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Creation: The Time and Manner of the Earth's Creation I

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Causation. From what has heretofore been said, it will be remembered that we hold the universe to be self-existent and eternal. Duration, space, matter, force, mind—each infinite after its kind—are its prime and included factors. The universe is comprised of these.

Such a universe can have no first cause, since that would imply a time when there was no cause, and there has been and can be no such time. Causation is eternal, and in the eternal and infinite universe there has been operating always eternal cause. The cause which produces all action, all movements that produce events, changes; the creation of, or forming of world systems, and worlds within world systems; causing also the passing away of worlds and world systems, whenever they may have fulfilled some special purpose for which they were created, and hence are ready to pass away, to be reformed into more desirable worlds or world systems. For in a universe where intelligence united with goodness and power obtains and prevails, even changes which may have disintegrating or destructive aspects, can only be conceived as having a beneficent purpose in them, changing from a good to a better status; or, to be more exact, and to place the physical as well as the moral and spiritual notion into the betterment wrought by the apparently destructive changes—better say that the changes move from telestial to terrestrial, and from terrestrial to celestial orders of worlds.

Of the creation of our earth and its heavens—worlds with which our earth-revelations deal—it need only be said that they were formed

Concerning the references cited in this chapter that deal especially with evolution, Roberts advised: "This chapter involving as it does consideration of various theories of creation, including evolution, makes all the standard authorities on these subjects sources of reference." Nevertheless, he lists only two works by Darwin which he had found "helpful," and he cautions, "one needs to keep in mind that there have been many modifications of the theory of evolution since [Darwin's] day."

or fashioned from preexisting world-stuff which “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) was formless, unorganized, and darkness covered all its depths. Then God spake and “the Spirit of God” (Gen. 1:2) moved in the chaos, and in due time an orderly world arose from the chaos and became the habitat of man as we now know it.

Two things have mainly occupied the attention of intellectual men with respect of this creation: first, the time of it; second, the manner of it.

Time element in creation. As to the time element of creation for our earth a great variety of views have been held. The Bible story of creation was held to mean, by the theologians, that the creation was effected some six thousand years ago by fiat word of God, and within six days as measured by the rotation of the earth upon its axis—just six ordinary days! Then came the message derived from developed scientific knowledge which indicated that the earth was of much greater antiquity than this, extending from hundreds of thousands to millions of years since its beginning. Scientists pointed to the record found in the earth's crust for the evidence of its slow formation and its great antiquity. Fossil remains of its extinct forms of life in its various strata; its well defined glacial periods of scores of thousands of years ago; the submerged portions of present large land areas uplifted by slow process into great desert table lands and mountain ranges; and in recent years the accumulative evidence for the existence of man in the earth in a remote antiquity, amounting to scores and to even hundreds of thousands of years, has rapidly increased and is of sufficient clearness apparently to be generally accepted by the scientific world. All these discoveries and developments with their accepted implications have led to attempts at revision of the theological interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. Some accept as a cue the casual statement of St. Peter, “that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8), and the Psalmist's expression of nearly the same import (Ps. 90:4). They have held that the “day” of Genesis was after the Lord's method of computing time; which would make the “creation day” period of a thousand years of earth time. But even this is insufficient to meet the demands of the creation time periods of science.

Again, theologians have suggested that the “creation days” in Genesis are not even after the Lord's measurement of “days” of a thousand years of earth time, but the “creation days” of Genesis are periods of indefinite time, and may be understood as representing thousands, or even millions of years. Other interpreters call attention to the significant language of the first verse of Genesis, which says: “In the beginning

God created the heavens and the earth.” They point out that there is no indication in the revelation itself when “the beginning” was, holding that “the sacred writer in Genesis does not commit himself to any definite limits of time (at all), but simply speaks of the creation as taking place ‘in the beginning,’ and (holding that) this phrase is elastic enough to cover the modern scientific position.”¹ That is, as to the time period in which the earth was created.

Our own position with reference to the time element in creation is that while there is no definite time fixed by revelation as to the “beginning” of the creation of our earth and its heavens, yet the revelation does limit the time of creation to the beginning “when” God created our earth and its heavens; this “beginning” and not an absolute beginning of the universe, is the meaning of the first verse of Genesis. So that the rendering of Genesis 1:1 would be: “In the beginning ‘when’ God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form,” and so following. This does not fix any period in terms of years for the beginning of the creation of our world; but it does make it possible to accord to science whatever antiquity its demonstrations may require for the duration of the earth, and hence approximately—with very wide latitude—the “beginning of creation.” Of this more will be said later.

The manner of creation. As already stated, the theologians held creation to be by fiat word of God, quoting in support *of* the theory ~~of~~ the scripture: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:6, 9). Against this fiat theory of creation, however, science has presented the view that the order and beauty of the world are not the result of one direct creative act, nor even of a series of directly creative acts; but it is the outcome of a gradual process continued through immense periods of time, from many lower forms and stages of life; and perhaps ultimately from one only life substance. There are, it is said, some eighty odd chemical elements known in the earth today, and it is now much more than a suggestion that these are the outcome of an inorganic evolution element, giving rise to element, going back and back to some primeval stuff from which they were all originally derived infinitely long ago;² and out of which has been differentiated all life forms that now inhabit the earth or that ever have lived upon it. This is the evolution theory of

¹Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, s.v. “The Creation Story and Science.”

²Thomson, *Outline of Science* 1:4.

accounting for the existence of life forms in the earth. It is described by one of the master architects of the theory, Herbert Spencer, as follows:

Definition of evolution.

Evolution is an integration of matter and a concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.³

After reading this definition, we can appreciate what Will Durant (author of *The Story of Philosophy*, 1926) meant when he says that Spencer “made the intellect of Europe gasp for breath,” when the author of the “Synthetic Philosophy” gave out that definition of evolution; nor are we surprised when he tells us that “it required ten volumes and forty years for its explanation.” Durant himself asks the question, “what does this definition mean?” and follows it with an explanation that is nearly as difficult as Spencer’s own. We may here only give part of Durant’s answer; sufficient, however, we trust, to set forth the theory of evolution somewhat clearly, though only in headlines.

The primeval nebula (cosmic dust) is homogeneous—i.e., it consists of parts that are alike (with that simple stuff, nebula dust, evolution starts); but soon it is differentiated into gases and liquids and solids; the earth becomes here green with grass, there white with mountain-tops (snow-capped), or blue with the multitudinous sea; evolving life begets, out of a relatively homogeneous protoplasm (i.e., stuff relatively simple), the varied organs of nutrition, reproduction, locomotion, and perception; a single language fills whole continents with its multiplying dialects; a single science breeds a hundred, and the folk-lore of a nation flowers into a thousand forms of literary art; individuality grows, character stands out uniquely, and every race and people develops its peculiar genius. Integration and heterogeneity, aggregation of parts into ever larger wholes and differentiation of parts into ever more varied forms: these are the foci of the orbit of evolution. Whatever passes from diffusion to integration and unity, and from a homogeneous simplicity to a differentiated complexity . . . is in the flow of evolution; whatever is returning from integration to diffusion, and from complexity to simplicity . . . is caught in the ebb of dissolution.⁴

The gloomy outcome of evolution. Here perhaps is as suitable a place as any to set down the horribly dark future which the theory of evolution sets out as the future of the world:

³Spencer, *First Principles*. [Roberts appears to have amalgamated phrases found in the index under “evolution” to generate this definition.]

⁴Durant, *Story of Philosophy*, 399.

“Finally, and inescapably,” says Mr. Durant, commenting upon the theory of evolution as set forth by Spencer,

comes “Equilibration.” Every motion, being motion under resistance, must sooner or later come to an end; every rhythmic oscillation (unless externally reinforced) suffers some loss of rate and amplitude. The planets ride through a lesser orbit, or will ride, than once they rode; the sun will shine less warmly and brightly as the centuries pass away; the friction of the tides will retard the rotation of the earth. This globe, that throbs and murmurs with a million motions, and luxuriates into a million forms of riotously breeding life, will some day move more leisurely in its orbit and its parts; the blood will run cooler and more slowly in our dessicated veins; we shall not hurry any more; like dying races, we shall think of heaven in terms of rest and not of life; we shall dream of Nirvana. Gradually, and then rapidly, equilibration will become dissolution, the unhappy epilogue of evolution. Societies will disintegrate, masses will migrate, cities will fade into the dark hinterland of peasant life; no government will be strong enough to hold the loosened parts together; social order will cease to be even remembered. And in the individual too, integration will give way to disruption; and that coördination which is life will pass into that diffuse disorder which is death. The earth will be a chaotic theatre of decay, a gloomy drama of energy in irreversible degradation; and it will itself be resolved into the dust and nebula from which it came. The cycle of evolution and dissolution will be complete. The cycle will begin again, and endless times again; but always this will be the dénouement. *Memento mori* is written upon the face of life; and every birth is a prelude to decay and death.⁵

Such the gloom of evolution! What is the use of these repeated cycles of life and death? Though endless the repetition of such cycles of life, could one say that existence is better than non-existence?

⁵Durant, *Story of Philosophy*, 400–401.

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Darwin, *Origin of Species*; Darwin, *Descent of Man*; Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*; Haeckel, *Evolution of Man*; Haeckel, *Life and Work*, 130, 114, 279, 310; Haeckel, *Riddle of the Universe*, 54, 239, 243; Roberts, “Man’s Relationship to Deity,” in *Gospel*, 3rd. ed.; Spencer, *First Principles*; and Spencer, *Synthetic Philosophy*. For a discussion of theories about creation and evolution, see pages 644–50 below.