

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

Copyright © 1878

CHAPTER ONE

THERE is something peculiarly striking in the manner in which the Holy Ghost opens this sublime book. He introduces us, at once, to God, in the essential fulness of his being, and the solitariness of his acting. All prefatory matter is omitted. It is to God we are brought. We hear him, as it were, breaking earth's silence, and shining in upon earth's darkness, for the purpose of developing a sphere in which He might display his eternal power and Godhead.

There is nothing here on which idle curiosity may feed – nothing on which the poor human mind may speculate. There is the sublimity and reality of DIVINE TRUTH, in its moral power to act on the heart, and on the understanding. It could never come within the range of the Spirit of God to gratify idle curiosity by the presentation of curious theories.

Geologists may explore the bowels of the earth, and draw forth from thence materials from which to add to, and, in some instances, to contradict, the Divine record. They may speculate upon fossil remains; but the disciple hangs, with sacred delight, over the page of inspiration. He reads, believes, and worships. In this spirit may we pursue our study of the profound book which now lies open before us. May we know what it is to **“inquire in the temple.”** May our investigations of the precious contents of Holy Scripture be ever prosecuted in the true spirit of worship: **“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”**

The first sentence in the Divine Canon sets us in the presence of Him who is the infinite source of all true blessedness.

There is no elaborate argument in proof of the existence of God.

The Holy Ghost could not enter upon any thing of the kind. God reveals himself. He makes himself known by his works. **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork.” “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord.” “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.”**

None but an infidel or an atheist would seek an argument in proof of the Being of One who, by the word of his mouth, called worlds into existence, and declared himself the All wise, the Almighty, and the everlasting God. Who but “God” could “create” anything.

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. that bringeth out their host by number; be calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” (Isaiah 40:26). “The gods of the heathen are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.”

In the Book of Job (chap 38-41) we have an appeal of the very grandest description, on the part of the Lord himself, to the work of creation, as an unanswerable argument in proof of his infinite superiority; and this appeal, while it sets before the understanding the most vivid and convincing demonstration of God’s omnipotence, touches the heart, also, by its amazing condescension. The majesty and the love, the power and the tenderness, are all divine.

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

Here was, in good truth, a scene in which God alone could act. Man, in the pride of his heart, has since proved himself but too ready to interfere with God in other and far higher spheres of action; but in the scene before us, man had no place until, indeed, he became, like all the rest, the subject of creative power.

God was alone in creation. He looked forth from his eternal dwellingplace of light upon the wild waste, and there beheld the sphere in which His wondrous plans and counsels were yet to be unfolded and brought out – where the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity was yet to live, and labor, and testify, and bleed, and die, in order to display, in the view of wondering worlds, the glorious perfections of the Godhead.

All was darkness and chaos; but God is the God of light and order. **“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”**

Darkness and confusion cannot live in his presence, whether we look at it in a physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual point of view.

“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

He sat brooding over the scene of his future operations. A dark scene, truly; and one in which there was ample room for the God of light and life to act. He alone could enlighten the darkness, cause life to spring up, substitute order for chaos, open an expanse between the waters, where life might display itself without fear of death. These were operations worthy of God.

“God said, Let there be light and there was light.”

How simple! And yet how Godlike! **“He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast.”**

Infidelity may ask, “How? where? when?” The answer is, **“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” (Hebrews 11:3).**

This satisfies the teachable spirit.

Philosophy may smile contemptuously at this, and pronounce it rude ignorance, or blind credulity, suitable enough for an age of semi-barbarism, but quite unworthy of men living in an enlightened age of the world's history, when the museum and the telescope have put us in possession of facts of which the inspired penman knew nothing. What wisdom! What learning! Yea, rather, what folly! What nonsense! What total inability to grasp the scope and design of sacred Scripture!

It, assuredly, is not God's object to make us astronomers or geologists; or to occupy us with details which the microscope or the telescope lays before every school-boy. His object is to lead us into his presence, as worshippers, with hearts and understandings taught and duly governed by His Holy Word. But this would never do for the so-called philosopher, who, despising what he terms the vulgar and narrow-minded prejudices of the devout disciple of the Word boldly seizes his telescope, and therewith scans the distant heavens, or travels into the deep recesses of earth in search of strata, formation; and fossils, – all of which, according to his account, greatly improve, if they do not flatly contradict, the inspired narrative.

With such **“oppositions of science falsely so called,”** we have nothing to do.

We believe that, all true discoveries, whether **“in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth,”** will harmonize with that which is written in the Word of God; and if they do not thus harmonize, they are perfectly contemptible in the judgment of every true lover of Scripture.

This gives great rest to the heart in a day like the present, so productive of learned speculations and high-sounding theories, which, alas! in too many instances, savor of rationalism and positive infidelity.

It is most needful to have the heart thoroughly established as to the fulness, the authority, the completeness, the majesty, the plenary inspiration of the sacred volume. This will be found to be the only effectual safeguard against the rationalism of Germany and the superstition of Rome. Accurate acquaintance with, and profound subjection to, the Word, are the great desiderata of the present moment.

May the Lord, in his great grace, abundantly increase in our midst both the one and the other.

“And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”

Here we have the two great symbols so largely employed throughout the Word.

The presence of light makes the day; the absence thereof makes the night. Thus it is in the history of souls – there are **“the sons of light”** and **“the sons of darkness.”**

This is a most marked and solemn distinction.

All upon whom the light of Life has shone, – all who have been effectually visited by the Dayspring from on high, – all who have received **“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”**, – all such, whoever and wherever they may be, belong to the first class, are **“the sons of light, and the sons of the day.”**

On the other hand, all who are still in nature’s darkness, nature’s blindness, nature’s unbelief, – all who have not yet received into their hearts, by faith, the cheering beams of the Sun of righteousness, all such are still wrapped in the shades of spiritual night, are **“the sons of darkness,” “the sons of the night.”**

Reader, pause and ask yourself, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, to which of these two classes do you, at this moment, belong.

That you belong to either the one or the other is beyond all question, You may be poor, despised, unlettered; but if, through grace, there is a link connecting you with the Son of God, **“the Light of the world,”** then you are, in very deed, a son of the day, and destined, ere long, to shine in that celestial sphere, that region of glory, of which **“the slain Lamb”** will be the central sun, forever.

This is not your own doing. It is the result of the counsel and operation of God himself, who has given you light and life, joy and peace, in Jesus, and his accomplished sacrifice. But if you are a total stranger to the hallowed action and influence of divine light, if your eyes have not been opened to behold any beauty in the Son of God, then, though you had all the learning of a Newton, though you were enriched with all the treasures of human philosophy, though you had drunk in with avidity all the streams of human science, though your name were adorned with all the learned titles which the schools and universities of this world could bestow, yet are you **“a son of the night,” “a son of darkness;”** and, if you die in your present condition you will be involved in the blackness and horror of an eternal night. Do not, therefore, my friend, read another page, until you have fully satisfied yourself as to whether you belong to the **“day”** or the **“night.”**

The next point on which I would dwell is the creation of lights.

“And God said, Let there be light; in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.”

The sun is the great centre of light, and the centre of our system. Round him the lesser orbs revolve. From him, too, they derive their light. Hence, he may, very legitimately, be viewed as an apt symbol of Him, who is soon to arise with healing in His wings, to gladden the hearts of those that fear the Lord. The aptness and beauty of the symbol would fully appear to one who, having spent the night in watching, beholds the rising sun gilding, with his bright beams, the eastern sky.

The mists and shades of night are all dispersed, and the whole creation seems to hail the returning orb of light. Thus will it be, by and by, when the Sun of righteousness arises. The shadows of night shall flee away, and the whole creation shall be gladdened by the dawning of **“a morning without clouds,”** – the opening of a bright and never-ending day of glory.

The moon, being in herself opaque, derives all her light from the sun. She always reflects the sun’s light, save when earth and its influences intervene. (It is an interesting fact that the moon, as viewed through a powerful telescope, presents the appearance of one vast ruin of nature).

No sooner has the sun sunk beneath our horizon than the moon presents herself to receive his beams and reflect them back upon a dark world; or should she be visible during the day, she always exhibits a pale light, the necessary result of appearing in the presence of superior brightness. True it is, as has been remarked, the world sometimes intervenes; dark clouds, thick mists, and chilling vapors, too, arise from earth’s surface, and hide from our view her silvery light.

Now, as the sun is a beautiful and an appropriate symbol of Christ, *so the moon strikingly reminds us of the Church.* The fountain of her light is hidden from view. The world seeth him not, but she sees him; and she is responsible to reflect his beams upon a benighted world. The world has no other way in which to learn anything of Christ but by the Church.

“Ye,” says the inspired apostle, **“are our epistle . . . known and read of all men.”** And again, **“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.”** (II Corinthians 3:2, 3).

What a responsible place!

How earnestly should she watch against everything that would hinder the reflection of the heavenly light of Christ, in all her ways! But how is she to reflect this light? By allowing it to shine upon her, in its undimmed brightness.

If the Church only walked in the light of Christ, she would, assuredly, reflect his light; and this would ever keep her in her proper position.

The light of the moon is not her own. So it is with the Church.

- She is not railed to set herself before the world.
- She is a simple debtor to reflect the light which she herself receives.
- She is bound to study, with holy diligence, the path which he trod, while down here; and by the energy of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in her, to follow in that path.

But, alas! earth with its mists, its clouds, and its vapors, intervenes, and hides the light and blots the Epistle. The world can see but little of the traits of Christ’s character in those who call themselves by His name; yea, in many instances they exhibit an humbling contrast, rather than a resemblance.

May we study Christ more prayerfully, that so we may copy him more faithfully.

The stars are distant lights. They shine in other spheres, and have little connection with this system, save that their twinkling can be seen. **“One star differeth from another star in glory.”** Thus will it be in the coming kingdom of the Son. He will shine forth in living and everlasting lustre. His body, the Church, will faithfully reflect his beams on all around; while the saints individually shall shine in those spheres which a righteous Judge shall allot to them, as a reward of faithful service during the dark night of his absence. This thought should animate us to a more ardent and vigorous pursuit after conformity to our absent Lord (See Luke 19:12-19).

The lower orders of creation are next introduced.

The sea and the earth are made to teem with life. Some may feel warranted in regarding the operations of each successive day, as foreshadowing the various dispensations, and their great characteristic principles of action. I would only remark, as to this, that there is great need, when handling the Word in this way, to watch, with holy jealousy, the working of imagination; and also to pay strict attention to the general analogy of Scripture, else we may make sad mistakes. I do not feel at liberty to enter upon such a line of interpretation; I shall therefore confine myself to what I believe to be the plain sense of the sacred text.

We shall now consider man’s place, as set over the works of God’s hands.

All having been set in order, one was needed to take the headship. **“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”**

My reader will observe the change from **“him”** to **“them.”** We are not presented with the actual fact of the formation of the woman, until the next chapter though here we find God blessing **“them,”** and giving **“them”** jointly the place of universal government.

All the inferior orders of creation were set under their joint dominion.

Eve received all her blessings in Adam. In him, too, she got her dignity. Though not yet called into actual existence, she was, in the purpose of God, looked at as part of the man. **“In thy book were all my members written, which, in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”**

Thus it is with the Church, – the bride of the Second Man. She was viewed from all eternity in Christ, her Head and Lord; as we read in the first chapter of Ephesians, **“According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”**

Before a single member of the Church had yet breathed the breath of life, all were, in God's eternal mind, **"predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son."**

The counsels of God render the Church necessary to complete the mystic man. Hence the Church is called **"the fulness of him that filleth all in all."** This is an amazing title, and it develops much of the dignity, importance, and glory of the Church.

It is too common to view redemption as bearing merely upon the blessedness and security of individual souls. This is entirely too low a view to take of the matter. That all which pertains, in any way, to the individual is, in the fullest manner, secured, is, blessed be God, most true. This is the least part of redemption. But that Christ's glory is involved in, and connected with, the Church's existence, is a truth of far more dignity, depth, and power.

If I am entitled, on the authority of Holy Scripture, to regard myself as a constituent part of that which is actually needful to Christ, I can no longer entertain a doubt as to whether there is the fullest provision for all my personal necessities. And is not the Church thus needful to Christ? Yes, truly. **"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."** And, again, **"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman; but the Woman for the man . . . Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God."** (I Corinthians 11:8-12).

Hence, it is no longer the mere question whether God can save a poor, helpless sinner, – whether he can blot out his sins, and receive him in the power of divine righteousness. God has said, **"it is not good that the man should be alone."** He left not **"the first man"** without **"an help meet;"** neither would he leave the **"Second."** As, in the case of the former, there would have been a blank in the creation without Eve, so – stupendous thought! – in the case of the latter, there would be a blank in the new creation without the bride, the Church. Let us, now, look at the manner in which EVE was brought into being, though, in so doing, we shall have to anticipate part of the contents of the next chapter.

Throughout all the orders of creation there was not found an help meet for Adam. **"A deep sleep"** must fall on him, and a partner be formed, out of himself, to share his dominion and his blessedness. **"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made [builded*] he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man."** (Chapter 2:21-23).

Looking at Adam and Eve as a type of Christ and the Church, as Scripture fully warrants us to do, we see how that the death of Christ needed to be an accomplished fact, ere the Church could be set up; though, in the purpose of God, she was looked at, and chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world.

There is, however, a vast difference between the secret purpose of God and the revelation and accomplishment thereof. Before the divine purpose could be actualized in reference to the constituent parts of the Church, it was necessary that the Son should be rejected and crucified, – that he should take his seat on high, – that he should send down the Holy Ghost to baptize believers into one body.

It is not that souls were not quickened and saved, previous to the death of Christ. They assuredly were. Adam was saved, and thousands of others, from age to age, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, though that sacrifice was not yet accomplished. But the salvation of individual souls is one thing; and the formation of the Church, as a distinctive thing, by the Holy Ghost, is quite another.

This distinction is not sufficiently attended to; and even where it is in theory maintained, it is accompanied with but little of those practical results which might naturally be expected to flow from a truth so stupendous. The Church's unique place, – her special relationship to **“the Second Man, the Lord from heaven,”** her distinctive privileges and dignities, all these things would, if entered into by the power of the Holy Ghost, produce the richest, the rarest, and the most fragrant fruits. (See Ephesians 5:23-32).

When we look at the type before us, we may form some idea of the results which ought to follow from the understanding of the Church's position and relationship. What affection did not Eve owe to Adam! What nearness she enjoyed! What intimacy of communion! What full participation in all his thoughts! In all his dignity, and in all his glory, she was entirely one. He did not rule over, but with her. He was Lord of the whole creation, and she was one with him. Yea, as has already been remarked, she was looked at, and blessed in him.

“The man” was the object; and as to **“the woman,”** she was needful to him, and therefore she was brought into being. Nothing can be more profoundly interesting as a type. Man first set up, and the woman viewed in, and then formed out of him, – all this forms a type of the most striking and instructive character. Not that a doctrine can ever be founded upon a type; but when we find the doctrine fully and clearly laid down in other parts of the Word, we are then prepared to understand, appreciate, and admire the type.

The 8th Psalm furnishes a fine view of man set over the work of God's hands: **“when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained: what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.”**

Here man is looked at, without any distinctive mention of the woman; and this is quite in character, for the woman is looked at in the man. There is no direct revelation of the mystery of the Church, in any part of the Old Testament. The apostle expressly says, **“in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets (of the New Testament) by the Spirit.”** (Ephesians 3:1-11).

Hence, in the Psalm just quoted, we have only “**the man**” presented to us; but ye know that the man and the woman are looked at under one head. All this will find its full antitype in the ages to come. Then shall the True Man, the Lord from Heaven, take his seat on the throne, and, in companionship with his bride, the Church, rule over a restored creation.

This Church is quickened out of the grave of Christ, is part “**of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.**” He the Head and she the body, making one Man, as we read in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, “**Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**”

The Church, being thus part of Christ, will occupy a place, in the glory, quite unique. There was no other creature so near to Adam as Eve, because no other creature was part of himself. So, in reference to the Church, she will hold the very nearest place to Christ, in his coming glory.

Nor is it merely what the church will be that commands our admiration; but what the Church is.

She is now the body of which Christ is the Head; she is now the temple of which God is the Inhabitant. Oh, what manner of people ought we to be!

If such is the present, such the future dignity of that of which we, through God’s grace, form a part, surely a holy, a devoted, a separated, an elevated walk is what becomes us.

May the Holy Ghost unfold these things, more fully and powerfully, to our hearts, that so we may have a deeper sense of the conduct and character which are worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called. “**The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**” (Ephesians 1:18-23).

~ end of chapter 1 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
