

THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

By THE REV. E. F. SUTCLIFFE S.J., M.A.

It will be as well at the start to explain the scope of this pamphlet. The purpose of the writer is not to give a history of the various explanations proposed by many authors through the ages; nor to discuss current theories of the source whence the account is thought to be derived. Neither is it his purpose to prove the doctrine of creation out of nothing from the first chapter of Genesis, though some reflections on this subject will find their place naturally in the course of the argument. The scope of the pamphlet is to essay a reasoned exposition of the interpretation which seems not only correct but also the most simple and natural.

The Doctrine of Inerrancy

In approaching this problem it is essential to bear in mind one or two principles of fundamental importance for its correct solution. In the first place it is clear from Catholic principles that no interpretation can be right which conflicts with the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible as the Word of God. At the same time we know that this doctrine does not imply that all the truths enunciated in the Bible are set forth with all possible clearness. On the contrary many parts of Scripture are wrapped in an obscurity that is remarked on by the Fathers in many pages of their writings. And, as regards the first chapter of Genesis, unless there were some obscurity as to the mind of the sacred writer, there would have been no opportunity for the many divergent explanations proposed in the past.

We know too that the doctrine of inerrancy does not teach that the inspired writers necessarily conformed their statements about the physical universe to the actual facts behind appearances. The same, it need hardly be said, is also true of our daily intercourse. No one accuses us of inaccuracy or error because we speak of the rising and setting of the sun or of there being a heavy fall of dew. And our common phrases about the world in which we live are not considered erroneous, because they reflect reality as it appears to our senses, although an intimate study of those appearances demonstrates that the actual truth is something very different from what it appears to be. Now the sacred books are written in the language of men, and without detriment to their inerrancy can use the manner of speaking current among men.

This is, of course, the teaching of Leo XIII in his famous Encyclical on the prosecution of Biblical studies. Readers of the *Providentissimus Deus* will remember that the Pope uses three expressions that illustrate our present point. He says that the sacred writers at times describe the facts of Nature either in metaphorical language or in the terms current in their own times, just as men do to-day, even those most learned in the natural sciences. He then goes on to point out that just as the ordinary manner of speaking gives expression to what strikes the senses, so also the inspired writers, in the words of St Thomas Aquinas, "follow sensible appearances." Finally, Pope Leo puts it another way, saying that as Almighty God in the Bible is addressing men, He has conveyed His meaning to them according to the manner of speaking common among men and so in language within their comprehension (" . . . quare eos . . . res ipsas aliquando describere et tractare aut quodam translationis modo aut sicut communis sermo per ea ferebat tempora, hodieque de multis fert rebus in quotidiana vita ipsos inter homines scientissimos. Vulgari autem sermone cum ea primo proprieque efferantur, quae cadant sub sensus, non dissimiliter scriptor sacer (monuitque et Doctor Angelicus) 'ea secutus est, quae sensibiliter apparent' (*Summa Theol.*, I, q. 70, art. 1, ad 3), seu quae Deus ipse homines alloquens, ad eorum captum significavit humano more," Denzinger-Bannwart, ed. 15, n, 1947).

An important consequence of this is that we must not look in passages of the Bible which speak of the physical world for a description which corresponds exactly with the facts as they are revealed by scientific research. All we have a right to expect is that the world will be described according to appearances and in the language current at the time when the passage in question was written. Of course, Almighty God could have revealed in the Scriptures the hidden secrets of Nature as He has revealed many of the hidden things of God, but such revelations would not have helped men to work out their salvation. This was understood by St Augustine, who says that the sacred writers, or more exactly speaking, "the Spirit of God, who spoke through them, had no will to teach these matters (i.e. the intimate constitution of the physical world) to men, as they would not have been means for promoting their salvation". This sentence of the great theologian is made his own by Pope Leo XIII in the Encyclical already quoted (" . . .

scriptores sacros seu verius 'Spiritus Dei, qui per ipsos loquebatur, noluisse ista (videlicet intimam adspectabilium rerum constitutionem docere homines, nulli saluti profutura," De Gen. ad litt. L. 2, c. 9, n. 20 (Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, 34, 270). Cf. Denzinger, *loc. cit.*).

Three also of the answers of the Biblical Commission which afford guidance in the study of this first chapter, are of special importance for our present purpose. These are the replies to the first, third, and seventh *dubia* contained in the decree of June 30th, 1909. In the seventh, which refers to chapter i. exclusively, we are told that exact scientific terminology is not always to be looked for. The reason given is that it was not the mind of the sacred author to teach the inward constitution of visible things or to give a complete and scientific exposition of the order of creation, but rather to give the Hebrew race an account designed for the people, couched in language current at the time, and accommodated to the perceptions and intelligence of the mass of men. By the answer to the first question we are taught that there is no solid foundation to the various systems excogitated to exclude the literal historical meaning of the first three chapters of Genesis. As is clear from the seventh *dubium* referred to above, the emphasis here is on the historical sense as opposed to the meaning of expressions referring to matters of physical science. The number of facts to which this answer refers is much larger in the second and third chapters than in the first. This is shown both by an examination of the chapters themselves and by the question and answer which compose the third *dubium*. In this quite a list is given of facts drawn from the second and third chapters the literal historical meaning of which may not be called in question; but from the first chapter there is only one, namely, the creation of all things by God in the beginning of time.

The reader will, I hope, pardon this rather long exposition of principles on account of their essential application to the interpretation of the Hexaemeron. Briefly, two very important truths should be borne in mind. First, that God has not revealed in the Bible the hidden secrets of nature, or what is the same thing, has not revealed the truths of physical science. Second, that there is nothing against inerrancy in descriptions that reflect the appearances of the physical world and follow the manners of speech current in the society in which the inspired writers lived. Now it is clear that man could arrive at a knowledge of the manner in which the world was formed only by revelation or by scientific study. The former source of knowledge is not to be looked for here, as we have already heard from St Augustine and Pope Leo XIII; and as regards the second there is need of no demonstration to show that in the centuries before the Christian era men had not arrived at the conclusions about the gradual formation of the earth and the stars reached by modern research in the fields of geology, palaeontology, and astronomy. Assuming, therefore, the truth of these modern theories, we may say, even before studying the Hexaemeron of Genesis, that we shall not find them there. This is an argument—and I think a valid one—against any concordistic theory, any theory, that is, which attempts to show that in the first chapter of Genesis we have in equivalent terms the same doctrine of the formation of the world that is set forth by modern science. The subsequent development of the argument will show that even the universe as we know it in its present stage of development is not viewed in the same light in Genesis c. 1 and by modern science, the fundamental difference being that the Hexaemeron treats the universe as being geocentric.

The Account of the Creation

We may now turn to the account of the creation presented in the opening chapter of Genesis, to which book it forms a fitting prologue. The following section begins with words the modern equivalent of which is "This is the History of the World," c. 2, v. 4, the history of the world being for an historian the history of mankind. This prologue opens with the succinct and terse statement that God created the universe: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew text here has the definite article with both words, though it is omitted in the Douay. The first point to notice is that the expression "the heavens and the earth" is the Hebrew equivalent of our word "the universe" to which no single word corresponds in that language. It is not, I think, necessary to labour this point, which may be verified by reference to a concordance of the Hebrew Bible. It will be sufficient here to quote the standard Hebrew-English Lexicon, that, namely, of Brown, Driver, and Briggs, p. 1030, who find this use of the expression in our verse and elsewhere, but especially in Deuteronomy, Jeremias, the second part of Isaias, and the Psalms. God, therefore, made (the word *bara* here used certainly means at least *made*) all that there is, in the beginning, when things first began to be, in the beginning of time. Therefore, before God made the universe there was nothing, which is

another way of saying that God created the world. That this is the sense in which Hebrew tradition understood the passage is shown by the words of the mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs: "I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them; and consider that God made them out of nothing" (2 Macc. vii. 28).

After this general enunciation of the fact of the creation of all things follows in verse 2 a description of the earth as it first was, which must be supplemented from v. 9. The earth is covered with waters, and over the waters of the abyss reigns darkness. The conception is geocentric. The firmament of heaven and the heavenly bodies are not made till the second day and the fourth day respectively. The earth is first made; all else is an elaboration and preparation of the earth in its complete setting to make it a suitable dwelling-place for man. The earth on the first day is said to have been "void and empty" under its covering of waters. These words are the Douay rendering of the Vulgate version of the Hebrew words *tohu ubohu*. What is their meaning? The earth is solid enough to support the mass of the incumbent waters. It is not formless in the sense of being a gaseous mass. Moreover, in Psalm 103 (Hebrew 104), in which the praises of the Almighty are sung for the power, magnificence, and wisdom displayed in the works of creation, after verse 5

*Who hast founded the earth upon its own bases;
It shall not be moved for ever and ever,
the psalmist continues in the next verse
The deep like a garment is its clothing;
Above the mountains stand the waters.*

The first half of this verse refers to the state of the earth after its creation, covered, that is, with the waters of the abyss. The second half contains a statement not explicitly found in Genesis, but evidence of the sense in which the inspired psalmist understood the narrative of the earlier book. For him the description of the earth as *tohu ubohu* did not mean that the earth was formless in the sense that it had as yet no definite contours. On the contrary the mountains were already there. The implication of his words is that from the beginning the earth was shaped as man has known it in historical times. But it was covered with waters, and therefore had as yet no plants and still more no animals, and there was as yet no man. Without plants and without animals the earth is fitly described as void and empty, or better, waste and empty. It was empty because there were no animals to roam over its surface. It was uninhabited. But the absence of plants affected it in a different way to the absence of animals. These latter live on it and move about on its surface. But trees and plants are rooted in it. They give colour, variety, and even form and shape to its surface. Without them the earth is fitly said to be waste (The meaning of *tohu ubohu*, "waste and empty," is confirmed by the use of the expression in Jeremiah iv. 23. The Douay there has: "I beheld the earth, and lo it was void and nothing." The sense would be better rendered by "waste and empty," the latter word, again, being taken in the sense of "uninhabited" or "deserted." This is borne out by the description, given vv. 25 and following:

*I beheld, and lo there was no man,
And all the birds of the air were gone.
I looked, and behold Carmel was a wilderness,
And all its cities were destroyed).*

This fact that the plants are considered as almost a part of the earth explains what otherwise is a difficulty in the description of the Hexaemeron. In the first three days the earth and the firmament are created and prepared; in the second three they are peopled with living or at least moving bodies. On the first day after the creation of the earth covered with waters, light is created and separated from darkness. On the second day the firmament is made, and is the means of separating the upper waters, those namely above it, from the lower waters, those namely on the surface of the earth; for the earth still remained covered with waters. On the third day the waters still on the face of the earth are gathered into one place, with the result that the surface of the earth appears for the first time, and grass, plants, and trees are created. The picture we now have is that of the dry earth covered with vegetation, surrounded by waters, surmounted by the dome of the firmament, and enjoying alternate periods of darkness and of light. But there are no animals on the earth, no fish or whales in the ocean, no birds in the air, no stars or luminaries in the firmament of heaven. It is the work of the second three days to people the regions created and separated from one another in the first three days. So on the fourth day are created the sun, moon, and stars. Notice that as these are not fixed but move in the

firmament, they are not treated as part of it, but as its "furniture" (Gen. ii. i; so the Douay. The Vulgate has *militia*; the Revised Version *Host*). On the fifth day are created the great whales and all that lives and moves in the ocean, and the birds to fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven. On the sixth and last day the earth is peopled first with animals, both domestic and wild, and with reptiles.

All is now prepared and furnished. The home of man is ready; and God Almighty crowns His work of creation by putting into execution His supreme design of creating man in His own image and likeness. The plants and trees, it will have been noticed, were created on the third day, within the period, that is, devoted to the creation and preparation of the different realms or habitats; and it has caused surprise that they were not created on one of the three last days consecrated to the creation of living creatures. The explanation is that the second triduum was reserved, not for the creation of life, but of the various kinds of living and moving beings. The vegetable creation, being stationary and rooted in the soil, is regarded as the complement of the earth; and its creation is, therefore, a necessary part of the preparation of the earth for the reception of its inhabitants, the animals and man (Since writing the above I have noticed that Father E. Power, S.J., writing in *Biblica* 7 (1926) 184 on Psalm 148 says: "Next come the lifeless objects of the earth which rise up into the air: 'Mountains and all hills, fruit-bearing trees and all cedars.'").

This preparation of the earth for the production and maintenance of living creatures is attributed in verse 2 to the Spirit of God, which on the first day immediately after the creation is described as brooding over the waters. The Douay version has: "The Spirit of God moved over the waters"; but the verb has the sense of brooding over, as a hen covers its eggs. This is remarked by St Jerome in his commentary, although in his translation from the Hebrew he has *ferbatur*. This is probably one of those cases where the holy Doctor used a word long familiar to the faithful rather than substitute one that would have sounded strange to their unaccustomed ears, although in itself a more accurate translation of the Hebrew. Although the text states that the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters, it must not be supposed that the vivifying action of the spirit was confined to the waters. The waters were lying over the face of the earth, and so in brooding over the waters the Spirit of God was brooding over all that had been created, over the earth as well as over the waters.

Two Periods in the First Day

It is important to notice that the work of the first day comprised the creation of the earth, covered as it was with the waters of the abyss, and secondly the production of light. The first day, therefore, had two periods. The first period, the beginning of which was marked by the creation of the earth and waters, was a period of darkness, for "darkness was upon the face of the deep," v. 2. Then followed the divine decree by which light was made, so that after the period of darkness came a period of light. These two periods together make up the first day. Hence we read after the account of the creation of light: "And there was evening and there was morning, one day," v. 5. To our notions it seems strange that evening should precede morning, as we consider day to begin with morning and end with evening; but the matter is easily explained from the text. The world began in darkness, and light was only created later. With this is in perfect agreement the Jewish custom of reckoning their days from sunset to sunset, according to which method of computation evening precedes morning. Some writers have concluded that this Jewish custom was based on the narrative of Genesis, but if our general argument is well-founded, the contrary was the case, and the manner of speaking in Genesis was based on the prevailing Hebrew practice.

Some writers have failed to realize the true extent of the work of the first day of creation, which in their opinion comprised only the creation of light. In support of this interpretation it is alleged that the six days of creation run from morning to morning, and therefore the first period of darkness is excluded from the first day. It is clear, however, that this reason supposes the truth of what it is alleged to prove, namely, that the reckoning of the days begins with the creation of light. The text clearly indicates the contrary, saying that there was evening first and then morning, one day. It is asserted secondly that the work of each day begins with the announcement of the divine edict of creation. This again assumes the truth of what is to be proved. The fact is that the work of each of the last five days is introduced by the narration of the divine Fiat, but this does not prove that it is necessarily so with regard to the first day. What has already been said in exposition of the text appears adequate to prove the contrary; for unless the creation of the world in darkness is the first work of the first day, there is no explanation of the evening of the first day, "There was evening

and there was morning, one day." It is in this sense the text is understood in the Sunday hymn for Matins:

Primo die, quo Trinitas

Beata mundum condidit.

Moreover, the fact that Almighty God is described as resting on the seventh day from all the work He had done, Gen. c. ii, v. i, implies that He had performed all the work of creation on the first six days. It is not credible that the creation of the earth itself, the greatest work of all from the point of view of the writer, should be excluded from the work from which God is said to have rested. Finally, for superabundance of proof, it is stated explicitly in Exodus, c. xx, v. "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day." One can only suppose that the work of the first day was made to begin with the creation of light, either on the presupposition that day cannot begin without light, or possibly under the sub-conscious influence of the desire to find in the text some period of indefinite duration before the beginning of the day to which could be conveniently assigned a long and gradual evolution of primitive matter in accordance with some attempt to establish harmony between the facts, as said to be demonstrated by modern science on the one hand, and the narrative of Genesis on the other.

Before proceeding to ask in what sense the inspired writer intended his narrative to be taken, it is still necessary to discuss the use by the sacred writer of two different words to designate the divine productive activity of the six days. These two words are *bara* and *'asah*, which St Jerome translates in the Vulgate account of creation respectively, *creare* (always) and *facere* (generally). From the use of these two words some have wished to deduce a difference in the nature of the divine activities in question. The word *bara* in its simple form, or *qal*, as it is called, is never used of any except divine activity; but it does not always denote creation out of nothing. Thus man as a whole composed of soul and body was not created directly out of nothing, as his body was formed of the slime of the earth, Gen. ii, v. 7; yet in c. i, v. 27, the word *bara* is thrice used of his creation. This is still clearer from the use of the word in Isaias c. xliii, v. 15: "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King." The word *'asah*, on the other hand, is the ordinary expression for "make," and is used indifferently of men and of God. But just as the sense of creation out of nothing is not conveyed by *bara* apart from its context, so the word *'asah*, like its English counterpart "make," can be used, when the context warrants it, to signify the particular idea of creation out of nothing. Thus in c. ii, v. 4: "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created (*bara*), in the day that the Lord God made (*'asah*) the heaven and the earth." Again in v. 21: "God created the great whales, and every living and moving creature, which the waters brought forth, according to their kinds." Here the word used is *bara*; whereas of terrestrial animals the word used is *'asah*: "God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and cattle, and everything that creepeth on the earth after its kind," v. 25. No one, I think, will wish to establish a difference between the manner of creation of the living things of the waters and of the earth. These examples show how precarious would be any argument based on the use of the one word rather than the other.

The Work of some of the Days

Let us now turn to consider the work of some of the days to see in what sense the author intended his words. The sun, moon, and stars were made on the fourth day: "God made two great lights . . . (the sun and the moon) . . . and the stars," v. 16. The sun and moon are both spoken of as great lights in comparison to the stars. As the moon is vastly smaller in reality than the stars, it is clear that the sacred writer does not wish to speak of the actual facts of the physical world, but only of appearances, and according to the current usage of men. Again, the earth is spoken of as created before the sun, the earth on the first day and the sun on the fourth. But if what science teaches is correct, the earth was thrown off from the sun as a molten mass, and caught up in the orbit of the parent body; and the sun must have existed before the earth. The sun is conceived as a body as large as it appears to the eye to be, and placed on the under-surface of the firmament of heaven to rule the day. This is shown by the verse quoted above, where the size of the sun and moon is spoken of according to their apparent relation to the size of the stars. Moreover, light was created on the first day, and the sun, from which the light of the earth comes, was created only on the fourth day. Again, the writer is not pretending to set down the realities of nature. It cannot be maintained that there is reference here to some light that existed in the remote past before the creation or formation of the sun, partly because the existence of such

light could only have been known through revelation, and we have seen that we must not look in Scripture for revelations from Almighty God concerning the secrets of nature, and partly because the text clearly indicates the contrary. For the initial period of darkness with the first period of light which followed, together constitute the first day, made up in the Bible phrase of evening and of morning. But the length of the days is regulated by the revolution of the earth on its axis, and the light of the day is the light of the sun. According to verse 5 it is the presence or absence of light which distinguishes day from night. It has long been known that this light is derived from the sun, but this simple truth is not so obvious as we today are inclined to think. There are many days when the sky is clouded and the sun invisible, yet light is not lacking. Consequently early man, before he realised the dependence of light on the sun, thought light to have an independent existence. "Scientific" thought was in this stage when the Hexaemeron was written, and there was consequently no difficulty to the contemporary mind that the first three days should have their period of light although the sun had not yet been created. Similarly to us it seems obvious that darkness is merely the absence of light, but this has not always been obvious. Early man thought of darkness as something positive and not merely as a negation or absence of something (In his treatise *Concerning Colours* Aristotle gives an argument to show that "darkness is not a colour but the deprivation of light." edit. Bekker, 791 b 2).

Thus we read in Isaias 45, 7, "I form the light and create darkness" and in Job 38, 19, "Where is the way where light dwelleth and where is the place of darkness?" Each apparently was imagined to spread over the earth and then to retire to its "dwelling" until the time of its next appearance. The trees and plants, as we have seen, were made on the third day before the creation of the sun on the fourth day. This again goes to show that the narrative is not intended to correspond with reality, as it is difficult to conceive how the vegetable world could flourish without the light and warmth of the sun.

Lastly, the description of the firmament of heaven as a solid vault shows that the narrative cannot be taken literally. According to the Douay Version: "God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament, from those that were above the firmament," v. 7. This translation follows the Vulgate in using the word "were" in the past tense. In the Hebrew there is no verb; and the sense demands the present. It was only after the creation of the firmament that there could be waters above it. From a comparison of other texts we see that the Hebrews imagined the firmament as a solid dome fixed over the earth, on the under side of which were placed the sun, moon, and stars, and on the upper side of which were the upper waters. By means of apertures these upper waters could descend on the earth, when God wished to refresh it with rain, Gen. ii. 5. This is a very natural way of representing things and keeps closely to appearances. According to Gen. c. i, v. 8, another name for this firmament is heaven, though, be it noted, the word "heaven" has in the Bible other meanings also. Let me illustrate by some quotations. Thus Eliu in Job c. xxxvii. v. 18, speaks of "the heavens, which are most strong, as if they were of molten brass." In Psalm cxlviii, vv. 4 f., the psalmist sings:

Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens;

And let all the waters that are above the heavens

Praise the name of the Lord.

The sources from which the waters of the great Flood were derived, are thus described, Gen. c. vii, v. II: "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates of heaven were opened; and the rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights." These flood gates are what have been described above as apertures in the firmament. The Revised Version has "the windows of heaven." So also in c. viii, v. 2: "The fountains of the deep and the flood gates of heaven were shut up, and the rain from heaven was restrained." When in Malachy God promises rain and therewith abundance, the promise is to "Open the flood gates of heaven, and pour out a blessing even to abundance," Mal. c. iii, v. 10. Cf. Isai. xxiv. 18; 4 Kings vii. 2, 19. There can, I think, be no doubt in the light of these texts that the account here given represents the conceptions current among the Hebrews and reflected in their manner of expressing themselves. There is nothing astonishing in the adoption of such conceptions, as they faithfully reflect the appearances that strike our senses, and as this account of the universe was defended by several of the Fathers as giving a correct description of the facts of nature, as may be seen from the pages of a Lapidé.

How to understand the First Chapter

If the above paragraphs have given an accurate interpretation of the texts, it follows that the first chapter of Genesis cannot be understood in its literal sense to give an account of the universe or of its origin that mirrors the actual facts of nature underlying the phenomena, and that it cannot, without violence, be so interpreted as to bring it into line with the ascertained truths of the physical sciences. It remains to show that the author has manifested his mind by showing that he had no intention of describing the ultimate facts of nature. This he has done in two ways. First, by the artificial and artistic scheme that he follows, which I now briefly recall to mind. It will be remembered that on its first creation, the earth was covered with waters, and above the waters reigned darkness. There were thus three layers or divisions, darkness, waters, earth. In this order, being from above, he describes the preparation of the earth for the reception of its living inhabitants. First, light is created, and light is separated from darkness. Secondly, the firmament is created, and thereby the upper waters are separated from the lower waters on the earth. Thirdly, the dry land is made to appear by the separation of the lower waters from the earth and their gathering into one place. Then, on the same third day, almost as part of the earth in which they are rooted, are produced grass, plants, and trees. The universe of heaven and earth being now prepared for the reception of its moving and living inhabitants, there follows the account of the work of a second triduum, in which the same order is again followed. First, the firmament is provided with the celestial bodies, which move about upon its face. Then the waters are peopled with whales and fishes, and the air with birds. And thirdly, comes the population of the dry land, namely, the animals and man. This schematic order is an indication that the writer is giving a word-painting artificial and artistic.

A second striking indication is provided by the information that on the fourth day lights were made "in the firmament of heaven to divide the day and night," v. 14. But we have already been told that on the first day God "divided the light from the darkness; and He called the light Day, and the darkness Night," vv. 4 and 5. Moreover, the writer tells us that lights, or luminaries, were made in the firmament of heaven to be "for days and years," v. 14. These lights were made on the fourth day; yet there had preceded three days without these heavenly bodies to mark off the days. What is this but to tell us that he is not intending to depict things as they really happened, but in a graphic and striking way to bring home to his readers that the whole universe, heaven and earth, and all that is in them, was created and prepared by the power and wisdom of God. That is the all-important lesson he wishes to inculcate. There is but one God, and He is the Author and Creator of all things. What does it matter to salvation whether plants or sea-animals were first formed? Such things the inspired writer has no mind to teach us, and has manifested the fact. He does wish to teach that the heavenly bodies are created for the good of man, that they are not divine, that being created by God for the sake of man, they can exercise no fatal or malign influence on his destiny. He does wish to teach that there are not two eternal principles, one of good and one of evil, the former creator of the soul of man and of the spiritual world; the latter creator of the material universe. He does wish to teach that matter is not intrinsically evil, created as it is by the hand of God. He does wish to teach that there is one and one only God, not a multitude of deities, as the pagan nations around fondly imagined.

The First Chapter is Historical

It is extremely important to notice that fundamentally the first chapter of Genesis is historical. It records and teaches the opening fact in the history of the world, namely, that it was created by God, a Being external to and anterior to the universe He created. But the drama of creation as displayed before our eyes in six successive scenes of as many days the writer has intimated to be only an artificial and artistic way of inculcating with greater emphasis than is possible in a single sentence the sublime truth he wishes to imprint on the minds of his readers that God is the Author and Creator of All. Hence if it is necessary to give a label to the above interpretation of the Hexaemeron, it should be called historico-artistic or historico-logical. Readers of modern manuals treating of our subject will understand this providing of a name or label.

The reader may be reminded that there is nothing new in the view that the six days were not meant by the inspired writer to signify six successive periods of time corresponding objectively to successive divine acts. Not only Origen (Migne, *Patr. Gr.* 11, 376 ff.), but also St Athanasius (*ibid.* 26, 276), and St Augustine (Migne, *Patr. Lat.* 34, 231), have expressed the view that all things were created by God at one and the same time. Moreover, no objection can be

urged against the above exposition on the ground that the institution of the Sabbath rest is referred to the fact that God performed the work of creation on six days and rested on the seventh. In the first place, just as God is only improperly said to have "worked" on the six days, so Christ by a similar use of language saying that : "My Father worketh until now," John v. 17, may, if the words are unduly pressed, be taken to imply that the Father "worked" also on the seventh day. But the truth is that, as indicated above, the sacred author implies that his days are only schematic. Nonetheless they formed a suitable object-lesson for the chosen people in the observance of the Sabbath-rest.

POSTSCRIPT.—This article was in the hands of the printers before the appearance of Dr. Messenger's able book, *Evolution and Theology*, which was published on November 16th, 1931. I am glad to be able to quote some of his remarks, p. 13: "A consideration of (Gen. c. 1), especially in its context, will show us that the universe, the origin of which is thus attributed to God, is the universe as it existed when Moses wrote. The things then in existence—the sun which then shone, the plants and animals then in existence—had all been created by God. There is no intention to speak of geological epochs or astronomical phases which indeed were then unknown." With these sentences I find myself in entire agreement. Indeed, the point of view here expressed by Dr. Messenger seems to me the only one which allows a correct understanding of the chapter as a whole. And from the above statement it appears to be a necessary conclusion that just as Moses was not concerned with the geological and astronomical processes to which the formation of the earth and the stars, as he knew them, was due, neither was he concerned with the biological processes to which animal life, as he knew it, may have been due. On the origin of irrational creatures, apart from the general truth that like all the universe they owed their being to God the Creator, he was free, according to the teaching of Leo XIII, to speak as men of his day spoke. Whether spontaneous generation is a fact or not, or possible or not, is a scientific question, just as is the geocentric theory of the universe. Hence I submit that Dr. Messenger's statement on p. 16: "Scripture really teaches spontaneous generation," is not justified by the expressions of Gen. c. i. Those expressions may justify the conclusion that the contemporaries of Moses believed in spontaneous generation, but not that it is the teaching of Scripture. In the words of St Augustine, already quoted, and adopted by Leo XIII, "The Spirit of God . . . had no will to teach these matters to men, as they would not have been means for promoting their salvation." If the view set out in this pamphlet is the correct one, it has the immense advantage that it sets us altogether free from the conclusions of physical science in the interpretation of Scripture. We shall not have to revise our exegesis in the light of more recent discoveries; and whatever discoveries may be made, they can never be in conflict with the Bible. This aloofness from the progress of purely human knowledge is surely in accord with the dignity of Holy Scripture.
