

**THE BOOK OF
GENESIS**

*The Bible for
School and Home*

by J. Paterson Smyth

The Book of Genesis

Moses and the Exodus

Joshua and the Judges

The Prophets and Kings

*When the Christ Came:
The Highlands of Galilee*

*When the Christ Came:
The Road to Jerusalem*

St. Matthew

St. Mark

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GENESIS**

by

J. Paterson Smyth

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I

This series of books is intended for two classes of teachers:

1. *For Teachers in Week Day and Sunday Schools.* For these each book is divided into complete lessons. The lesson will demand preparation. Where feasible there should be diligent use of commentaries and of any books indicated in the notes. *As a general rule* I think the teacher should not bring the book at all to his class if he is capable of doing without it. He should make copious notes of the subject. The lesson should be thoroughly studied and digested beforehand, with all the additional aids at his disposal, and it should come forth at the class warm and fresh from his own heart and brain. But I would lay down no rigid rule about the use of the Lesson Book. To some it may be a burden to keep the details of a long lesson in the memory; and, provided the subject has been very carefully studied, the Lesson Book, with its salient points carefully marked in coloured pencil, may be a considerable help. Let each do what seems best in his particular case, only taking care to satisfy his conscience that it is not done through

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laziness, and that he can really do best for his class by the plan which he adopts.

2. *For Parents* who would use it in teaching their children at home. They need only small portions, brief little lessons of about ten minutes each night. For these each chapter is divided into short sections. I should advise that on the first night only the Scripture indicated should be read, with some passing remarks and questions to give a grip of the story. That is enough. Then night after night go on with the teaching, taking as much or as little as one sees fit.

I have not written out the teaching in full as a series of readings which could be read over to the child without effort or thought. With this book in hand a very little preparation and adaptation will enable one to make the lesson more interesting and more personal and to hold the child's attention by questioning. Try to get his interest. Try to make him talk. Make the lesson conversational. Don't preach.

II

HINTS FOR TEACHING

An ancient Roman orator once laid down for his pupils the three-fold aim of a teacher:

1. *Placere* (to interest).
2. *Docere* (to teach).
3. *Movere* (to move).

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1. To interest the audience (in order to teach them).
2. To teach them (in order to move them).
3. To move them to action.

On these three words of his I hang a few suggestions on the teaching of this set of Lessons.

1. Placere (to interest)

I want especially to insist on attention to this rule. Some teachers seem to think that to interest the pupils is a minor matter. It is not a minor matter and the pupils will very soon let you know it. Believe me, it is no waste of time to spend hours during the week in planning to excite their interest to the utmost. Most of the complaints of inattention would cease at once if the teacher would give more study to rousing their interest. After all, there is little use in knowing the facts of your subject, and being anxious about the souls of the pupils, if all the time that you are teaching, these pupils are yawning and taking no interest in what you say. I know some have more aptitude for teaching than others. Yet, after considerable experience of teachers whose lesson was a weariness to the flesh, and of teachers who never lost attention for a moment, I am convinced, on the whole, that the power to interest largely depends on the previous preparation.

Therefore do not content yourself with merely studying the teaching of this series. Read widely and freely. Read not only commentaries, but books that will

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give local interest and colour—books that will throw valuable sidelights on your sketch.

But more than reading is necessary. You know the meaning of the expression, "*Put yourself in his place.*" Practise that in every Bible story, using your imagination, living in the scene, experiencing, as far as you can, every feeling of the actors. To some this is no effort at all. They feel their cheeks flushing and their eyes growing moist as they project themselves involuntarily into the scene before them. But though it be easier to some than to others, it is in some degree possible to all, and the interest of the lesson largely depends on it. I have done my best in these books to help the teacher in this respect. But no man can help another much. Success will depend entirely on the effort to "put yourself in his place."

In reading the Bible chapter corresponding to each lesson, I suggest that the teacher should read part of the chapter, rather than let the pupils tire themselves by "reading round." My experience is that this "reading round" is a fruitful source of listlessness. When his verse is read, the pupil can let his mind wander till his turn comes again, and so he loses all interest. I have tried, with success, varying the monotony. I would let them read the first round of verses in order; then I would make them read out of the regular order, as I called their names; and sometimes, if the lesson were long, I would again and again interrupt by reading a group of verses myself, making remarks as I went on. To lose their interest is fatal.

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I have indicated also in the lessons that you should not unnecessarily give information yourself. Try to question it *into* them. If you tell them facts which they have just read, they grow weary. If you ask a question, and then answer it yourself when they miss it, you cannot keep their attention. Send your questions around in every sort of order, or want of order. Try to puzzle them—try to surprise them. Vary the form of the question, if not answered, and always feel it to be a defeat if you ultimately fail in getting the answer you want.

2. *Docere (to teach)*

You interest the pupil in order that you may *teach*. Therefore teach definitely the Lesson that is set you. Do not be content with interesting him. Do not be content either with drawing spiritual teaching. Teach the facts before you. Be sure that God has inspired the narration of them for some good purpose.

When you are dealing with Old Testament characters, do not try to shirk or to condone evil in them. They were not faultless saints. They were men like ourselves, whom God was helping and bearing with, as He helps and bears with us, and the interest of the story largely depends on the pupil realizing this.

In the Old Testament books of this series you will find very full chapters written on the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the election of Jacob, the Sun standing still, the slaughter of Canaanites, and other such subjects. In connection with these I want to say something that

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especially concerns teachers. Your pupils, now or later, can hardly avoid coming in contact with the flippant scepticism so common nowadays, which makes jests at the story of the sun standing still, and talks of the folly of believing that all humanity was condemned because Eve ate an apple thousands of years ago. This flippant tone is "in the air." They will meet with it in their companions, in the novels of the day, in popular magazine articles on their tables at home. You have, many of you, met with it yourselves; you know how disturbing it is; and you probably know, too, that much of its influence on people arises from the narrow and unwise teaching of the Bible in their youth. Now you have no right to ignore this in your teaching of the Bible. You need not talk of Bible difficulties and their answers. You need not refer to them at all. But teach the truth that will take the sting out of these difficulties when presented in after-life.

To do this requires trouble and thought. We have learned much in the last fifty years that has thrown new light for us on the meaning of some parts of the Bible; which has, at any rate, made doubtful some of our old interpretations of it. We must not ignore this. There are certain traditional theories which some of us still insist on teaching as God's infallible truth, whereas they are really only human opinions about it, which may possibly be mistaken. As long as they are taught as human opinions, even if we are wrong, the mistake will do no harm. But if things are taught as God's infallible truth, to be believed on peril of doubting God's Word, it may do grave mischief, if in after-life the pupil find

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them seriously disputed, or perhaps false. A shallow, unthinking man, finding part of his teaching false, which has been associated in his mind with the most solemn sanctions of religion, is in danger of letting the whole go. Thus many of our young people drift into hazy doubt about the Bible. Then we get troubled about their beliefs, and give them books of Christian evidences to win them back by explaining that what was taught them in childhood was not *quite* correct, and needs now to be modified by a broader and slightly different view. But we go on as before with the younger generation, and expose them in their turn to the same difficulties.

Does it not strike you that, instead of this continual planning to win men back from unbelief, it might be worth while to try the other method of not exposing them to unbelief? Give them the more careful and intelligent teaching at first, and so prepare them to meet the difficulties by-and-by.

I have no wish to advocate any so-called "advanced" teaching. Much of such teaching I gravely object to. But there are truths of which there is no question amongst thoughtful people, which somehow are very seldom taught to the young, though ignorance about them in after-life leads to grave doubt and misunderstanding. Take, for example, the gradual, progressive nature of God's teaching in Scripture, which makes the Old Testament teaching as a whole lower than that of the New. This is certainly no doubtful question, and the knowledge of it is necessary for an intelligent study of

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Scripture. I have dealt with it where necessary in some of the books of this series.

I think, too, our teaching on what may seem to us doubtful questions should be more fearless and candid. If there are two different views each held by able and devout men, do not teach your own as the infallibly true one, and ignore or condemn the other. For example, do not insist that the order of creation must be accurately given in the first chapter of Genesis. You may think so; but many great scholars, with as deep a reverence for the Bible as you have, think that inspired writers were circumscribed by the science of their time. Do not be too positive that the story of the Fall *must be* an exactly literal narrative of facts. If you believe that it is I suppose you must tell your pupil so. But do not be afraid to tell him also that there are good and holy and scholarly men who think of it as a great old-world allegory, like the parable of the Prodigal Son, to teach in easy popular form profound lessons about sin. Endeavor in your Bible teaching “to be thoroughly truthful: to assert nothing as certain which is not certain, nothing as probable which is not probable, and nothing as more probable than it is.” Let the pupil see that there are some things that we cannot be quite sure about, and let him gather insensibly from your teaching the conviction that truth, above all things, is to be loved and sought, and that religion has never anything to fear from discovering the truth. If we could but get this healthy, manly, common-sense attitude adopted now in teaching the Bible to young people, we should, with

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God's blessing, have in the new generation a stronger and more intelligent faith.

3. *Movere (to move)*

All your teaching is useless unless it have this object: to move the heart, to rouse the affections toward the love of God, and the will toward the effort after the blessed life. You interest in order to teach. You teach in order to move. *That* is the supreme object. Here the teacher must be left largely to his own resources. One suggestion I offer: don't preach. At any rate, don't preach much lest you lose grip of your pupils. You have their attention all right while their minds are occupied by a carefully prepared lesson; but wait till you close your Bible, and, assuming a long face, begin, "And now, boys," etc. and straightway they know what is coming, and you have lost them in a moment.

Do not change your tone at the application of your lesson. Try to keep the teaching still conversational. Try still in this more spiritual part of your teaching to question into them what you want them to learn. Appeal to the judgment and to the conscience. I can scarce give a better example than that of our Lord in teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan. He first interested His pupil by putting His lesson in an attractive form, and then He did not append to it a long, tedious moral. He simply asked the man before Him, "Which of these three *thinkest thou?*"—i.e., "What do you think about it?" The interest was still kept up. The man, pleased at the appeal to his judgment, replied promptly, "He that

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showed mercy on him;” and on the instant came the quick rejoinder, “Go, and do thou likewise.” Thus the lesson ends. Try to work on that model.

Now, while forbidding preaching to your pupils, may I be permitted a little preaching myself? This series of lessons is intended for Sunday schools as well as week-day schools. It is of Sunday-school teachers I am thinking in what I am now about to say. I cannot escape the solemn feeling of the responsibility of every teacher for the children in his care. Some of these children have little or no religious influence exerted on them for the whole week except in this one hour with you. Do not make light of this work. Do not get to think, with good-natured optimism, that all the nice, pleasant children in your class are pretty sure to be Christ’s soldiers and servants by-and-by. Alas! for the crowds of these nice, pleasant children, who, in later life, wander away from Christ into the ranks of evil. Do not take this danger lightly. Be anxious; be prayerful; be terribly in earnest, that the one hour in the week given you to use be wisely and faithfully used.

But, on the other hand, be very hopeful too, because of the love of God. He will not judge you hardly. Remember that He will bless very feeble work, if it be your best. Remember that He cares infinitely more for the children’s welfare than you do, and, therefore, by His grace, much of the teaching about which you are despondent may bring forth good fruit in the days to come. Do you know the lines about “The Noisy Seven”?—

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“I wonder if he remembers—

Our sainted teacher in heaven—
The class in the old grey schoolhouse,
Known as the ‘Noisy Seven’?

“I wonder if he remembers

How restless we used to be.
Or thinks we forget the lesson
Of Christ and Gethsemane?

“I wish I could tell the story

As he used to tell it then;
I’m sure that, with Heaven’s blessing,
It would reach the hearts of men.

“I often wish I could tell him,

Though we caused him so much pain
By our thoughtless, boyish frolic,
His lessons were not in vain.

“I’d like to tell him how Willie,

The merriest of us all,
From the field of Balaclava
Went home at the Master’s call.

“I’d like to tell him how Ronald,

So brimming with mirth and fun,
Now tells the heathen of India
The tale of the Crucified One.

“I’d like to tell him how Robert,

And Jamie, and George, and ‘Ray,’
Are honoured in the Church of God—
The foremost men of their day.

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“I’d like, yes, I’d like to tell him
 What his lesson did for me;
And how I am trying to follow
 The Christ of Gethsemane.

“Perhaps he knows it already,
 For Willie has told him, maybe,
That we are all coming, coming
 Through Christ of Gethsemane.

“How many besides I know not
 Will gather at last in heaven,
The fruit of that faithful sowing,
 But the sheaves are already seven.”

LESSON I

THE CREATION STORY

Lecture to the Teacher

I

I begin with a quotation from a well-known English scientist (Sir William Henry Preece, K.C.B., F.R.S., etc.):

“In all the Literature of all the languages there is no poem so magnificent as the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. It dashes off with a master’s hand in a few bold words the history of a million years. The first fact chronicled is: ‘In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth,’ and the next: ‘God said, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.”’ We are not enlightened, as to the tools or processes by which these things were fashioned, or to the period occupied in the operations. Creation may and probably is going on still, for new wonders are being discovered every day, and there is no sign of finality. Our range of observation is a mere dot in the vast expanse of space.

“It was the fashion in the days of my youth to regard Science and Religion as antagonistic. It is so no

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longer. I have known more religious men in the ranks of Science than in the Army of the Church. My two great Masters in Electricity were Faraday and Kelvin. They were eminently true religious men. The Facts of Science, when properly interpreted, invariably support the truths of Religion.”

Where did this wonderful Creation Story originate? We do not know. How old is it? We do not know. We know only that in its substance it is ages older than the Book of Genesis where it finds its present place.

A most interesting fact brought out by thoughtful Bible study is that the Bible was not formed all at once but grew gradually. Long before our present Old Testament books God was helping men by earlier fragmentary teaching, oral teaching, folklore told in tribal gatherings and around the ancient camp fires; written teaching perhaps reaching back before Abraham, when writing was quite common in the early world. We can tell very little about it but we have clear traces of its existence. Just as we know of the existence of long lost primeval life-forms through fossils embedded in the rocks, so we know of the existence of this long lost ancient literature through its traces embedded in the Bible.

The Old Testament writers, you will remember, keep repeatedly telling us of the old lost documents existing long before themselves. They tell us that they are quoting from, e.g., the Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers xxi. 4), the Book of Jasher (2 Samuel i. 18), Books of Gad and Nathan (1 Chronicles xxix. 29, and

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2 Chronicles xii. 15); the Books of Shemaiah and Iddo (2 Chronicles vii. 15); the Book of Jehu (2 Chronicles xx. 34); etc., etc.

I want, in passing, to emphasize for you the fact stated by the inspired writers themselves that they wrote their histories of past ages much in the way that Mr. Green or Professor Gardiner or any other historian wrote his history. This is most important to remember in the scare about Higher Criticism which some of you know about. You would never think of doubting these historians' account of William the Conqueror merely because they wrote their histories 900 years after his death. Of course you would believe that they studied the books of earlier historians and old letters and parchments and inscriptions and monuments. And if all the libraries and museums which contained these should be burned down to-morrow you would surely think it unreasonable if people should say that we have no good grounds for believing that William the Conqueror ever lived.

Yet something of this kind is what makes people uneasy in the statements of what is called "Higher Criticism." Scholars express the opinion that the Pentateuch *in its present completed form* was written centuries later than Moses' day. Then somebody suggests that if that be so it cannot be trustworthy history, in fact that the writer must have been romancing a good deal. It is a steady thought to keep in mind that the writers keep telling us that their histories were so much made up out of pre-existing documents. On reading Green's "History of the English People" you know that

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300 years before him there were several less complete printed histories—and 300 years earlier still there were still less complete manuscript chronicles, and 300 years farther back there were separate uncollected annals, and state papers and letters and documents of various kinds. Thus gradually by successive editing English history grew. And thus also gradually Bible history grew, under the care of that inspired Church whose history it was.

No one can tell from what age of the world our Hebrew Creation Stories came into the Bible. We have two of them thus lifted in side by side in Genesis. One of them in the first chapter, the other in the second. They differ in the titles “God” and “Lord God” given to the Creator; they differ, too, in details, but they agree in the grand claim that in the beginning GOD (not a great crocodile, nor an elephant, nor a set of fighting deities), but GOD created the heavens and the earth.

What strange fancies this Creation Story sets stirring! How far back does it go? Did you ever wonder what the ancient world did for want of a Bible before the Bible was written? How did men during all these centuries learn anything about God? Had they this Creation Story in substance handed down perhaps by word of mouth in the folklore of the early Hebrew race? Was it the first inspired Bible of the primitive world? Did Moses’s mother teach it to her boy as she nursed him in the palace? Was it part of the religious knowledge which made Joseph such a hero? Did Abram receive it in Ur of the Chaldees? Had God already guided inspired men to teach the infant world The Creation, The Fall, The

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Story of the Flood, as a sort of “Bible before the Bible” for those ancient days?

We cannot answer these questions. We find the story standing in the Book of Genesis. And we know that it came from far earlier sources. That is all we know.

II

Now, we are to consider this old Creation Story.

I don't think any thoughtful reader can study it without being impressed with two things: its simplicity and its grandeur.

Its simplicity lies on the very surface. It evidently belongs in its simple form to simple people in the simple child ages of the old world. There are no scientific statements. There are no learned descriptions. Just the simple story for simple people in the simple child ages.

Its simplicity, I say, lies on the surface. But fully to realize its grandeur and sublimity you must compare this Hebrew Creation Story with some of the Creation Stories of other races.

Some fifty years ago a sensation was created in the religious world by the discovery of a similar Creation Story and Deluge Story in Abraham's old home in Chaldea. It is written on clay tablets, and in its origin goes back probably to Abraham's day. It was studied with deep interest both because it came

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from Abraham's country and because it resembled our Genesis account.

Both the Chaldean account and the Bible account agree in having the simplicity of an old world story for the child races of the world. But if you want to feel in full force the meaning of inspiration, you have only to compare the two stories, to compare the gross polytheism and superstition into which the poor stupid age naturally drifted—and the pure, dignified, sublime account given to teach a chosen race who should bear the torch of God's light for humanity.

Reading the two together you feel at once how like they are and yet how unlike. You see that they are both simple stories in simple form for the child races of the world.

But one tells in simple childlike way of many gods with evil human passions at the head of creation. The other tells in the same simple childlike way of one God, holy and just and good who created everything in the heavens and the earth, who made the sun and the moon which the Chaldeans worshipped, and the great bulls to which the Egyptians prayed, and who as the crown and summit of His whole creation "made MAN in His image, after His likeness, and gave him dominion over the fish and the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." Some think that the Chaldean story is a corruption of a purer original. Others think that God's inspiration enabled the Chosen Race to purify an older story and to see with the keen

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intuition derived from on high, that “In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth.”

But, however this may have been, no one can compare this Hebrew statement with the Chaldean or Egyptian or any other in the world without a sense of the presence of God.

A deep sense of God’s inspiration in the Old Testament comes from comparing it with the writings and thoughts of other nations around. When you read of the dark ages of Greece and Rome, the stories of their filthy gods and goddesses, and the deeds of their brave, cruel, boastful men—it never occurs to you to expect any trace of sorrow for sin or longing after holiness. Then turn to read the early prophets of Israel pleading only for righteousness and the psalmists crying and longing after God and mourning in deep agony for their sins, and you feel at once this sense of God’s presence, of God’s inspiration, of God’s great purpose to raise up one nation as the teachers and prophets of the world.

In deepest sincerity I am saying what I feel. No man can honestly place the writings of Scripture beside any other writings of their time without confessing that the best proof of the inspiration of the Bible is the Bible itself. Has any man ever found conviction of sin and conversion to God resulting from the study of Greek or Roman classics? We find it continually resulting from the study of the Hebrew classics. We believe that the Bible is inspired because it inspires.

III

Many difficulties that have been found by superficial readers in the story of creation arise from misunderstandings which should have been corrected in us in our childhood and which it is our business to correct in the pupils of our day. I don't mean that we should necessarily speak to them of doubts and difficulties; but that we should avoid the teaching and correct the misapprehensions which lead to such doubts and difficulties.

Take, for instance, the vague impression in many minds that science demands a much greater antiquity for the world than the Bible accounts would allow. This impression has been, I think, originated mainly by the statement in the margin of many old Bibles that Creation took place B.C. 4004. Of course, this marginal note is no part of the Bible. It is but a mere human conjecture inserted 300 years ago. But it has turned out to be a mischievous conjecture. Because it is on a page of the Bible, people have unconsciously accepted it as of some authority, and feel troubled when they read in authoritative scientific works that probably four million and four¹ would be nearer to the truth. Tell the pupils

¹The 4 has an amusing appearance of exactness, as if there were really some good grounds for fixing a date. In this age it is a surprising and interesting study, that of the efforts made by the greatest minds in the Church for centuries to settle this question. The great majority, from Eusebius to Archbishop Ussher, agreed that the date must be B.C. 4004. They were not content even with fixing the year. In the seventeenth century Dr. John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of the University of

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to draw a pencil mark through that 4004; and in future when you read of the millions of years that go to make a limestone rock, and the millions or billions that may go to make a planet—when your mind almost reels at the stupendousness of the thought, remember that the Bible puts no difficulty in your path by setting limits to the time. This marvellous old Creation story simply says “*In the beginning,*” which may have been thousands, or millions, or billions of years ago. In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

So far for statements that are clearly *not* in the Bible. Next comes a statement that *is* in the Bible: that Creation was finished in six days. I suppose nobody now believes, except the children, that the Creation was finished in six literal days of twenty-four hours each. The children believe it still; and one sometimes feels it a pity that we have to correct them. For this story, belonging to the child races of the primitive world, has been apparently with intention cast in this simple form, so that it should be intelligible to even the simplest minds in all the ages. Perhaps the earliest writer or teacher of it thought—no doubt, the primitive races who learned it thought—that the Creation was begun on the first morning of a certain week, and cleanly finished on the last night, as a carpenter might finish off his week’s work. It was a simple notion, but sufficient for them, and nothing would have been gained by explaining to

Cambridge, one of the most eminent Hebraists of his time, declared, as the result of his careful calculations, that Creation took place and man was created by the Trinity on October 23rd, 4004 B.C., at nine o’clock in the morning!

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them that this framework of six days might represent millions of years. It would have been premature. It would have been bewildering to men who could form no clear conception of large numbers or long periods of time.¹ It would have been utterly useless for the purpose intended of helping men's lives nearer to God. People were but big children, needing children's teaching for their simple, undeveloped minds. The teaching must be true, but popular and elementary. Does anyone seriously believe that it would have been well to teach them in an accurate science lesson about the "HOW" of Creation; to teach them, perhaps, about evolution, and the nebular theory, and the "uncompounded homogeneous, gaseous condition of matter," and the vast stretches of time needed for making the universe? Of what use would all this bewildering knowledge have been in teaching the one fact of supreme import for them to save them from grovelling, debasing polytheism; that it was God, holy and good, who made all things; and that the crown and summit of His work was man?

I don't think it matters at all that the early simple minds should have so read the Creation story, or that simple people should still believe that the world was created in six literal days. Good Christians and holy men in all ages have done so, and their religion was none the worse for it. But it matters very much if people insist that this is the only possible belief consistent with Scripture, that the truth of inspiration is pledged to

¹Mr. Gladstone emphasizes this point in his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*; and points to his studies in Homer for proof that the early men could not clearly comprehend large numbers.

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this belief, and that to doubt it is to doubt the inspired Word of God.

For the framework of six scenes or days is no essential part of the story. And the writer of this Book of Genesis seems to go out of his way to show this. For, as I have said, he gives you a second Creation story side by side with the first (*ch.* ii. 4-26), differing from it as one of the Gospels differs from another, yet helping to make the lesson more complete. This second version is not at all arranged in the six days' framework; nay, it rather thinks of Creation as done in one day—“*in the day*” (ii. 4)—which caused a great deal of controversy for ages in the Church. This second version also is not particular to give the same order of Creation; while the teaching about God and man is just the same in them both. The Creation Psalm, also (civ.), which is a paraphrase of this story, lays no stress on the time or on the order of the Creation. And the same is true of all the passages in the Bible praising God for His creative work. Surely this should make it at least probable that to teach the time and the exact order was no part of the object of inspiration, but to teach the great lesson, so essential to religion, that all things come of God.

IV

But let there be no mistake here. Let there be no flippant talk that because the purpose of the Bible is religious and moral, therefore the account of the Creation here is to be treated lightly, or as unworthy the attention of scientific men. For this Creation story is

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at the foundation of all science as well as of all religion. Even men who doubt its supernatural origin must at least see what it has done for the world in saving it from subjection to the grotesque myths and nature-worship and polytheism which grew wild in the world, and which would have made a true science of nature impossible. Where the sun and moon were gods, and the crocodile and ox were revered as divine, and men bowed down in fear at the many deities warring in the stormy heavens, a true science of nature could not be. Where the powers of nature were worshipped and feared, there could never be the confidence or freedom needed for the study of nature. To the Hebrew poets and prophets alone there is calm and peace. They have learned the inspired Creation Story. To them there is no power in nature save the one supreme will—snow and hail, fire and vapour, stormy wind, fulfilling His word. All through the Bible runs that deep and reverent teaching of which the keynote is struck in these opening words of Genesis, and whose influence has given to mankind the liberty which made possible the scientific attitude of mind.

But, people say, it is not a scientifically correct account of Creation, and, therefore, could not be inspired by God. Perhaps it is not a scientifically correct account; but does it follow, therefore, that it is not inspired of God? When a child asks us questions about the phenomena of nature, do we give him scientifically correct accounts? Would it be wise to do so? Would he understand us? We consider the capacity of the child's mind, and impart to him *as much truth as he is capable*

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of receiving on the matter in a simple, imperfect, popular way. We aim at a teaching that will be intelligible, that will not teach him what is false, and that will not have to be unlearned by him by-and-by, when his mind grows able to understand the full scientifically accurate account. And if some scientific professor should object that our explanation was very imperfect, we should think that though that professor might know a good deal about science, he knew very little about teaching children.

I want you to see that it is an entirely false issue when you ask: “Is this a completely scientific account of Creation?” The question is rather: “Does this Genesis story accomplish what seems to be its purpose?”

Is it not simple enough for the youngest child in our Sunday schools to understand it, and remember it?

Is it not lofty and elevating enough for the philosopher in its conceptions of the greatness of God and the dignity of man as the child of God?

Is it not helpful to science in its delivering men from the terror of nature; in its conception of the unity and universality of creation; in its introducing the great idea of creating—i.e., making out of nothing—which pagan nations unaided have always been unable to attain?

And does it not fulfil the further condition that the *simple old child-lesson will never have to be laid aside*, but only enlarged, and its details filled in? For all the ages up to this it has served its purpose; but men say now that it does so no longer. Science has been teaching us the marvellous discoveries of evolution—of germs of

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life developed through ever higher stages for myriads of years; and foolish, hasty people say, "The Bible is now disproved. All things have come not by direct creation of God, but by slow, age-long development from lower stages." Perhaps this theory will be superseded by a better; but at present it seems a very probable theory. Does it overthrow the Bible? Is the old creation story contradicted if this theory be correct?

Nay, rather, has it not for thoughtful readers of the Bible received a new light and glory? Men have gone back to the old Creation story to read it again in the light of this new discovery about evolution. Many students of Scripture at first were perplexed. Then they went back. They saw at once that creation would be just as Divine and miraculous if it were slow and gradual. Doubtless God could instantaneously make a mighty oak; but surely it is no less wonderful if He should only make the little acorn, of which I could carry a dozen in my hand, and yet, every one of which contains within it a mighty oak endued with power to carry on a succession of mighty oaks through ages to come. This roughly illustrates the difference between the idea of direct creation of a world completely fitted up at once, and that of a slow, gradual evolution which men of science at present think to be the truer theory of creation.

Men saw, I repeat, that the Creation story was at least not incompatible with evolution. Then they examined the old document more closely in the light of this new science, and they saw that there was absolutely no warrant in it for looking on the world as a ready-made

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piece of work. They saw in the inspired story—what men had not looked for before—a foreshadowing of this magnificent process. It reveals a law of continuous development in creation. “These are the generations of the heavens when they were created.” “The inspired historian saw no Almighty Hand building up the galleries of Creation; he heard no sound of hammer nor confused noise of workmen; the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the deep; chaos took form and comeliness before His inspired vision; and the solar system grew through a succession of days to its present order and beauty;” and at last, when all things were ready—after how many myriads of years we know not—man came forth of the dust, the summit of the whole creation, for “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

Instead, therefore, of assuming an apologetic tone for this Creation story, try to understand its purpose and its effect on life; try to realize what a check it has been on the wild growth of mythologies and debasing nature-worship; what a foundation it has made for the science and religion of the world; how it has taught, what could never have been otherwise learned, that all things come into existence through the originating will of God; that the summit of the whole Creation is man, the child of God, into whom the Divine breath has been breathed, to make him akin to the Almighty.

Learn thus a deep reverence for the story, which shall show through your teaching, and shall help your pupils of this new generation to more solemn thoughts about the Bible.

LESSON ON THE CREATION STORY

Genesis I. and II. to v. 4

Read carefully the introductory Lecture to this Lesson. Note that the teaching to be emphasized is (1) that all things come from the hand of God; (2) the dignity of man made in God's likeness, the end and summit of Creation.

§ 1. *The Creation Story*

I want you to look back a long time—to the time when you were not here in the world. How long ago? Ten, fifteen years? Was anybody here then—father? mother? Were there animals? trees? rivers? etc. All without you! How could they have got on without you! Now we go back still farther, before father, mother, or anyone that you know; go by steps or stages back to St. Paul; back to Isaiah, to Moses, to Abraham, to Noah. Back behind all; before men, women, trees, anything existed; all a mass of dull cloud and vapour, and darkness, and confusion. What does the Bible say? (*ch. i., v. 2*). We don't know how many thousands or millions of years ago. Was anybody here then? God. Was there ever a time when God was not in the world? What was God going to do with all that confused, cloudy mass, without form and void? To make a world. How did He begin? (*v. 2*). And then? (*v. 3*). You see how easy for God to make

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everything; just a brooding of His Spirit—just a word of His power. “He spake and it was done.”

Now, do you know that this Creation story is probably older by far than Moses—older by far than the Book of Genesis, where it has been inserted? Perhaps in substance older than Abraham, or perhaps revealed to Abraham, and used by his children and descendants long before Moses’s day as a little Bible fragment to keep their thoughts right with God.

Fancy Moses, and Joseph, and Isaac being taught this old story by their mothers in some such form as we have it to-day.

See how simply that story was taught. In seven periods, seven divisions or little chapters, or seven “days.” This made it easy to remember, and to teach to the children and the simple big people in the wandering tribes. We do not think that God made everything in six exact days of twenty-four hours each; but that was the simple Eastern way of learning it.

Some people think that the whole story was perhaps revealed to the inspired writer in a vision of six scenes or days, as if a magic lantern should show it in six pictures. We do not know. Could God have made everything in six days or six hours? Yes; just as easily as in six thousand years. But the world has the appearance of having been very slowly made, and certainly took many thousands of years.

And so you have to learn to-day the story that was taught to the children, and men, and women in the early ages of the world. What does it say was made

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on first day (or period)? second? third? etc. What did God say of each day's work? (Question carefully but rapidly through the chapter up to v. 25, trying to leave on the mind the impression of the gradual, orderly way in which Creation progressed from the formless void of v. 2, through all the stages, until at last the earth stood ready for its final purpose; and then, when all was prepared, after perhaps enormous periods of time, God made man. (*Be careful to lead up to man's creation as the climax.*) If teachers teach it wisely, this story, so simply learned by the child-races of the world, will never have to be superseded as science advances. By-and-by, if the pupils should learn all that science may have then to tell about *how* the Creation was accomplished, the old story of their childhood, in its simple grandeur, will still remain as the eternal framework, Science only has to fill in the details.)

§ 2. *The Use of the Creation Story*

Now, why do you think this Creation story was so very important for men to know? Why should they care? Because they could not help caring. The cows, and horses, and lions did not want to know how they came here; but men can't help wondering and asking, Where did I come from? What am I here for? Where am I going to? Did anyone make me and all things about me? or did we just come of ourselves, by chance, with no one to care for us. If somebody made us, what sort of being was it—good or bad, loving or hostile—a god or a brute? Men could never have the courage to struggle

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on without knowing, or at least guessing, something of these things. Do you think they could ever find out by themselves? Who must teach them? God.

Would it make any matter if people never learned the answer to their questions? If they thought they came by chance, or that the sun and moon, or a number of not very good gods, had made them, or that some great big elephant made them, or a crocodile, as some of them thought in Egypt where Moses lived—would it matter? Why? Because if I thought that I came by chance, or was made by bad gods, or by a brutal crocodile or elephant, I should be always frightened and troubled, and I should feel that I was a low, degraded thing; so I should never be likely to rise up to a life of beautiful deeds and noble thoughts. But if I somehow found out that a noble, righteous, loving God had made me, with His own nature in me, and was watching over me as His own child, and wanted me to be noble and righteous and loving, just like Himself, would not that make a difference? Therefore God began His Bible with this glorious statement—“In the beginning God created,” etc.

Would it be any comfort to the poor world of olden days? Think of the poor, simple, frightened people who did not know. They saw earthquakes, and lightning, and fierce, raging seas. They heard the wild storm-wind breaking down the trees, and the beasts of prey roaring in the forest, and they trembled, and feared, and prayed to these animals, and these strong forces of nature around them. And perhaps they asked in their wonder, Did anyone make these? Does anyone

rule them? Did anyone make us? Where did we come from? Does anyone take thought for us? Can anyone help us? Can the sun and moon save us when we, in Chaldea, pray to them? Can the crocodiles and river be appeased when we sacrifice to them in Egypt? And God's answer came at last. Like a cool, soft hand upon the world's hot brow, there came this peace of God through the Creation story: "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth. And GOD made two great lights, the sun and moon that ye worship; and GOD made the great monsters that you are so terribly afraid of; and GOD made you, and breathed His breath into you to make you holy. You are the greatest thing in God's creation, for you are most like to God." Would not that be a comfort to them, and a help to make them brave and good?

§ 3. *Man in God's Image*

Read from v. 26. Now we come to the final act of Creation. On what day? Yes. That is the last of the great periods of Creation. All the dead things—earth, and sun, and moon—were made. The earth was made, the animals were made; and all were good. All obeyed the law of their nature as God designed; they *had* to do it. The sun and moon could not help rising and setting, could they? But at last God was going to make the noblest thing of all—a being with some of His own divine nature in him; a being with a free will, who could obey or disobey as he pleased. So He said, "Let us make man;" and He made man. And, like a boy awaking

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in the morning, and wondering, and asking, “Where am I?” the man awoke into life, and rose upright, and knew at once that he was not like the beasts around him. Why? i. v. 26; ii. 7. “In God’s image, after God’s likeness.” Even to us, in spite of the Fall, much of this likeness remains. There is a spark of God’s nature in every one of us; we have a consciousness of God; we have a feeling within of a great eternal rule of right stamped on our soul; and when we do right or wrong, something inside us praises or blames us; and when we want to do a bad thing, it insists “you ought not;” we can’t prevent it doing so; and sometimes it frightens us, and points us in the dark midnight to a great judgment hereafter. Did you ever feel this curious feeling? What do we call it? Conscience! Yes, it is the part of us where the Holy Spirit dwells, and by which He prompts us to every good thought and deed. Is this true of the beasts? (Make the children realize this difference between man and beast, and thus understand the meaning of “God’s image and likeness.”)

Is it not a glorious thought that man is the chief work—the crown of all God’s Creation? That when Christ came to earth, it was not as an angel, but a man. Whenever you think your life insignificant, and that it does not matter whether an insignificant thing such as you does right or wrong, think that we are *related* to God—in kinship with God, as none of the beasts are. Remember this, that you are made in God’s image and likeness; that we are so important in His sight that He thought it worth while spending thousands and thousands of years in preparing this earth for us as a

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sort of platform on which we should live, and form our characters, and grow Godlike and fit for heaven; that He thought it worth while at last, when all else failed, to come down to earth, and take our nature, and die for us. Is it not a shame to disappoint Him?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON I

Does Bible tell how long ago God began creating the world?

What does it say?

Must six days mean six literal days?

What was created on first day?

Tell of some of the other days.

What was the final act of creation?

What does this teach us about Man? For whose sake was the world created?