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# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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## THE CREATIVE DAYS \*

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ONE of the storm-centers of the apparent conflict between science and Revelation has for years been the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis. With the development especially of modern physical science, the Mosaic account of creation became the object of many attacks, as supposedly antiquated or outworn and no longer intellectually tenable. This citadel of the Faith has thus for some decades been bombarded with the missiles of the most highly developed scientific acumen. Terms for an armistice have indeed been offered, and compromises looking toward concord and permanent peace have been suggested. But these have never been entirely satisfactory to either side. Meanwhile on each side there have been those who have opposed every compromise. They have remained fixed in their determination to continue the conflict with their original weapons, without even so much as a willingness to examine the weapons of the other party. As this is a subject of undoubted importance in these times of speculation and doubt, the following brief consideration of the *Creative Hexaëmeron* may not be wholly amiss and unwelcome.

Speculation upon this question has not been confined altogether to our own age. In practically every age philosophers and theologians discussed it. In the speculative thought of all races the questions of the *whence, how, when, and why* of origin have been second only to that of the *whither* of destiny. Thus many theories of creation have

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been developed. But as this is a subject that lies beyond the range of human consciousness and experience, unenlightened reason alone could never solve these transcendent mysteries of origin. This would seem to be as impossible, without revealed facts or premises of reasoning, as for a man to weigh himself while holding his own scale. Here man's profoundest speculations fail, and unaided human reason must halt with bowed head and veiled face before the divinely imposed limitation, "So far shalt thou go but no farther."

#### I. TWO SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Man is, however, not thus left to himself without light, as to these absorbing questions. As if to anticipate man's burning desire to know about his origin, for his "O my Father" of inquiry there is the long anticipated revealed answer, "Here, my child."

#### I. THE VOLUME OF REVELATION

The account of creation in Genesis has always been regarded as of divine origin. It seems to bear upon its very face the stamp of Divinity. And only in proportion as other accounts, however we may explain their origin, have been found to approach this one in Scripture, have they been regarded as containing elements of truth. Fitting it is, therefore, that this record of man's and nature's origin forms the introduction to the revelation of his state and destiny. And, in the main, this account of creation was for centuries accepted with implicit faith as God's one and final revelation to man on this important topic.

Many great and reverent men saw indeed some difficulties of interpretation, such as the creative days consisting each of an evening and a morning, the creation of light and of the earth before that of the sun, the existence of plants before sunlight, and the fact that to God's rest-day was assigned no evening. But, being profoundly devout, these men regarded such difficulties as only philosophically profound and thus merely apparent. Indeed, by some men like Augustine this whole narrative was regarded as not

an ordinary one, and therefore beyond any explanation according to ordinary canons of interpretation and in merely human terms and times. And in this conclusion might devoutest faith well have rested and been satisfied. Man might reverently have allowed the record to stand as God's final inspired chronicle of His own work of creation. For as God's work must be above man's work as high as the heavens are above the earth, so might man well have regarded God's *record* of the same as being above or different from merely human records.

## II. THE VOLUME OF NATURE AND ITS RELATION TO THAT OF REVELATION

There is, however, another volume of truth open to man. In addition to the volume of God's Word, there is the volume of His completed work. Indeed, God's work in nature is the great outstanding visible fact of whose origination the account in Genesis is apparently the divinely inspired record. And the record must correspond to the fact, or the fact to the record. If both are from God, they must agree; for all divine truth, whatever its habitat, must be consistent with all other and related truth. Thus God's truth as to His creation comes to us in two volumes; namely, the book of nature and the book of Revelation. They are complements of each other and are therefore both necessary to the better understanding of this great subject.

Taken in the order of the time of interpretation rather than in that of their origins, there is a sense in which the relation of the volume of Revelation to the volume of nature is like that of prophecy to history, of the Old Testament to the New Testament. As prophecy is to a certain extent intelligible without history, or the Old Testament without the New Testament, so the account in God's volume of Revelation is also somewhat intelligible without God's volume of nature. But as history is the key to the better understanding of prophecy, or the New Testament to that of the Old Testament, so God's book of nature is the key to the better understanding of the account in God's book of

Revelation. And as prophecy is to a certain extent also the key to the understanding of the purpose of history, so also is the account in Genesis the key to the understanding of the purpose of nature. The failure to recognize this relationship between nature and Genesis has been one of the chief causes of the conflict between science, in the wider sense, and religion.

### III. APPARENT CONFLICT OF INTERPRETATION

Modern science has wonderfully enlarged man's conception of the greatness of physical creation, and therefore, to the devout, also of its Creator. She has compelled nature to yield many secrets. But with her marvelous development there has also been developed the feeling of her own sufficiency in the resolution of problems not distinctively her own. With the suggestion of the account of creation in Genesis, she has proudly attempted to construct one of her own, virtually without the factor of Deity, out of the apparent evidence from nature itself. But in so doing she has erroneously proceeded as if she knew all the forces that have been operative in the development of universal nature. She has indeed laid bare many of nature's mysteries, but for every one laid bare she has found beneath it several others, and each still more mysterious,—and so on in a geometrical ratio. And where she has come back to Scripture to illustrate her findings, it has been with the prepossession that her own findings must be final, and that where they do not agree with Scripture upon its very surface, there Scripture must necessarily be in error.

On the other hand, theology has been too prone to reject without examination the investigations and conclusions of science. Assuming that a rather literal interpretation of Genesis in human terms of time and sense must necessarily be final, she has too often closed her eyes to the light that nature, properly understood, may shed upon the account in Genesis. Finding that the testimony of science has not agreed with her preconceived interpretation of Scripture, she has been rather too ready to reject all scientific in-

vestigation, as well as all philosophic inquiry, as atheistic and false. In this adherence to Scripture she would indeed only have been consistent, had it not been for the fact that she has confounded God's Word with her own interpretation of it. She should at least have been open to more light for her interpretation; for, upon her own premise, that both are from God, nature and Scripture could not disagree. Thus, where it was a matter of interpretation alone, she should have welcomed at least the *more settled* results of science that might be harmonized with the account in Genesis.

Thus science, especially in her philosophic applications, has been too bold in her assumptions and too settled in her conclusions, many of which have not at all stood the test of later science. And theology has been inclined to disregard or reject whatever light from nature science might throw upon the account of Revelation. But, as already intimated, since the testimony of nature and the account in Genesis seem to be complementary for the fuller truth involved in both, they should be used together, though each in its own way and to its own particular end, in the resolution of this great problem. Therefore, science and theology must share each other's testimony and bear with each other's shortcomings. Nor must either arrogate all truth to herself; but each must humbly acknowledge the infinality of her own immediate conclusions. And where the two still seem to be in conflict, let each patiently await more light. Meanwhile it is surely only appropriate for science not to assail the creative record itself, even as it is for theology not to assail nature itself.

#### IV. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF REVELATION

The theologian must ever bear in mind that the chief purpose of Scripture is the revelation of the way of salvation, and that other things, even including human history, like a complex scaffolding, are used in so far as they contribute to that great end. Therefore it is that the beginning of Genesis gives only in barest outline the

account of God's work in creation, as the necessary ultimate premise to all that follows. Details of the work of creation and descriptions of methods of operation, not entering into so general a plan, are therefore omitted from its record. It is given to us for its religious value, not for scientific enlightenment, though surely, if of divine origin, in no element can it in the least be contrary to a science true to the facts of nature.

Scripture here deals with simple facts as *effects*, whose ultimate causes necessarily lie above human experience and beyond first-hand investigation; and it therefore does not pretend to assign any causes except the one great First Cause of all. Its purpose being religious, not scientific, secondary causes are not given because manifestly not a part of that purpose. But that is not saying that therefore no secondary causes were operative, for surely all secondary causes are themselves effects from the great First Cause.<sup>1</sup> Therefore all secondary causes are of necessity included in the great First Cause and are apparently implied in that sublime account of the creation of the universe. And, indeed, what seems to be a finished universe is still teeming with secondary causes, which is simply saying that the First Cause *continues to sustain*, and perhaps is still further *developing*, the created universe through the agency of secondary causes as the continued expression of His omnific will.

This truth, that the great First Cause worked both directly and through secondary causes in the work of creation, which should seem almost axiomatic, has been too much overlooked. The theologian in his interpretation of Genesis apparently could see only the First Cause operative in creation, while the scientist, in his interpretation of nature, could apparently see only secondary causes operative in a supposed merely cosmic development. And in so doing their views have seemed mutually exclusive. But the scientist seems to have forgotten that all secondary causes necessarily imply a first cause, of which these them-

<sup>1</sup> See the writer's *Creation Ex Nihilo* (Badger, 1918), chap. IV.

selves are only effects. And the theologian might have known that the First Cause naturally implies and includes secondary causes as in part the agencies of His operations.

V. SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY APPROACHING TRUTH  
FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS

In her treatment of this subject, theology properly starts from a special supernatural revelation of transcendental truths and facts, as premises, and therefore necessarily reasons deductively toward detailed natural phenomena and truths. Science, with equal propriety, starts from observed natural phenomena, and therefore reasons inductively toward ultimate facts and truths. Theology has been inclined to err in the arbitrary use or application of her revealed, but not fully understood, premises. Science has chiefly erred in forming rather hasty generalizations, and drawing conclusions, from an insufficient, and oftentimes imperfectly understood, number of phenomena as her data for reasoning. There is thus a sense in which the approach to this sublime problem on the part of theology and that on the part of science, have virtually been from opposite sides. The theologian has approached it from the Godward, or supernatural, side, the side of the ultimate Cause or Worker; the scientist has approached it from the manward, or natural, side, or the side of the cosmic effect or of the finished work. Hence it is, as already noted, that the one has seen only God, the First Cause, directly active; the other has seen operative only secondary causes with which it still teems. And, in a sense, both have been right; for to the one, for his purpose, God the Creator or Worker is everything, while to the other, for his special purpose, the creation or work, with its still inhering causes or forces, is everything. And we believe that, like two crews of tunnel workers working on opposite sides of a great mountain, they are really necessarily approaching each other and must eventually meet. And that place of meeting must be the very center and heart of the great over-towering mountain of God's universal truth.



## VI. THE ACCOUNT IN GENESIS MEANT FOR ALL AGES

Remembering the real purpose of Scripture, and particularly of this account of creation as its introduction and as the basic premise or postulate to all that follows, let us not lose sight of that other equally important and associated fact, that it is meant to be suited to all ages. It is to be God's revelation concerning the origin of all things to the last generation, however cultured and enlightened, just as much as it was to the earliest people to whom it was first given, however primitive and untutored. And to both it was meant to be equally adapted as in outline the ultimate truth. Therefore, its presentation of truth, even its very language, must of necessity be of that general character that fits it to all ages and to every condition of man. If it had been presented in the scientific terminology of this twentieth century, and with scientific details intelligible to this generation, it would have been absolutely incomprehensible by the generation of the fifteenth century before Christ, and largely so even by every generation before the nineteenth century of our era. Again, if it were given in the scientific terminology, in the light of all the discoveries, of future centuries of human history, it might be unintelligible even to this twentieth century with all its boasted scientific attainment. Therefore, the use of the technical phraseology of any one century of enlightenment would hardly have fitted it for any other.

The revelation of creation is thus given in that universal phenomenal language that makes it intelligible to all ages, and to all stages of enlightenment. Therefore, no one age can ever expect to exhaust its full meaning, as no one age has complete possession of all the arcana of nature. And yet, every age, however enlightened, can reverently approach this divine record, matchless in its outline simplicity, and not find its own real discoveries out of harmony with it. There it stands unique, yet universal for all time, divinely matching all real discoveries of truth, as we believe could be shown, like the simple outline of prophecy matching its fulfillment in a most complex history. Nor

can the last word of real science ever contradict it, if of divine origin, or any real human needs outgrow it.

#### VII. THE LANGUAGE PHENOMENAL

Perhaps a few words in further explanation of the language used might not be out of place. We still speak of the sun as rising or as setting, though we know it to be so only in appearance and that what really happens is the earth rotating on its axis from west to east as the cause of this appearance. We may say, the eye sees, the mind forms a resultant image, and language endeavors to express in words what it has imaged. But the words are not the image, much less the thing imaged. They are at best but a representation—and that, in its last analysis, a pictorial one—growing out of the phenomenon, or appearance to the eye, as imaged in the mind. This is the natural birth of language; and the more primitive the people are, the more phenomenal is their language. And though with the development of language this phenomenal nature of it is in many terms all but lost, it still lies imbedded—as it were, fossilized—in the apparently meaningless combination of sounds or letters.

Thus all language in its last analysis is really phenomenal or metaphorical. And so moral and spiritual truth is, of course, necessarily revealed to us in phenomenal or metaphorical language, the basis of whose metaphors is even itself phenomenal,—phenomenal physical nature. Thus we speak of sweet music, glorious truth, etc. Hence, necessarily, the many anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms in Scripture. The things which, or whose phenomena, lie within the range of our physical senses are made the images to show forth the things that lie without, or the supersensuous; and the language of their phenomena becomes the vehicle to convey conceptions, however faintly, of transcendental ideas. The known becomes the imaging mirror for the unknown. And if the known itself is dim and shadowy, as it really is, even at best, how much more so must be the unknown, its mirrored image! Indeed, as

the embodied soul cannot directly or immediately view or look out upon the environing universe, but only indirectly or mediately through the several windows of the bodily sense-organs, *all* its knowledge of external nature must, strictly speaking, necessarily be imperfect and incomplete. As its contact with and operation upon physical nature is thus only through these appointed tools or means of knowledge, it can truly or literally only "know in part" even the things of this present physical world, not to speak of the origin of the cosmos and its past and future or of the spiritual world that transcends it and the ultimate reality in that infinite Being that is the Ground or Author of both. The ego in the present state can thus at best see or know the non-ego only "in a mirror darkly." Only in our glorified humanity hereafter can we, by immediate vision, see "face to face" and "know fully." In its last analysis, it is this fact that lies at the basis of the perplexing problem of the "reality" of all philosophic search. Hence even an absolutely intelligible direct *revelation* of such transcendent facts would seem equally impossible to an embodied spirit.

Surely, if God necessarily reveals himself elsewhere in Scripture in various anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms, in human language based by metaphor upon the things of time and sense, we may reverently believe that in His revelation of creation, He also similarly uses human terms, with all their implied metaphors, based upon the phenomena of sense and time. And as in the many acknowledged anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms of God's Word we would not ascribe to Him human emotions, form, and action, so in His account of creation we must not limit Him to human methods and conditions of earthly times and relations.

## II. THE MAIN FACTS SET FORTH

Enough has probably now been said on the sources themselves, for the better understanding of their contents.

We shall therefore proceed to an examination of the main facts set forth or implied.

#### I. THE BEGINNING, AND THE CREATION OF THE ELEMENTS

The account in Genesis opens with the very striking sentence, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What the true and full import of this sentence is, and what its relation to what follows, it is difficult with absolute certainty to determine. There are several views as to that import and relation.

1. This opening sentence may be meant to serve merely as an introduction to the account itself, and would thus be a brief, comprehensive statement of the whole work of creation, which is immediately after given somewhat in detail. According to this view, it would practically be equivalent to a caption or general heading for the whole account, and would at once arrest the attention of the reader to a theme ineffably grand. This is rather the popular, and no doubt the prevalent, view; and upon first thought it seems very plausible. But this would still leave open the question as to the origination of the elements, whether viewed as so-called ponderable matter or as ultimately nothing but energy, for the account immediately proceeds, "And the earth was waste and void," etc. The matter or material, or the elemental energy, of unorganized chaos is thus referred to as already existing before this second verse. And if the first verse were only the general introduction or the comprehensive caption to the whole, then we should have here no revelation as to the whence of so-called matter. Whether it had at some previous time been created by God, not revealed here but *assumed*, or whether it had existed from eternity and was therefore *co-eternal* with God, would then surely be an open question, left with the reader—perhaps to try his reason, and perchance his faith.

What a plausible argument this would afford to the exponent of the theory of the eternity of matter or the elements, however viewed,—a theory very natural to the

materialist, or the mechanistic scientist, with his laws of the uniformity of nature and of the apparent conservation of energy and matter or of the all-inclusive monistic *substance!* For, recognizing only secondary causes, these laws to him seem absolute, not only for nature in its cosmic development but also for that dim and mysterious period before the present supposedly developed cosmos. This would make of God—if indeed He were still regarded as necessary to an intelligible explanation of things—not a real creator, that is, a creator *ex nihilo*, but a great master-builder or fashioner of the universe, in the six creative days, from preëxisting elements at His hand. But the theory of the eternity of the world-stuff is untenable, not only in the light of Scripture with its one infinite and absolute Existence, *God*, but also in the light of its own nature and of its very necessary finiteness.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, even upon the basis of this view of the import of the opening sentence in Genesis—according to which there would apparently be no *revelation* of the creation of the elements—we should eventually be forced back upon the only tenable conclusion, that the so-called world-stuff itself had at some *previous* time been created by that Being whom we call *God*, as the mind's great necessary fundamental postulate. According to this view the term *beginning* could, therefore, not refer to any *absolute* beginning, such as the beginning of created being itself, or of the elements, or even of time, but to the beginning of the present *cosmos*, whose fashioning or construction would thus therein be set forth.

2. That opening sentence may also be taken to mean the very thing which would otherwise be left an open question by the interpretation that it is merely an introduction or caption to what follows: it may mean the creation of the world-elements themselves, and of course, *ex nihilo*. According to this view, the term *beginning* would clearly refer to the time of that *primal* creation, and would evidently mean the absolute beginning of the ex-

<sup>1</sup> Creation Ex Nihilo, chaps. v.-vii.

istence of the *material of chaos*. And as time is apparently measured duration, based upon successive physical changes or revolutions in multiplications and divisions with their coincident events, probably that beginning also marked the beginning of *time*, as we know it. But whether it is so inclusive as to mean the beginning of *all* created being, it would be impossible to determine; for the creation of angelic beings may have antedated the creation of our physical cosmos and may perhaps have antedated even the creation of its substance, or its constitutive elements.

Moreover, may there not have been *other* creations, and even of other sentient beings in *them*, of which we have no revelation and of which a revelation would clearly be unnecessary for, and perhaps unintelligible to, this earth's race of men? There may even *now* exist other universes, and perhaps with rational beings, apart and independent from and beyond our own,—created perchance *before* and perchance *after* our own, but of which we have, and perhaps could have, no knowledge. Other universes might even have been created, run their appointed courses, and then been disintegrated or even annihilated, before ours was called into cosmic or even into elemental being. And our own might even have been fashioned or furnished from the disintegrated elements of an *older* universe. Who can say with certainty that this could not be possible, for who can limit the operations or the power of the omnipotent and eternal God to our own universe with its limited cycle of duration? And yet, in any of the above possibilities, that first sentence in Genesis would not be any the less true; for that beginning would simply be shifted back to the time when the substance of *present nature's primal universe* was born out of the womb of vacuous nothing. But it would be shifted back to that only; for the creation of other possible, elementally distinct, universes, created earlier in their elements, as well as of perhaps later ones, would not be included in this creative account, and the word *beginning* at its head would be altogether unaffected by such universe or universes, as its contents are meant to

be a revelation of the creation of *our* universe, and to *man* as a being related to and confined within it, at least so long as he needs such revelation. Such beginning would then apparently not be identical with that spoken of in the first verse of St. John's Gospel, as before *all* creation.

Taking, then, that first verse in Genesis as the crystallized account of the creation, by God's omnific power, of the *elements*, whether viewed as matter or as nothing but energy, out of which the creative Word later fashioned our cosmos, we might conceive of indefinite time elapsing between what is described in it and in what follows. During this period, perhaps within that chaos other forces operated. And perchance the forces still active might then have been impressed upon it to be used during the later *cosmic period* as His secondary agencies in the unfolding process of the following six creative days. Of course, the time of the act bodied forth by the contents of that first verse might also be taken as having *immediately* preceded, as that act was the preparation for, the creative steps that followed. And surely no one can absolutely deny the possibility of either assumption as to the time-relation of the *primal creation* of the first verse and the *sixfold cosmic creation* of the verses immediately following. Surely, time measured by cycles and events does not enter as a *necessary* factor into the operations of the eternal God.

## II. THE COSMIC CREATIONS AND THEIR TIME-PERIODS

It has been observed by various writers that the record of creation in Genesis is a truly unique record. Even as a contribution to literature it is a consummate masterpiece. And it sets forth a series of creative acts that were unmistakably according to a wonderful plan and a series of so-called days that must have been of an extraordinary character,—facts which we shall now proceed briefly to consider.

### 1. *The Successive Creative Acts of the Cosmic Week.*

The accounts of the first three days tell respectively of the creation or manifestation of light, of the establishing

of the firmament together with the dividing of the waters below it from those above it, and of the separation of the waters upon the earth's surface from the land and also of the creation of plant life. There were thus *two* distinct creative acts on the third creative day. The accounts of the last three days tell respectively of the placing of lights or luminaries in the heavens with their appointments, of the calling into being of sea-animals together with winged creatures, and of the calling into being of land-animals and also of the creation of man as nature's crown and lord. Hence there were also *two* distinct creative acts on the sixth creative day.

The first triad thus began with light and ended with two creative acts, the second one being the creation of life in its lowest form, in plants. The second triad began with organized light-dispensers and ended with two creative acts, the second one being that of the creation of the highest, psychic, life in man, God's image. Hence both periods began with light, the first with light diffused and the second with light radiated from highly organized luminaries; both periods ended with life, the first with the lowest living organisms (plants) and the second with the highest organized life (man). And at least the latter of these creations, that of man as a living soul (i. 27; ii. 7), was a superadded act and manifestly a distinct and real creation *ex nihilo*, or an *absolute* creation, as the beginning of a new non-absolute entity,—as was also evidently that of living beings in sea and air. Hence the use of the word *bara* for these two creations (ver. 21, 27), even as for the absolute creation of primal matter (ver. 1). The account of the first triad, moreover, may be said to speak of God's work upon crude matter as the preparation for the beginnings of life, with which that triad was crowned and closed; the account of the second triad speaks of God's work upon matter in its higher organization and of the calling into being of the successive higher forms of life, crowning all with the life of the human soul.

Furthermore, creation manifestly proceeded by regular



steps from low to high and from high to higher, each step occupying a definite, or from another viewpoint an indefinite, time-period called *day* (*yom*). The great acts of God's creative work are thus revealed as taking place in chronological sequence; and that revelation is expressed in terms that make the record true and relatively intelligible to every age. And yet, even the sacred chronicler probably did not understand the full content of the conceptions bodied forth in the terms he was moved to employ in this account,—which might, in a sense, well be spoken of as an inverse prophecy,—just as the prophets that spoke of the coming Messiah, or of any other *future* event, could not fully know the future historic content of their prophecies. Nor can we even yet fully understand this meaning. Nay, as prophecy must first be clearly fulfilled by history before its fuller meaning becomes apparent, so we may believe that not till the universe will have had its full out-working, and till man will have clearly read all its secret meanings and traced its every law and known its every state throughout all ages of its existence, will he be able fully to understand the phenomenal panoramic outlines of those creative records, and that is *never!* One thing is clear, however, that we have here a unique account of the successive acts or works of God that marked the successive days or time-periods. And that is the important thing, next to its revelation of a Creator, *God*.

The creative acts are, moreover, described as the work of a God who is a free living *personality*, and not simply a blind and fateful all-pervading energy. The narrative speaks of this creation as His own *free* act, uninfluenced by anything external to, or even by any necessity inherent in, Himself. It also makes it clear that the creature is essentially different and distinct from its Creator. Each separate event chronicled is represented as having had its supernatural origin external to the Creator, from His omnific fiat. And we might almost see it implied in the very language that, after each divine fiat to inaugurate a particular work or a specific creation, the Creator operated

in *further developing* it through *secondary causes*, themselves the effects or imposed forces of these successive divine *fiats*. This appears from the expressions, "Let the earth bring forth," "created and made" (ii. 3 — created to make), etc. Thus *no* event was self-originated; and where secondary inhering forces became operative by divine appointment to complete or carry forward the work, these were themselves also God's creatures. Thus, apart from acts of created will, totally and absolutely all universal nature is alone God's created work.

Some geologists speak of vast cataclysms, or sudden extraordinary leaps, in nature during the æonic history of our earth, in some of which they acknowledge an energy, or set of forces, operating that was *extraordinary* and above all explanation. With a little more faith, or scientific imagination, they might see in those very cataclysms the work of special divine *fiats*, some actually matching those spoken of in our creative records. In acknowledging the presence of the extraordinary with the ordinary in the past history of our globe, they would have only one step to acknowledge the supernatural divine presence in *direct* operation with the operation of secondary causes. And, as already noted, undoubtedly those special divine *fiats*, or immediate and supernatural creative acts, in the first chapter of Genesis, started each its distinctive work, which was then to be carried forward, mediately and naturally, through the secondary laws or forces implanted in nature by those same successive *fiats*. The geologist's unexplained cataclysms, followed by nature's ordinary processes, would thus become full of meaning.

We have, then, in the first chapter of Genesis a supernaturally revealed account of a series of successive supernatural events, enacted by that transcendent Being, God, in six successive time-periods called *days*.

## 2. *The Length of the Yom, the Creative Day.*

As to the length of those days or time-periods, it might be asked, Who can limit them to a duration of twenty-four

hours each when the inspired narrative clearly does not thus limit them? Indeed, but few thinkers of this generation would regard them as ordinary days. As the account is one of extraordinary, or supernatural, acts on the part of an infinite and absolute God, and as everything else connected with it is apparently supernatural, so should we reverently consider the days spoken of to be *more than ordinary days*. Indeed, the very indefiniteness and singularity of the language employed is suggestive of this fact, even as the greatness or extraordinary character of the work suggests extraordinary days. And as some one suggested long ago, while the sacred writers glorify God for His work of creation, nowhere do they speak of the creative days as miraculous days of twenty-four hours for so great a work of creation. Moreover, the term *day* is used in different senses in the Scriptures. We read of the day of visitation (Isa. x. 3), of the day of the Lord (Zech. xiv. 1), of the day of salvation (2 Cor. vi. 2), and the like. So Christ said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day" (John viii. 56). We need hardly say that these terms clearly do not refer to twenty-four-hour periods of time. And in the first two passages the word for day is, of course, the Hebrew *yom*, as in the account of creation in Genesis. Furthermore, in the creative record itself the term day (*yom*) is used in different senses, as is acknowledged, as follows: day of about twelve hours as distinguished from night (ver. 14, 16, 18), solar day of twenty-four hours (ver. 14, "and let them be . . . for days"), day as distinguished from darkness after the creation of light on the first creative day (ver. 5, "And God called the light Day"), the creative days themselves (ver. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), and day for the whole six-day creative period (ii. 4, "in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven"). It surely must be clear to every reader that in only one of these cases does the word *yom* signify a twenty-four-hour day; namely, the second one (second use of it in ver. 14). And, of course, probably this earth alone of all possible worlds has a twenty-four-hour day; while upon no two

planets of our solar system are the days alike, and perhaps upon no two other heavenly bodies that may circle around their suns in the starry universe.

These six creative time-periods are therefore designated *days* because they were successive periods analogous in various ways to the period familiar as day to man, for whom this account was meant to be a revelation. Each was a period, however long, marking its own distinct and completed work; and hence for these reasons, and not because of length or duration, it is in human language called *day*. Moreover, it is altogether probable that those six creative days were not of equal length or duration.

But the objector will say that surely an almighty God could have created the whole universe even in a moment of time. And his objection might be considered as having some validity, provided he could claim to know the whole *why* and *how* of God's creation. But it is surely not a question as to whether God *could* do so or not, but one as to whether He *did* so or not. And here the evidence, both from His inspired record and from His finished work, is overwhelmingly against such an instantaneous creation. It might be said that an age and an instant must be equal with Him who inhabiteth eternity and who is not limited by time and space relations. Thus what would seem an age when measured by material revolutions might be equivalent to a moment to an unmeasured or infinite Being. To Him to whom a thousand years are but as a day, our measured time is of little significance. But, of course, it must also be remembered that to Him a day is as a thousand years. In other words, to the eternal and infinite God there is *no* measured time as we know it, for He must necessarily be timeless in duration, even as He is measureless in essence. However, it is not a question as to the length or duration of those creative days to the eternal and unchangeable Creator *God*, but it is one as to the length or duration of them to His temporal and changeable creature man.

But the most common argument in supposed proof of the theory that the creative days were twenty-four-hour days of our earth, has been the one based upon the *Sabbath*. In the beginning of the second chapter of Genesis it is said that the Lord rested on the seventh day and that He blessed that day and hallowed it. And again in the commandment of the Sabbath for man, he is commanded not to do any work on the Sabbath Day; and the reason assigned is, that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and rested on the seventh day.

Now it is of course true that the Sabbath which man is commanded to keep, as well as each of the other six days of the terrestrial week, is a *solar day* of twenty-four hours. But from this the conclusion cannot be drawn that therefore the days of the creative week must have been days of twenty-four hours each. Such reasoning would involve the assumption that the days of the creative week were the *same* as are the days of the terrestrial week. And as that is really the thing to be proved, it would clearly be a *petitio principii*. Indeed, as the fourth creative day so manifestly included ordinary terrestrial days, the latter cannot be the measure of the former. And this must, of course, also be true of the other creative days, as belonging to the same class. It will also be remembered that man was created at the close of the sixth day and that the Sabbath followed upon his creation. It would seem strange if six terrestrial days which man had not known except part of the last, would have been followed immediately by the terrestrial Sabbath, so that man's first full day of life would have been his Sabbath. It will also be observed that the Sabbath of the creative week is not spoken of as consisting of an evening and a morning. It is called simply *the seventh day*. Nor is God spoken of as resuming His work for another creation. Then, what of the succeeding weeks or ages? Would those have been weeks or ages of rest, without any resuming of work? And yet Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

The physical creation had been completed and nature's

laws had been ordained. Man as nature's crown was here to contemplate God's handiwork, and intellectually, as well as partly physically, to be creation's lord. God's creative Sabbath had thus begun as man's day of intellectual unfolding and sovereignty. And to that day is assigned no evening, probably simply because to it has not come the morning parallel to those of the other six days. The creative days of physical nature are past, and the day of God's rest from the work of creation (but of *providence* in *created* nature) and of man as the object of God's special concern and delight, is here. And as on the sixth creative day man in the image of God appeared as nature's lord, so on the creative Sabbath God has appeared in the likeness of man to redeem him and to complete his sovereignty.

Moreover, it is expressly declared that God finished His work on the *seventh* day, not on the sixth, however we may explain that statement. And be it remembered that this declaration follows a statement that is apparently meant as a sort of interlude between the account of the sixth day and that of the seventh day; namely, "And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." Thus, though the work of cosmic creation was completed in six days, it was not till the seventh day that "God finished His work which He had made." And then He is said to have rested, though surely not as we speak of resting, but rather in cessation from physical creation and in contemplation and delight. And yet He still works, through secondary causes in physical nature, and in providence. We must remember that these statements about God are necessarily anthropomorphic and anthropopathic metaphors.

A close examination of the account of the institution of the Sabbath for man should thus make it clear that the divine week (the celestial circle) is held up as the pattern of the earthly human week (the terrestrial circle). The days or degrees are equal in number, but necessarily very unequal in length. As in six divine days God *created*, so in six terrestrial or human days man is to *work*. And as

God rested from His work of physical creation on the seventh *olamic* day, or God's Sabbath, so is man to rest from his labors on each *seventh day* (or on one day out of seven) of the *planet* which is his abode. But as the nature of God's work and rest was different from that of man's work and rest, even as the natures of the workers are different, so were God's six creative days and creative Sabbath different from man's days of labor and Sabbath of rest. And this must also be true of the Christian Lord's Day, of a completed redemption. And if there are rational creatures like man on other heavenly bodies, as their days would not be of the same length as ours, they may observe one day out of seven of their own planet's rotations as their day of rest, or Lord's Day of worship. And thus the same commandment to observe one day out of seven, but of their own kind, in commemoration of a completed creation (or of a completed redemption) would serve for *all possible worlds* of rational creatures. God's divine creative week, with its Sabbath, would equally be the pattern for all worlds, however long or short their days. And unless God's creative days were *different* from our solar days, such a record of creation as that in Genesis could be true for our earth alone. It should therefore need no further proof that God's creative Sabbath is different from man's Sabbath, for which it serves as the pattern. Hence, the creative days were not ordinary terrestrial days of twenty-four hours, but extraordinary or *olamic* days.

As already remarked, the creative days are spoken of as consisting each of an evening and a morning, the evening having been before the morning in the order of time, and apparently also in the order of event or condition which it is by analogy meant to characterize. But, surely, they were very different from those caused by the sun, which did not even appear until the fourth creative day. Nor would a solar day be described as consisting of an evening and a morning, or of an evening before a morning, although

perhaps from this as a model or suggestion the Jewish day began in the evening. These days are spoken of as having begun with an evening, *ereb* (Greek *erebos*), from *arab*, to mingle or blend, suggestive of darkness. They are said to have ended in a morning, *boker*, in the primary sense meaning to cleave, separate, therefore to distinguish, suggestive of light. Thus they began in a blending, dusk or darkness, and ended in a parting, dawn or light. Such is clearly the root idea conveyed by the language employed. Thus the first day was a period, however long, that commenced in darkness and ended in light as compared with its beginning, however we may explain its nature. And light itself was the newly created principle, or energy, or shall we say essence, of that first day. It began in unorganized chaos, upon which God's spirit moved, and ended in elementary organization and in light, compared with which its beginning was night or evening. Similarly might we describe the other days, if that entered into our specific purpose. It might, however, be added that the morning closing one day was apparently as evening compared with, or perhaps the evening of, the succeeding day, as in an ascending series.

We speak equally phenomenally and even indefinitely when we speak of the morning of the world and of the dawn of history or of civilization, as also when we speak of the evening of time. We even speak of life's sunset and of superstition's night. And we should rather look for such pictorial language in a narrative that comes to us from that primitive age and through the medium of that imaginative Oriental mind. These days are therefore not marked in the sacred chronicle by sunrise and sunset. Indeed, the fact that in the great creative panorama the sun itself is not made to appear until the fourth day, as already noted, is wonderfully in accord with the most plausible theories of modern science, as might be shown, if space permitted. Of that first creative triad it could be said,



No sunrise, and no sunset, too,  
Marked those creative days;  
No spinning worlds seemed moving through  
Vast orbits in void space.

What, then, was the absolute length of those creative days, if they were not ordinary days of twenty-four hours each? Christian geologists and astronomers, in attempting to reconcile the record of Genesis with what they believe they can read in the strata of the earth and in the heavenly bodies, have made many guesses at their probable length, and have even made elaborate calculations. But all their calculations must fail in determining anything like their probable length, for they are based upon data that must necessarily remain uncertain as premises for conclusive reasoning. The so-called cataclysms, or the special creative acts to begin new orders of nature, as well as the forces and conditions that were unequal in different ages, make all calculations very inconclusive. Moreover, of what avail are human calculations of the duration of periods that determine *divine* acts! In other words, here we are in the region of the mysterious and uncertain. However, those creative days were unquestionably indefinite periods of time, and no doubt equivalent to ages as measured by the cycles of our sun, and probably of unequal length or duration, as we have suggested. And it is not probable that science will be able to throw much real light upon this subject beyond the fourth, or at best the third, day; and even upon the fifth day it can not throw a great deal of light. We may therefore safely accept the sacred account of creation in Genesis for what it is apparently intended to teach.

We have thus briefly considered the matter of a proper approach to, and interpretation of, the sources of information on this subject, as also the time-element which has caused so much misunderstanding; and further details, especially as to the several creative acts or works of the successive days, would lie beyond the scope and purpose of the present article.