

# MARTIN LUTHER

COMMENTARY ON  
GENESIS, VOL. 1:  
LUTHER ON THE  
CREATION

Martin Luther

**Commentary on Genesis, Vol.  
1: Luther on the Creation**

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**Luther M.**

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# **Martin Luther**

## **Commentary on Genesis, Vol.**

### **1: Luther on the Creation**

#### **SECOND INTRODUCTION**

—to—

#### **LUTHER'S WORKS IN ENGLISH**

This introduction or prospectus is supplementary to that in the first volume on the Psalms, in that it likewise emphasizes, though from different view-points, the history and fruits, as well as the present need and future mission of the Protestant Classics of the greatest of all reformers in their relation to the development of the human race.

Let us in this introduction briefly notice the following: The progress of the movement to translate and circulate Luther's works in English, and then emphasize the need of developing an interest to read them; first, because of the relation of Luther and his writings to the public library; and secondly, because as the chief of the Teuton Protestant Church Fathers, we need to understand Luther in his relation to the Greek and Latin Church Fathers, and our true historic relations to them all.

#### **THE PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT**

With profound gratitude to Almighty God for his rich blessing bestowed upon the publication and quick sale of the first volume, Luther's Commentary on the Psalms, a book "the mourning soul cannot well be without," we now send forth the first volume of his Commentary on Genesis, with the confidence that those, who think with Melancthon that "a single page of Luther contains more sound divinity than many whole volumes," will not change their opinion by studying this volume. Having purchased all the copies of Luther on Galatians and his Notes on the Gospels by Dr. P. Anstadt, and the right to reprint them, with two other volumes about ready for the press, one by Prof. E. F. Bartholomew, D.D., and another by Dr. Bernhard Pick, our progress is encouraging, especially since the movement has taken an intersynodical character with colaborers from every branch of our polyglot communion.

#### **LUTHER ON THE OLD TESTAMENT NEEDED FIRST**

This volume on Genesis follows the first volume on the Psalms because the volumes ought to be published first that are needed most and will do the most good. As Professor of Old Testament Exegesis I found that like "Luther on the Psalms" so "Luther on Genesis" was not accessible to the English, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish students of theology, Prof. Bugge's Norwegian translation of extracts from it being out of print. Therefore we believe this volume also will be welcomed by all Old Testament professors and students. While both these volumes will be a healthy corrective to the Old Testament critics, their contribution to the biblical knowledge and the devotional life of Protestantism cannot be exaggerated. Though first delivered to critical students they have also

been extensively read in family worship. Luther began and closed his blessed ministry in the church of God not by fighting the Pope, but by expounding the Word of God. He began by explaining the whole Psalter from 1513 to 1516 (before 1517) forming volumes III and IV of the Kaiser Chronological Edition and closed his life's labors by expounding the first book of the Bible, Genesis, which composes volumes I and II of the St. Louis Walch edition. He commenced with the penitential Psalms of David and ended with Moses, the earliest writings of the Old Testament. The reason so many preachers and congregations neglect the Old Testament is because it is neglected in the seminaries. God willing a volume of Luther on the Prophetical Books will be issued and then in all three years at the seminary the students may have something of Luther on the Pentateuch, Psalms and Prophets.

## **LUTHER'S WORDS ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

In the recent marvelous development of public libraries it is held if it is the duty of the state to teach the child to read for the welfare of the child and of the state, it is also the duty of the state to offer the child something to read. Hence the library is being supported by taxation like the public school, and the library buildings are being erected near the high schools. It is as President Roosevelt said while west recently, our civilization rests on the church, the school and the library. The library is the child of the church and school and will in turn greatly influence both. Luther, the founder of the Protestant Church, and the founder of the Public School, is also the founder of the Protestant Library. Yea, more, nearly four hundred years ago he united the school and the library as is proved by the following:

It is noteworthy that Luther closes his "Address to the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in behalf of Christian Schools," which is considered by educators for its pioneer character and statements of principles "the most important educational treatise ever written," by a powerful appeal in behalf of public libraries which I give in full from Luther on Education by Prof. Painter.

Luther concludes that great educational treatise thus:

"Finally, this must be taken into consideration by all who earnestly desire to see such schools established and the study of the languages preserved in the German states; that no cost nor pains should be spared to procure good libraries in suitable buildings, especially in the large cities that are able to afford it. For if a knowledge of the Gospel and of every kind of learning is to be preserved, it must be embodied in books, as the prophets and apostles did, as I have already shown. This should be done, not only that our spiritual and civil leaders may have something to read and study, but also that good books may not be lost, and that the arts and languages may be preserved, with which God has graciously favored us. St. Paul was diligent in this matter, since he lays the injunction upon Timothy, 'Give heed to reading,' I Tim. 4:13, and directs him to bring the books, but especially the parchments left at Troas, 2 Tim. 4:13.

"All the kingdoms that have been distinguished in the world have bestowed care upon this matter, and particularly the Israelites, among whom Moses was the first to begin the work, who commanded them to preserve the book of the law in the ark of God, and put it under the care of Levites, that any one might procure copies from them. He even commanded the king to make a copy of this book in the hands of the Levites. Among other duties, God directed the Levitical priesthood to preserve and attend to the books. Afterwards Joshua increased and improved this library, as did subsequently Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and many kings and prophets. Hence have come to us the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, which

would not otherwise have been collected and preserved, if God had not required such diligence in regard to it.

"After this example collegiate churches and convents formerly founded libraries, although with few good books. And the injury from the neglect to procure books and good libraries, when there were men and books enough for that purpose, was afterwards perceived in the decline of every kind of knowledge; and instead of good books, the senseless, useless, and hurtful books of the monks, the *Catholicon*, *Florista*, *Graecista*, *Labyrinthus*, *Dormi Secure* (names of Latin grammars and collections of sermons), and the like, were introduced by Satan, so that the Latin language was corrupted, and neither good schools, good instruction, nor good methods of study remained. And as we see, the language and arts are, in an imperfect manner, recovered from fragments of old books rescued from the worms and dust; and every day men are seeking these literary remains, as people dig in the ashes of a ruined city after treasures and jewels.

"Therein we have received our just due, and God has well recompensed our ingratitude, in that we did not consider his benefits, and lay up a supply of good literature when we had time and opportunity, but neglected it, as if we were not concerned. He in turn, instead of the Holy Scriptures and good books, suffered Aristotle and numberless pernicious books to come into use, which only lead us further from the Bible. To these were added the progeny of Satan, the monks and the phantoms of the universities, which we founded at incredible cost, and many doctors, preachers, teachers, priests and monks, that is to say, great, coarse, fat fellows, adorned with red and brown caps, like swine led with a golden chain and decorated with pearls; and we have burdened ourselves with them, who have taught us nothing useful, but have made us more and more blind and stupid, and as a reward have consumed all our property, and filled all the cloisters, and indeed every corner with dregs and filth of their unclean and noxious books, of which we cannot think without horror.

"Has it not been a grievous misfortune that a boy has hitherto been obliged to study twenty years or longer, in order to learn enough miserable Latin to become a priest and to read the mass? And whosoever has succeeded in this has been called blessed, and blessed the mother that has borne such a child! And yet he has remained a poor ignorant man all through life, and has been of no real service whatever. Everywhere we have had such teachers and masters, who have known nothing themselves, who have been able to teach nothing useful, and who have been ignorant even of the right methods of learning and teaching. How has it come about? No books have been accessible but the senseless trash of the monks and sophists. How could the pupils and teacher differ from the books they studied? A crow does not hatch a dove, nor a fool make a man wise. That is the recompense of our ingratitude, in that we did not use diligence in the formation of libraries, but allowed good books to perish, and bad ones to survive.

"But my advice is not to collect all sorts of books indiscriminately thinking only of getting a vast number together. I would have discrimination used, because it is not necessary to collect the commentaries of the jurists, the productions of all the theologians, the discussions of all the philosophers, and the sermons of all the monks. Such trash I would reject altogether, and provide my library only with useful books; and in making the selection I would advise with learned men.

"In the first place, a library should contain the Holy Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German and other languages. Then the best and most ancient commentators in Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

"Secondly, such books as are useful in acquiring the languages, as the poets and orators, without considering whether they are heathen or Christian, Greek or Latin. For it is from such works that grammar must be learned.

"Thirdly, books treating of all the arts and sciences.

"Lastly, books on jurisprudence and medicine, though here discrimination is necessary.

"A prominent place should be given to chronicles and histories, in whatever language they may be obtained; for they are wonderfully useful in understanding and regulating the course of the world, and in disclosing the marvelous works of God. O, how many noble deeds and wise maxims produced on German soil have been forgotten and lost, because no one at the time wrote them down; or if they were written, no one preserved the books; hence we Germans are unknown in other lands, and are called brutes that know only how to fight, eat and drink. But the Greeks and Romans, and even the Hebrews have recorded their history with such particularity, that even if a woman or child did anything noteworthy, all the world was obliged to read and know it; but we Germans are always Germans and will remain Germans.

"Since God has so graciously and abundantly provided us with art, scholars and books, it is time for us to reap the harvest and gather for future use the treasures of these golden years. For it is to be feared (and even now it is beginning to take place) that new and different books will be produced, until at last, through the agency of the devil, the good books which are being printed will be crowded out by the multitude of ill-considered, senseless and noxious works. For Satan certainly designs that we should torture ourselves again with Catholicons, Florists, Modernists and other trash of the accursed monks and sophists, always learning, yet never acquiring knowledge.

"Therefore, my dear sirs, I beg you to let my labor bear fruit with you. And though there be some who think me too insignificant to follow my advice, or who look down upon me as one condemned by tyrants; still let them consider that I am not seeking my own interest, but that of all Germany. And even if I were a fool, and yet should hit upon something good, no wise man should think it a disgrace to follow me. And if I were a Turk and heathen, and it should yet appear that my advice was advantageous, not for myself, but for Christianity, no reasonable person would despise my counsel. Sometimes a fool has given better advice than a whole company of wise men. Moses received instruction from Jethro.

"Herewith I commend you all to the grace of God. May he soften your hearts, and kindle therein a deep interest in behalf of the poor, wretched and neglected youth; and through the blessing of God may you so counsel and aid them as to attain to a happy Christian social order in respect to both body and soul, with all fullness and abounding plenty, to the praise and honor of God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen."

Wittenberg, 1524.

In his "Table Talk" Luther continues thus:

"The multitude of books is a great evil. There is no measure or limit to this fever for writing; every one must be an author; some out of vanity, to acquire celebrity and make a name; others for the sake of lucre and gain. The Bible is now

buried under so many commentaries, that the text is not regarded. I could wish that all my books were buried nine ells deep in the ground, by reason of the ill example they will give, every one seeking to imitate me in writing many books, with the hope of procuring fame. But Christ died not to favor our ambition and vain-glory, but that his name might be glorified.

"The aggregation of large libraries tends to direct men's thoughts from the one great book, the Bible, which ought, day and night, to be in every man's hand. My object, my hope, in translating the Scriptures, was to check the so prevalent production of new works, and so to direct men's study and thoughts more closely to the divine Word. Never will the writings of mortal man in any respect equal the sentences inspired by God. We must yield the place of honor to the prophets and apostles, keeping ourselves prostrate at their feet as we listen to their teaching. I would not have those who read my books, in these stormy times, devote one moment to them which they would otherwise have consecrated to the Bible."

## **LUTHER THE FATHER OF MODERN LIBRARIES**

The foregoing literal quotations on the library; its divine origin and its biblical and ecclesiastical development from the time of Moses; its interlingual and international importance; its satanic and anti-Christ-like dangers; its true mission and relation to the church, school, family and state; the comprehensive sample catalogue of a model library; and the words that when libraries tend to direct men's thoughts from or against the one great Book they are complete failures; these and other like thoughts of Luther, who was born only 15 years after the death of Gutenberg, his countryman, the inventor of printing; these words so warm, clear and wise of the hero of the Reformation, uttered nearly 400 years ago, prove that Luther and not Franklin was the father or founder of modern libraries of printed books and documents.

In W. T. Fletcher's "Public Libraries In America," of the Columbian Knowledge Series, published in Boston, 1899, we read on page 10, "But when did the public library movement begin? Not even the Reformation, with its tremendous assertion of the right of man to spiritual freedom, brought about the change so designated. Franklin more than any other originated this movement." It is strange that in all the recent and growing bibliography on the library there is little or no tendency to trace the origin of the Protestant library to the Protestant Reformation. Yet Mr. Fletcher says on p. 37, "It is a significant fact that everywhere the clergy are found foremost in advancing the library movement." He certainly does not mean the Catholic clergy.

If you examine the libraries of our day and judge from their contents and spirit, the conclusion irresistibly comes to one that they do not know their own father or founder. Their walls often are decorated with fine pictures of illustrious men, Carnegie and other liberal donors; but in no public library, not even in districts of our country where the German and Scandinavian taxpayers are in the majority do we find a picture on their walls, "Martin Luther, the Founder of the Library Among the Protestant Teutonic Nations." Though Carnegie should expend all his fortune on libraries alone, his donation to the library idea would be unworthy to be compared with that of Luther. Besides what Luther wrote urging the Teutonic nations accepting his teachings to erect libraries or "book houses" as he called them, and besides what he did in other ways to encourage the collection of the writings of the Germanic nations, this Teuton of the Teutons, their child and father, born, as I said, only fifteen years after the inventor of printing died, wrote a library of 113 volumes in the infancy of printing, which is still today the leading classic library of Protestantism, which has been translated and retranslated in part into every language of the globe and influenced every Protestant and many Catholic authors, and is or should be the foundation and center of every library that is not anti-Protestant. Alas! Alas! It is

not so in our own Protestant land, the United States. He seems to be feared more as a leader of a sect, which he never was, than loved and honored as the hero of the Reformation and the very soul of the Protestant Teutonic literary activity and its treasures. However I am not so greatly concerned to have Luther honored as the father of the modern library by hanging his picture on their walls. There is a better way for the Protestant library to honor their father and that is to purchase his writings complete in the German, Scandinavian and English languages and then interest their German, Scandinavian and English citizens to read them. True some libraries have a dozen or more books written about Luther, his life, etc., but not a single book written by him. All the books that others have or may write about him are as nothing compared to what he himself wrote in explaining the Holy Scriptures and the fundamental principles of our modern aggressive Protestant civilization. If they are the happy possessors of a few books translated from our great Teuton church father, the books are often in such poor and antiquated English that no one can nor will read them with any comfort. Librarians and pastors and Protestant laymen, what have you up-to-date in your library from the heart and pen of the father of Protestant literature? Look now and see, and make a note of what you find and write us, and we may be of some help to you in completing your collection.

But what is the use for libraries to purchase Luther's works in German, Scandinavian or English when the people do not call for the books and read them. Therefore we have given emphasis to their cry that is going abroad in the land.

### **READ LUTHER! READ LUTHER!! READ LUTHER!!!**

Why? Because as a true intelligent Protestant you cannot read any thing better. Millions of people have said and millions more will say next to the Bible they received more from Luther's writings than from all other books combined. And if you take the Protestant professors of our land, and for that matter of all lands, they all together would come far short of making a Luther. He was not only ahead of his times, but on many subjects he is far ahead of our age. Yes, when we keep company with Luther we feel we are behind the times, on subjects like Romanism, Protestantism, Christian schools, Christian libraries, the Christian family, the Christian state, and many Christian social problems. It is possible to go backwards as well as forwards.

How can I read Luther when I have not his books and I cannot afford to purchase them? Our cry is not Buy Luther! Buy Luther!! Buy Luther!!! But Read Luther! Read Luther!! Read Luther!!! Many buy Luther's works and do not read them. They can afford to purchase them all and as they have a beautiful book-case with glass doors, perhaps the finest piece of furniture in their homes, as the style now is (for what is a home without an up-to-date book-case?), they subscribe for all Luther's works for a show in their book-case, and we ask can you name a set of books that makes a better show in any public or private library than Luther's works, especially in a Protestant library? They are also really a far better investment than these large, thick, cheap but dear, subscription books, which are nice only while they are new and then they fade and the outside becomes as bad as the inside. When you look at the libraries of many Protestant homes, you pity them, first because of what they have not and then because of what they have.

But Luther's writings should go into the home library not for a show nor for an investment, but to be read. Perhaps there is no passage of Scripture that our homes should take to heart just now more than the advice of Father Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy: "Give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in thee." 1 Tim. 4:13-14. Give heed that you read something, that you read the best, and give heed how you read, that the gifts in you may not be neglected. Then the right, sound exhortation and pure teaching will follow. Notice the order is first, give heed to reading. Many have never read any writings of Luther except perhaps his small catechism. They have not built very well on the foundation laid. When one thinks of the solid Christian books our German and Scandinavian parents read and what the children read now-a-days, you must sigh.

Again many say I have now more books than I can read and if I buy more I will not read them. Well, you will not lose much if you do not read many books you have, but if you would sell these and buy a few of the classic writings of Protestantism and read and read them again and again, you would be blessed, and just such a work is Luther on Genesis.

## **NO ONE IS TOO POOR TO BE A LUTHER READER**

I have spoken of those who can afford to buy Luther's works and do buy them, and yet they do not read them. There is another class much smaller but much better; namely, those who enjoyed the study of their catechism and the little they have read here and there in extracts from Luther and they long to read more, but do not know where to get the books or have not the money to buy them. To all such let our pastors, parochial and Sunday school teachers and all others say on every occasion possible that such works can be had in the public library. If you do not find them there make application on the little blank slips the library furnishes for the public to request the library to secure the books desired. If they do not do so at once have your neighbors repeat and repeat the same request. This is the way the latest trashy novels are introduced in public libraries, for they buy only what the public asks for. These libraries are supported as a rule by taxation and the Germans and Scandinavians are heavy taxpayers and their requests for good standard books in their own language or in English will be favorably considered. We ourselves are to blame if public libraries have not the standard classics of their Protestant father and founder.

It is therefore in harmony with historic development and with the spirit of Luther that in Chicago, June 29, 1903, an adjourned meeting of the convention, which assembled in the same city in September of the previous year, was held and effected an organization known as the

## **NATIONAL LUTHERAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

one aim of which as specified in its constitution, is "To aid in duplicating as far as practicable the 'Luther' literature in the British Museum Library in all the larger American Public Libraries." (See the constitution for further details.) The public libraries of Great Britain are far ahead of the American public libraries in their Luther literature, and we as free loyal Americans cannot afford to let it continue so.

The question arises, what nations, what culture should characterize the libraries of the world? Shall the Greeks, or the Latins or the Teutons? To aid in answering this question I will add another heading

## **THE GREEK, LATIN AND TEUTON CHURCH FATHERS**

In the Introduction of Vol. I in the Psalms, to which the reader is referred, it was stated that the key-note of all of the "sacred books" of the East is "Salvation by Works." And yet in the face of this Protestants are asked to believe that they are "sacred books," when their main teachings are directly contrary to what we have been taught to esteem as most sacred, namely, our Christian faith in the grace of Christ for salvation. To Protestants they are not sacred books but the very opposite. I would far rather call the writings of Luther sacred, which teach and defend the doctrine of salvation by grace as taught by the one great Book, although it stands alone and protests against the false teachings of the so-called sacred books of the east.

However let us now look more closely at the west. Here we find that Protestants have shown commendable zeal and enterprise in translating, publishing and circulating the large libraries of the Greek and Latin church fathers. Every pastor continuously receives circulars with the almost

irresistible temptation to purchase the patristic writings of both Catholic churches. This is all well, but we should not forget that the Anglo-Saxon people are neither Greeks nor Latins, but Teutons, and that our Teuton church fathers are Protestants and they also should be translated, published, circulated and read and taught. Little Wittenberg dare not fall behind Constantinople and Rome. It ought not.

*For "Saxon and Norman and Dane are We."*

True the Teutons can and do learn from the Greek and Latin church fathers, but we also believe that the children of the old Greeks and Latins can learn much from our Teuton fathers, and that they have as good reasons to welcome our classic church literature as we have theirs; and we hope the day may soon come when they will translate and read ours as faithfully and impartially as we do theirs. What a blessing that would bring to Christendom!

In some quarters however English Protestants have been in danger of appreciating the fathers of the Greeks and Latins to the extent of neglecting to give due honor to their own. Many Protestant ministers' libraries contain all classics except the Protestant classics. Let the whole world have the Greek and the Latin fathers as it has, but let Protestants awake and give the world theirs. Is it not a shame and a pity that while all the writings of the Greek and Latin fathers have been translated into many languages, yet the complete works of Luther, the first and chief of the Protestant fathers, have never been translated into any language, though his loyal disciples are numbered by the hundreds of thousands in different tongues, as the fruits of those writings? For of the 70,169,000 Lutherans in the world, 43,731,000 speak German, 7,300,000 Swedish, 3,500,000 Norwegian, 3,200,000 Danish, 3,000,000 Finnish, 1,100,000 Esthish, 400,000 Hungarian (or 4,500,000 of the Finnish or Magyar race), 4,000,000 English, 2,000,000 Lettish, 500,000 Slovakian, 300,000 Polish, 200,000 French, 100,000 Dutch, 100,000 Russian, 82,000 Icelandic, 50,000 Bohemian, 63,000 Wendish, 113,000 Lithuanian, 250,000 the heathen dialects of Asia and 280,000 the heathen dialects of Africa. And further as all German speaking Reformed churches use Luther's version of the Scriptures, so they welcome his writings also.

True in all these 17 or more languages some of Luther's writings have appeared. But it is distressing to learn how few they are, and how out of date and imperfect some of these are. Luther is the common property of all Protestants, and so are his writings. They would be helpful in all time to the 21,000,000 Episcopalians, the 17,000,000 Methodists, the 11,000,000 Baptists, the 9,000,000 Presbyterians, the 4,500,000 Congregationalists, and all other Protestants; and not only to the 140,000,000 Protestants, but also to the 80,000,000 Greek Catholics and 200,000,000 Latin Catholics and to the heathen, to the infidel, to the state as well as to the church. The first thing for Protestants to do is to give all nations the Bible; and the second, to give them the best Protestant classics. We can. Will we?

No nation or race is greater than its greatest men, and those greatest men are not greater than their best writings. Hence little is of more value in literature than the honest critique by these greatest men of the best writings of the most civilized and cultured nations before their time. Therefore of the greatest interest are the following

## **CRITICISMS OF THE GREATEST TEUTON CHURCH FATHER ON THE GREEK AND LATIN CHURCH FATHERS**

They are taken literally from his Table Talk and read thus: I will not presume to criticise too closely the writings of the fathers, seeing they are received of the church, and have great applause, for then I should be held an apostate; but whoever reads Chrysostom, will find he digresses from the chief points, and proceeds to other matters, saying nothing, or very little, of that which pertains to the subject. When I was expounding the Epistle to the Hebrews, and turned to what Chrysostom had written upon it, I found nothing to the purpose; yet I believe that he at that time, being the chief rhetorician, had many hearers, though he taught without profit; for the chief office of a preacher is to

teach uprightly, and diligently to look to the main points and foundation on which he stands, and so instruct and teach the hearers that they understand aright and may be able to say: This is well taught. When this is done, he may avail himself of rhetoric to adorn his subject and admonish the people.

Behold what great darkness is in the books of the fathers concerning faith; yet if the article of justification be darkened, it is impossible to smother the grossest errors of mankind. St. Jerome, indeed, wrote upon Matthew, upon the Epistles to the Galatians and to Titus; but, alas, very coldly. Ambrose wrote six books on Genesis, but they are very poor. Augustine wrote nothing to the purpose concerning faith; for he was first roused up and made a man by the Pelagians, in striving against them. I can find no exposition upon the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, in which anything is taught pure and right. What a happy time have we now as to the purity of the doctrine; but alas, we little esteem it.

We must read the fathers cautiously, and lay them in the gold balance, for they often stumbled and went astray, and introduced into their books many monkish things. Augustine had more work and labor to wind himself out of the writings of the fathers, than he had with the heretics. Gregory expounds the five pounds mentioned in the Gospel, which the husbandman gave to his servants to put to use, to be the five senses, which the beasts also possess. The two pounds he construes to be the reason and understanding.

The more I read the books of the fathers, the more I find myself offended; for they were but men, and, to speak the truth with all their repute and authority, undervalued the books and writings of the sacred apostles of Christ. The Papists were not ashamed to say, What are the Scriptures? We must read the holy fathers and teachers, for they drew and sucked the honey out of the Scriptures. As if God's Word were to be understood and conceived by none but themselves, whereas the heavenly Father says: "Him shall ye hear," who in the Gospel taught most plainly in parables and similitudes.

Augustine was the ablest and purest of all the doctors, but he could not of himself bring things back to their original condition, and he often complains that the bishops, with their traditions and ordinances, trouble the church more than did the Jews with their laws.

I am persuaded that if at this time, St. Peter, in person, should preach all the articles of the Holy Scriptures, and only deny the pope's authority, power and primacy, and say that the pope is not the head of all Christendom, they would cause him to be hanged.

Jerome should not be numbered among the teachers of the church, for he was a heretic; yet I believe he was saved through faith in Christ. He speaks not of Christ, but merely carries his name in his mouth.

Again he says, Jerome may be consulted for the purpose of historical study. As to faith, and good true religion and doctrine, there is not a word about them in his writings. He writes only respecting fasts, sorts of food, virginity, etc. I have already proscribed Origin. Chrysostom possesses no authority in my estimation. Basil is but a monk, for whom I would not give the value of a hair. The Apology of Philip Melanchthon is worth all the writings of all the doctors of the church put together, not excepting those of St. Augustine.

Tertullian is a thorough Carlstad; Cyprian the martyr is a feeble theologian.

The fathers said nothing decisive during their lives, respecting justification by grace; but at their death they believed in it. This was the more prudent course for them to follow, in order neither to encourage mysticism, nor discourage good works. These worthy fathers lived better than they wrote.

Since I became, by the grace of God, capable of understanding St. Paul, I have been unable to esteem any of these doctors; they have shrunk into insignificance in my estimation.

## **PREFACES AND DEDICATIONS**

—of—

### **LUTHER'S "DEAR GENESIS."**

#### **HIS "SWAN SONG" AND HIS "IT IS FINISHED."**

We certainly will be pardoned for issuing here and at this time the Prefaces: of Veit Dietrich, who published the first of these lectures in Latin; of Basil Faber, who was the first to translate parts from Latin into German; of Dr. Walch, who issued one of the best editions of Luther's complete works; and of Dr. Cole, who was the first to translate a small part from Latin into English. The words of these four men are a stronger appeal than we can write for the extensive circulation among English Protestants of this the last and the greatest of Luther's writings.

It is as Mathesius says: "Surely the last thoughts are the best when they at the time refer to the Word of God and spring from it. The sermons and books of aged men are worthy of consideration and preservation." Hence, Jerome Weller called this commentary Luther's Swan Song, and Morlin calls it the "Consummatum Est," "It Is Finished," of Luther.

A new interest will be taken in the lines of this book when it is remembered how dear they were to the Reformer himself. He frequently expresses his love for his "dear Genesis," and had the prophetic impression that his labors in Genesis and his earthly life would terminate together. And so they did. This was the last public work of Luther's forty years of professorial, ministerial and reformatory labors. This saint of God, who was "a lion before men, but a lamb before God," concludes his commentary thus: "This is now the dear Book of Genesis. May our Lord grant that others may do it better than I have done. I can no more; I am so weak. Pray to God for me, that he may grant me a good holy hour at death!"

A friend, one of the collectors of these comments, records these remarkable coincidences at the foot of the Commentary: "The man of God, Doctor Martin Luther, finished his Commentaries on the Book of Genesis in the year of our Lord 1545, on the 17th day of November; having commenced them in the year 1535. In his opening remarks he had said, 'This exposition I shall pore over and die over (*immorabor et immoriar*).'<sup>1</sup> According to this prophecy concerning himself he died at Eisleben, Feb. 18th, 1546, piously and continually calling upon the Son of God."

## DEDICATION OF VEIT DIETRICH

*To the Most Illustrious, High-Born Prince and Lord, John Ernest, Duke of Saxony, Landgrave of Thuringia, Margrave of Misnia.*

It is this glorious and beautiful architectural building, the world; that is, the heavens and earth with all that in them is, as the stars, the elements, the trees, the plants, and all kinds of animals, etc., created so admirably for it and wisely ordered by God in their relations to one another, that teaches us to know God as the one eternal and almighty Creator and the right Master-builder, and to understand that he created us for this life, body and soul, and gave us reason and a spirit in order that he might thereby be worshipped. And such knowledge would have remained pure and beautiful in the hearts of all men without doubt and error of any kind had human nature not fallen through disobedience into such miserable darkness and other innumerable calamities.

For what blindness and ignorance of God, his nature and will, his providence and government, there is in the hearts of all men in their corrupt and infirm nature, is evident from the doubts which stick in the hearts of everyone, concerning which Plato was right when he wisely said, "That the minds of men are so overpowered with conviction by the laws of the motion of the heavenly bodies and other testimonies of nature, that they are compelled to confess that the world had for its Creator an eternal and almighty divine Mind." And yet we find that this knowledge and this conviction are darkened and deranged when we consider how enormous and confused all things are in the world and in this life, and when we find ourselves so often plunged into such great misery and need without help or rescue as if there were no God left to his creatures.

From such doubts all those mad-brained opinions of philosophers have arisen. Some, as the Epicureans, denied the existence of God altogether; others, as Aristotle and the Stoics, believed God was an eternal mind, yet bound and confined him to second causes; just in the same way as the poets fable that Saturn was bound by Jupiter. Thus they ascribe to him no action, but that which the general concurrence of second causes produces. Hence having their minds infatuated with this delirium, they can neither ask any good thing of God, nor expect any good thing from him, because, with them events are necessarily only consequents which responsively follow upon their natural first causes.

Therefore, while these men thus reasoned, they did not bring forth their own private and personal opinions only, but the common errors which lie concealed naturally in the minds of the whole human race. The greatest part of mankind fix their eyes upon second causes; but these never raise them so high as the great Over-ruler of all; so as to wait for the government or pressing forth of second causes from and by him, as Elijah did, when he prayed for rain in the midst of a drought, and as Isaiah did, when he drove back an army of the enemy by prayer.

When this darkness in the mind of man had followed upon the fall of our first parents, God came forth anew out of his secret habitation, and immediately made himself known again, with a distinct *voice* and with fresh testimonies; that the human race might not appear to be created in vain nor without a mighty purpose, nor for destruction only. The creation indeed was a great benefit and blessing from God. But much more so was his revelation of himself to the human race from the very "beginning," by certain testimonies and evidences; delivering with a distinct voice the *promise* of eternal life and salvation, and making a declaration concerning a judgment to come, in which after this life he would separate the righteous from the wicked. The Law also, though known to nature at first, he renewed, and showed what was his true worship. He caused it moreover to be attended with signs, which could be wrought by no power less than infinite. He recalled the dead to life, he stopped the motions of the heavens and the course of the sun, and he even turned the sun back in his course to refute a human delirium, which pretended to suspend God by second causes as by the golden chain of Homer.

And lastly, the Son of God himself assumed human nature and lived openly with us, taught us and became a sacrifice and offering for our sins; and after having overcome death rose and lived again, and discoursed with many in an open and familiar manner; and moreover preached to a great multitude of hearers. And although these things, on account of their greatness, seem to human judgment to be mere fictions, yet they are attested and sealed by sure and certain evidences and miracles; so that they are as surely true as that it is mid-day when the sun has mounted in his course to the mid-heaven.

To these blessings we are also to add this, that God was pleased that there should be a history of the human race from the very "beginning," and a record of all those testimonies, by which he revealed himself, committed to writing and engraven on biblical monuments, which should remain forever. Nor will God be known in any other way than by these testimonies; nor will he consider any assembly of men, who are ignorant of these testimonies, to be his Church, nor will he receive the prayer of those, who do not call upon him as the same God, who does thus make himself known by these his testimonies.

The Mohammedans and Turks call upon God as the Creator of universal nature, but they set themselves against his Son and his Son's doctrine. They say, that he who can approve such doctrine cannot be God. And as to his Son, in whom God more especially reveals himself, and concerning whom he says himself, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him," on him they spit with infuriated madness!

And what says Plato here? Although Plato does raise his mind above the common opinions of the vulgar, and does not ascribe divinity to statues of wood and stone, but really does inquire after God with very wise reasoning; and although he defines him to be "an eternal mind" and the great Cause of all good in nature, yet he still errs very widely from the true God. But how is that, some one may say? What description of God will you find more appropriate than Plato's? I acknowledge that he thought most learnedly and wisely concerning the nature of God; but concerning his will, he hangs in doubt himself and leaves all his readers and disciples in doubt also; and to use his own expression "bestormed and shipwrecked in their reasoning." Neither Plato nor Mohammed knew whether God heard and received the unworthy; nor how, nor why, he received them.

Plato ought however to have inquired not only how God manifested himself in the creation of things, and what traces of himself he impressed upon the face of nature, but also whether or not he had uttered any voice by any certain signs or testimonies, and how that voice was spread abroad and made known. He might have heard these things when studying mathematics in Egypt, and might easily have learned all particulars from their neighbors the Jews. But the greater part of men always despise the voice and the Church of God.

But to what purpose is all this far-fetched Introduction? It is for this end, that we may know the true Church of God is nowhere but among those, who have and who embrace the writings of the prophets and the apostles; that God is nowhere rightly called upon, but where the doctrine contained in these books truly shines forth. And here again we have to consider another singular blessing of God: That he was pleased to cause a whole connected history of all ages, from "the beginning," to be recorded in these books, and has preserved them by his own peculiar care. Nay, the whole Mosaic Economy was ordained for this very preservation of them. For what was the whole of that Economy, but a school and library of these books?

And the fountain of all is the *first book* of Moses, called Genesis, which profane men may perhaps laugh at and consider that it does not differ from the "Timon" of Plato, in which also the creation of the world is described. But the godly reader knows that there is a wide difference between profane descriptions and this description given us from above. For the latter not only informs us of the beginnings and nature of created bodies, but gives us a description of God himself. And it contains also an account of the beginnings of *the Church*; for the sake of which all other things were

created and made, all which things we must know before we can understand whence the doctrine of the church proceeded and how the knowledge of it was spread abroad in the world.

All heathen superstitions crept into the assemblies of men without any certain authors, and were afterwards accumulated by fanatical persons on various occasions. But from "the book of Genesis" we learn that the doctrine of the church was delivered to our first parents by the voice of God, and that thence the knowledge of it was preserved and spread abroad in the world by a continued series of persons and events, and not without manifest evidences and testimonies. Enoch was taken up into heaven; Noah truly preached of the Flood and was afterwards preserved in the Flood; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, etc., for there are many signs and evidences that they were teachers and priests, truly called of God, were most certain witnesses, that the doctrine which they embraced and preached was from heaven.

Symmachus objects against Christians, that all agree that the oldest doctrine must be the true one; but that the apostolic doctrine is a recent fiction. But Symmachus is here in a very great error; for it can be most manifestly proved that the doctrine now held by the Church is the first doctrine that was ever delivered to the world. And that is plainly shown in this "Book of Genesis," where both the doctrine is recorded as having been delivered of God; and also the increasing nations are described, which departed from the purity of that doctrine and formed for themselves new opinions concerning God and set up idols, instead of worshipping him. Therefore, we must come to this Book for a description of the beginnings of the Church, and for testimonies of its propagation; and it is to this Book that all doctrines must be referred in order to discover their origin or antiquity.

Philosophers knew nothing of the cause of sin, of the cause of death, nor of the cause of the great calamities to which the human race are subject; nor did they know anything of the restitution of all things, nor of eternal life. They were continually inquiring, how there is so much misery in the nature of the human race, which is so exalted and excellent. How often do they exclaim against and lament man's violent and impetuous inclinations to vice! They see that his virtues are weak and that they are only faint attempts which soon vanish and end in nothing; as we see in Pausanias, who was the great general of the Greeks against Mardonius; and in Alexander; also in Themistocles and many others. Aristotle seeks for the cause of the death of the human race and of all other living creatures in their material nature; and to make good his hypotheses, he enumerates privation among the principles of natural things; that he might in some way or other make out a continual lapse of matter, decaying and perishing, in order to assume other forms.

But the Book now under consideration sets before us a far different cause of the death of the human race and of the corruptions which defile it; it shows that the cause was a turning away from God in our human nature at "the beginning;" which human nature, casting away the light and knowledge of God and of life, procured to itself a confusion in its powers and a subjection to the tyranny of the devil and of death. The greatness and enormity of these evils appeared in our first parents, in the murder of Cain and in other horrible wickednesses, seen in those first flowers of the human race, which excelled all others in purity and excellence.

Then again we have a beautiful view and proof of this in the propagation and continual renewing of the Church; where it appears that the Church is not a kingdom or body politic, belonging to this world, enclosed and guarded by armed garrisons; but a body formed of widely dispersed assemblies, though not hidden and obscure; bearing about with them the divine voice and the Word, and dispensing it in public congregations of honest men, to kings, rulers and cities; and calling and drawing many everywhere to prayer and to the true worship of God; though they are all the while derided, cast out, and driven away by tyrants and by the great part of mankind.

Melchizedek, whom the old divines supposed was Shem, the son of Noah, surpassed all the men of that time in wisdom, righteousness and age; and he preached for a long time to the people of Sodom and the neighboring places, for his dwelling was not more than eight English miles from Sodom. Therefore no doubt he had a congregation, by no means insignificant, which contained the

families of Abraham, Lot and many others. For although the Church was small, yet there was always some Church existing; and that no obscure nor inconsiderable assemblage. And these little schools or congregations of hearers were protected and defended from on high. For all the neighboring cities, Sodom the chief in power, with infuriated madness despised the heavenly doctrine, and railed at and hated its preachers.

In meditating on this book of Genesis the picture Moses gives us of the Church at that time is to be continually and diligently considered. And indeed in reading these histories, the following six particulars are to be carefully borne in mind.

*First, the doctrine of our primitive fathers is to be considered,* and that the prophets and apostles drew many things from these fountains. For our forefathers and the prophets learned the benefits of Christ, both out of the promise given to Abraham and from other parts of those histories. How eruditely and learnedly does Paul draw up the article of righteousness by faith out of that word of Genesis, "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." And David ascribes unto Christ a priesthood like that of Melchizedek; marking particularly his office of blessing; when he blessed Abraham and promised him in the sweetest words, the favor and help of God; which was different from the office of the Levitical priesthood.

This is a most rich part of the Scripture of Genesis as the following commentary frequently points out, and as the godly reader at once perceives in this very history itself; for he knows that these histories are to be read in a far different spirit and with a widely different intent, than all profane and heathen histories. Heathen histories merely set before us examples of civil manners, and show that the events attending honest designs are for the most part good, and pleasant, and successful; but that the most fatal calamities await atrocious wickedness. And this is nearly all that we learn from profane and heathen histories. But these prophetic writings contain things of much higher moment; the doctrine of God, the divine testimonies concerning eternal things and the government of the Church.

*Secondly. We must observe and consider these miracles.* Not merely to feast our wondering curiosity on their singularity or novelty, but hold them fast as testimonies and evidences; intended to show what kind of doctrine and what kind of teachers God approves. All those marvelous and signal acts of God are above nature, and wrought as "seals" of the doctrine. For we are not to imagine that God was in jest, when he forewarned the antediluvian world of the Flood, and when he saved the family of Noah alone from that mighty Deluge. All these his mighty acts were testimonials of his providence and of his doctrine, which the aged Noah preached.

*Thirdly. Let the government, defense and protection of the Church be diligently observed;* which, although it seems to be neglected of God, yet exhibits most illustrious proofs of the presence of God and of his providence.

The Emperor Augustus ruled the world by sure and established laws; he had his armies, to whose care he entrusted the safety of his provinces, and he had also his wealth and other resources, wherewith to support his armies. Thus a political government is fortified and protected by human laws, counsels and power. But the government of the Church is far different from this.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wander about like private men and strangers in the land without any human resources for protection; and they collect together a Church by the Word or Voice of God, and by the Holy Ghost. And though they are unceasingly exercised with various sorrows and distresses, they still find themselves delivered from all evils, protected and defended from above!

So also Jacob, when about to take his journey with all his family through the territories of his angry and embittered brother, is filled with fears and hesitations, and the difficulties seem insurmountable by all human counsel, but in the night he wrestles with the Lord and is encouraged, confirmed and protected.

And many like examples are contained in this little but momentous book of Record, which shows us that God is ever with his Church. It commands and encourages us also to seek and hope for help and defense from him. For these things were recorded and handed down to posterity that we

might be encouraged by such examples and might know that God in the same manner is ever willing to protect and defend us.

*Fourthly. We must bear in mind the continual succession of the Church.* Men magnify the ordinary succession of all human things; the titles and honors and decorations of parents and the magnificence of houses and places. Cain, Ishmael and Esau arrogated to themselves dominion and superiority in the Church, because they had the advantage of their brethren in age. The ancient Babylonians maintained that their opinions concerning God were the most true, because that was the most ancient dwelling place of our fathers, and because it was the capital and citadel of their empire; just as bishops and colleges now on account of an ordinary succession assume to themselves this peculiar honor, that they cannot err; and that they are the habitation and the pillars of the truth.

But Paul shows us in Romans 9:6, etc., that all such judgments and opinions are refuted in Genesis, where the apostle shows in the most forcible manner that the Church is not propagated and continued by any prerogatives or privileges of birth or place, but by the calling and Word of God. The family of Jacob was the Church; because it retained the doctrine of the Word from heaven; but Esau did not retain it.

Thus the Church which fell away and declined in Palestine was restored by the calling of the great teacher Abraham, and by the renewal of the promise to him with additional evidences and testimonies, and this history shows that the Church is the care of God, and is regenerated and revived by him; as Paul says, "And he gave gifts unto men, prophets and apostles, and pastors, and teachers."

Let us not then be moved by honors of dignity, or places, or an orderly succession, so as to be made to believe that the church is that assembly of men who oppose the Gospel and who would kill and exterminate all honest men on account of their profession of the doctrine of godliness, as Cain did.

*Fifthly. We must bear in mind while reading this Book of Genesis, the lives, manners and actions of the persons recorded in it.* We have before been speaking of the doctrine and government of the Church, and they who despise these will never truly value or prize this book. For such men seek in these histories as in all others, and are interested only in the various commotions and changes of states and kingdoms, and the examples and lives of the leaders of armies and the wonderful events of wars. But here they read also the conversations and lives of shepherds; which are like real pastorals, better than Virgil's *Bucolica*. And they here read also the marriages and quarrels of women, which they despise as altogether without interest. All such readers and proud men err, and do not understand that it is the Church which is here portrayed by Moses, which is poor and humble in external appearance and unlike mighty empires; yet, as the members of that Church lived a civil life, its history consists in domestic and political actions; according to the vocation of those members of the Church of God and the various occurrences which took place in their lives.

Thus Abraham taught his guests concerning God, and with such effect that they themselves said, that he was an angel from God; for it is indeed a great work, verily the greatest of all works to teach rightly concerning God. This same man carries on war when circumstances require it and defeats a huge army of the Chaldeans with a very small number, showing thereby that true courage is a divine motion in the soul from God. This same man is also a master of a family, is full of pure affection, and loves his wives and his children. He is also a diligent man in all his domestic affairs. He defends his fountains and his cattle. In buying he evinces peculiar care, justice and equity; things which he knows God requires in all the dealings of men with each other. And in all this tenor of domestic and political life Abraham's great aim is this, that thereby his confession and profession might be made manifest by his actions. In all the common calamities moreover which attend this life of trouble, he exercises the fear of God, patience and calling upon God in prayer; and he experiences at the hand of God many and great deliverances.

All these things in the lives of the holy patriarchs are committed to *letters* and recorded in this Holy Book; to the end that superstitions of every kind might be refuted. For in all ages superstitious

men have imagined and sought out various ceremonies and modes of religious action, which are not consistent even with common sense, and these superstitious ceremonies they have pompously commended to the people under the title of great acts of religion. All the laws of celibacy, of particular meats and drinks, of afflicting and torturing the body, to make a feigned outside show of religion, are as ancient as the world itself. But let us oppose to all these mad inventions the domestic and political lives and conversations of the patriarchal fathers, which were full of examples of faith, full of the most honorable and kind duties toward their fellow men, and full of the tenderest affection. Nevertheless, these holy characters were not without ceremonies. There were sacrifices; there were certain explanations of the Word and will of God; there were certain holy exercises. The possession of letters and of learning also rested with these men especially. From them it is that we received theology, history and medicine. Therefore they must doubtless have been engaged in various domestic duties and exercises; that those of the less experienced ages might be instructed by them and trained to virtue.

*Sixthly. Even the faults and falls of the great men, recorded in this Book must be particularly considered.* They took the greatest care not to rush into anything against their consciences. But some offenses will arise in the best of men even against their wills. And sometimes offenses occur of which men are wholly ignorant and unconscious before they take place. Lot, when in the great grief of his mind he had drunk to excess, was defiled by an incestuous commerce with his own daughters.

But in these slips and falls we are to observe a distinctive difference. These holy men who feared God, as I said, were on their guard not to rush into anything against their consciences; and when they happened to fall they deplored the weakness of human nature and learned to see the value of the promise of deliverance through the Saviour, who was to come. And they at length knew that God had received them again in mere mercy, for the sake of the great Deliverer promised; and by that confidence and trust in the promised mercy they returned to God; and therefore they obtained pardon and were delivered from their sins and the punishment of them. Hence Jacob preaches and proclaims the angel, the Son of God, by whom he said he was "delivered from all evil"; namely, from sin and eternal punishment. But the wicked, as Cain, the "giants," and the people of Sodom, defiled themselves with various sins and iniquities in an open contempt of God, and rushed into eternal destruction. Therefore the wide difference between the falls and punishments of these two characters is to be diligently observed in reading this book of Genesis.

These observations I have made by way of Introduction for the benefit of the inexperienced, that being thus forewarned they might know that the doctrine contained in these sacred histories is concerning the most momentous things, and is most copious and extensive, which indeed the following commentary will most learnedly and blessedly open up and explain. Let those therefore who read it bear in mind that the six particular admonitions which I have here mentioned; and let their aim in reading be this, that by meditating on the lives of the holy men here recorded, they may become accustomed to the fear of God and to faith in him; and to call upon him in prayer and supplication.

And as there is no old commentary of the book of Genesis existing, and as it is well known to all that this book is calculated to be of the utmost benefit and profit, thanks are due to the Reverend Doctor Luther, our teacher, both from myself and from all who fear God, for having undertaken this exposition, by doing which he has rendered a most essential service; not only to us, but to all posterity; because he has here opened up and explained the most important things; and has also so commented upon those most excellent men and lights of the Church, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, that their virtues because of this commentary shine forth with much renewed brightness.

Before this, when the people heard the names of these luminaries of the Church, they had no particular thoughts upon their spiritual excellencies or their heroism; nor did they consider them to be above the common rank of shepherds; but now, they learn to acknowledge the peculiar presence of God with them, and to render thanks unto God that they were called of him and that they so wonderfully governed and revived the Church. From these also they have borrowed eminent examples

of the fear of God, of faith, of confession, of patience, and of many other holy virtues. On these they fix their eyes as on leaders and lights of the Church, and inquire of their doctrine for the confirmation of their faith. In a word they venerate them as their fathers; that is, as teachers of all who call upon Jesus Christ; and they understand also that these same patriarchs are the fathers in the flesh of those murderers, the Jews, and of others who, like the Jews of old, hold up Christ for a laughing-stock and "crucify him afresh" day by day.

Indeed, it is no small step toward godliness to know the doctrines of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; and to exalt these eminent men in our esteem.

And that this commentary might be a benefit to more, and might be handed down to posterity, as Doctor Luther had not leisure enough to commit it to writing, with the help of my friends, Caspar Cruciger and George Rorary, I collected it with the greatest diligence and speed, as we received it from the mouth of our venerable teacher Luther; and faithfully committed it to paper; and I hope our services will be acceptable to all our readers who fear the Lord.

This useful and valuable monument of divine knowledge and experience therefore I dedicate to you, most Illustrious Prince, John Ernest; which, I doubt not, you will prize more than any monuments of marble or of brass. For I know it is your desire that this noble work of Martin Luther should be preserved for the Church's sake; and I am equally assured that you love and cherish it with a pious regard, and after the example of your father; and I am also persuaded that you love the author of it; which also you do after the example of your reverend father, that most upright prince, Elector John, Duke of Saxony, whose worth we thus deservedly record; who, although he was far inferior to our most eminent leaders, whom I have before mentioned, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; yet I may justly rank him with that Pharaoh, King of Egypt, whom Joseph instructed in the true knowledge of God; and who gave a quiet dwelling to the family of Jacob. For thus your father also learned the Gospel with a holy desire that he might worship God. And he cherished and adorned the churches, and devoted all his counsels with the greatest moderation, to the common peace and tranquility of Germany.

Receive therefore, Illustrious Prince, this great work, which is now dedicated to you; that by reading these wonderful histories of the government, the perils, and the defense of the Church of God, you may learn to govern and strengthen your own exalted mind.

The reason why this commentary did not appear all at once, but in separate volumes, was because the labor of collecting and committing it to paper was very great; and we have not much idle time at our disposal, from the duties of our calling, as many dream we have; nor as those have, who only vaunt and talk of their great and numerous good works. I hope however that this my candid confession will be accepted by the reader, if I shall put into his hands a part of our labors first; though it is not a small part; and I promise that the remainder shall be added to it in a short time. For as one of old says, "A godly mind surmounts the hardest toil."

We who are engaged in church work have not only the labor of commenting and teaching, but we have also to endure many other burdens; and that, too, with much courage and firm determination of mind.

Nor am I deterred from my purpose even by the opinions of those, who say that nothing which our adversaries advance, who reproach this kind of doctrine (which, through the goodness and mercy of God, sounds forth in our Church), ought to be published to the world. For God's will is that he should be proclaimed aloud, both by the living voice and by the writings of his Church. Hence it is said concerning the Church's living voice, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise." And concerning her writings, "These things shall be written for the generation to come." God's will is, that the doctrine revealed by him should be delivered faithfully and purely to posterity. And his will also is that we should inculcate it by speaking, by discoursing, by commenting, and by writing; that it might become familiarly known to us. And this continual meditation and application of the pen are of essential service to the promotion of godliness.

In a word, on what subjects can we meditate and what things can we commit to paper more useful and important than these? I approve of the labors of all, who devote themselves to the useful arts. I praise those who describe the nature and properties of plants and adorn any of the arts given us from above. But it is not more the duty of men to philosophize upon plants or upon the anatomy of the human body, than to collect with a godly intent those things which were delivered to us of God, attended with sure and certain testimonies.

And as to our adversaries, who reproach the doctrine of our Church, all such are refuted in this very book of Genesis by those sure witnesses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Since, therefore, we have such eminent men as these, as witnesses on our side; nay, as our teachers, too; let us not be moved by the calumnies and reproaches of the wicked. Reader, farewell. To God I commend you.

Christmas, 1544.

## DEDICATION OF BASIL FABER

*To the Worthy, Honorable and Illustrious Christopher von Steinberg, my Gracious Lord:*

How one should read the books of Moses and what one should chiefly learn from them are fully set forth by our beloved and highly honored father, Doctor Luther, in many places of his writings; namely, one should first of all and above all concentrate his attention upon the very loving and comforting promises concerning our Lord and Saviour, some of which are very clear and plain in the sacred writings of Moses, as Gen. 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Also, Gen. 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Likewise Deut. 18:15, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." In the second place attention should be given to the glorious and beautiful examples of faith, of love, of suffering, of patience, of prayer and other spiritual characteristics and traits in the saints, as in Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. How God was disposed toward them, governed, protected and heard them. And thirdly, study the examples of unbelief among the ungodly and of the divine wrath and judgment, in Cain, Ishmael, Esau, in the Flood and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. For all these are nowhere described more truly and fully than in the writings of Moses; and such examples illustrate, if they are rightly studied, how the entire Old Testament is to be used with profit; namely, that we learn to trust and believe in God from the examples of the saints set before us, how God received them, ruled and led them and wonderfully protected them. But from the examples of the wrath and judgment of God learn to fear him.

Such passages are not only here and there in all the books of Moses, but in his first book he treats also the following important themes: Whence all creatures, especially man, have their origin; also what sin and death are and how man may be delivered from them and become truly pious, which every man seeks and desires; for these are the most important subjects of all the sacred Scriptures. Likewise, how the Church originated and grew, often came in need and danger, and was wonderfully preserved by God.

The foregoing one should know, if he would read Moses, and especially his first book, Genesis. But so much is in these sound and useful lessons and explanations of Genesis by our honored father, Doctor Martin Luther, of blessed memory, that I will give a short account of it. And first it is true that this dear and great man, our beloved father and prophet, Doctor Martin Luther, served the Church to his last days in many and various labors. In his exposition of the prophetic and apostolic writings, he has most faithfully explained, enforced and defended the doctrines concerning the forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God, and eternal salvation. However his expositions of his "beloved Genesis," as he delighted to call it, are a key or paragon to all his other writings and books, and a very rich treasure in which an excellent theology is gathered and formulated, as every diligent reader will find for himself. For what is now and then treated in many writings of Doctor Luther, flow together here in one work, which might rightly be called Dr. Luther's Theology. Further you find here for the first time many useful reports of all kinds of spiritual and theological discussions, as they spring up continuously, and especially critical and special instruction almost on every article of Christian doctrine, of God, of the three Persons in the divine Essence, of the creation, of sin, of faith and the forgiveness of sin; of the Law and the Gospel, and how both doctrines are to be distinguished from one another, which have never been treated better and more fully than in this book. Also, of the true Church, of the papacy of Rome, against which you will find here very powerful storms, almost on every page. Against the Jews and all their lies, dreams and phantasies; also some powerful discussions and strong refutations of their prejudices, comments, corruptions and misunderstandings. In addition also the correct exegesis or explanations of many difficult passages of the Scriptures, and strong consolation in all kinds of spiritual need and temptations, as against doubt and unbelief, the

fear and the crisis of death, and the like. Also, the refutation of many false teachings and heresies both old and new. In addition some fine and useful histories illustrating the course of the Gospel in our day. Likewise prophecies concerning Germany as to its sad future because it lightly esteems the Word and is so very unthankful, some of which have already been realized and others are about to be. Finally you find at times, according to the drift and occasion of the expositions, good counsels and reports also about external and worldly affairs, to know which fully is necessary, useful and pleasant.

Therefore then, as I considered it a sin that such a treasure should remain only in the Latin language and that others, who were unacquainted with it, should be robbed of it, especially since Dr. Martin Luther was the teacher and prophet of Germany; and in order that everybody, especially the fathers of homes and the people at large, might enjoy this treasure to their profit, advancement and consolation, have I in my weak ability translated the first two parts of the Exposition into German in the plainest and most faithful manner, and dedicated the same to your high honor and to other Christians of the nobility, who have been admonished to love and further such Christian works, for a testimony and praise that your highness was disposed in a Christian and praiseworthy manner to further such useful church works, and heartily inclined to do them. May our beloved God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant that it may be helpful to many pious Christians! Herewith I commend your highness and the benevolent Christians of the worthy nobility to the care and protection of Almighty God.

*Your humble, willing servant,*  
*BASIL FABER.*

Dated Magdeburg, St. Michael, A.D. 1557.

## PREFACE OF DR. JOHN GEORGE WALCH

Among the illustrious gifts of grace with which God endowed our beloved and blessed Dr. Martin Luther, as the chosen agent for the reformation of the Church, one of the greatest was that he did not only love the divine Word from his heart and held it indeed, dearer than thousands of gold and silver; but also that he possessed a deep insight into and was mighty in explaining the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Both were united in a high degree in him by the wisdom and goodness of God. He was indeed a great lover of the divine Word and found in it his greatest pleasure, when he studied it to be established in his faith by learning from it the way he should walk. In the many and various trials he had to experience he could draw from it the one consolation, of which he gave many proofs and at the same time left behind him a testimony that can not be gainsaid, which confirms that for which he is in this respect honored. For his love and high appreciation of the sacred Scriptures he makes apparent upon every occasion. From the beginning of his academic career to its close he lectured constantly and untiringly on the Scriptures and sought to make his hearers acquainted with them. He founded his teachings on them and was therefore firm and unmovable in the same. He used them against his opponents as the sword of the spirit, put them to flight and refuted all their errors, so that they could not do anything against him, especially the Papists. He praised the Scriptures most highly and admonished all to read them and pray to God for true light if they desired the true knowledge and wished to further their salvation. As great as was his love to the divine Books so well was he experienced in them and God gave him great talents to understand and explain them. He did not hang to the outward shell nor did he seek to apply in his expositions an extensive human knowledge; but he came to the right foundation and the true and real purpose of the Spirit of God, whether he had before him the legal or the evangelical Word, and knew a clear and impressive way to give the true meaning and will of God in the respective passages, especially concerning the universal sinful and deep ruin of mankind, the grace and merciful love of God, Christ the kernel of all the holy Scriptures, righteousness by faith, the active and working character of faith, as also other points of life and doctrine, which he did not do the least in the historical parts of the Scriptures.

Such gifts Luther received from God because he was chosen as the agent of the Reformation, and they were by all means necessary to that end. For by means of the Scriptures the light penetrated the darkness covering the world, and revealed the abominations of the papacy. Hence he translated the Scriptures into German from the original texts. He placed the Bible in the hands of the people. Then in his sermons, academic lectures and everywhere he diligently explained in many excellent expositions the divine Books, where he showed how one is to understand the Word of God and apply it fruitfully to his edification.

These expository and exegetical writings of the sainted Luther are written with a talent especially adapted for the work, and they have also at all times brought special blessings, although we deny not that some are to be preferred to others. And among Luther's very best writings all agree, and rightly so, is his Commentary on Genesis, a short historical account of which I will now give.

Luther began this work at Wittenberg in his lectures to the university students in 1536, and ended it after ten years of labor, Nov. 17, 1545, only a few months before his death. So John Mathesius reports in his "Sermons on the Life of Luther," and then adds, Luther because of worry left Wittenberg for a time to visit the Prince of Anhalt, at Merseburg, and wrote, "Upon his return home, he finished his Genesis, Nov. 17, 1545, on which he had labored ten years." Ludwig von Seckendorf's "History of Lutheranism" is the authority that he began this work in 1536, while in the margin of the Latin edition is printed that he entered upon the exposition of the twenty-second chapter, Oct. 27, 1539.

In the meantime the wisdom of God directed that this glorious treasure should not lie buried, but should be brought to light for the quickening of many souls, and issued periodically in parts. The beginning was made while Luther was still living, and the first part, the Creation and the Flood,

appeared in 1545, containing his lectures on the first eleven chapters of Genesis, edited by Veit Dietrich, who heard Luther deliver the lectures while a student at Wittenberg, to which he wrote a dedication, and Luther added a short but precious "Address to the Christian Reader" [both of which we print in full]. Luther died in 1546, and Veit Dietrich in 1549, but Jerome Besoldus, pastor at Nuremberg, continued the work and issued the three other parts or volumes at Nuremberg. The second volume, The History of Abraham, with a preface by Michael Roting, professor at Nuremberg, from the twelfth chapter to verse 10 of the twenty-fifth chapter, was published in 1550. The third volume, to the thirty-sixth chapter, appeared in 1552, with a preface by Philip Melanchthon, and the fourth volume to the end of Genesis, in 1554, prefaced by Besoldus himself. Jerome Baumgartner, a councilman of Nuremberg, and a great lover of Luther's writings, appointed Besoldus to this work upon the death of Veit Dietrich, Melanchthon and Rorary approving. Jerome Besoldus studied at Wittenberg, heard these lectures from Luther's mouth, and diligently wrote a large part of them as they were delivered. He stayed in the home of Luther and ate at his table. He made use, also, of what Dietrich, Cruciger, Rorary and Stoltz had written from Luther's mouth. He says when Veit Dietrich died while preparing the second volume, the enemies of the Gospel sought to prevent its publication, and there was little hope that it should appear in print complete. But God graciously heard the prayers of the godly in these dark and distressing days, who longed for the last and best writings of their beloved Luther, when Councilman Baumgartner resolved that at least what Veit Dietrich had prepared for the second volume should appear, and the result was the work complete was printed.

This commentary was delivered to the students in Latin and first published in that language. But soon arrangements were perfected to issue it in German. Basil Faber, who died while rector in Erfurt, a celebrated educator, translated the first two volumes, whose dedication we give in full; and John Guden, senior pastor at Brunswick, translated volumes three and four, and his dedication was to the same person and written on Epiphany of the same year, 1557, a little before Faber's dedication.

Other editions of the commentary, both in Latin and German, followed, and then it was incorporated in the editions of the complete works of Luther; in the Wittenberg edition, in Latin and German, and in the Altenburg and the Leipsic collections in German, and all subsequent editions.

That Luther himself did not make much of this work is a proof of his humility and that he ascribed nothing to himself, but all to the grace of God. Nevertheless the commentary is worthy of all the praise it has received. In the Formula of Concord our forefathers referred to it as a "*Commentarius praeclarus*," or an excellent commentary and the Leipsic and Wittenberg theologians in their final report and explanation, especially against Flacius, mention "The Augsburg Confession," the Postils, and other sermons of Luther which are full of the precious teachings and strong consolation of the Holy Ghost, and all his other books on doctrine, especially those written after the Diet of Augsburg, in 1530, among the best of which are his explanations of certain Prophets and the Psalms, the Epistle to the Galatians; and in this select list is classified the "Commentary on Genesis." They designate it as a "rich exposition, with which he closed his calling, his ministerial office and his life in a blessed way. Because of this we justly esteem it highly. For in the same commentary he gave full and free expression to his last convictions and confession on most of the articles of the Christian faith and bequeathed them to the world."

In like manner have other divines of our Church judged of this commentary and held that we should esteem it highly and that it proves Luther was truly a great expounder of the Scriptures. (Basil Faber's dedication is quoted at length here, also Veit Dietrich at other places, but we refer the reader to their documents, which we give in full.)

John Guden says: "Luther has left us in this Commentary a rich treasury as a legacy, and what a valuable treasure it is, they will truly learn, who diligently read it. As a summary, one finds here the true kernel of the doctrine our God has revealed to us through Dr. Luther, as Melanchthon, Jonas and other spiritual men have also rightly judged."

Mathesius with good spiritual taste says: "He who learns to know Christ in Genesis has instruction in the power of the divine Word and knows what sin and righteousness are, which avail before God. My testimony concerning this blessed Commentary I wish to leave behind me that my natural and spiritual children may not forget it, but esteem it highly all their lives. My Genesis, for the sake of instruction and consolation, I have frequently read through, underscored and described. Remember this commentary explained to me the Word and will of Christ, and from it God gave comfort, rest and life to my troubled soul. For when our case is like the suffering of the patriarchs and the exposition suits one's heart as if the Doctor really speaks with us, then the Commentary is incorporated in us and lives in us, and refreshes and quickens one's heart." Joachim Morlin, in "How to Read With Profit the Writings and Books of the Beloved and Blessed Man of God, Dr. Martin Luther," praises above all others this Commentary and says: "Read the following 'Consummatum Est,' 'It Is Finished,' of this holy man, 'The Beloved Genesis,' in which as in a new world he brings forth and opens up not only certain parts but all the treasures and riches of the wisdom of the divine Word, so that there is not another book like it on earth since the times of the apostles. Luther's Genesis makes all theologians scholars." Jerome Weller says: "Luther's Commentary on Genesis is his Swan Song. For although all Luther's writings are full of manifold doctrines and consolations, yet his Commentary on Genesis excels all others. There is hardly a temptation for which he has not given in this Commentary a sure remedy; yes, Luther has excelled himself in this Commentary. Therefore I continually admonish all theological students again and again that they read this commentary diligently and assiduously and never lay it out of their hands, but seek to be wedded to it. For I can assure you I received more benefit from this commentary than from almost all the other writings of Luther. Therefore I will never be satisfied nor tired of reading it. If all that has been written since the apostles were gathered in one heap, they would not be worthy to be compared with this Commentary. I know that I speak the truth, and all who have experienced the truth and learned theologians share my convictions."

Not that the work does not praise itself but that we may better know that not only a few but that the teachers of our Church generally, have at all times justly emphasized its praise, I add a few more testimonies. Timothy Kirchner, in the preface to his "*Thesaurus Dr. Lutheri*" (1565), says: "In this book all theologians must go to school, and no one will graduate in it. Luther, the man of God, has so clearly and richly treated in it nearly all the greatest and most important articles of our Christian faith, that the like, the holy Bible alone excepted, has not appeared in the world and indeed will not. It will be and remain indeed a '*Thesaurus thesaurorum*,' a treasury of treasures, and a perennial fountain of all consolation, along with the Bible." David Chytraeus (1557) also does not know how to praise this work enough, he says: "It is a Swan Song and at the same time a complete work in every respect. Not only is it a rich treasure of spiritual wisdom and learning, clothed in fine, rich language, and an accurate explanation of all the difficult passages and questions, but it has also developed in its language a special and characteristic power, which moves the soul of the reader and inspires him to true piety, fear of God, faith and other virtues." He admonishes all the godly attentively and diligently to read this last work of Luther, and advertise it in preference to other writings, which are indeed learned, but are not as awakening as this one. Daniel Cramer agrees with Chytraeus and says in his "Isagogics," in 1630: "Whoever has not read this Commentary is not worthy of the name of a theologian." Abraham Calov in his preface to his "Commentary on Genesis" (1671), calls this "A golden book," and Thomas Crenius (1704), "A work that can not be praised enough." Christian Gerber expresses his conviction thus: "The writings of Luther are worthy to be esteemed more highly and used more diligently. His Commentary on Genesis is a remarkable book, not only awakening but useful and edifying to read. He has so beautifully described the virtues and piety of the holy patriarchs that one can hardly read them enough when he once begins. One could draw from this Commentary an excellent patriarchal and Christian system of ethics, and it is to be hoped that some theologian will do it, which would indeed be a useful and excellent book." Again John Heinrich von Seelen writes: "It is a treasure more precious than gold, containing inestimable riches of holy thoughts, so that some

have rightly judged that this is the best of all Luther's books." Von Seckendorf writes: "One is really amazed at the almost incredible gifts of Luther to explain the holy Scriptures so critically and clearly without any great effort. He studied the greatest expounders of the Bible. He was little concerned about his words and style and dictated nothing, and the same thoughts he uttered on other occasions in different words, for he was never in want of words." Many more like testimonies could be quoted.

The foregoing words of praise are well grounded, as every one who has thoughtfully and diligently read this book must confess. What Richard Simon, the Jewish critic, and Pallavicinus, Maimburg and other enemies of the Protestant faith have said against it only prove their own ignorance and darkness in spiritual knowledge and makes Luther shine forth all the brighter. When von Seckendorf wished to make extracts from this Commentary, so many important subjects and passages were found that he did not know which to select.

There is a glorious work for this book of the sainted Luther to accomplish. From it the learned and the unlearned may be taught the true meaning of Genesis, gain a critical insight into many theological subjects and reap much for their private devotions. Therefore it is well that new editions of it are constantly being issued and an opportunity is given to a larger number to read it. This edition will be found more correct and accurate than the others, and also more serviceable and convenient. This is due to the publisher, Mr. John Gottgetreu Mueller, who has chosen not only good paper and print, but also a convenient form (a quarto instead of a folio form). May the Lord of lords make this labor of the sainted Luther to be a greater blessing, so that his most holy name may further be glorified and many souls be established in the saving knowledge of the Gospel, or encouraged to that end, for the sake of his merciful love. Amen.

*JOHN GEORGE WALCH.*

Jena, April 6th, 1739.

## **FROM THE PREFACE BY DR. HENRY COLE**

### **A TRIBUTE OF A THEOLOGIAN OF ENGLAND**

"This invaluable and last production of the loved and revered reformer is a rich and precious mine of sacred wisdom; a vast treasury of deep research, of varied scriptural knowledge and of extensive Christian experience; in a word, it is a profound and comprehensive body of biblical, sacred-historical, doctrinal, spiritual and experimental divinity. So that a Christian who procures 'Luther on Galatians' and 'Luther on Genesis' possesses a complete treasury of rich, solid and saving theology.

"Indeed it is impossible to convey by any command of description an idea of the extent, depth and richness of the mine of Christian knowledge and experience, which Luther's long hidden and unknown exposition of Genesis contains. The sins, trials, afflictions, faith, hope, deliverances, joys and duties of kings, princes, magistrates, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters and servants, rich and poor, are treated, as they occur in the lives of the patriarchs and prominent characters of the divine Record.

"I hesitate not a moment to express my fullest persuasion that the Church of Christ will consider Luther's commentary on Genesis the deepest and most spiritual exposition of any book or portion of the holy Scriptures in existence; entering the most deeply and clearly into God's mind, and furnishing the most profound, varied and blessed edification for the family of heaven; and also the most useful, truthful, valuable and divine instruction for the world at large.

"As an expositor of the holy Scriptures Luther's comments contain a depth of investigation unpenetrated, a width of meditation unspanned, an extent of research unoccupied, a scriptural knowledge unpossessed, a variety of reflections unevincd, a multitude of wonders unrevealed, a number of beauties undiscovered, a value of instruction uncommunicated, a spirit of holiness unbreathed, a height of praise unascended, a depth of worship unfathomed, and a magnification of the Scriptures as the Word of God, unsurpassed and unequalled by any commentator, before or since his day."

This divine and educator of the Church of England says Luther's Commentary on Genesis is "Doubtless the masterpiece of the greatest of the extra Bible saints and servants of the Most High." "What an ox-like labor, or as the reformer expresses it, 'what a ministerial sweat!'" "This greatest of all commentaries."

Space will not permit more. In the second volume on Genesis we hope to say more on the place this commentary has held and ought to hold in English Protestantism.

### **A TRIBUTE OF A CHRISTIAN LADY IN SCOTLAND**

Dr. Cole in his preface, dated London, Feb. 2nd, 1857, records to the praise of God that, "It came in a most remarkable and wholly unexpected way to the knowledge of a noble lady of Scotland, Lady M—, that the 'Creation,' the first part of Luther's great commentary on Genesis, was translated; and that the translator was at a loss for ways and means whereby to print and publish

it; and, after two letters of favored communication and explanation between the translator and her ladyship, this 'noble' disciple of the Redeemer, 1 Cor. 1:26, in her second letter at once with divine nobleness of mind purchased the manuscript at its full fixed price, without one word about abatement; and she also as nobly undertook to print and publish it at her own expense. From her ladyship's communications it appeared that she herself was 'brought to the knowledge of the truth' by reading translations of Luther's writings. Her present holy acts of service to the cause of truth were therefore those of gratitude to God, of love and honor to the name of Luther, and of encouragement to his humble translators."

Years before, this lady read of Dr. Cole's intention to translate Luther on Genesis, but it did not appear. Thinking that the translator had no doubt "gone the way of all the earth," she made an effort to have it translated and published, in order to be benefited still more by reading Luther in English. Hence her great surprise after many years to receive a letter from Dr. Cole, stating the manuscript was finally ready. She replied thus: "My Dear Sir:— Your letter was the cause of much interest and surprise to me; for about the time that you completed your translation of 'The Creation' by Luther, I was anxiously inquiring from every one I could think of, to know if there was any one who could and would translate it; and I bought the work on Genesis in the original in hope to find some one to translate it; but upon inquiring of Messrs. — and others, I found that the translation and publication would be so expensive that I was obliged to abandon the thought of it."

It thus pleased all-wise God to choose not a rich son of his, but a daughter to execute his blessed work. May God grant that this interest so general and promising in England and Scotland half a century ago in translating Luther may be revived by all the sons and daughters who have been benefited by his writings!

Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 28th, 1903.

*J. N. LENKER.*

## DR. MARTIN LUTHER TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

My lectures on Genesis I did not undertake with the intention that they be published and advertised; but in order that I might serve for a time our University as it is at present, and that I might exercise my audience and myself in the Word of God; lest I should finish the death of this body in an old age indolent and entirely useless. To this end Ps. 146:2 awakened and encouraged me: "While I live will I praise Jehovah; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

Moreover, I undertook the work in order that I might be found at death among that "little flock" and of those "babes," out of whose mouth "God perfects praise" or establishes strength, by which he destroys the enemy and the avenger, Ps. 8:2. For the world always has enough monsters and devils, who blaspheme, corrupt and pervert the Word of God, so that God be not adorned with his glory, but Satan instead is adored.

It however so happened that these lectures fell into the hands of two good and pious men who collected them. Dr. Casper Cruciger, whose books sufficiently testify how he was led by the spirit of God and by the study of his Word; and Mr. George Rorary, the ministers of our church here at Wittenberg. Their work was followed by that of Master Veit Dietrich, the pastor at Nuremberg, who contributed his share. All of these men are truly faithful, scholarly and zealous ministers of the Word of God, and their judgment is that these lectures should by all means be published. For my part I leave them to act according to their own conviction, as St. Paul says, "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind," Rom. 14:5, and as I see that they are moved by a holy zeal to serve the congregations of the Church of Christ, I therefore strongly approve of their intention and I pray that the benediction of God may rest upon them!

However I would prefer that their Christian labors and valuable time were spent on a better book and a better author. For I am not one of whom it can be said, "He did a good work"; neither one of whom you can say, "He tried to do a good work"; I belong to the last order of authors, who dare scarcely say, "I desired to do a good work." Oh, that I might be worthy of being the last in this last order. For all these lectures were delivered in an extemporaneous and popular form, just as the expressions came into my mouth, following in quick succession and also mixed with German, and surely more verbose than I wished.

Not however that I am conscious of having spoken anything contrary to the truth. My chief aim has been, as far as possible, to avoid obscurity and present as perspicuous as my talent and ability could the things which I wished to have understood. For I feel keenly that these weighty matters of which Moses wrote have been treated by me in a manner far beneath their dignity and importance. But I console myself with the old proverb, "Let him fail who attempts to do a thing better than he is able"; and with this Scripture, "God requires nothing of a man beyond the ability he has given him." 2 Cor. 8:12.

But why multiply words? That of which we treat are the Scriptures; the Scriptures, I say, of the Holy Spirit, and for these things, as St. Paul says, who is sufficient? 2 Cor. 3:5. They are a river, says Gregory, in which a lamb may walk or touch bottom and an elephant must swim. They are the wisdom of God which makes the wise of this world and "the prince" of it fools; which makes babes eloquent, and the eloquent men babes.

In a word he is not the best, who comprehends all things and never fails, for such a one never has been, is not now and never will be; but he is the best here who loves the most, as Ps. 1:2 says, "Blessed is the man that loveth the law of Jehovah and meditateth on it." Abundantly sufficient is it for us, if we delight in this divine wisdom, love it and meditate on it day and night.

We examine the commentaries of the fathers and find that the good will was certainly not lacking among them, but to do it they were not able. And how ridiculous are all of our day, who attempt to explain the great things, the Scriptures by a beautiful, as they term it, by a pure Latinity

or by paraphrases, being themselves utterly destitute of the spirit and of understanding, and no more competent to treat such holy things than, as the proverb runs, "Asses are to play upon a harp." Jerome correctly said, Every one brings the offering to the tabernacle he can afford. One brings gold, another silver, another precious stones and the skins or the hair of goats. For the Lord has need of all these things. The wills of all were equally pleasing to him, though their offerings were not equal.

Therefore I permit these few goat hairs of mine to be published, as my offering and sacrifice unto God, whom I beseech in Christ Jesus, our Lord, that he would, through my labors, give occasion to others to do better or at least to exert themselves to explain these things better than I have done. As to my adversaries and their god, the devil, I believe with holy pride and exultation in the Lord, that I have given occasions enough to them to cavil and calumniate, for this I have continually and liberally done from the beginning of my ministry. This is the only service they are worthy to perform, for they neither can do nor desire to do anything that is good; being, as Paul says, "men of corrupt minds; and unto every good work reprobate," Tit. 1:15, 16.

May our Lord Jesus Christ perfect his work, which he hath begun in us and hasten that day of our redemption, for which we long with uplifted heads, and for which we sigh and wait in pure faith and a good conscience, in which we have also served an ungrateful world, a world that is the incorrigible enemy even of its own, to say nothing of our, salvation. "Come, Lord Jesus!" and let every one that loves thee, say, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

# COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

## CHAPTER I

### I. INTRODUCTION

This first chapter of our Holy Bible is written in the simplest and plainest language, and yet it contains the greatest and at the same time the most difficult themes. Therefore the Jews, as Jerome testifies, were forbidden to read it or hear it read before they were thirty years of age. The Jews required that all the other Scriptures be well known by every one before they were permitted to approach this chapter. Their Rabbins however accomplished little good by this, for even many of the Rabbins themselves, whose years were more than twice thirty, give in their commentaries and Talmuds the most childish and foolish explanations of these, the greatest of all subjects.

Nor has any one yet in the church to the present day explained all these momentous things correctly and satisfactorily in every respect. For interpreters have confused and entangled every thing with such a variety, diversity and infinity of questions that it is very clear that God reserved to himself the majesty of this wisdom, and the correct understanding of this chapter, leaving to us only the general ideas that the world had a beginning and was created by God out of nothing. This general knowledge may clearly be taken from the text. But with respect to the particulars, there is so much that one cannot be clear about and hence innumerable questions have continually been raised in commentaries.

From Moses however we know that 6000 years ago the world did not exist. But of this no philosopher can in any way be persuaded; because, according to Aristotle the first and the last man cannot in any way be determined, although however Aristotle leaves the problem in doubt whether or not the world is eternal, yet he is inclined to the opinion that it is eternal. For human reason cannot ascend higher than to declare that the world is eternal, and an infinite generation preceded us and will follow us. Here human reason is forced to stand still. However from this belief follows as a consequence the perilous opinion that the soul is mortal, because philosophy knows no plurality of infinities. For it cannot be, but that human reason must be overwhelmed and shipwrecked in the sea of the majesty of these themes.

Plato collected, perhaps in Egypt, some traditional sparks as it were from the sermons of the fathers and prophets, and therefore he came nearer the truth than others. He holds that matter and mind are eternal; but he says that the world had a beginning and that it was made out of matter. But I cease to mention the opinions of philosophers, for Lyra cites these although he does not explain them.

Thus neither among the Hebrews, Greeks nor Latins is there a leading teacher whom we can follow here with safety. Therefore I shall be pardoned if I shall see what I can say on the subject. For except the one general opinion that the world was created out of nothing there is scarcely another thing connected with the subject on which there is entire agreement among all theologians.

Hilary and Augustine, two great lights in the church, believed that the world was made on a sudden and all at once, not successively during the space of six days. Augustine plays upon these six days in a marvelous manner in explaining them. He considers them to be mystical days of knowledge in the angels, and not natural days. Hence have arisen those continual discussions in the schools and in churches concerning the evening and morning knowledge, which Augustine was the cause of being introduced. These are all diligently collected and particularly mentioned by Lyra. Let those therefore who wish to know more about them consult Lyra.

But all these disputations, though subtle and clever, are not to the point in question. For what need is there to make a two-fold knowledge. Equally useless is it to consider Moses in the beginning of his history as speaking mystically or allegorically. For as he is not instructing us concerning allegorical creatures and an allegorical world, but concerning essential creatures and a world visible and apprehensive by the senses, he calls, as we say in our trite proverb, "a post, a post;" that is, when he says morning or day or evening, his meaning is the same as ours when we use those terms, without any allegory whatever. Thus the Evangelist Matthew, in his last chapter, uses the same manner of expression when he says that Christ arose on the evening of the Sabbath; that is, at that time of one of the Sabbath days which was formed by the evening light. But if we cannot fully comprehend the days here mentioned nor understand why God chose to use these intervals of time, let us rather confess our ignorance in the matter than wrest the words of Moses from the circumstances which he is recording to a meaning, which has nothing to do with those circumstances.

With respect therefore to this opinion of Augustine, we conclude that Moses spoke literally and plainly and neither allegorically nor figuratively; that is, he means that the world with all creatures was created in six days as he himself expresses it. If we cannot attain unto a comprehension of the reason why it was so, let us still remain scholars and leave all the preceptorship to the Holy Spirit!

These days were distinguished thus. On the first day the unformed mass of heaven and earth was created to which light was then added. On the second day the firmament. On the third day the earth was produced out of the waters and its fruits created. On the fourth day the heavens were adorned by the creation of the sun, moon and stars. On the fifth day the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air. On the sixth day the beasts of the earth were created, and Man was made. I say nothing of the other views which divide these sacred matters into the work of creation, of distinction, and of oration, because I do not think such divisions of the subject can be made to harmonize in all respects with each other. If any one admire such views let him consult Lyra.

As to Lyra thinking that a knowledge of the opinion of philosophers concerning matter is necessary, and that on such knowledge must depend a man's understanding the six days' work of creation, I question whether Lyra himself really understood what Aristotle calls matter. For Aristotle does not, like Ovid, call the original unformed chaotic mass matter. Wherefore omitting these unnecessary subjects altogether, let us come at once to Moses as a far better teacher, whom we may more safely follow than we may philosophers, who dispute without the Word about things they do not understand.

## **II. GOD'S WORK ON THE SIX DAYS IN PARTICULAR**

### **PART I. GOD'S WORK ON THE FIRST DAY**

#### *I. V. 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

A necessary and a very difficult question arises here, in that Moses speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth, and yet does not mention the day on which nor the Word by which they were created. For one naturally inquires why Moses did not rather use the same form of words here, as he did subsequently, where mention is made of the Word thus: "*In the beginning, God said, Let there be the heavens and the earth?*" For Moses mentions "the heavens and the earth" before God had spoken anything, whereas both the Decalogue and the whole Scripture testify that God made the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, "in six days." But as I said before, we enter on this path without a guide. We leave therefore to others to follow their own judgment here, while we will expound it according to our views.

Not those elements which now are, but the original rude and unformed substances Moses calls "the heavens and earth." The water was dark, and because it was by nature the lighter element it

surrounded the earth, itself also as yet unformed was a kind of mud. God formed this first material, if I may so call it, of his future work, not before or apart from the six days, but, according to the express words of the Decalogue, in the "beginning" of the first day.

As I view the matter therefore Moses does not mention here the first day, because these confused substances of the hitherto rude heavens and earth were afterwards formed, and as it were fully adorned and distinguished. For what he immediately calls the "deep" and the "waters;" that is, the rude and unformed water which was not yet distributed nor adorned with its proper form, he here calls "the heavens;" whereas, had Moses spoken otherwise and had said, "In the beginning God said, Let there be the heavens and the earth;" there would have been no need of afterwards saying, "God said;" seeing that these unformed waters would have been already illuminated and the light would have been already created.

The meaning of Moses therefore in all simplicity is that all things which now exist were created by God and that "in the beginning" of the first day were created the mass of mud or of earth, and of dark mist or of water; on which afterwards, in the after part of the first day, God shed the light and caused the day to appear, which might discover this rude mass of "the heavens and the earth;" which was in all respects like undeveloped seed, and yet adapted to produce whatever God should require.

V. 2a. *And the earth was waste and void.*

In the Hebrew words TOHU and BOHU there is no more meaning than can be expressed in any other language, yet these terms are frequently used in the sacred Scriptures. TOHU means "nothing," so that a TOHU earth means, in its simple reality, that which is in itself "empty" or "waste;" where there is no way, no distinction of places, no hill, no vale, no grass, no herbs, no animals, no men. And such was the first appearance of the waste and untilled earth, for while the water was mixed with the earth no distinctions of those various objects could be discerned, which are clearly seen since the earth's formation and cultivation.

Thus Isaiah, 34:11, when threatening destruction to the whole earth says "There shall be stretched upon it the line of TOHU, confusion; and the plummet of BOHU, emptiness;" that is, it shall be made so desolate that neither men nor beasts shall be left upon it; all houses shall be devastated and all things hurled into chaos and confusion. Just as Jerusalem was afterwards laid waste by the Romans and Rome by the Goths, so that no vestige of the ancient city as it once was could be pointed out. You now behold the earth standing out of the waters, the heavens adorned with stars, the fields with trees, and cities with houses; but should all these things be taken away and hurled into confusion and into one chaotic heap, the state of things thus produced would be what Moses calls TOHU and BOHU.

As the earth was surrounded with darkness or with waters over which darkness brooded, so also the heaven was unformed. It was not only TOHU because it was destitute of the garnishing of the stars, and BOHU because it was not yet separated and distinguished from the earth, but because it was as yet altogether destitute of light and a dark and deep abyss which like a dense cloud enveloped the earth, or that mass of mud; for the division of the waters from the waters follows later.

Here then we have the first thing which Moses teaches: that the heavens and the earth were created on the first day; but, that the heaven was as yet unformed, not separated from the waters, destitute of its luminaries, and not elevated to its position; and the earth in like manner was as yet without its animals, its rivers and its mountains.

As to Lyra's argument that this original matter was mere power and was afterward rendered substance by its own power, or as to what Augustine says in his book of "Confessions," that matter is as it were nothing, and that no medium matter can be thought of between the Creator and the thing created; such subtle disquisitions I by no means approve. For how could that be a mere nothing which was already of such material and substance that Moses calls it "the heavens and the earth"? Unless indeed you would call it artificially the same kind of matter which you call wood, which is not yet wrought into a chest or a bench. But this latter substance is what true philosophers would call matter in a secondary state.

We should rather consider the whole subject, as Peter considers it, 2 Pet. 3:5, where speaking of the wicked, he says "For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." For Peter seems to intimate that the earth consists of water, and was made out of water, and that after it was produced out of water and placed as it were in the light, it swam as it now seems to do in the water. This, says he, the wicked knew, and therefore being confident of this condition of things, they feared no peril from water, which they knew to be the fundamental substance of the earth. Yet the water destroyed that earth which it preserved, buoyed up and bore; just as at the last it shall be destroyed by fire. From this intimation of Peter, it would appear, that the earth was made to stand in the water, and out of the water. But let this suffice concerning the original matter or material. If any one should discuss the subject with greater subtlety of argument, I do not think he would do so, with any profit.

V. 2b. *And darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

The "water," the "deep," and the "heavens," are here put for the same thing; namely, for that dark unformed substance which afterwards was divided by the Word. For it was the office of the second Person of the Trinity, namely Christ, the Son of God, to divide and adorn that chaotic mass produced from nothing. And this may have been the very design of Moses in not mentioning the Word in the first place; that is, in not saying at first, "*And God said.*" For some maintain that this was done by Moses purposely.

V. 2c. *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

Some consider "the Spirit of God" here to mean merely the wind. But if anything material is here to be understood by "Spirit," I should rather refer it to the first moving of the original unformed mass of heaven and earth, which is called "the deep," which is always in motion to this day; for water is never still, its surface is always in motion. But I prefer here to understand the Holy Spirit. For the wind is a creature which did not exist, while as yet the heavens and the earth lay in that confused chaotic mass.

There is moreover an universal agreement of the Christian Church concerning a revelation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity in this first creative work. The Father through the Son, whom Moses here calls the Word, creates "the heavens and the earth" out of nothing. Over these the Holy Spirit broods. And as a hen sits upon her eggs that she may hatch her young, thus warming her eggs and as it were infusing into them animation, so the Scriptures say the Holy Ghost brooded as it were on the waters; that He might infuse life into these elementary substances which were afterwards to be animated and garnished. For the office of the Holy Spirit is to give life.

These explanations, as far as I see, are sufficient for our present purpose. Wherefore casting away all other diverse opinions, let us set down this as the truth, that God created "the heavens and the earth," as yet a rude mass, out of nothing; so that the earth, as an unformed chaotic mass, enveloped the heaven as yet also an unformed mass, like a dark, circumfluent, nebulous cloud.

It is necessary however that we discuss the terms here used. At the very beginning of this discussion we are met by the expression "In the beginning." Some have expounded the words "In the beginning" as meaning "In the Son," from John 1:1; seeing that Christ also gives to the Jews when they inquired "who He was?" this answer, "The beginning, who also speak unto you," John 8:25. This same exposition is given also from Ps. 110:3, "With thee is the Beginning, in the day of thy power;" which passage nearly all commentators expound as meaning, "With thee is thy Son in divine power." But it is well known to those acquainted with the Greek language that the expression *tan Archan* should be rendered by an adverbial phraseology "at first" or "in the beginning," etc. It is a figure of speech which we frequently meet in Greek. Wherefore let those who will, amuse themselves by thus interpreting the expression "In the beginning." I prefer the simplest explanation which can be at once understood by the less learned.

My belief is therefore that the design of Moses was to signify the beginning of time; so that "In the beginning" has the same meaning as if he had said, "At that time before which there was no time." Or he means that when the world began it so began that the heavens and the earth were created by God out of nothing; but created in a rude shapeless mass, not formed and beautified as they now are. Though they lay not long thus, but began immediately on the first day to be garnished with the light.

The Arians imagined that angels and the Son of God were made before "the beginning." But let us pass by this blasphemy. We will omit also another question, "What was God doing before the beginning of the world;" was he in a state of entire inaction or not? To this question Augustine introduced in his Confession the reply, "He was making a hell for all searchers into his secrets." This reply says Augustine was made to ridicule the violent and audacious blasphemy of the question.

The modesty therefore of Augustine pleases one, who elsewhere candidly says that in all such cases he draws in the sails of his thoughts. For if we speculate and dispute to infinity, these things still remain incomprehensible. Even those things which we see we can understand but little. How much less then shall we grasp in our knowledge such things as these. For what will you determine concerning things that were before and beyond time? Or what can be your thoughts of things God did before time was? Wherefore let us away with all such thoughts and believe that God before the creation of the world was incomprehensible in his essential rest, but that now since the creation he is within and without and above all creatures; that is, he is still incomprehensible. This is all that can be said, because that which was outside of time our intellect can not comprehend.

Wherefore God does not manifest himself in anything but in his works and in his Word; because these can in some measure be comprehended, all other things which properly belong to his divinity, cannot be comprehended or understood, as they really are; such as those things which were beyond time and before the world's creation, etc. Perhaps God appeared to Adam unveiled; but after his sin he may have shown himself to him in "a noise," Gen. 3:8, under which he was covered as with a veil. So also later in the tabernacle God was veiled by the sanctuary; and in the desert by the pillar of a cloud and by the pillar of fire. Wherefore Moses also calls these things "appearances" or "shadowings" of God, by which he then manifested himself. And Cain calls that the "face" and the "presence" of God where he had before offered his sacrifices, Gen. 4:14. For our nature is so deformed by sin, yea corrupted and lost, that it cannot understand God naked and unveiled nor comprehend what he really is. Therefore it is that these covering veils are absolutely necessary.

It is moreover insanity to dispute much concerning God as to what he was beyond and before time, for that is to desire to comprehend naked divinity or the naked divine essence. And it is for this very reason that God has wrapt himself in the veils of his works and under certain visible appearances, just as at this day he veils himself under baptism, absolution, etc. If you depart from these veiling signs, you at once run away beyond measure, beyond place and beyond time into the most absolute nothing; concerning which, as philosophers say, there can be no knowledge. Therefore it is that we with solemn propriety enter not into this question; but rest content with this simple meaning of the expression, "In the beginning."

II. But it is more worthy of observation that Moses does not say "In the beginning, ADONI, the Lord created the heavens and the earth;" but he uses a noun of the plural number ELOHIM; by which name, in the Books of Moses, and in other parts of the Scriptures both angels and magistrates are sometimes called. As in Ps. 82:6, "I have said ye are gods." It is certain however that here it signifies the one true God, by whom all things were made. Why therefore does Moses here use a plural noun or name?

The Jews cavil at Moses in various ways. To us however it is clear that the intent of Moses is to set forth directly the Trinity; or the plurality of persons in the one divine nature. For as he is speaking of the work of the creation it manifestly follows that he excludes angels, who are creatures, from the creative work. There remains therefore this sacred conclusion of the whole matter; that God is One,

and that this most perfect Unity is also a most perfect Trinity. For how otherwise does Moses use the plural number, "In the beginning ELOHIM *created*."

The cold and wicked cavilling of the Jews therefore is to be altogether exploded, when they say that Moses used the plural number for the sake of reverence. For what place is there here for the exercise of reverence? Especially since that which is an idiom among us Germans is not common to all languages; namely, that it should be considered a point of reverence to use the plural number when speaking of one person.

Although the Jews make so much noise about this term ELOHIM being applied to angels and to men, be it remembered that it is in the plural number in this place where it cannot possibly be applied to any but the one true God, because Moses is treating of the Creation. There were moreover many other singular nouns which Moses might have used had he not purposely intended to show to the spiritually minded, that in the divine nature there is before and independently of all creation and all creatures, a plurality of persons. He does not indeed say in plain terms, there is the Father, there is the Son, and there is the Holy Ghost; and they are the one true God; because that was reserved for the doctrine of the Gospel. It was enough for him by the use of a plural noun though afterwards applied to men also, to set forth this plurality of the divine persons.

Nor ought it to offend us that this same term is afterwards applied to creatures. For why should not God communicate his name unto us, seeing that he communicates to us his power, and his office? For us to remit sins, to retain sins, to quicken to spiritual life, etc., are the works of the divine Majesty alone; and yet these same works are a sign to men and they are wrought by the Word which men teach. Thus Paul said, "That I may save some of them that are my flesh," Rom. 11:14. And again, "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some," 1 Cor. 9:22. As therefore these works are truly the works of God, although they are assigned also unto men and are wrought by means of men; so the name of God truly represents God though it is applied also to men.

Arius could not deny that Christ existed before the world was created, because Christ himself says, "Before Abraham was, I am," John 8:58. It is written in the Proverbs, 8:22, also, "Before the heavens were, I am." Arius is obliged therefore to confess that Christ or the Word was created before all things, and that he afterwards created all things, and that he was the most perfect of all creatures though he did not exist from everlasting. But to this fanatical and impious opinion we ought to oppose that which Moses so briefly expresses by the term "In the beginning." Nor does Moses place anything before "the beginning" but God himself; and him he here represents by a plural noun.

Into these absurd opinions do minds fall when they speculate on such mighty things without the Word. We know not ourselves; as Lucretius says, "Man knows not the nature of his own soul." We feel that we can judge, enumerate, distinguish quantities, and, if I may so call them, spiritual creatures, such as truth and falsehood, and yet we cannot to this day define what the soul is. How much less then shall we be able to understand the divine nature! We know not for instance what is the motion of our will; for it is not a motion of quality or of quantity; and yet it is some motion. What then can we know of things divine?

It is fanatical therefore to dispute concerning God and the divine nature without the Word and without some veiling representation. Yet thus do all heretics; and they think and dispute respecting God with the same security as they would respecting a hog or a cow. Therefore they receive a reward worthy their temerity; for by these means they are dashed on the rocks of every peril. Hence he who would contemplate such mighty things in safety and without danger must confine himself with all simplicity within those representations, signs and veils of the divine Majesty, his word and his works. For it is in his word and his works that he reveals himself unto us; and such as attain unto the knowledge of these are like the woman laboring under the issue of blood, healed by touching these hems of his garment.

Those on the other hand who strive to reach God without these veils and coverings, attempt to scale heaven without a ladder, that is, without the Word; and in so doing are overwhelmed by

the majesty of God, which they vainly endeavor to comprehend, and they fall and perish. And so it befell Arius. He conceived the imagination that there was some medium between the Creator and the creature; and that by that medium all things were created. Into this error he necessarily fell the moment he denied contrary to the Scriptures a plurality of persons in the divine nature. But as he discussed these things without the Word of God and depended solely on his own cogitations, he could not but be thus dashed to pieces.

Thus the monk of the Papists, because he follows not the Word, imagines such a God to be sitting in heaven as will save any one who is covered with a cowl and observes a certain strict rule of life. Such a one also attempts to ascend into heaven by his own cogitations without God as revealed in his Word, or without the revealed face of God for his guide. Thus also the Jews had their idols and their groves. The fall and the destruction of all are alike. They are precipitated and dashed to pieces; because every one leaving the Word follows his own imaginations.

If therefore we would walk safely we must embrace those things which the Word teaches, and which God himself has willed us to know; and all other things which are not revealed in the Word we must leave. For what are those things to me, which God did before the world was made, or how can I comprehend them? This is indulging thoughts upon the naked Divinity. And these are the thoughts by which the Jews suffer themselves to be led away from this text; and which thus prevent them from believing in a plurality of persons in the deity; whereas it is evident that Moses employs a plural noun.

The papal decree condemned the Anthropomorphists (manlikeners), because they spoke of God as they would of a man, and attributed to him eyes, ears, arms, etc. An unjust condemnation truly! For how otherwise can man talk with man concerning God? If to think thus of God be heresy; then for a certainty is the salvation of all children, who can only think and speak thus as children concerning God, at an end for ever. But to say nothing about children, give me the most learned doctor in all the world; how otherwise will even he speak and teach concerning God?

An injury therefore was thereby done to good men; who, though they believed God to be omnipotent and the only Saviour, yet were condemned merely because they said God has eyes by which he looks upon the poor and needy, and ears by which he listens to their prayers. For how otherwise can this our nature understand the spiritual reality of God. Moreover the Scriptures use this form of speech. Wherefore such were undeservedly condemned. They should rather have been lauded for the simplicity which they studied; which is so requisite in all teaching. It is absolutely necessary that when God reveals himself unto us, he should do so under some veil of representation, some shadowing manifestation, and should say, "Behold under this veil thou shalt surely discover me." And when we embrace God under this veil or shadow, when we thus adore him, call upon him, and offer to him our sacrifices, we are said rightly to offer our sacrifices unto God!

It was thus doubtless that our first parents worshipped God. In the morning when the sun rose they adored the Creator in the creature; or to speak more plainly they were by the creature reminded of the Creator. Their posterity retained the custom, but without the knowledge; and hence the custom lapsed into idolatry. The cause of this idolatry was not the sun; for he is a good creature of God; but the knowledge and the doctrine became by degrees extinct; for Satan cannot endure true doctrine. Thus when Satan had drawn Eve from the Word, she fell immediately into sin.

To return then to the Anthropomorphists. I consider that they were condemned unjustly and without cause. For the prophets represent God as sitting on a throne. When foolish persons hear this their thoughts are immediately picturing a golden throne, marvellously decorated, etc., though they must all the while know that there can be no such material throne in heaven. Hence Isaiah says "that he saw God sitting on a throne; and his train filled the temple," Is. 6:1. Whereas God cannot absolutely or by real vision appear to be thus represented or seen. But such figures and representations are well-pleasing to the Holy Spirit; and such works of God are set before us by the means of which we may apprehend God by our understanding. Such also are those figures when it is said that "He made the heavens and the earth"; that he sent his Son; that he speaks by his Son; that he baptizes; that he remits

sins by the Word. He that does not understand these things will never understand God. But I say no more here; since these things have been frequently and abundantly discussed by me elsewhere; yet it was necessary to touch upon them on the present occasion for Moses' sake, whom the Jews here so severely attack, in the exposition of which we are proving the plurality of the divine persons in the deity. Now let us proceed with the text.

III. V. 3. *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

Moses has already said that the rude mass of heaven and earth which he also calls "darkness" and "the deep," was made by the Word; and that work ought to be considered the work of the "first day." Yet, it is now for the first time that Moses uses the expression "God said, Let there be light," etc. A marvelous phraseology this indeed; unknown to any writer of any other language under heaven, that God by speaking causes that to exist, which had no existence before. Here therefore Moses sets before us the medium and instrument which God used in performing his works, namely the Word.

But we must here carefully mark the distinction in the Hebrew language between the words AMAR and DABAR. We render each by the terms to say or to speak. But, in the Hebrew there is this difference: AMAR only and properly signifies the word uttered. But DABAR means also the thing or substance uttered. As when the prophets say "This is the Word of the Lord," they use the term DABAR not AMAR. Even at this day the new Arians blind the eyes of those unacquainted with the Hebrew language by saying that the term in question implies, and is, "a thing created;" and that in this way it is that Christ is called the Word. Against this impious, and at the same time ignorant, corruption of the term Word, the reader is duly warned, and exhorted to remember that Moses here uses the word AMAR which simply and properly signifies the word uttered; so that the word uttered is something distinct from him who utters it; as here is also a distinction between the person speaking and the thing spoken.

Therefore we have before proved from this text a plurality of persons; so here is also an evident distinction of persons; for it affirms that it is God the speaker, if I may so express myself, who creates; and yet he uses no material; but creates the heavens and the earth out of nothing by the sole word he utters.

Compare here the Gospel of St. John "In the beginning was the Word." He exactly agrees with Moses. He says that there was no creature whatever before the world was made. Yet God possessed the Word. And what is this Word and what does it do? Hear Moses. The light, says he, as yet was not; but the darkness out of its nothing-state is changed into that most excellent creature, light. By what? By the Word. Therefore, "in the beginning" and before every creature is the Word; and it is so powerful that out of nothing it makes all things. Hence that irrefragably follows, which John eloquently adds, that the Word was and is God! And yet, that the Word is a person different from God the Father; even as the Word, and he who utters the Word, are things absolutely distinct from each other. But at the same time this distinction is of the nature that the most perfect oneness, if I may so speak, of unity remains.

These are lofty mysteries, nor is it safe to go further into them than the Holy Spirit is pleased to lead us. Wherefore here let us stop; content with the knowledge that when the unformed heaven and unformed earth, each enveloped in mist and darkness, had stood forth created out of nothing by the Word, the light also shone forth out of nothing; and even out of darkness itself by the Word. The first work of the Creator Paul speaks of as a marvellous work; "God that commanded the light to shine out of darkness," etc. The command of God, says he, made that light. This therefore is enough for us and sufficient to confirm our faith, that Christ is truly God, who existed with the Father from all eternity before the world was made; and that by him, who is the wisdom and word of the Father, the Father made all things. It is remarkable also that Paul in his passage makes the conversion of the wicked the work of a new creation, and a work wrought also by the Word.

But here reason impiously busies itself with foolish questions. It argues, if the Word ever existed, why did not God create the heavens and the earth before by that Word? And again, Since

the heavens and the earth were first made, when God began to speak, it seems to follow that the Word then first had existence, when the creatures began to exist, etc. But these impious cogitations are to be cast from us for concerning these things we can determine nothing nor think aright. For beyond that "beginning" of the creation is nothing but naked and divine essence; naked deity! And since God is incomprehensible that also is incomprehensible which was before the world; because it is nothing less than naked God!

We believe it right therefore to speak only of "the beginning," because we cannot advance beyond the beginning. But since John and Moses affirm that the Word was "in the beginning," and before every creature, it of necessity follows that the Word was ever in the Creator and in the naked essence of God. Therefore he is the true God; yet so, that the Father begets and the Son is begotten. For Moses establishes this difference when he names God, who spoke and the word which was spoken. And this was enough for Moses to do; for the clearer explanation of this mystery properly belongs to the New Testament and to the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. In the New Testament therefore we hear the literal names of the sacred persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. These indeed are indicated in certain psalms, and in the prophets but not so distinctly expressed.

Augustine explains the word somewhat otherwise. For he interprets the expression "said" in this manner. "Said;" that is, it was so defined from all eternity by the word of the Father; it was so appointed of God. Because the Son is the mind, the image and the wisdom of God. But the true and simple meaning is to be retained. "God said;" that is, God by the Word made and created all things. This meaning the apostle also confirms when he says, "By whom also he made the worlds," Heb. 1:2. And again, "All things were made by Him and for Him," Col. 1:16. And within these limits ought to be confined every thought of the creation; our duty is to proceed no further; if we do, we fall headlong into certain darkness and destruction.

Let these facts therefore be sufficient for us in any question concerning the world and its creation. With respect to the material of the world that it was made out of nothing; as the light was made out of that which was not light, so the whole heavens and the whole earth were made out of nothing; as the Apostle says, "He calleth those things that are not, as though they were," Rom. 4:17.

With respect to the instrument or medium which God used, it was his omnipotent word which was with God from the beginning, and as Paul speaks, "before the foundation of the world," Eph. 1:4. Therefore when Paul says in Col. 1:16, "All things were made by him," for he uses the preposition, after the Hebrew manner, for per; the Hebrews thus use their letter BETH; this and all similar passages are taken from this verse of Moses, who is here speaking of the Word uttered, by which anything is commanded or demanded.

This Word was God, and was an omnipotent Word, spoken in the divine essence. No one heard this Word uttered but God himself; that is, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. While it was uttered the light was generated; not out of the material of the Word nor out of the material of the speaker, but out of darkness itself. The Father spoke within, the work was immediately wrought without, and the light existed. In the same manner also were all things afterwards created. These facts, I say, concerning the manner of the creation are amply sufficient for us.

IV. But here again a well known question is perpetually agitated, namely, of what kind was that light by which the original unformed mass of heaven and earth was illumined, seeing that neither the sun, nor the stars, were then created; and yet the text shows that this light was real and material. This fact has given occasion to some to have recourse to an allegory, who would explain the matter thus: "Let there be light;" that is, the angelic nature. And again, "God divided the light from the darkness;" that is, he separated the holy angels from the wicked angels. But this is to trifle with allegories, utterly out of place and not to interpret Scripture. Moses is here historically recording facts. He is moreover writing and penning a record for unlettered men; that they may have the plainest possible testimonies concerning the great creation. Such absurdities therefore are not here to be tolerated.

A second question is here also agitated, namely, whether this light moved itself with a circular motion. I confess that I for my part know not the truth of the matter. But if any one desires to know what I consider the nearest to the truth my opinion is, that this light was movable, so that its motion from east to west, or from its rising to its setting formed the natural day. Although it is difficult to describe the kind of light it was, yet I am by no means inclined to think that we should depart, without cause, from the plain grammar of the subject; or that we should use any violence by wresting from their common meaning the plainest terms. For Moses distinctly affirms that "there was light;" and he reckons this as the "first day" of the creation.

My opinion is therefore that this was true and real light; and that it revolved with a circular motion as the light of the sun revolves. I believe however that this light was not so clear and splendid as it afterwards was, when augmented, ornamented and beautified by the light of the sun. Even as the sacred Scriptures testify that in the last day God will make the present light of the sun, now unclean, in comparison with its future brightness, far more splendid and glorious; as therefore the present light is as it were a thick and imperfect mass of light, when compared with that light which shall be, so that original light was imperfect when compared with the light that now shines. Such are my sentiments concerning these two questions. Moses then proceeds to say:

V. 5. *And there was evening and there was morning one day.*

We must here first observe that the Jews begin their day differently from us. With them the day commences from the evening and the setting sun and terminates on the evening following. We begin our day with the rising sun. And it is very remarkable that the Jews derive their term evening, which they call AEREF, from ARAF which signifies "to mingle or confound." In the same manner from the term AREF they form their expression AROF, which our countryman renders by Cynomia, "dogfly," which may signify "a confused fly." Because in the evening, the appearances of things are confused and indistinct, and when the light is removed cannot be clearly discerned.

V. Moses has taught us concerning the first day. We shall see however that Moses retains this same expression "God said" in the creation of all the other creatures. "And God said let there be a firmament," etc. The very repetition of this same expression ought to be most delightful to us, because as I said, it brings to us a mighty testimony for the confirmation of our faith; that the Son, in these eternal things, is very God; and that in the unity of the divinity there is a plurality of Persons; because the speaker is one Person and the Word spoken another Person.

In this manner also the Psalmist speaks, "By the Word of Jehovah were the heavens made," etc., Ps. 33:6. And Solomon implies the force of this wonderful phrase of Moses, when he writes that the divine wisdom was as it were the handmaid of the Creation. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was, etc.; when he established the heavens, I was there; when he set a circle upon the face of the deep," Prov. 8:23, 27. Here Solomon shows that he fully understood this doctrine of our religion, so plainly set forth by Moses; and that he understood it in a manner beyond the knowledge of the ignorant multitude, who heard these things, and read them, but understood them not. For had not Solomon fully understood this mystery, he could not have spoken thus. But he drew all these things from this verse of Moses, as from a deep and holy fountain. Another proof of this his divine knowledge is Prov. 30:3, "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou knowest?"

I believe also that there were similar writings of other holy men, such as of Enoch, Elijah, etc., in which there existed many testimonies of the same kind. But as even at the present day, these things though plainly revealed in the New Testament remain hidden, and are by many not only not received, but fiercely opposed, so to a much greater extent did it happen among the Jewish people, while the holy fathers set these mysteries before the wise in divine things, with the greatest skill and wisdom.

To us it is great consolation to know that these divine mysteries were thus shadowed forth by Moses from the beginning of the world; that in these divine beings there is a plurality of persons and yet a unity of the divine essence. And if there are some who do not believe, but fiercely oppose this doctrine, what is that to us? Abraham saw three, and adored one! And the Holy Spirit says, Gen.

19:24, "Then Jehovah rained fire from Jehovah out of heaven." Although fanatics understand not nor regard these words, yet we know that they are the words not of a drunken man, but of God.

Many such testimonies as these exist throughout the Old Testament, which that excellent man, Hilary, has diligently collected. If these testimonies are obscure, and to the wicked and unbelieving seem to be unfounded, yet to the godly all things which are revealed and handed down to us in the Holy Scriptures are firmly founded and sufficiently clear. They know that the Person speaking is one Person and that the Word spoken is another Person; not in nature but in Person; and is that Word by which all things were made "in the beginning;" and by which they are all upheld to this day; as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "Upholding all things by the Word of his power," Heb. 1:3.

But here we are to be admonished that the words, "Let there be light," are the words of God and not of Moses; that is, that they are realities, facts, works! For God "calleth those things that be not as though they were;" and God speaks not grammatical words but very and substantial things. So that what with us is sounding voice, is with God a substantial thing, a reality! Thus, the sun, the moon, the heaven, the earth, Peter, Paul, you, and I, are all and each, words of God! Yea, we are single syllables or single letters as it were of and in comparison to the whole creation.

We also speak, but we can only speak grammatically, or in letters. That is we give names to created things, etc. But divine grammar is quite another thing! When God says, "Shine thou sun," the sun immediately exists and shines forth. Thus the words of God are things, not mere words!

Here therefore there has been rightly made a distinction between the word created and the word uncreated. The word created is a thing, or fact, or work done, by means of the word uncreated. For what is the whole creation but the word of God spoken forth or uttered? But the word uncreated is the divine mind or thought, the internal command of God, flowing from God, and the same as God, and yet it is a distinct Person. And thus God reveals himself unto us as the speaker, having with or in himself, the word increate, by which he created the world and all things with the utmost facility of operation, namely by merely speaking! So that there was no more difficulty with God in creating than with us in speaking. It was in such meditations as these that the pious fathers Augustine and Hilary found their delight.

## **PART II. GOD'S WORK ON THE SECOND DAY**

I. V. 6. *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.*

Moses may here seem to have forgotten himself in that he treats not at all of two most important themes: the creation and the fall of the angels, but confines his sacred narrative to the creation of corporeal things. Though there is no doubt that angels were created, yet not one word is found in all the Scriptures concerning their creation, their battle, or their fall; except that which Christ briefly utters, John 8:44, in reference to the devil, that he "abode not in the truth;" except also that woful account of the Serpent, which the sacred historian hereafter gives us in the third chapter of Genesis. It is wonderful therefore that Moses is wholly silent on things of such great interest.

Hence it is that men having nothing certain recorded upon the subject, naturally fell into various fictions and fabrications, that there were nine legions of angels, and that so vast was their multitude that they were nine whole days falling from heaven. Others have indulged imaginations concerning the mighty battle between these superior beings, in what manner the good resisted the evil angels. My belief is that these ideas of the particulars of this battle were taken from the fight which exists in the church, where godly ministers are ever contending against evil and fanatical teachers, and that on this ground they have formed their ideas of the battle of the good angels against the evil ones who wished to usurp Deity. But so it ever is. Where no plain testimonies exist rash men consider themselves at liberty to imagine and invent what they please.

In the same manner men form their various opinions concerning the danger and the fear of angels and of the evils they work, all which opinions are founded on Is. 14:12, 13, where Lucifer is represented as having said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." But the prophet is there predicting the greatness of the pride of the King of the Babylonians. Bernard again has the idea that Lucifer foresaw in God that his purpose was to exalt man above the nature of angels, that his proud spirit envied man this felicity and that he fell in consequence. But let the Christian man take these things at their own value and at no more. For myself I would by no means urge any one to give his assent to any such opinions. The things that are certain are, that the angels fell, and that the devil from having been an angel of light was made an angel of darkness. Perhaps there was also a conflict between the good angels and the evil.

As Moses however was writing to a new and uninformed people his object was to write those things only which were useful and necessary to be known. The nature of angels therefore and other kindred subjects which were not necessary to be known he passed by. Wherefore nothing on the whole of this obscure subject, beyond what Moses has plainly recorded, ought to be expected from me. The more especially so, as the New Testament itself treats very sparingly of this deep theme. It says nothing more concerning the angels than that they were condemned and that they are still held as it were in prison and in chains until the judgment of the last day. Let it suffice us therefore to know that there are good angels and bad angels, but that God created them all alike good. Whence it follows of necessity, that the evil angels fell and stood not in the truth. But how they fell and stood not in the truth is unknown. It is nevertheless probable that they fell by pride; because they despised the Word or Son of God, and wished to exalt themselves before him. This is all I have to say. Now let us return to Moses.

II. We have heard that the work of the First Day was the rude unformed "heavens and earth," both of which God illumined with a certain impure and imperfect light. We now come to the work of the second day, where we shall see in what manner God produced out of this original rough undigested mist or nebulosity, which he called "heavens," that glorious and beautiful "heaven" which now is, and as it now is; if you except the stars and the greater luminaries. The Hebrews very appropriately derive the term SCHAMAIM the name of the heavens from the word MAIM, which signifies "waters." For the letter SCHIN is often used in composition for a relative, so that SCHAMAIM signifies "watery," or "that which has a watery nature." This indeed appears so from the color of the "heavens." And experience teaches that the air is humid by nature. Philosophers also say that if there were no sun the air would be a perpetual humidity. But they assert that the air is both humid and warm, but that it is humid from its own nature, because the heaven was made out of waters, and that therefore it is, that it rains and contains a fructifying moisture; but because the light and heat of the sun are added to it, the humid nature of the air is so tempered that it is also warm.

This thick and rude mass of mist or nebulosity, created out of nothing on the first day, God grasps by his Word and commands it to extend itself into the form and with the motion of a sphere. For in the Hebrew the word RAKIA signifies "a something extended;" from the verb RAKA, which means "to unfold or expand." And the heaven was formed by an extension of that original rude body of mist, just as the bladder of a hog is extended into a circular form when it is inflated. I use thus a rustic similitude that the sacred matter may be the more plainly understood.

When therefore Job 37:18 says "that the heavens are strengthened with iron," "that the sky is strong as a molten mirror," his mind is not dealing with the material but with the Word of God, which can make a thing the softest by nature the hardest and the firmest. For what is softer than water? What is thinner or more subtle than air? Yet these things, which were the most subtle and the softest by nature, from being created by the Word preserve their form and motion with the greatest perfection and the greatest firmness. Whereas, had the heaven been formed of adamant or of any material infinitely harder still, it would by its rapid, long and continuous motion, have soon been broken in pieces or melted. In the same manner the sun, by his rapid motion, would melt in one day

even if formed of the hardest material, were it not for the Word of God by which it was created. For motion is of itself very creative of heat. Hence Aristotle asserts that the lead of the arrow is sometimes melted by the velocity of its motion.

These facts of nature therefore are miracles of God, in which the omnipotence of his Word is clearly discerned, exhibiting the wonder that the heaven, though softer and more subtile than water, and performing continuously the most rapid revolution, and that too with so vast a variety of bodies and their motions, should have existed and revolved so many thousands of years uninjured and unweakened! It was this that caused Job to say, "that the heavens were molten, as it were, of brass," Job 37:18; that they are by nature the softest of substances. How great the subtilty of the air is in which we live, we ourselves know perfectly well; for it is not only not tangible, but not discernible. And the heaven, or ether, is still more subtile and thinner than the air or atmosphere. For its blue or sea-color or water-color appearance is not a proof of its density, but rather of its distance and its thinness; to which its rarified state, if you compare the thicker substances of the clouds, the latter will appear in comparison, like the smoke of wet wood when first ignited. It is to this extreme subtilty, yet unaltered durability, that Job alludes as above mentioned. So philosophers have among them this celebrated maxim, "That which is humid is limited by no boundary of its own."

Wherefore the heaven which cannot consist by any boundary of its own, being aqueous, consists by the Word of God; as it is taught in the present divine record of Moses, "Let there be a firmament!" Gen. 1:6. Hence philosophers who were more diligent in their inquiries formed their conclusion, and that by no means a light one for nature to form, that all things were ruled and governed, not by chance nor at random, but by a divine providence; seeing that the motions of the heavens and of the superior bodies are so certain and so peculiar to themselves. Who indeed could possibly say that all these things proceeded by chance, or by their own mere undirected nature, when even the workmanship of men proceeds not from chance, but from skillful art and certain design, such as pillars formed round, triangular, hexagonal, etc.?

All these things therefore are the works of the divine Majesty! By him the sun holds his course so accurately and with so fixed a law, that he deviates not a hair's breadth from his all-certain path in any one part of heaven. This course he holds in the most subtile ether, supported by no substances or bodies whatsoever, but is borne along as a leaf in the air. Though this comparison is neither strictly correct nor appropriate, because the motion of a leaf is irregular and uncertain; but the course of the sun is ever certain, and that too in an ether far more subtile than this atmosphere in which we move and live.

This marvelous extension of the original rule and dense nebulosity or cloud or mist is here called by Moses "a firmament," in which the sun with all the planets have their motion round the earth, in that most subtile material. But who is it that gives such firmness to this most volatile and fluctuating substance? Most certainly it is not nature that gives it, which in far less important things than these can exert no such power. It follows therefore that it is the work of him, who "in the beginning" said unto the heavens and unto this volatile substance, "Let there be a firmament," or "Be thou a firmament," and who establishes and preserves all these things by his omnipotent power, put forth through his Word. This Word makes the air with all its thinness and lightness to be harder and firmer than adamant, and to preserve its own boundary; and this Word could on the contrary make adamant to be softer than water, in order that from such works as these we might know what kind of a God our God is; namely, the God omnipotent, who made out of the rude mass of unformed heavens the present all-beauteous, all-glorious heaven; and who did all these things according to his will as well as according to his power.

But I have said that with the Hebrews the "firmament" derives its name from a verb in their language signifying "to extend." It is to this signification of the Hebrew verb that David beautifully alludes, in his similitude of military hide-coverings and tents which he uses in Ps. 104:2, when he says of God "Who stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain." For as the rolled-up hide-covering of

the military tent is unrolled and then stretched out as a canopy to the stakes which are fixed in the earth, so Thou, O God, says David, unrolledst as it were and stretchedst out the first formed, but as yet unformed, rude heaven, into the present glorious "firmament," where Thou sittest invisibly as on a sphere over the whole creation, in the midst of all things and yet out of and above all things.

It is a circumstance naturally exciting our particular wonder that Moses evidently makes three distinct parts or divisions of this portion of the creation. He describes "a firmament in the midst of the waters," which "divides the waters from the waters." For myself I am inclined to think that the firmament here mentioned is the highest body of all; and that the waters, not those "above" the firmament, but those which hang and fly about "under" the firmament, are the clouds, which we behold with our natural eyes; so that by the waters which are "divided from the waters," we may understand the clouds which are divided from our waters which are in the earth. Moses however speaks in the plainest possible terms, both of waters "above" and of waters "under" the firmament. Wherefore I here hold my own mind and judgment in captivity and bow to the Word, although I cannot comprehend it.

But a question here arises, what those waters are and how those bodies of water which are "above" the firmament are distinguished from those which are "under" the firmament. The division and distinction here made by philosophers is well known. They make the elements to be four; and they distinguish and place them according to their qualities. They assign the lowest place to the earth; a second place to the water; a third to the air; and the last and highest place to the fire. Other philosophers add to these four elements ether as a fifth essence. After this division and number of the elements, there are numerated seven spheres or orbs of the planets, and an eighth sphere of the fixed stars. And on these subjects it is agreed among all philosophers that there are four spheres of generating and corruptible principles; and also eight others of non-generating and incorruptible principles.

And Aristotle disputes concerning the nature of the heaven; that it is not composed of the elements, but has its own peculiar nature, because if it were composed of the elements it would be corruptible, in that these substances would mingle together and mutually produce and suffer corruption. Therefore he will not attribute to heaven and the heavenly bodies the primary qualities, *primas qualitates*, that is, the attributes of the elements, and says that they are simply creatures possessing a co-eternal light, and qualities and attributes peculiarly their own, and created with them.

Now these things, although they are not certain, yet since they contain principles of a most beautiful theory, gathered from a course of reasoning approaching the truth, are useful for instruction, and it would be barbarous if one should determine to neglect or despise them, since in some respects they harmonize with experience. For we experience it to be the truth that fire by its very nature travels beyond itself, as is seen in the phenomena of the lightning and the fiery meteors in the air. By these principles, learned from experience, they are led to give fire the highest place, next to it the air, after it water comes third, and last the earth in the lowest place, since in weight it surpasses all the others.

These things have their place and use as rudiments or primary principles, which if any one contend that they are not universally true, yet they are true in general and serve to the end that we may learn and hand down to others the true theories. For though fire can be struck from flint, yet it cannot therefore be denied that in the highest regions there is fire. Therefore theology gives these theorists this rule, which philosophy does not know sufficiently, that although God ordained and created all these things by his Word, yet he is not therefore bound to these rules so that he can not change them according to his good pleasure. For we see that neither grammar nor the other sciences are so perfectly set forth in rules that there are no exceptions; thus the laws of public and secular affairs step in and temper all things with reason. How much more can this be done in divine things, so that, although we indeed experience that the four elements are ordained and disposed by God, yet they can, contrary to this order, also have and maintain fire in the middle of the ocean, just as we saw that it was hidden in flint.

Likewise the mathematicians have concluded that there were a definite number of spheres, not that it is necessary to be so, but because one can not teach anything definitely about such things unless one distinguishes the spheres thus, on account of the variety of their motions, about which one can teach nothing without such imagination, if I may so name it. For teachers and professors of these sciences or theories say: We give examples, not because they are in every detail correct, but in order that no one may teach differently concerning those subjects. Therefore it would be the height of folly to despise and ridicule such things as some do, because it is not so sure that it could not be different, for they serve to the end that good arts and sciences may be taught, and that is sufficient.

The philosophers in general teach such things, to which the more modern theologians agree and add to these eight spheres two more,—the crystalline, glacial or aqueous heaven, and then the empyreal or fiery heaven. The Greeks however have discussed these themes much more elegantly and prudently than our scholars. For Ambrose and Augustine have had very childish thoughts. Therefore I praise Jerome because he simply passed over them in silence.

There are some who hold that the crystalline heaven is watery, because they think it is the waters of which Moses here speaks, and there the firmament or eighth sphere is added so that they be not consumed by their rapid and constant motion. But these are puerile thoughts, and I will rather confess that I do not understand Moses in this passage than that I should approve such illiterate thoughts.

The seventh heaven they call empyreal; not because it is fiery or burning, but from the light which is lucid and splendid. This heaven in the home of God and of the blessed, because it was filled immediately after creation with angels, and Lucifer, as they affirm, fell from this heaven. These are about all the ideas that theologians have added to the opinions of philosophers.

However, our scientists, who have studied astronomy, teach that there are still more spheres; namely, twelve, and three motions in the eight spheres; as, the *motum raptum*, *motum proprium*, *motum trepidationis*, a rending motion, a characteristic motion, and a trembling motion. For of such things indeed one cannot speak, unless he give each motion its own sphere.

Averrois had other thoughts, more absurd and far more in agreeable to reason. For he advocated that each sphere was an intellect, or an intelligent nature. The occasion or cause of these foolish thoughts was that he saw the infallibly perfect and most regular motion of the heavenly bodies. Therefore he thought these spheres were intelligent substances, each setting itself in motion in a sure and continuous manner. But from this follows the greatest and worst ignorance of God; wherefore we repudiate the thoughts of Averrois. But the others, which we have mentioned, we approve in so far as they are useful to be taught. For indeed this knowledge of the motion of the heavenly bodies is most worthy of all praise, however little that knowledge may be.

Moses however proceeds with his narrative of the creation in all simplicity and plainness, as they say; making here three divisions: waters "above" the firmament, waters "under" the firmament, and "the firmament" in the middle. In the term heaven, Moses comprehends all that body which philosophers represent by their eight spheres, by fire and by air. For the sacred historian makes no mention of the flowing of the waters until the third day. And it is manifest that the air in which we live is called in the holy Scriptures the heaven; because the Scriptures speak of the "fowls of heaven," Job 28:21; Ps. 8:8. It also speaks of the heavens being shut when it does not rain, 1 Kings 8:35. And again it speaks of the heavens giving their dew, Zech. 8:12; all these things take place in the air, not in the spheres of the moon or of the other planets. This distinction of the spheres therefore is not Mosaic nor scriptural but is an invention of men as an aid to instruction on these astronomical subjects; and which ought not to be despised as such an assistance.

And although they say that the elements are corruptible, yet I doubt it, for I see indeed that they remain. And although a part at times is changed, yet it follows that the whole will be changed; but these changes of the elements are only in part. Thus the air remains unchanged in which the birds live and fly; also the earth upon which the trees and other things grow, though certain parts of the same are changed.

Now Aristotle makes the cause of all these things the first mover, *primum motorem*. Averrois however says the cause of these motions are "*formae assistentes a foris*;" that is, intelligent natures which move from without. Following Moses we say that all these things are brought forth and governed simply by the Word of God. He spake and it was done. He never commanded that the angels should govern these bodies; just as we ourselves are not governed by the angels, although we are guarded and kept by the angels.

Thus also that the motion of the planets retrogrades is the work of God created by his Word, which work belongs to God himself, which is greater and higher than can be attributed to angels, but God, who thus distinguished these things, governs and preserves them. And it is the same God who commanded the sun to start in its course but the firmament to stand still, said also to the planets and the stars, thou shalt move so and so. The Word does even this; namely, it makes the most uncertain motion the most certain, even though these heavenly material bodies move in the fluctuating atmosphere, and not in any place or along any material line. For as a fish in the middle of the sea, a bird in the open heavens, so the stars move in their appointed course, but in a motion most secure and very wonderful indeed. Thus also this is clearly the cause why the Elbe river here at Wittenberg and in this district has its fixed and continuous course and dare not become weary. All such works are the works of the Word, which Moses here honors and praises: "He said," etc.

But we Christians ought to meditate and think on these things and their causes differently from philosophers. Although there are some things which are beyond our comprehension, as for instance these waters that are "above" the firmament, all such things are rather to be believed with a confession of our ignorance than profanely denied, or arrogantly interpreted according to our shallow comprehension. It behooves us ever to adhere to the phraseology of the holy Scriptures, and to stand by the very words of the Holy Spirit, whom it pleased in this sacred narrative by his servant Moses, so to arrange the different parts of the great work of creation, as to place in the midst "the firmament;" formed out of the original mass of the unshapen heaven and earth, and stretched out and expanded by the Word; and then to represent some waters as being "above" that firmament and other waters "under" that firmament, both waters being also formed out of the same original rude undigested matter. And the whole of this part of the creation is called by the Holy Spirit the heaven; together also with its seven spheres and the whole region of the air; in which are meteors and signs of fire and in which the wandering fowls make their homes.

Therefore these common principles we will not oppose nor deny, when they say everything by nature sinks under itself, and everything light rises above itself, although we also see that dense heavy vapors arise but by reason of the influence and motion of heat. We say also that all these things were thus created and maintained by the Word, and they can also by virtue of the power in the same Word be changed yet today; as all nature will finally be altogether transformed. Thus also it is contrary to the rule given that waters should be above the heaven or firmament, and yet the text affirms it.

To return therefore unto the principal matter before us; when any inquiry is instituted as to the nature of these waters, it cannot be denied that Moses here affirms that waters are "above" the heaven; but of what kind or nature these waters are, I freely confess for myself that I know not; for the Scriptures make no other mention of them than in this verse, and in the Song of the three children, in the Apocrypha, Dan. 3:61; and I can attempt to declare nothing certain on these and similar subjects. Hence I can say nothing whatever as known and understood concerning the heaven where the angels are and where God dwells with the blessed; nor concerning other kindred things, which shall be revealed unto us in the last day, when we shall have been clothed with another body.

But I add, for the sake of those who do not understand this, that in the Scriptures the word heaven often signifies what we call the horizon. Hence the whole firmament is called the heaven of heavens, in which are gathered the heaven of all human beings; that is, the horizon. In this respect we have a different heaven here in Germany than the people in France or Italy. But this name helps nothing at all in the explanation of our text. Therefore the greater number of theologians interpret

here waters, as also indicated above, the glacial heaven, the cold heaven, which is located where it is that it may moisten and refresh the lower sphere in their great and swift motion, lest they be consumed by their excessive heat. But whether they have thus concluded correctly, I will leave unanswered.

I freely confess that I do not know what kind of waters these are. For the old teachers of the church did not specially worry about this, as we see Augustine condemned all astrology. Although it contains much superstition, yet it should not be entirely despised, for it is wholly given up to the observation and consideration of divine themes, a zeal and diligence most worthy of human beings. Therefore we find that many most highly talented and excellent persons have exercised themselves in astrology and obtained pleasure from it.

Sufficient has been said on this subject to show that on the second day the heaven was separated and located so that it stood in the middle between the waters.

III. But here another question presents itself. To the works of all the other days there is added the divine sentence of approbation, "And God saw that it was good." How is it then that the same sentence is not added to the second day's work, when the greatest and most beautiful part of the whole creation was made? To this question it may be replied, that this same divine sentence is added at the end of the creation of all things on the sixth day and more fully expressed thus, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." And these words apply to the heaven also.

Lyra is inclined to think with Rabbi Solomon, that as this divine expression, "And God saw that it was good," is uttered twice during the third day's work, one of the divine sentences refers to the second day's work; which was perfected on the third day, when the waters which are "under" the heaven were more distinctly divided from the waters which were "above" the heaven. But it is by far the safest way not to be too curious and inquiring on these subjects; because they exceed our human capacity.

Others speculate here and give reasons they understand not, that the second number is of an evil omen, because it is the first number that departs from the unity of God, but God was displeased with this digression and approved of the unity, and therefore he did not add the clause "it was good" on the second day. Lyra is however right in calling this a misleading and dangerous explanation. For in this manner all the numbers depart from the Unity.

Therefore it is far the safest not to be too curious and inquiring in these subjects, because they are placed above our human capacity. For how can we understand that order which God himself establishes and approves. Yes, reason must here be put to shame, for what is order in the eyes of God we judge to be the confusion of order. Thus the stars seem to us to be arranged thoughtlessly in wild disorder in that the bright ones are scattered among those more obscure, and the lesser among the greater. Who would judge this to be order? And yet it is the most perfect harmony, so constituted by the all-wise mind itself. In like manner we judge of other matters. It seems confusing that our Elbe and all rivers flow to the sea in an irregular winding course. Such disorder there seems to be also among trees, yes, between man and wife, where it appears there is no order. But all this only proves that God is a God of order and that his judgment as to order is quite different than ours.

We therefore cease to follow more curiously the question why God added twice to the third day, "And God saw," etc., and omitted it on the second day. Nor will we conclude rashly whether the work of the second day was finished in the third day or not. Philosophers have handed down the rudiments of the arts and of the science of astronomy, and in doing so they divided the heaven into various spheres. We have a much simpler theory or science, in that we at once make God the immediate Creator of all things by his Word, *Dixit*, "And God said."

For how can we understand that order which God approves as such? Nay, our natural reason must here of necessity be confounded; for that which is order with God is in our judgment confusion. Hence the stars appear to us to be in a state of wild disorder; the bright being mingled with the more obscure, and the lesser with the greater. Who would judge this to be order? And yet it is consummate harmony; and so constituted by the all-wise Mind. And so we judge of other things. Our river Elbe

seems a confusion; as do all other rivers also; because their streams empty themselves into the sea by winding courses. In the same manner trees seem to present a confusion. Nor do males and females in the world and their unions and combinations appear to be a state of order. All here also as to the appearance of things is disorder and confusion. All these things therefore unitedly prove that God possesses an order, and judges of it, differently from ourselves.

Cease we therefore to penetrate into these things with too much curiosity, why it is that God repeats the divine sentence in question twice during the work of the third day and omits it altogether in the work of the second day? Nor determine we rashly whether the work of the second day was finished on the third day or not. Philosophers laid down the rudiments of the arts and of the science of astronomy; and in so doing they divided the heaven into its various spheres. But we adopt a simpler and more true method of procedure and judgment; for we at once make God the immediate Creator of all things by his Word, "And God said."

### **PART III. GOD'S WORK ON THE THIRD DAY**

I. V. 9a. *And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place.*

In the foregoing I observed that we do not understand the order of the works of God. Had he therefore asked us our opinion here we should have advised him to use such an order as to add the sentence now in question to the work of the second day. But God will ever be master of his own order and the ruler of the world. Wherefore we ought not to be over curious here. The text plainly declares that God commanded the waters "under the heavens to be gathered together unto one place." It does not say as before, V. 7, "under the firmament," where it is said, and God divided the waters which were "under the firmament" from the waters which were "above the firmament."

The heavens therefore, according to the phraseology and definition of the Scriptures, are the whole of the higher region and its machinery, together with the entire body of the air and all its spheres. The Hebrew name is derived from the material of which it is composed; namely, from that confused body of water, by the extension or expansion or multiplication of which it was formed. For that first body of unformed water was not so extensive in itself, but was so expanded or spread out by the Word. Just as Christ, according to the record of the Gospel, so multiplied a few loaves by his blessing as to make them suffice for a great multitude of men.

What therefore we philosophically call the air, with all its spheres, Moses here calls the heavens.

But by waters he means the waters of our seas and rivers, which were also formed out of that original unformed mass of water; or out of the dregs or lees of it, as it were, after the heavens had been formed or expanded out of it by the Word. I believe however that the nature and power of our water are far inferior to those of the heavenly waters. For our waters are, as I have said, the dregs, as it were, of the higher waters. So that they may be said to have been gathered together not only as to their place or position, but as to their body or substance, because these latter waters are heavier than those of the air or heaven. For we can breathe in the air, but we cannot breathe in the water.

And when Moses says that these waters were "gathered together unto one place" collectively, he is rather to be understood as speaking in a plural or distributive sense. As if he had said, that they were gathered unto various places; and not that the whole body of the waters was gathered unto one place, as one ocean, but that they were distributed into various seas and rivers; some higher up, and some lower down, some greater, and some less, etc.

V. 9b. *And let the dry (land) appear.*

These words claim particular attention, because Moses had just before said, that the earth was TOHU and BOHU; that is unformed, rude and uncultivated, mixed with waters and washed by the waters on every side. Here therefore Moses also means that this original mass of earth was sunk under the waters and covered by them. Otherwise, why should he represent God as saying "And let the dry land appear," if it had not been surrounded by the abyss of water and almost covered with these

original nebulous mists or waters? For we have here a confirmation of that which I have repeatedly set forth; that the world, at its first formation, was nothing but a rude chaotic mass of water and earth; and now on the third day the earth is brought out and made to appear. As therefore at first the light was brought in upon the waters; so now, the beauty of that light is made to shine upon the earth. For both these qualities were necessary to render the earth habitable; that it should be "dry" and that it should be in the light or illuminated.

II. Moses now calls the earth "dry" on account of the removal of the original waters from it. Thus we behold the waters of the ocean rage and boil as if they would swallow up the whole earth. For the ocean stands higher than the earth. But it cannot pass its appointed bounds, for this spot of dry land circumscribes the earth of the first creation; and even opposes an insuperable barrier to original ocean-waters. Hence Job, 38th chapter, and the 104th Psalm bear witness that, although the sea is higher than the earth and is limited by no boundaries of its own, yet it cannot pass its boundaries appointed of God. For the earth, being the center of the world, would naturally be submerged and covered with the sea. But God keeps back the sea by his Word and thus makes the plane of the earth stand forth out of the waters, as far as is necessary for the habitation and life of man.

Hence it is by the power of God that the waters are prevented from rushing in upon us. God therefore performs for us to this day and will do so to the end of the world, the same miracle which he wrought for the children of Israel in the Red Sea, Ex. 14:21-22. But he made a special manifestation of his power by working the mighty miracle on that occasion, to the intent that he might bind that people, who were few in number, the more devotedly to his worship. And what else is this our life upon earth, but a passage through the Red Sea, where the high and threatening walls of water stand up on each side of us? For it is most certainly true that the sea is much higher than the earth. God therefore to this day commands the waters to hang suspended and holds them up by his Word that they may not break in upon us, as they burst in upon the world at the deluge. Sometimes however signs of God's power are still manifested, whole islands perish under the waters, whereby God shows that the mighty water is still in his hands, and that it is with Him either to hold it fast or to let it rush in upon the wicked and the ungrateful.

Philosophers have their disputes also concerning the center of the world and the circumfluent water. Indeed it is wonderful that they go so far as to determine the earth to be the center of the whole creation. And it is from this argument, that they conclude that the earth cannot fall; because it is supported from within by the other spheres surrounding it on every side. Hence according to these philosophers the heaven and all other spheres rest upon this center, by which support they themselves also derive their durability. It is well becoming us to know these arguments. But these philosophers know not that the whole of this stability rests on the power of the Word of God. Although therefore the water of the mighty ocean is higher than the earth, yet it cannot pass its appointed bounds nor cover the earth. But we live and breathe as the Children of Israel existed in the midst of the Red Sea.

V. 10. *And God saw that it was good.*

Moses here adds this divine commendation although nothing was wrought beside the division of the waters and the bringing out of waters a small particle of the earth. Now above, at the most beautiful part of God's creation, this short divine commendatory sentence was not added. Perhaps it was omitted as an intimation from God that he is more concerned about our habitation than about his own; and that he might by such intimation animate us to higher feelings of gratitude and praise. For we were not destined to exist in the air or in the heaven, but on the earth where we were appointed to support our life by meat and drink.

Therefore after God adorned the roof of man's habitation, namely, the heaven, and added the light, he now spreads its floor and makes the earth suitable for the dwelling service of men. This part of his work, God twice declares to be "good" on our account, by which he would intimate that we men form so great a part of his care, that he is desirous to assure us by such a twofold approbation of this portion of his creation-work wrought with so much care that he would ever hold it under his

peculiar protection; that he would grant it his perpetual presence, and would prevent our great enemy and our most certain death, the mighty water, from rushing in upon us. Beautifully therefore did God form in "the beginning" the foundation and roof of this house. Now let us see how he furnished and garnished it.

III. V. 11. *And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after its kind, etc.*

God, as we have seen, has now constructed the first and the principal parts of man's house. Its roof, the heaven, is most beautiful, but it is not yet fully adorned. Its foundation is the earth. Its walls are the mighty waters on every side. God next makes provision for our food. He commands the earth to bring forth herbs and trees to bear fruit of every kind. Here you may again see why the earth was before called TOHU and BOHU; because it was as yet not only dark, but altogether barren of fruit.

But mark what kind of food God prepares for us; namely, herbs and fruits of trees. I believe therefore that our bodies would have been much stronger and healthier if this surfeiting and especially the eating of flesh of all kinds since the flood had not been introduced. For although the earth after the sin of Adam was cursed, and because still more corrupt after the flood, yet our food of herbs would have been much more refining, thin and pure, had we still lived on them, than our gross feeding on flesh is now. It is quite evident that in the beginning of the world the food of man was herbs, and it is equally evident that the herbs were created for the very end that they might be food for man.

That the earth produces grain, trees and herbs of every kind is the work of this day. Now indeed, all things spring forth from the seed of their kind. But the original creation was wrought without any seed, by the simple power of the Word. Indeed that seeds now put forth their plants is still the effect of the work of the original creation by the Word, and it is a work full of wonder and admiration. For it is a singular act of God's power that the grain, falling on the earth, springs forth in its time and brings forth fruit after its kind. And that like plants should be put forth from like seeds in an unceasing and unchanging order, is sure proof that it is not the consequence of a chance creation, but the especial operation of divine providence. Hence from wheat grows nothing but wheat; from barley nothing but barley; from the bean nothing but beans; for the same continuous and unaltered nature, order and condition of each plant are constantly preserved.

Philosophy knows nothing of the cause of all this and attributes the whole to nature. We however well understand that nature was so created at the first by the power of the Word, that the seeds and forms of all plants might be exactly and perfectly preserved. Wherefore not only are the first-day waters of heaven multiplied, as there is need; but the first seeds are also multiplied, as God sees fit, and they all preserve their original form and nature with the utmost perfection.

Here again a question is frequently raised as to the time or season of the year, in which the world was created; whether the creation was wrought in the spring or autumn. And although the opinions of men differ on this point, yet each one has his own reasons and conjectures. Those who prefer making autumn the season of creation, consider that they prove their judgment to be correct from the fact that the trees when first created produced their fruit. For Adam and Eve ate of their fruit. They prove their opinion moreover to be the right one, as they think, by the argument that the works of God are perfect! Others will have it, that the spring was the time of the creation, because the spring is the most beautiful season of the year and is, as it were, the infancy and childhood of nature. Hence it is that the ancient poet Ovid describes the spring as being the originating cradle-time of the world.

Neither party however has sufficient ground for concluding their arguments to be exclusively right; for the sacred text supports both opinions, because it declares, that the earth "brought or budded forth," which certainly is not the time of autumn, but of spring. It also declares that fruits then existed; which it is equally certain is not the time of spring. Wherefore, my opinion is that such was the miracle wrought of God at the first creation of the world that all these things existed at the one time; the earth budded forth, the trees blossomed, and the fruits, in their perfection, immediately and suddenly followed; and then the miracle ceased; and nature gradually fell into her regular order. Thus, all these

herbs and trees are propagated by means of their seeds in the same kinds and forms as those in which they were first created. Hence men reason wrongly, when they argue from the natural to the supernatural effect. For the whole is to be attributed to the Creator and to his first creation-work, in which he at the same time perfected the infant buddings of spring and the mature fruits of autumn, as far as the herbs and the fruits of the trees were concerned.

Moreover this state of things at the creation induced Hilary and others to conclude that the world stood forth suddenly at the Word of God in all its full perfection; and that God did not employ six whole natural days in the work of creation. For the text compels us to confess that the trees together with their fruits existed on the same day Adam was created. But although all this was indeed wrought of God very much more quickly than it is now for this same work of God in our age generally occupies six months of time, yet the text does not use the verb "to fructify" only but also the verb "to germinate."

With reference therefore to this question, concerning the time of the creation, it is most probable that the spring was the season in which the world was first created. Hence the Jews begin their year at this season, making the first month of spring the first of their year, that being the time of the year when the earth begins to open its bosom and all things in nature bud forth.

Concerning this part of the creation another question is also raised as to the time when the unfruitful or barren trees and herbs were created. For myself I would not attempt to settle anything as to this point, but I will offer my opinion. I believe that all trees were in the beginning good and fruitful; and that the beasts of the field and Adam had as it were one and the same table; and that they all fed on wheat, pulse and the other nobler fruits; for there was then the greatest possible abundance of all these creatures.

After the sin of Adam however God said for the first time to the earth "that it should bring forth thorns and briars." Wherefore there can be no doubt that we have so many trees and herbs which are of no use whatever for food as the divine punishment of that first sin of Adam. Hence it is that many have considered the whole original state of earth paradise, on account of the blessing and the abundance which attended the first creation. Those who held this opinion affirmed that the expulsion of Adam from Paradise was his being deprived of this happy state of the earth and placed among thorns, where frequently after the greatest labor scarcely any benefit is derived. On this matter however we shall speak hereafter. But with respect to the present question, I am quite inclined to think that all the trees were fruitful when first created.

The curious reasoning of the men of our day is detestable; when they inquire in their arguments, why it was that God adorned the earth with fruits on the third day before he had garnished the heaven with stars? They affirm that such a part of the creation-work belonged rather to the work of the sixth day; and that it would have been more appropriate as the heaven was first expanded before the earth was brought forth, had the heaven been adorned before the earth. For they say that the adorning of the earth belonged more properly to the sixth day. Lyra would make here the subtle distinction that this was not the ornament of the earth but the form of it. However I doubt whether any such distinction can be admitted, as satisfactory. My opinion is that, as I have before said, the order adopted by God in all these things is not to be submitted to the exercise of any judgment of ours. Indeed was not the heaven adorned with that light, which was created on the first day? That light was assuredly the most beautiful ornament of the whole creation.

In this sacred matter I therefore much prefer that we consider the divine care and goodness exercised in our especial behalf, in that God prepared a habitation so beautiful for the man, whom he was about to create, before he created him, in order that when created he might find a habitation already prepared and furnished for him, into which thus ready and garnished God led him when created, and commanded him to enjoy all the fruits and provisions of his ample abode. Thus on the third day were prepared the food and the store-room. On the fourth day the sun and the moon were given for the service of man. On the fifth day "dominion" was committed to him over the fishes

and the birds. On the sixth day the same "dominion" was intrusted to him over all the beasts, that he might use all the rich blessings of these creatures freely, according to his necessities; and as a return God only required that man should acknowledge the goodness of his Creator and live in his fear and worship. This peculiar care of God over us and for us even before we were created, may be contemplated rightly and with great benefit to our souls, but all conjectures, reasonings and arguments upon the great subject of the creation are uncertain and fruitless.

The same care for us is manifest in his spiritual gifts. For long before we are converted to faith Christ, our Redeemer, rose and ascended above, and is now in the house of his Father preparing mansions for us; that when we arrive there we may find heaven furnished with everything that can complete our joy. Adam therefore not yet created was much less able to think of his future good than even we are, for he as yet had no existence at all. Whereas we continually hear all these things from the Word of God, as promised to us. Let us look at this first creation of the world therefore as a type and figure of the world to come, and thereby let us learn the exceeding goodness of God, who thus benefits, blesses and enriches us, even before we are capable of thinking for ourselves. This solicitude, care, liberality and beneficence of God, both for our present and future life, are matters more becoming us to contemplate and admire than it is to enter upon speculations and conjectures as to the reason why God began to ornament the earth on the third day. Let these observations suffice concerning the work of the third day in which a house was built and furnished for man. Now follow the remaining days in which we were appointed rulers, to "have dominion over" the whole creation.

#### **PART IV. GOD'S WORK ON THE FOURTH DAY**

I. V. 14a. *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night.*

This is the work of the fourth day in which those all-beautiful creatures, the sun and the moon, together with all the stars, were created by the Word. Nor were they created as to their substances and their bodies only, but as to the blessing of God upon them and through them; that is, as to their powers, effects and influence.

You heard above that on the first day the "light" was created. This light continued to illumine all things instead of the sun, the moon and the stars until the fourth day. And on the fourth day those authors and rulers of the day and the night were themselves created.

Hence there has here arisen a question with reference to this first "light;" whether after the sun and the moon were created it disappeared altogether or remained, embodied in the sun. And on this point a great diversity of sentiments and opinions has existed. My simple belief is that the nature of all these works of God is the same. As on the first day the rude unformed heaven and earth were created and afterward completely formed and perfected, as the originally imperfect heaven was afterward stretched out and adorned with light, and as the earth was first called forth from the waters and then clothed with trees and herbs, so the first formed light of the first day, which was then only begun, as it were, and imperfect, was afterwards perfected and completed by the addition of those new creatures, the sun, the moon and the stars. Others say that this original "light" still remains, but is obscured by the brightness of the sun. Both opinions may be true. For it may be that the original light still remains and was as it were the seed-light of the sun and the moon.

Moses however makes a difference here, calling the sun and the moon the "greater lights." What philosophers say therefore concerning the magnitude of these bodies has properly nothing to do with the text before us. What we have here to do is to observe that the Scriptures do not speak of these bodies with reference to the magnitude of the bodies themselves but with reference to the magnitude of their light! For if you would compare the sun with the stars and collect all the stars into one body, you would have a body perhaps greater than the sun, but that whole body of stars together would not form a light equal to the light of the sun. On the contrary if you could divide the sun into

minute particles, the most minute particles would surpass in brightness the brightest star. For all these bodies were created with an essential difference as Paul affirms. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars," etc., 1 Cor. 15:41. And this difference does not consist in the nature or magnitude of their bodies, but in the nature and essentiality of their creation itself; so that in this the work of God's creation is more wonderful. Hence marvellous beyond expression or thought is the fact that the rays of the sun should be dispersed through such length and breadth, with such wonderful properties of nourishment and heat to all bodies under their influence; and that, too, while the sun itself revolves with such amazing velocity.

Astronomers say also that the stars are lighted as it were by the sun so that they shine. Likewise they say that the moon borrows its light from the sun. And this is beautifully proved in an eclipse of the moon, when the earth comes between the sun and moon and the light of the sun is not transmitted to the moon. I do not deny nor reject this, but I do hold however that it is of divine power that this efficacy is added to the sun to light and illumine even the distant moon and stars with its own light; and likewise that the moon and stars are so created that they have the capacity to receive the light that is projected from the sun so far away.

Augustine sets forth two opinions about the moon in the beginning of the 12th Psalm, and in his discussions he forces an allegory upon the church, while he himself defines nothing. But I leave this; for from astronomers as from master artists we most readily learn what points are possible to be disputed in this science. I am satisfied that in these bodies so glorious and useful for our life we discern the goodness and power of God, who created such things by his Word and conserved them to the present day for our use. These are matters belonging to our calling or profession; that is, they are theological themes, and they have the efficacy to comfort and strengthen our hearts.

What is further discussed concerning the nature and attributes of these creatures, although for the most part approaching the truth and studied with profit, yet I see that the reason is by far too weak to understand these things perfectly. Therefore the greatest men of genius and learning, overwhelmed by the worthiness of these creatures, could not conclude otherwise than that they are eternal, and, as it were, gods.

Since, therefore, philosophers define a star to be a denser point within its own orbit, we come much nearer the truth when we define it to be light created by God through his Word. And it is indeed more likely that the stars are bodies round like the sun, little globes fixed to the firmament, so that each gives light by night, according to its gift and its creative functions.

V. 14b. *And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.*

When Moses adds above, "And let them divide the day from the night," he intimates that difference between the natural and the artificial day, so universally made by astronomers. For he had before said, "And there was evening and there was morning one day;" "were the second day," etc., where he is speaking of the natural day which consists of 24 hours, during which the first great movable body, the sun, performs his revolution from east to west. But here, when the sacred historian says, "And let them divide the day from the night" he is speaking of the artificial day, the space of time during which the sun is above the horizon.

II. These therefore are the primary offices of the sun and the moon: to be the rulers and directors of the night and the day; whereas the stars perform not these offices nor are so appointed of God. But the sun, when he rises, brings in the day without the rising or aid of the other stars. So the moon, even independently of the stars, is the ruler of the night and makes the night; for she is created by God for that very office. As to these changes of the day and the night, they are ordained for the refreshment of our bodies by sleep and rest. The sun shows his brighter light for man's work. The moon has her paler light as more adapted for repose than for work.

But what is the meaning of Moses when he says, "And let them be for signs," etc.? Lyra explains it as signifying signs of rains and storms, etc. This in an interpretation which I would not strongly oppose; though I have great doubts whether these "Lights in the firmament of heaven" do, or can,

pre-signify rains, tempests, etc., with any certainty, as the poet Virgil and others represent in their writings. The gospel does indeed make a "reddened" evening a sign of "fair weather," and on the contrary a "lowering" morning a sign of "foul weather," Math. 16:2-3. With respect therefore to the common saying that the rising of the constellation of the Pleiades indicates rain and other proverbs of a similar description, I will not with great concern tear them to pieces, nor will I at once admit and confirm them, because I cannot see that they are all uniformly sure and certain.

I hold the simplest meaning of the text is that he does not speak of such inferior signs, but greater signs, such as eclipses and collisions of heavenly bodies, so that a sign is a wonder, a prophecy or miracle, by which he reveals his wrath or the misfortune of the world. If any think this explanation is too coarse, let us remember that Moses wrote for a rude people.

Here belong meteors and the rare phenomena which take place in the air, when stars are seen to fall, when halos surround the sun and moon, when the rainbow appears and similar things happen in the sky. For Moses calls the heaven the whole aqueous mass in which the stars and planets move, also the highest sphere. We speak of spheres and circles to make the explanation plainer. For the Scriptures know nothing of these and say that the moon with the sun and stars are not each in its sphere, but in the firmament of heaven, below and above are the waters. That they are signs of future events, experience teaches concerning planet collisions and meteors.

The expression "For seasons" claims particular attention. The term in the Hebrew is LEMOEDIM; and MOED signifies "a stated, fixed, certain time." Hence it is a term commonly used in the Scriptures to signify "a tabernacle of covenant;" because there certain feasts were accustomed to be held in a certain place and time according to certain rites. Therefore it is that Moses describes the sun and the moon as being created "For seasons;" not only because the seasons are ruled and evidently changed by the course of the sun; for we see that most inferior bodies are changed by the access and recess of the sun; and the quality of the air according to which our own bodies are also changed is of one kind in the winter, of another in the summer, of another in the autumn and of another in the spring; but because we observe other differences and distinctions of times and seasons in civil life, all which are derived from the motions and revolutions of these heavenly bodies. Hence at a certain time of the year men make their contracts for building houses, hire their servants and their services, and collect taxes, debts and rents, etc. All these are services rendered us and blessings bestowed upon us by the sun and the moon, that we may by their laws and revolutions divide the times and seasons for the various labors of man and enjoy many other blessings which they confer. It is by them that we divide and number our weeks, months, quarters, etc., etc.

The next expression, "For days," refers to the natural day, during which the sun performs his revolution round the earth. Our being enabled therefore to number days and also years, are blessings of the creation and are thus ordained of God. Wherefore philosophers define time to be "an enumeration of motions," which numbering could have no existence if the heavenly bodies did not move by a sure and fixed law. If they all stood fixed in a certain place without motion, numbering could have neither commencement nor regulation. And where there is no numbering of days, months, years, etc., there is no time. Hence a man in a sound sleep, being destitute of all sense of number and of all faculty of enumeration, knows not how long he sleeps.

In a like manner, though we can in a measure recollect our infancy, yet we are not conscious of the fact of having sucked the breasts of our mothers; and yet we then had natural life. The reason is that we were deficient in the sense of number and the power of annumeration. For this same reason beasts know nothing of time; just as infants have no such knowledge. The sense and faculty of number therefore prove man to be a peculiar and superior creature of God on which account we find Augustine declaring the faculty of annumeration to be an especial gift of our nature, and proving from this very gift the immortality of the soul; because man alone can calculate and understand time.

With reference to the future life, some here inquire whether the offices of these heavenly bodies are designed of God to cease. But the life to come will be without time. For the godly will enjoy an eternal day and the ungodly will have an endless night and eternal darkness.

The sun therefore makes the day, not only by his light and brightness, but by his motion, which he makes from east to west until he rises again at the end of 24 hours and thus makes another day. Wherefore astronomers make three great benefits to proceed from the sun: his motion, his light and his influence.

Concerning his influence however I shall enter upon no subtle inquiry. It is enough for me to know that these heavenly bodies were created for our use; that they may be unto us "For signs of wrath or of grace and for seasons," that we might observe certain distinctions of time, etc. These things, because they are taught us in the Holy Scriptures are sure. All things else, such as the doctrines and predictions of astrologers, are not thus certain.

One is wont to inquire here concerning the astrological predictions which some confirm and prove from this text. If they are not defended perseveringly and pertinaciously, I will not combat them strongly. For one ought to concede to the ingenious and learned brains their playground. Therefore when one reads of the misuse and unbelief of their superstitions, I would not be greatly offended if one exercise himself in these predictions for the sake of pleasure.

As to that which pertains to the practice of astrology I could never be persuaded to count astrology among the sciences, for the reasons that it has no clear demonstration or visible proof. That they cite experiences does not influence me. For all astrological experiences are merely particular. For those, skilled in the practice only, have observed and committed to writing the things that have not failed; the other experiences, however, in which they failed or were not followed by the results they predicted would certainly follow were not committed to writing nor remembered. But just as Aristotle says that one swallow alone does not make summer, so I think one cannot form a true and complete science from such single and particular observations. For just as it is said of hunters, they may hunt every day, but they do not find game every day. The same may be said of astrologers and their predictions, because they fail very often.

But now since they indeed contain some truth, what folly it is at the same time that one should be so anxious about the future. For grant that it is possible to know the future through the predictions of astrologers, were it not in many respects far better, if they are evil, to be entirely ignorant of them than to know them, as Cicero contends? Instead it is much better to stand in the fear of God always and to pray than to be tormented and tortured by the fear of future events. But more of this at another time.

Wherefore my judgment is that astrological predictions cannot safely and satisfactorily be founded upon this passage of Scripture; for they are, as I have said, signs observed and collected by reason. But the next and proper meaning, if we understand Moses concerning the signs, which God knows and shows, is to the end that men in general may be admonished and terrified by them. Let these observations on the fourth day suffice.

Now here begins to open upon us and to present itself to our meditation that great subject, the immortality of the soul. For no creature besides man can understand the motion of the heaven or estimate the celestial bodies and their revolutions. The pig, the cow, the dog cannot measure the water they drink. But man can measure even the heaven and form his calculations of all the heavenly bodies.

Wherefore a spark of eternal life glitters forth here from the fact that man is naturally exercised in this knowledge of all nature. For this anxious inquiry indicates that men were not created with the design that they should live forever in this small weak portion of God's universe; but that they should occupy the heaven, which in this life they so admire and in the study and contemplation of which they are continually engaged.

If heaven were not the destination of man what aim or need was there for his being endowed with this wide capacity for rich knowledge and thought. Indeed the stature and form of the body of man also argues that he was designed for heavenly things, even though his origin was so very mean

and humble. For God made the first man from the common earth. After this the human race began to be propagated from the seed of the male and female, in which the embryo is formed in the womb in all its particular members, and there it grows until by its birth it is ushered forth into the light of heaven. From this birth comes the life of sensation, the life of motion and the life of operation.

When at length the body has grown and the man has a sound reason and soul in a sound body, then first shines forth in all its brightness that life of intelligence found in no other earthly creature. By this faculty, leaning on the aid of the mathematical sciences, which no one can deny were indicated and taught from above, man mounts in his mind from earth to heaven, and leaving behind him the things below concerns himself about and inquires into heavenly things. Hogs do not do this, nor cows nor any other beasts of the earth, it is the employment of man alone. Man therefore is a being created of God with the design that at an appointed time he should leave the earth, dwell in heavenly mansions and live a life eternal. These great principles of man's creation form the reasons why he is able not only to speak and to judge, which are things pertaining to language and argument, but is capable also of acquiring any science whatever.

From this fourth day therefore begins to be manifested the peculiar glory of our race. Because God here forms his mind and purpose to create such a being as should be capable of understanding the motions of those heavenly bodies, which are created on this fourth day; and a being who should delight himself in their knowledge, as peculiarly and exclusively adapted to his nature. All these things therefore ought to call forth our thanksgiving and praise; while we reflect that we are the citizens of that heavenly country which we now behold, understand and wonder at, yet understand only as strangers and exiles, but which after this life we shall behold nearer and understand perfectly.

Hitherto therefore we have heard the divine historian speak of those creatures only, which are endowed with neither life nor sense; although some philosophers have spoken of the stars and the greater heavenly bodies, as if they were animate and rational. This I think has arisen from the motion of these bodies, which is rational and so certain that there is nothing like it in any other creatures. Hence some philosophers have affirmed that the heavenly creatures were composed of body and intellect, though their bodies were not material. Plato reasons thus in his "Timoeus."

All such opinions however are to be utterly exploded and our whole intellect is to be subjected to the Word of God and to what is there written. The Holy Scriptures plainly teach that God made all these things, that he might by them prepare for the man, whom he was about to create, a home and a hospitable reception; and that all these things are governed and preserved by the power of the same Word, by which they were originally created. Wherefore all things being at length prepared pertaining to the furniture of his home, the Scriptures next show us the manner in which man was "formed" and introduced into his possession to the end that we might be taught that the providence of God over us and for us is greater than all our own care and concern for ourselves can possibly be. These things are plainly taught us in the Scriptures. All other things not supported by the authority of the Scriptures are to be repudiated and rejected.

I have therefore thought it especially becoming and necessary to repeat here that admonition which I have frequently given, that we ought constantly to acquaint and familiarize ourselves with the phraseology of the Holy Spirit. For no one can successfully study any of the human arts unless he first correctly understands the idiom of the language in which its principles are described. For lawyers have their peculiar terms, unknown to the physician and the philosopher. In like manner, the latter have each a phraseology peculiar to themselves with which the professors of other arts have little or no acquaintance. Now one art ought not to perplex another. But every art ought to maintain its own course in its own way and to adopt its own peculiar terms.

Accordingly we find the Holy Spirit, to use a language and a phraseology peculiar to his own divine self, declaring that God created all things by his Word or by speaking them into being; "He spake and it was done"; that he wrought all things by his Word; and that all the works of God are certain words of God, certain things created by the uncreated word. As therefore the philosopher

uses his own terms, so the Holy Ghost uses his. Hence when the astronomer speaks of his spheres, his cycles and his epicycles, he does so rightly, for it is lawful for him in the profession of his art to use such terms as may enable him the better to instruct his disciples. On the other hand the Holy Ghost will know nothing of such terms in the sacred Scriptures. Hence those Scriptures call the whole of that part of the creation which is above us, "The heaven," nor ought that term to be disapproved by the astronomer; for the astronomer and the Scripture both adopt, as I have said, terms peculiar to themselves.

It is in this manner that we are to understand the term "seasons" in the sacred text before us. For the term "season" with the philosopher and with the Hebrew has not the same signification. With the Jews the term "season" signifies, theologically, an appointed feast or festival; and also the intervals of days, which concur and conjoin to form the year, wherefore this term is everywhere rendered by the word "feast" or "festival" or "festivity"; except where it is used to signify a "tabernacle" or "tent."

I deemed it best to offer these admonitions concerning language and phraseology before we advance further, and I hope they will not be found useless or out of place, as showing the importance that every art should confine itself to its own language and terms; that no one art should condemn or deride another, but that each should rather aid the other and render mutual services. And this indeed the professors of all arts do, in order that the unity of the whole state may be preserved; which, as Aristotle says, "cannot be constituted of a physician and a physician; but must be formed of a physician and a husbandman."

## **PART V. GOD'S WORK ON THE FIFTH DAY**

I. V. 20. *And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth, etc., etc.*

We see Moses retains invariably the same sacred phraseology, "And God said," etc. Hitherto he has been speaking of the superior creatures; the heaven with all its host of planets and stars, which God created out of water by the Word, and gave light unto it, just as we now see the air around us lucid, with a natural illumination.

Moses now proceeds to speak of new creatures also produced out of the waters; namely, of birds and fishes. He connects these two creatures in his narrative on account of their similarity of nature. For as the fish swims in the water, so does the bird swim as it were in the air. Though their flesh differs, yet they have the same origin. For the sacred text is here quite plain, that the birds when created out of the waters immediately flew into the air where they now live. Moses here retains moreover his uniform term in calling the whole region above us, "heaven."

And first it is worthy of admiration that, although the fishes and the birds were both created out of the same matter, the waters, yet as the bird cannot live in the water, neither can the fish exist, if brought into the air. Physicians rightly argue, when they affirm that the flesh of birds is more wholesome than that of fishes, even though the nature of birds is also aqueous; because they live in a more rarified element; for air is a purer element than water; the latter, in which the fish are generated and live, being constituted of the dregs as it were of the former. Philosophers however do not believe this identity of the nature of birds and of fishes. But the faith of the sacred Scriptures which is far above philosophy and far more certain, assures us that the nature of the fish and of the bird had the same origin.

Here again is a further proof of the divine authority and majesty of this book, in that it sets before us under such various forms that power of God by which he created all things, beyond the conception of all reason and understanding. Who for instance could ever have thought, that out of water a nature could be produced, which should by no means endure water? But the Word of God speaks, and in a moment out of water are created birds. If therefore the Word of God but sound, all things are immediately possible; and out of the same water shall be formed either fishes or birds.

Every bird therefore and every fish is nothing more or less than a word of divine grammar or language; by which grammar all things, otherwise impossible, immediately become possible and easy; by which also things contrary and conflicting become similar and harmonious; and vice versa.

But these divine things are thus written and ought to be diligently observed, studied and known by us, that we might learn to admire and adore the power of the Divine Majesty; and that we might edify and strengthen our faith from all these marvellous creation works of God! For if one could raise the dead it would be nothing in comparison to this wonderful work; that a bird was created in a moment out of water! But the reason we do not day by day and continually wonder at these things, is because by our having seen them always before us, they have lost their wonder in our eyes. If however one does but believe these things, he is compelled at once to wonder at them. And that wonder gradually confirms his faith. For if God can form a mass of water, call forth and create the heaven and its stars, each one of which equals or exceeds the earth itself in magnitude; if God can, from a small drop of water, create the sun and the moon, can he not defend my poor body against all enemies and against Satan himself? Can he not after that poor body is laid in the tomb raise it again to another and a new life? Wherefore we are to learn from this book of Genesis the power of God; that we may accustom ourselves to doubt nothing that God promises in his Word! For, in this glorious and marvellous creation work is laid a confirmation of our faith in all the promises of God; that there is nothing so difficult, nothing so impossible, which God cannot do and perfect by his Word. For all this is here proved by God's creation of the heaven, earth, sea and all that is in them.

But we must here touch upon that which has arrested the attention of the holy fathers, and especially of Augustine; that Moses in this sacred narrative uses these three expressions in reference to God, "God said;" "God made;" and "God saw;" as if God designed by these three expressions, used by His servant Moses, to set forth the three persons of the divine majesty! Thus by the expression "said" is signified the Father. The Father begat the Word from all eternity; and by this same Word he made in time this world. And these holy fathers applied the expression, "God made" to the person of the Son; for the Son has in himself the "express image" of the person of the Father; not only of his majesty, but of his power by which he created all things. Hence the Son gives to all things their existence. And as by the Father things are spoken into being, so are they also by the Son or the Word of the Father, by whom "all things subsist." And to these two persons is also added a third; the person of the Holy Spirit, who "sees" and approves all things which are created.

These three expressions therefore, "said," "made," "saw," are spoken by Moses in a beautiful and appropriate manner as attributive of the three divine persons; that we might by these three expressions the more distinctly understand that great article of faith, the Holy Trinity. For the sole reason these props of our faith were religiously sought by the holy fathers was, that the profound subject, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, so incomprehensible in itself, might in some measure receive aid to its comprehension. Wherefore I by no means condemn these pious attempts, because they are perfectly in harmony with the analogy of faith and most useful also for the instruction and confirmation of faith.

In this manner Hilary also distinguishes other attributes. "Eternity is in the Father; form, in the image; and use, in the gift." He says that the Holy Spirit is the gift for use, because he gives the use of all things; in that he governs and preserves all things that they perish not. The same fathers hold and affirm also, "The Father is the mind; the Son the understanding; the Holy Ghost the will." Not that the Father is without understanding or the Son without will. But these are attributes; that is terms or expressions, which are not applicable to three divine persons collectively, but to the one or the other divine person, separately or differently. Not, as we have said, that the Father is without wisdom, etc. But we thus portray and present these divine things to our minds that we may better hold and explain the article of faith on the Holy Trinity.

When therefore the sacred text says "And God saw that it was good," the divine expression implies God's intended preservation also of the thing which he had in each case just created. For the

creature itself, thus newly created, could not stand unless the Holy Spirit should love it, and unless this complacency of God in his own work should preserve that work. For God did not thus create these things, designing to forsake them when created, but he approves them and loves them still. The great Creator by his divine agency still simultaneously stirs, moves and preserves, after his own God-like method all things which he hath made. I deemed it right thus briefly to touch upon these sacred matters; for the godly thoughts of those, who have preceded us in this holy study and whose course we are ourselves pursuing, are well worthy our knowledge.

The expression in the above text, which Jerome renders "the creeping creature that hath life," is in the original Hebrew NEPHESCH, and signifies a "soul" or "life" or "something living." Moses calls fishes by this name. With reference to birds, it is well known that they are AMPHIBIOUS; that is they live either on land or in the air.

II. V. 21a. *And God created the great sea-monsters (whales).*

An inquiry may naturally here be made, why Moses mentions by name, "whales" only. But it is so, that the Scriptures in general make mention only of the greater fishes. The mention of "leviathan" and of "dragons" in the Book of Job, and in other places of the Scriptures is well known. It is certain however that all the large sea-monsters are called by the name, "whales;" some of which have wings as the dolphin, the king of fishes. Not however because it exceeds all other fishes in size. For the eagle, the king of birds, does not surpass all birds, nor is the lion, the king, larger than all other beasts.

I believe however the reason of this is that we might know that these huge bodies are really the glorious works of God, and that we might not through any terror at such awe-striking bulks, imagine that these stupendous animals were not works of God, but unreal monsters. These great facts of creation being thus established in our minds, it is easy to conclude, that as these enormous bodies were created by God, the lesser fishes, such as herrings, sprats, minnows, etc., were created also by him. Let him who would contemplate this more deeply read Job, Chap. 41. He will there plainly see in what lofty language the Holy Spirit, by means of the poet-author of that book, lauds that marvellous monster "leviathan," whose strength and confidence is such that he contemns even the force of arrows. Such descriptions open our eyes and encourage our faith to believe the more easily and firmly that God is able to preserve us also, who are so indescribably less in magnitude and strength.

A question here also raised concerning mice and doormice; whence and how they originate and are generated. For we find by experience that not even ships, which are perpetually swimming on the ocean, are free from mice, and no house can be thoroughly cleared of mice but that they will still be generated. The same inquiry may be instituted concerning flies. And also whither birds go in the time of autumn.

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