

## BEGINNINGS

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*The fact that the first words of the Bible are "In the beginning" is some indication of the importance which Scripture gives to beginnings. Here are collected some observations about some of the important beginnings: the beginnings of the world, of humanity, of Israel, and of the Church. Beyond all of these there is to be a new Beginning, which is still expected.*

### God

While, of course, one cannot discuss God's beginning, for He has existed always or eternally, He may be thought of as the Beginning of all else. He always was—or rather IS.

He IS the Beginning and the Beginner—the Alpha, the First, as well as the Omega, the Last. Every thing was originally in Him—a Person; or, that is, a small group of Divine Persons, for His first announced Name is plural: ELOHIM, plural as surely as Cherubim, Seraphim, Shemim (Heavens) are plural.

But the verb going with this plural noun is always in the singular, to emphasize the essential UNITY of Deity. And this noun is no plural of majesty, let alone a sort of editorial "WE".

This is clearly seen in the earliest consultation: "Let US make man" (Gen. 1:26), and further: "The man is become as ONE OF US" (Gen. 3:22); and much later: "Remember now thy CREATORS in the days of thy youth." (Eccles. 12:1)

Here is the perennial human dilemma: EITHER in the beginning there was NOTHING, from which everything has somehow come (though there are people who claim to believe in the eternity of matter); OR ELSE in the beginning was THE ALL from which (or from whom) a part has come.

God alone can create, but He does not create magically—"out of nothing." Actually He EX-creates, out of Himself, out of His Own inner infinite electronic resources: Ps. 33:6, 9. God exhaled, outbreathed, radiated, the entire universe: "OUT OF HIM THE UNIVERSE" (Roms. 11:36a, and other New Testament (N.T.) passages, confirming the Psalm mentioned). Judging from the Divine creative power of Jesus Christ in the N.T., one may affirm that Creation was instantaneous; there was no evolving about it.

Consider, what took place at Cana in Galilee? The brimming water-pots left no room for any additive, and there was no transition via pinky hues from the colorless to the red.

And what took place—unrecorded, unnoticed—at the fruitful blessing of the broken loaves and

fishes? Must not batches of golden brown bread, followed by shoals of glittering silvery fish, have streamed forth from the creative fingers of Deity? For the surplus "fragments" filling the baskets were every bit as real as the substantial satisfying and tasty loaves that left only a desire for more.

Did the Risen Lord advance by visible steps through the solid walls of the Upper Room, --- or He wasn't there, then He was in the midst?

Apart from the anachronism, could a film have been taken of the creative activities of the Six Days, or merely "snaps" of the void Before and the fully formed After?

Now return to "ELOHIM" in plural form, yet with verb in the singular, and its (His?) creative power. The Father is clearly—although rather rarely—referred to in the Old Testament; so is the Son, the Eternal Son: (Ps. 2:2, 6, 7, 12; Prov. 30:4). But the angels are the sons of God; Lucifer was the first prodigal son; he abode not in the Truth.

Israel was the son of God. (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 1:15) And Solomon was especially beloved and adopted, as God's son. (2 Sam. 12:24-25)

Now a most important point is reached: MONOTHEISM.

Many people have never noticed that ONE has two meanings: (1) one and the same; (2) UNITED.

So, in the great monotheistic word in the Bible, the words "One God" mean A UNITED DEITY, thus including more than one Divine Person. (Deut. 6:4)

"God is love" is a revelation implying plurality of Divine Persons. God always was loving, out-giving, caring, before there was any world to love. The Son was the Father's delight, day by day (Prov. 8:30). Thus spake the pre-incarnate Wisdom of God, in Whose Bosom He was, and, mysteriously, ever remained. (Jn. 1:18; 3:13)

### The Universe

The beginning of the universe, then, was, as we have seen, when God made it. In Genesis 1, where this work is described, there is no poetry or symbolism—only the simplest but sublimest prose, from the first verse onwards: "IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS —AND THE EARTH."

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### Sin

There was sin in the universe before there was sin in the world or, perhaps preferably, angelic sin previous to human sin.

Did God create Satan, some ask? Yes, but not as Satan, or as adversary. He was originally Lucifer. He was seen and heard in the earthly Eden, tempting the seemingly unwarned Eve, using the "vocal organs" of a shining and intriguing serpent as his loudspeaker (as later the angel used those of Balaam's ass) in pretended commiseration with the slightly restricted bride of Adam, accusing God of tantalizing meanness, and, like Absalom and the Unjust Steward, offering better terms with the property of Another.

Genesis 3 is full of truest human psychology in two vital and modern ways: (1) God-shyness, (2) blaming others, including God Himself for the human dilemma.

Sin is alienation from God, in fancied independence of self-will, and a mistaken sense of freedom; for license is not liberty, which necessarily carries the restriction of the girdle of Truth, neither too tight, nor too lax.

### Eve

That Eve was neither surprised nor alarmed at hearing the serpent talk seems indicative of the fact that the dawn of human consciousness and experience was involved.

Eve showed that she was careless in her handling of the Word of God. For she added to its strictness with her own "nor touch it"; then she subtracted from it, with her own "lest ye die."

This gave an opening for the Tempter to follow up his questioning of God's Word by contradiction, and indeed disproof. One can well picture his touching the forbidden fruit with impunity. Thus doubt and disbelief were planted in the unguarded heart of Eve, until she in turn successfully tempted her Husband-to-be to disobey the Divine command, but not this time with impunity.

### Adam

The first man, whom the anthropologists are further away than ever from finding, was a son-child, offspring—of God (Lk. 3, end). He was formed, created, and made by God, in God's image—and also in God's LIKENESS (though this is nearly always omitted—but why?) From this one may boldly affirm that Adam was the greatest genius ever. God began with perfection—He started with COSMOS, not with CHAOS, neither in Nature in general, nor man and woman in particular.

The animals and birds and fish were created directly and completely. Man became an animated being, a "NEPHESEH," but not by the

implanting of a soul; rather, the total man, in-breathed by the Spirit of God, became a "living soul," and mortal if disobedient. However, the word "soul" has become narrowed to mean a part of man, something which he has, and which, in the soul-spirit unit, is IMMORTAL.

The soul, in this narrower sense, has with insight been called the synthesis of which spirit and body are, respectively, thesis and antithesis. The spirit—that masterful entity, the EGO, is freer, wider ranging, more closely related to, or more expressive of thought and will and command. The soul, on the contrary, is more closely connected with feelings, sense-impressions, experiences of the world around, and within, with habits, memories, and of fears rather than of hope.

These concepts involve the likeness of God, i.e., personality. Moreover, here is the beginning of psychology, in self-knowledge, self-awareness, the LIKENESS OF GOD. Adam sensed no kinship, relationship, attraction toward, or aversion from, the animals, which however he distinguished from one another.

How long were the first parents of humankind in the Garden? Many persons tend to lengthen the ideal and the idyllic. However, when the suggestion, "probably only for one day," is made, then very careful thought is required. Every word, and every act, of Adam—and as well of Eve—must be considered.

God did not give Adam the names of the animals; rather, Adam derived them from his inherent insight, his perception of their natures. How long did he take to name them? The creatures were, to begin with, far fewer than they were to become. Presumably he named the "kinds," which may have represented families, or even some larger category. And, of course, Noah did not take varieties into the Ark.

A further word about the animals: "cattle" are distinguished from "beasts of the field" in the text—the former, one may assume, were created ready for the service of man, requiring no taming, as fruit-trees no cultivating, and cereals no change from grasses. (Note: To assume otherwise is to admit that so-called primeval or pristine man was cleverer than modern man.)

With the fall, self-sufficiency, independence of God, disobedience—the sin that first of all entered the universe through Lucifer fallen and degraded to Satan, now entered the world through Adam, in whom all mankind sinned, became a failure, frustrated; yet God in His great mercy provided a substitute, as indicated in the wording of the PROTO-EVANGEL (Gen. 3:15).

Seemingly, Time, as it is known, began at this point.

### Time

What is TIME? One might say that time, which of course includes season, opportunity, is a waiting and watching period. Time is a measurement of ENTROPY, which involves wear and tear, change and decay, and corruption and failure. (Roms. 8:20. "Subject to vanity," or "Thralldom of decay" according to Moffatt.)

Of course mere Time produces no improvement, let alone creativity. Time is not limitless, not as long as anyone wants. Time is a measure of energy running out, running down, running away. It is precisely WHAT MAN DOES NOT HAVE. There is no improvement outside the life-cycle of an organism.

"Given sufficient Time" is mere words. When a clock stops, it remains stopped. Every thing is a sort of Chronometer: a fresh-cut flower in a vase on the mantel-piece; a lighted candle; an eroding rock or mountain—and because of Time, the flower will wither, the candle burn out, and the rock wear away.

Time, as it is known, is neither creative nor constructive. Thus infinite or indefinite Time is the evolutionist's worst enemy.

Mere conditions do not produce life, which is seen to be most carefully planned and prepared, and the reverse of mere accident and chance. To declare that life will be sure to arise, whenever and wherever the right conditions concur, is just wishful thinking—or rather thoughtless wishing.

### The Human Family

Adam and Eve, then, were driven from the Garden, but perhaps left some opportunity to converse with Deity at the eastward place where the Cherubim guarded the way back to the Tree of Life.

Cain and Abel were begotten and born outside the Garden. The name "Cain" means "acquisition" ("Gotten"). It may be that Eve thought that the Proto-Evangel had been fulfilled, that in her first-born she had brought forth the promised Deliverer. It might be noticed, incidentally, that the Hebrew of Gen. 4:1 could be read: "I have gotten a man, Jehovah Himself."

How old was Cain when he slew his brother? Not in his "teens," as we have been led—or allowed—to believe at Sunday School. Evidently he was quite mature as was Abel.

Abel was a "keeper of sheep," that were already tame, and acceptable for sacrifice, with the shedding of blood. Cain, on the other hand, was a "tiller of the ground."

Which people did Cain fear might kill him? And, of course, whom did he marry? If he was about 128 years of age, Cain, with 25 years for a

generation, and a possible minimum of four children to a family, could have had a posterity of some 1,500 persons to start his settlement or City; and Abel could have had equally numerous offspring to start and continue a blood feud. There is no need to imagine pre-adamites.

### Culture and Technology

There was no beginning of civilization, for man, as a race, was never uncivilized. Just a few words are used in the Inspired Record to show this.

Cain must have organized his departure and eastward trek to the land of Nod; and, he must have been instructed as to both town-planning and architecture.

Two features of civilization, if not of culture, appeared early, viz. music, with both string and wind instruments (Gen. 4:21); and war, with threat of retaliation, by weapons both defensive and offensive (Gen. 4:22-24).

With the vitality and longevity reported of the people of the early patriarchal centuries, there was overlapping of several generations, with consequent oral transmission of history and of other information. Nevertheless, Death reigned; and all persons—with one exception—perished inside the first Millennial Day. The solitary exception was Enoch, who walked with God, and who may well be one of the Two Witnesses who, with Elijah, is to return before very long. (Rev. 11: 3-13).

### The Present Order of the World

Since ". . . the world that then was . . . perished" in the Flood (2 Peter 3:6), then very probably the present order began after the Flood. Of course the extent of the changes wrought by the Flood still may not have been imagined fully.

The Flood was world-wide because Christ said that the Flood came and "took them all away." The fossiliferous strata are not a record of the coming of life in MILLIONS OF YEARS, but rather the DEPARTURE of life in about a 12-month period.

Causes of the Flood were not only physical—terrestrial or astral—but also moral, both human and angelic. (Gen. 6:2; 1 Pet. 3:19 and 20; 2 Pct. 2:4; Jude 6)

After the Noachic Flood the human race was, so to speak, given a fresh start.

### The Divisions of Mankind

The purpose of the Confusion, Divinely contrived at the Tower of Babel, was to keep men apart, as well as to scatter them. There is no indication that at Babel each and every man spoke an entirely different language. One may assume that there were only three divergent

tongues at first: the Semitic and Hamitic being varieties of the basically persisting Japhetic.

Latin was not differentiated into languages mutually unintelligible until after several centuries, but at Babel God wrought the equivalent of such changes immediately. Just so, any old vine can turn ground water into wine in say six months, but at Cana the True Vine did so instantaneously.

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth: and they left off to build the city." (Gen. 9:27; 10:25; 11:1-9; 11:19-26)

### The Jewish People

Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could hardly be called Children of Israel, and although the name "Jew" was not used apparently until 2 Kings 16:6, yet the nation began with Abraham.

At Babel, the people were divided; and in Peleg's time, the earth was divided (Gen. 10:25). In Abram's time Ur was divided, as it were, and Abram called out. Then was a new beginning—a distinction of a spiritual nature. And soon there were the Children of Israel, whom God loved and adopted for their fathers' sake, especially Abraham's.

Israel, in the centrally-situated Promised Land, should have been a lighthouse for the nations of the three old-world continents. But too often Israel, without God, was as powerless as Samson shorn of his Nazarite locks. Too often godless rulers were followed by a godless people.

While God Himself was really Israel's Invisible King, in time the people demanded a human king. Saul was a disappointment, but David—

with the exception of one incident—came up to standard.

Solomon, the son of David, began well. But despite his wisdom, other things, and especially his love of many, and strange (i.e., foreign), women led to disillusionment with "things beneath the sun." Eventually there was civil war, then later godlessness, and then captivity.

The endings of the major prophets, who were also historians, indicate the exhaustion of the Divine patience, and threaten the near total—and final—destruction of the chosen people, but not quite.

In present decades, Israel has returned to the land, prophecy being fulfilled in a way which could hardly have been believed a century ago. God is going to give the nation a new heart, going to remove its veil of blindness and obduracy, going to give it a rebirth, as shown so clearly in Hosea, in Romans 9-11, and as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who became the great apostle Paul.

### The Church

God has already called out a new body from Jew and Gentile—the Christian Church. Most readers will be familiar with the facts. It must be confessed that the Church may need as much renewing, not merely reformation, as Israel.

### The New Beginning

God is going to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, even though He may have to amputate a generation to save the race, before His pending Return to earth. And at last He is going to make all things new (Rev. 21-22).

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Food Laws

Letters in the December, 1973 *Quarterly* relating to Biblical Food Laws might well be considered seriously by all Christians. Has God changed His mind between Lev. 11:18 and 1 Tim. 4:4-5? Are the Food Laws given in the Old Scriptures for disciplinary training?

God, as a loving Father, might have included in His laws relating to our well-being: "Do not drop a heavy stone on your bare foot"; or "Do not touch a red-hot coal or strike a sharp jagged stone with the bare hand." The penalty for disobedience is instantaneous in these latter cases; and God has obviously considered that our natural distaste for pain will quickly set us straight.

The effects are not as sudden or directly obvious in the case of the Food Laws, and God

has considered it necessary to warn us in writing. Every creature created by God is good, in that God created it for a definite purpose. Scavengers have their place, as does the janitor in any well-run establishment. We even have governmental laws protecting these God-created janitors.

Because God created janitors to keep the world clean, and He considers them good, in that they effectively accomplish their job, does not mean that they are suitable as man's food.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
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