

This was the one thing in which the writer was interested and which he sought to impress on the minds of his readers. If he refers to the separate parts of the world in detail, it is not to give us scientific information at all, but only to cut the ground clear away from underneath the various forms of nature-worship which had grown up among men, and he refers to them only so far as is necessary for his purpose. The order of creation is a purely ideal order, without any scientific significance at all. Substantially the same order is found in the older Chaldaean account of creation recently deciphered on the clay tablets of Nineveh and Borsippa—an account so outrageously polytheistic that no one for a moment would think of taking it as inspired. The Biblical writer may very well have adopted the order traditionally current among Semitic nations as the one best suited to his purpose of correcting the polytheism that had become associated with it, without intending to vouch in any way for its accuracy. In truth, strict accuracy in minor matters of fact is about the last thing with which the poet concerns himself.

It may perhaps surprise some to have the first chapter of Genesis treated as a poem. But the example of the 104th Psalm shows that the creation was regarded as a fit theme for poetic composition, and a single glance at the Genesis story reveals that it has both the artificiality of form and the elevation of thought which are the universal characteristics of poetry in every age. For strong dramatic power and scenic effect, the instantaneous results of the creative fiat of the Almighty have never been surpassed in the whole range of literature. Surely with all our boasted advance in culture and literary discernment we have reached a stage where we can recognize a genuine poem, even though imbedded in a prose narrative, and interpret it accordingly. No one has ever had any scientific quarrel with the 104th Psalm, because that is found in a confessedly poetical collection. Once we frankly regard this as poetical too, geological objections to its accuracy