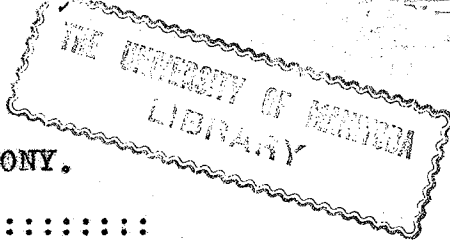


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THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY.

By D. Lang

As to the origin of the present universe three different theories have had and still have their supporters:-

1. That the world as it now exists existed in this same form from eternity.
2. That the matter but not the form has eternally existed.
3. That both the matter and form are the product of a spiritual cause.

There is little doubt as to which of these theories, the writer of the Genesis account accepted; he was confident in the belief that all things were created by a spiritual being. Often-times the first few words of a paragraph sum up and express in germ, the thought unfolded in that paragraph, so the writer of Genesis gives in commencing the key to all that follows. He wishes to teach man that God is the originator- the first cause of the multiplicity found in the universe, and states the truth in the first verse of the narrative. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth!" He was not only an architect who moulded and shaped existent material according to his will - but more than this he called the material into being. He possessed the idea and then by willing gave this idea objective form by calling into being that which would correspond to the idea- for such seems to be the ordinary meaning of the Hebrew word translated "Created".

In order that we may rightly unfold the meaning of any author it is necessary that if possible the purpose of the writer should be discovered and kept clearly in view, for if the primary purpose is to teach religion, we must regard any matter brought from other realms of knowledge merely as illustrations of the religious truth or if the primary purpose is to teach scientific truth we cannot complain if the theology is bad.

What then is the primary purpose of our author? Is it to teach religious truth, or to impart scientific knowledge? or is the aim to teach both; one being used as a means of enforcing the other? We may perhaps best discover this by carefully noting some of the more evident characteristics of the narrative before us.

1. The account given us is very brief- and admits of great expansion. The story of how the universe, so vast and varied came into existence is summed up in a few short sentences. The purpose evidently, is not to give a detailed or exhaustive account of the various stages and processes in creation, but rather to present in synoptical form a view of the whole process by merely naming the different stages. The writer does not mystify by recounting a large number of details, amongst which the mind could be easily lost but instead he presents in a few vivid pictures the whole series of creative acts. The scientist deals with the almost endless variety found in the natural world and strives to find a unity amidst the variety, but the writer of the Genesis account on the other hand starts with unity- starts with God- whom he shows to be the originator of the various forms viewed in detail by the scientist. The one thing of importance for the scientist is a view of the details in nature, the essential thing for the religious teacher is to keep in view the One in whom all the details converge. As the various prismatic colours may be traced back to the single beam of white light, without which they could not exist, so the various manifestations in the world may be traced back to the single source without whom they would not exist. Martineau has truly said: "Science discloses the method of the world but not its cause, religion its cause, but not its method". The Bible having given the bare text as to the method, it leaves to the scientist the task of writing the complete commentary on the text by interrogating nature. Each scientist brings his quota of knowledge and helps us to understand the brief account given us. The geologist comes from deciphering the story in the rocks and says: