

lative knowledge by which it is conditioned. Still, after every one of his faults and limitations as an Expositor has been catalogued, it remains undeniable that Calvin is the greatest Expositor of the Reformation era, and that his commentaries have a higher and more permanent value than those of any other writer from the days of Nicolas of Lyra down to modern times.

F. W. FARRAR.

*THE MORAL ASPECTS OF THE MOSAIC NARRATIVE OF THE CREATION.*

GENESIS I.

In an article entitled "And God created Great Whales," which I contributed to this Magazine for 1882 (see Vol. iv. *Second Series*, pp. 191 ff.) there was one section which attracted an unusual amount of attention. It was that in which I gave my recollection of a discourse which I heard from the lips of Rev. T. T. Lynch some five and twenty years ago. Many of his friends—and no man ever had more devoted friends—wrote to thank me for the pleasure I had given them, to remind me that there was a second part to that Discourse, better even than the first, of which I had given no account; and to beg me, if I could, to complete my report of it. One or two of them even sent me "notes," which they had taken at the time, and placed them at my service. These, however, I found to be too fragmentary and imperfect to be of real use. But twenty-five years ago I had a singularly retentive memory; and, if I sat down to the work within a few hours, could generally so report any speech or discourse in which I had been deeply interested as to retain its main substance, and even something of its form, though I never could take "notes" while listening to the speaker without forgetting all that I had heard except

so much as I had written down. That too retentive memory played me some pranks indeed, and plunged me into some difficulties; but nevertheless it had its compensations. And among those compensations I reckon it not the least that it enabled me to preserve a tolerably clear impression of some of Mr. Lynch's sermons—sermons the like of which I never expect to hear again.

I have looked up my report of the second part of the Discourse to which my correspondents have referred, and find that it fully sustains the admiring recollections of it which after so many years they still cherish. That report must necessarily be imperfect, and especially imperfect in this, that it must do injustice to that exquisite and poetic beauty of expression in which Mr. Lynch excelled all the great speakers and preachers I have heard; but it preserves, I think, many of his suggestive and instructive thoughts. Hence I propose to lay it before the readers of *The Expositor*, in the hope that they may reap some advantage and pleasure from its perusal.

No further preface will be required, if the reader will only be good enough to read the paragraphs numbered 8 and 9 in the Article to which I have already referred. If they cannot do that, it may be enough to say that, in the first part of his discourse, Mr. Lynch had dwelt on the *scientific* aspects of the narrative contained in the first chapter of Genesis, and had argued that this narrative gives us the best conception of the origin of the universe which the best Hebrew minds were able to frame; that these conceptions, fairly interpreted, are in singular and admirable accord with the generalizations of modern science, and promise, as science advances, to win a more entire acceptance; and that the very deficiencies of the story, from a scientific point of view, are among its chief merits and excellences, since they enable it to produce a larger and even a truer impression on the popular mind.

He then, so far as my poor report enables me to follow him, proceeded thus.

But, now, let us turn to the *moral* aspects of this Chapter ; and in dealing with these I shall hold to the same method—admitting defect, but trying to shew that, for the purpose in hand, these very defects are merits of the most singular excellence.

Men have so occupied themselves with the supposed collisions of Science and Scripture, our attention has been so often directed to the conflict between Geology and Genesis, that probably you have never been troubled by any suspicion of moral defect in the Mosaic narrative. But the very moment it is suggested to you, you will see how great the defect is, how much may be made of it by hostile criticism ; how imperative it is, therefore, that we should be able, if we honestly can, to prove this defect an excellence.

When God looked down on his finished work, He pronounced it “very good.” Can *we* honestly adopt that verdict? *He*, the God of Moses, might well say, “All is very good”; for the narrative gives no hint of that which is evil, or seems to be evil, in the natural world, of that which is inimical to health, life, peace. There is no suggestion in this Chapter of storm, pestilence, earthquake, disorder, disease, and the endless havoc that springs from the fierce appetites of fish and bird and beast and creeping thing. But all these “evils,” as we call them, were in the world before man was set to rule and subdue the world, and long before Moses wrote the story of its creation. Was it fair, then, to suppress all mention of these “evils,” to shew us only what was good in the world, to pass by death, disorder, disease, as though these were of no account? Is not the Biblical story of creation as defective from a moral, as from a scientific, point of view? If we were to rewrite that story, should we not, simply by introducing omitted

facts into it, give it a wholly different moral tone. As thus:—

“God divided the light from the darkness; and God said, Let there be a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and heats that scorch and smite at noon. God divided the air from the waters; and God said, Let the waters roar and be troubled, and let the winds rave and destroy. God divided the earth from the seas; and God said, Let the earth be scattered over with deserts of salt and sand, and let the grass and herbs and trees run into dank unwholesome jungles. God made the sun to rule the day, moon and stars to rule the night; and God said, Let them be often darkened and not for many days appear, and let them possess a fascination for men so fatal that they shall worship all the host of heaven. God created the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air; and God said, Let the fish devour one another, and let birds of prey hover in the air, and let their hearts be set on carrion. And, last of all, God made the beasts of the earth, and man, their lord; and God said, Let the beasts thirst for blood, and let all creatures strive against man, and let the conflict with them be harder for him because man preys on his fellow-man.”

Now in this new dismal story of the creation, you observe, we simply introduce *facts*—facts omitted from the Mosaic story. In *that* there is not a word of the “evils” of nature, not a hint even, unless it be in the mention of that primeval darkness which may have contained the germs of all things ill, just as the light contains the germs of all things good. The story is morally defective, therefore, as well as scientifically defective. It does not cover, or does not seem to cover, all the facts of the case; it omits many of the facts with which we are all painfully familiar, and apart from which our conception of the world is incomplete.

Is there, then, no reason for this defect, no reason that

converts it into an excellency? Surely there is. For, consider: with all you know of what we call the evils of the natural world, do you not feel, do you not often say, "It is very good. I ask no fairer home than this. If only men were good, earth were heaven!" *This* is your feeling—is it not? that if you yourselves were good and your fellow-men were good, the earth would be "very good," a very good and fitting home for you and them. But God is good. Why, then, should not He find the earth a very good earth? Your feeling that the earth would be good if only man were good, is shared by the vast majority of men. And why should not this popular feeling find expression in an account of the creation designed for the popular mind? In writing this first Chapter of Genesis, Moses was no more bent on producing a complete moral essay than on penning a complete scientific treatise. What he aimed at was to give such an account of the creation as would find its way to the popular heart, as would reflect and, while reflecting, correct and enlarge its impressions. Despite our knowledge of evil, we say, "The world is a good world, a very good world, to those who are good enough to live in it." Why, then, should we blame Moses for thinking of the world as we think, and speaking of it as we speak? Is not what we say *true*: why, then, should it be *untrue* on his lips?

On his lips, if not truer than on ours, it is at least more suggestive of faith and hope; for he was in the counsel of the Almighty: and we may be very sure that if God pronounced the world "very good," it was, and is, very good, and will more fully prove itself good to us as we grow wiser. Our own impression is, as we have seen, that it is a good world; but, at times, when storm, pestilence, disease, death, come very near us, we might distrust our own impression were it not for the Divine assurance and confirmation of it. *Then* we are glad to strengthen our private impression by God's public word, and are able to *believe* that the world is

good, even though we cannot see it, because God has said that it is good.

And if the Divine story and verdict strengthen faith, they also suggest hope. When He pronounced the world very good, God knew or foreknew that man would fall away from Him: and how could a world in which men were to sin be a very good world unless it contained whatever was good for them *in the time of their sin and trial*, as well as that which was good for them before they fell and after their redemption was complete? It would not have been a good world to God unless it contained whatever was really good for man under all changes and conditions, however evil this or that in it might seem. And, perhaps, one reason why God dwells on what was good in his creative work, and keeps out of view what we think evil, was this: that He might inspire us with the hope that as things were good in the beginning, so all things will round to a final goal of good; and that, by assuming all things to be good, He might teach us to look for good in what we call evil.

We admit, then, the moral defect of the Narrative, that it does not cover all the facts of Nature, that it gives no account of "the evil" that is in the world. But we contend that this defect is an excellence, if God's design were to detain our hearts and minds on the thought that, in his view, all things are good and tend to good; that what we think evil is but the shadow of time and will pass with time, but that what we see to be good is to be for ever.

Again: there may be in this Narrative, in its very defect, a hint that "the things of darkness" are as truly, though not so obviously, ministers of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness as "the things of light." Much that we call evil in Nature is certainly good, or contributes to the general good. It has been justly said that if every man were able, and were permitted, to destroy whatever he did

not like, whatever he held to be evil to him, nothing would be left; even those things which are recognized as of the most general use would be banished from the world by the dislike, by the distempered appetite or the foolish mistakes of this man or that. We may find a significant, though trivial, illustration of this fact in our newspapers. How often are we told of farmers, at home or abroad, who have shot down the birds of their district, because these small thieves of the air have injured, or have been supposed to injure, their crops,—only to discover by the immense multiplication of grubs and caterpillars, who do them far worse harm, that they have destroyed not their enemies but their friends. God's creatures have many ways of ministering to each other's good. Some render a direct service by nourishing life; others render indirect service to the general welfare by keeping down forms of life which, unchecked, would multiply far too rapidly. Creatures prey on each other; plants live upon and strangle each other; fish live on fish, birds on birds, beasts on beasts, man on all: but thus the general balance of life is preserved, and the order and welfare of the world at large are maintained.

The world *is* a good world; for good largely predominates in the world. True, there are forces in it which produce storms, earthquakes, blight, murrain, pestilence, broad sandy deserts, barren soils, tangled and unwholesome jungles; but take the world as a whole, and there are far more fruitful than barren soils, far more nutritious herbs and fragrant flowers and fruitful trees than noxious weeds: storm and earthquake are local and infrequent, while the sun shines everywhere and "the rain it raineth every day." The world *is* a good world; for though there is much in it that tells of evil, even the evil in it points to larger ultimate good. The storms bring us a purer air and fruitful showers; earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are but the occasional outbreaks of that gracious interior fire which

keeps the surface of the earth warm and fertile all the year round; autumnal decay enriches the soil; the fierce instincts which lead creature to prey on creature, not only preserve that general balance of life which is most for the common health and fecundity and welfare; they are also used by the Divine Wisdom for the production of still higher and more profitable forms of life, the struggle for existence giving rise to the noblest and most enduring forms of existence. But if good predominates over evil, and if even that which is evil in its effects to some subserves the general good, why should not we, why should not Moses, why should not God Himself, pronounce the world of nature to be "very good?" Had Moses dwelt on the facts and aspects of the natural world which we call evil, would he have given us so true an impression of the world as it exists, and of the end for which it exists, as he has given us by passing by all *that*, to dwell on the fact that all things were made by God, and made to minister to the good of all? If not, that which we have spoken of as the moral defect of his narrative becomes an excellence of the highest order, and the omissions of his story only make his story more true and more complete.

We say, then, that the world is a good, a very good, world; but can we also say that it is the best possible world? To that question we must reply, Yes, *and*, No. We must reply "No," because we look for an ampler fairer world than this, a world free from those signs of struggle and imperfection which we now discover around us; or for such a change in ourselves, in the eyes with which we look out on the world, as will enable us rightly to interpret what now seem to us signs of defect and conflict, and to find in them the signs of perfection and victory. We look, in short, for such a change in the world, or in ourselves, as shall bring us a new heaven and a new earth. Till that change come, we must say: "No, we are not in the best



world possible." And yet, till that change come, it may be the best world possible for *us*. A physician sometimes says of a patient, "He is going on as well as possible." What! a man confined to his chamber, oppressed by weakness, his brain clouded with pain—is he going on as well as possible? Yes, as well as possible *for a sick man*, and in the best possible place. He may still suffer much, and have much more to suffer before he can leave his chamber for the activities of the great busy world; but he is passing rightly through the stages and crises of his disorder, and, with care and patience, we may cherish the best hopes for him. And, in like manner, we may say of the world: It is the best possible world for us while we are still smitten with the infections of evil, and that we are going on in it as well as is possible. It takes faith, indeed, in the wise goodness of the great Maker and Healer, and sometimes it *tasks* faith, to say of the world, of any race, or of any man in it: He, or it, is doing well, as well as possible, in the conditions. But with faith in Him who made all things good, and made all for good, we can say it. There may be many relapses, much that disappoints and hurts us; but, nevertheless, if we are taught of God, we may see that the powers of darkness are being subdued by the powers of light, that good is slowly but surely overcoming evil; and when we cannot *see* it, we still believe it, because we know that the defect is in our vision, not in God's ordering of the world, because we are sure that his gracious purpose cannot be made void by the sin of man. He made all things for good; He doeth all things well; and therefore all must go well and reach a final and complete end of good at the last.

If we did not believe that, how could we enter into God's rest? When God had finished all his work, we are told that He *rested* from his work, and blessed the day on which He rested. Now this Divine "rest" is the repose

of satisfaction in work done and in the benefits that will accrue from it. When we have completed a difficult task, when, as we survey it, we see that it answers to the scheme, the idea, we had in our mind; when we can pronounce it, "Very good work very well done," we enter into as pure a satisfaction, as true a rest, as it is given us to know, and bless the day which brought it. And we are made in the image, after the likeness, of God. There must, therefore, be in God that which corresponds to our satisfaction in work well and truly done. Moses assures us that there *is* that in Him. God has created the elements, dividing the light from the darkness, the air from the water, the earth from the sea; thus giving form to the formless universe. He has furnished the elements with their appropriate tenants—the light with sun, moon, and stars; the air with birds to sport in it, the sea with fish to swim in it, the earth with beasts to live in it: thus filling the empty universe. And, now, God surveys everything that He has made; and, behold, it is very good: all things have their form: there is a vast complex service of uses where before there was a shapeless void. And God is satisfied. He rests from his labours. He rejoices in his finished work, and in the benefits that will flow from it.

And how shall we enter into his rest, unless we can see or believe that the work is a good work, the world a good world? unless we can see or believe that all that is, or seems to be, evil in it, subserves the general good, and will conduct to a still larger and more universal good? This *is* our faith; this our hope. To us, this story of the Creation is not only a story; it is also a parable, and a parable that bids us both wait and hope. It says to us, Do not expect to say, "It is very good," until the end come; but do not cease to expect an end in which all things shall rest, and you shall rejoice over a good as wide

as the universe, as lasting as eternity. For the present there may be much to perplex, much to sadden, much to disappoint you; but wait on, and hope on: for that which is perfect *will* come, though it tarry, and you shall have peace at the last.

ALMONI PELONI.

---

ST. PAUL ON THE HEATHEN.

ROMANS II. 12-16.

IN the 16th and 17th verses of the First Chapter of this Epistle, we have, though in no technical form, the theological thesis or theme of the most important of all the doctrinal discussions in which the Apostle Paul was ever engaged. The verses run thus:—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and to the Greek; for God's righteousness is revealed in it *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*, as it stands written, He who is righteous by faith shall live."

In the remainder of the Chapter, the Apostle shews, in a free and easy manner, befitting epistolary composition, that Greeks or Gentiles stand in most urgent need of the Gospel, their actual ethical condition being extremely corrupt.

Then, in Chapter ii. he proceeds, in a manner of peculiarly effective dialectic, to impeach his countrymen, the Jews, of equal pravity and guilt. "Thou doest," says he, "the same things." And "dost thou think," he inquires, "that thou shalt escape the condemnation of God?" He proceeds to maintain that God is absolutely impartial, and will render to every man, whether Jew or Gentile, according to his deeds, and thus according to his real character. At the bar of the great Judge no one will be accepted because he is a Jew; and no one will be condemned because he is a