

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

THE VISION OF GENESIS.

FROM "THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD," BY J. W. DAWSON, LL.D., F.R.S.E.,
PAL M'GILL, COLLEGE, MONTREAL.

It is now necessary to inquire in what precise form this remarkable revelation of the origin of the world has been given. I have already referred to the hypothesis that it represents a vision of creation presented to the mind of a seer, as if in a series of pictures which he represents to us in words. This is, perhaps, the most intelligible conception of the manner of communication of a revelation from God; and inasmuch as it is that referred to in other parts of the Bible as the mode of presentation of the future to inspired prophets, there can be no impropriety in supposing it to have been the means of communicating the knowledge of the unknown past. We may imagine the seer—perhaps some aboriginal patriarch, long before the time of Moses—perhaps the first man himself—wrapt in ecstatic vision, having his senses closed to all the impressions of the present time, and looking as at a moving procession of the events of the earth's past history, presented to him in a series of apparent days and nights. In the first chapter of Genesis he rehearses this divine vision to us, not in poetry, but in a series of regularly arranged parts or strophes, thrown into a sort of a rhythmical order tried to impress them on the memory, and to allow them to be handed down from mouth to mouth, perhaps through successive generations of men, before they could be fixed in a written form of words. Though the style can scarcely be called poetical, since its expressions are obviously literal and unadorned by figures of speech, the production may not unfairly be called the Song or Ballad of Creation, and it presents an Archaic simplicity reminding us of the compositions of the oldest and rudest times, while it has also an artificial and orderly arrangement, much obscured by its division into verses and chapters in our Bible. It is undoubtedly also characterized by a clearness and grandeur of expression very striking and majestic, and which shows that it was written by, and intended for, men of no mean and contracted minds, but who could grasp the great problems of the origin of things, and comprehend and express them in a bold and vigorous manner. It may be well, before proceeding farther, to present to the reader this ancient document in a form more literal and intelligible, and probably nearer to its original dress, than that in which we are most familiar with it in our English Bibles:

THE ABORIGINAL SONG OF CREATION.

Beginning.

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth,
And the earth was formless and empty,
And darkness on the surface of the deep,
And the Breath of God moved on the Surface of the Waters.

Day One.

And God said—"Let Light be,"
And Light was.
And God saw the Light that it was good.
And God called the Light Day,
And the darkness He called Night.
And Evening was and the Morning was—Day one.

Day Second.

And God said—"Let there be an Expanse in the midst of the waters,
And let it divide the waters from the waters."
And God made the Expanse,
And divided the waters below the Expanse from the waters above the Expanse.
And it was so.
And God called the Expanse Heavens.
And Evening was and Morning was, a Second Day.

Day Third.

And God said—"Let the waters under the Heavens be gathered into one place.
And let the Dry Land appear."
And it was so.
And God called the Dry Land Earth,
And the gathering of the waters called He Seas.
And God saw that it was good.
And God said—"Let the earth shoot forth herbage,
The Herb yielding seed and the fruit-tree yielding fruit containing seed after its kind, on the earth."
And it was so.
And the earth brought forth herbage,
The Herb yielding seed and the Tree yielding fruit whose seed is in it after its kind,
And God saw that it was good.
And Evening was and Morning was, a Third Day.

Day Fourth.

And God said—"Let there be Luminaries in the Expanse of Heaven,

To divide the day from the night,
And let them be for Signs and for Seasons,
And for Days and for Years.
And let them be Luminaries in the Expanse of Heaven
To give light on the earth."
And it was so.
And God made two great Luminaries,
The greater Luminary to rule the Day,
The lesser Luminary to rule the night,
The stars also.
And God placed them in the Expanse of Heaven
To give light upon the earth,
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.
And Evening was and Morning was, a Fourth Day.

Day Fifth.

And God said—"Let the waters swarm with swimmers, having life,
And let winged animals fly over the earth on the surface of the expanse of heaven."
And God created great Reptiles,
And every living thing that moveth,
With which the waters swarmed after their kind,
And every winged bird after its kind,
And God saw that it was good.
And God blessed them, saying—
"Be fruitful and multiply,
And fill the waters of the sea;
And let birds multiply in the land.
And Evening was and Morning was, a Fifth Day.

Day Sixth.

And God said—"Let the land bring forth living things after their kind,
Herbivores and smaller mammals and Carnivores after their kind."
And it was so.
And God made all Carnivores after their kind,
And all Herbivores after their kind,
And all minor mammals after their kind.
And God saw that it was good.
And God said—"Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,
And let him have dominion over the fish in the sea,
And over the birds of the heavens,
And over the Herbivora,
And over the Earth,
And over all the minor animals that creep upon the earth."
And God created man in his own image,
In the image of God created He him,
Male and female created He them.
And God blessed them.
And God said unto them
"Be fruitful and multiply,
And replenish the earth and subdue it,
And have dominion over the fishes of the sea
And over the birds of the air,
And over all the animals that move upon the earth."
And God said—"Behold, I have given you all herbs yielding seed,
Which are on the surface of the whole earth,
And every tree with fruit having seed,
They shall be unto you for food.
And to all the animals of the land
And to all the birds of the heavens,
And to all things moving on the land having the breath of life.
I have given every green herb for food."
And it was so.
And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.
And Evening was and Morning was, a Sixth Day.

Day Seventh.

Thus the Heavens and the Earth were finished.
And all the hosts of them.
And on the seventh day God ended the work which he had made,
And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.
And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,
Because that in it He rested from all His work that He had created and made.

THE GOSPEL'S GOOD WORKS.—I.

I name first among good works the *regeneration of individual men*. Evil is like leaven in its character. Its nature is to increase. Men have never yet of themselves been able to keep themselves from becoming worse. When putrefaction or corruption begins in any material substance, it goes on from bad to worse. It cannot arrest its own progress. If that is to be done at all it must be by the introduction of some antiseptic agent, which, coming into contact with it, will bring a curative force to bear upon it. Now, just such a morally antiseptic influence has the Gospel of Christ had upon individual men, and and through them upon the race, wherever it has been preached and believed. If you would have a crucial instance by which this may be illustrated, then look at ancient Greece. There you had the finest intellectual culture, probably, that the ancient world ever saw. But morally, it was, on the testimony of competent and impartial witnesses, sunk in the lowest

degradation. "To visit Corinth," was a proverbial phrase for becoming acquainted with the most abominable forms of vice, and the sickening description which Paul gives in his first chapter of the Romans, of the loathsome wickedness of the Gentiles, may well enough have been suggested to him by the sights he saw and the sounds he heard in that very city, from which, indeed, that letter was written. But see what happened, even in that metropolis of Satan. Paul went there without any outward accessories of power, having none of that "wisdom of words" to which the Greeks were so partial, and, on his own showing, knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and in a short time there gathered round him some of the worst of the people, to begin and carry on, under the influence of the Lord whom he proclaimed to them, a new and nobler life, so that within a few years after he could write to the church which he had founded there, saying, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the Lord." Is it then a work worthy of ridicule, or of opposition, or deserving the execration of mankind, to effect such a transformation as that? Nor let any one suppose that such results of the proclamation of the Gospel as these are confined to apostolic times. They may be seen among ourselves to-day. The records of every faithful pastor's ministry have cases in them as striking as any of those described in the New Testament; and there are institutions among us whose agents can tell of similar transformations as almost every day occurrences in their experience. Let any one take up the private register of such a centre of Christian work as the Home for Intemperate Men, which was opened some two years ago in our city, let him follow each case up and discover how first the man was brought to himself, by being led to the Lord Jesus, and how he is faithfully following the Master still, amid many discouragements and temptations, and he will not be able any longer to doubt the efficiency of the Gospel as a remedial agency for fallen men. He will find some instances of imposture and apostasy, indeed, just as in the apostolic times we meet with Simon Magus and Hymenæus, but in the vast majority of cases he will be compelled to acknowledge that a real and lasting change has been effected. Now what is there in such works as these to arouse the enmity and antagonism of men? Why should they oppose that which is accomplishing such results among us? Confessedly these are good works. They are in the line of that very philanthropy which even the adversaries of the Gospel profess to set before them as their chiefest aim. With what consistency, therefore, can they seek its destruction? Is it a dishonourable thing to make the unchaste pure, the thief honest, the drunkard sober; and the savage of civilization—who is the worst of all savages—benevolent and kind? If it be, then let the Gospel be stoned for doing it. But if these be works of the most laudable description, then let the enemies of the Gospel show the superiority of their system by surpassing such results, or "else forever hold their peace." When infidelity of whatever sort shall produce such trophies of its power, we shall begin to think that there is something in its claims, but not till then.—Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D.

THE gold of the sanctuary must be tried before it is accepted; and is thrown into the fire, not because it is of no value, but because it is so precious.—Lady Powerscourt.

THESE are the rules I have always accepted: First, labour; nothing can be had for nothing; whatever a man achieves he must pay for; and no favour of fortune can absolve him from his duty. Secondly, patience and forbearance, which are simply dependent on the slow justice of time. Thirdly, and most important, faith. Unless a man believe in something far higher than himself; something infinitely purer and grander than he can ever become—unless he has an instinct of an order beyond his dreams; of laws, beyond his comprehension; of beauty and goodness and justice, beside which his own ideals are dark, he will fail in every loftier form of ambition, and ought to fail.—Bayard Taylor.