unscientific mind. But if we regard it as the medium of the conveyance of religious truth, and note what is taught of God, of man, recalling, at the same time, how other nations struggled in vain for these same teachings, and the age in the world's history in which all this was delivered to man, we must, if we are honest, confess that we find something here more pure, more true, more elevated than any of the world's many traditions contains. What is this something? The answer is at hand: *God*. The same God, to be sure, who is in all history and in all literature; but who is here *as he is* not elsewhere.

² *The Expositor*, January, 1891.

THE BABYLONIAN ACCOUNT OF CREATION.

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Babylonian conception of the universe.—Account of the creation, tablets I.—III.—Marduk's combat with Tiamat, tablet IV.—Creation of constellations, stars and moon, tablet V.—Animals, tablet VI.—The Cuthean and the non-Semitic account of creation.

The ordinary Babylonian conceived the earth as round and immovable, a lofty mountain, resting on the abyss of the waters. Above the earth, stretched the arch of the sky, the heaven of God *Anu*, the father of the gods, resting on the foundation of heaven, the horizon. Above this firmament again is the inner part of heaven, the abode of the gods, called the "sunlit house," because here the sun shone continually. Between the visible heaven and the inner part of heaven were the upper waters, an heavenly ocean.

At both north poles, that of the ecliptic as well as that of the equator, sat the astronomical *Anu* and *Bēl*. Below, in the furthest south, perhaps the constellation of Arago, the astronomical *Ea*.

The sky was divided by "ways" or "paths" of the movable stars, one of them being the ecliptic (or *Anu*-path); another, the Tropic of Cancer (the *Bēl*-path), and a third, the Tropic of Capricorn (the *Ea*-path). On either side of the world, to the east and to the west, there were doors, through which the sun passed on his daily circuit; but it does not follow that the Babylonian poets, who wrote the accounts of the creation and other cosmogonic and epic poems, believed in the existence of such doors, as little as we believe the earth to be fixed and stationary, because we may say that that the sun rises or sets.

In the sky there are four classes of heavenly bodies: 1, The

² Compare the writer's article in *Hebraica*, Vol. IX. pp. 6-23.