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**An Essay on the
Mosaic Account of
the Creation and
Fall of Man.**

Nathaniel Lardner



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An Essay on the Mosaic Account of the Creation and Fall of Man.

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AN
ESSAY
ON THE
MOSAIC ACCOUNT
OF THE
Creation and Fall of MAN.



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THERE are not a few difficulties in the account, which Moses has given of the creation of the world, and of the formation, and temptation, and fall of our first parents. Some by the six days of the creation have understood as many years. Whilst others have thought the creation of the world instantaneous: and that the number of days mentioned by Moses is only intended to assist our conception, who are best able to think of things in order of succession. No one part of this account is fuller of difficulties, than that which relates to man. And some learned Jews, as well as Origen, and others among Christians, have supposed the account before us, not to be a history, but an allegory. The present prevailing opinion is, that what relates to man is fact. And it is argued, that, as the true character of Moses is that of an historian, it would be unbecoming his judgment and exactness, to insert an allegory in the midst of historical facts, without giving any intimation of it.

I shall take the account in the literal sense, and shall go over it under these several heads or divisions. 1. The formation of man. 2. the trial, upon which he was put in paradise. 3. the temptation he met with. 4. his transgression. 5. the consequences of that, with the sentence passed by God upon the tempter, and upon the transgressors, our first parents.

1. The first thing in order is the creation of man. For with that I begin, not intending to survey the other works of God, before made.

Gen. i. 26. 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 on the earth. 27. So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them.

This may be reckoned a summary account of the creation of man, which is more largely and particularly related again in the next chapter.

And God said: Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness.



It is common for Christians to say, that here is a proof of a Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. To which others answer, that the Jews never understood these expressions after this manner, who always believed one God, and that God to be one person only, except when they fell into gross idolatry, after the manner of their Heathen neighbours. And many learned Christians are clearly of opinion, that the doctrine of the Trinity was not revealed in the Old Testament.

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These interpreters therefore suppose, that the stile common to Princes, and great men, who often speak in the plural number, is here ascribed to God. Nor need the consultation, here represented, be supposed to be between equals. But God may be rather supposed to declare his mind to his angels, as counsellors. Nor will it be an invincible objection, that in this history there is no notice taken of the creation of angels. For there follow expressions, which may be reckoned to imply their existence, and their dignity, and that they were not unknown to man.

But indeed we need not to suppose any real discourse or consultation at all. The meaning is no more than this. "All other things being made, God proceeded to the creation of man: or, he purposed now, at the conclusion, to make man." And it may be reckoned probable, that Moses introduced God, in this peculiar manner, deliberating and consulting upon the creation of man, to intimate thereby, that he is the chief of the works of God, which are here described. Or, in other words, according to Patrick upon v. 26. "God not only reserved man for the last of his works, but does, as it were, advise, and consult, or deliberate about his production: the better to represent the dignity of man, and that he was made with admirable wisdom and prudence."

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It is here also worthy to be observed, that according to the account of Moses, a different method was taken in forming man, from that, in which other animals were were formed. *Ver. 20. And God said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life. And afterwards v. 24. And God said: Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth.* They were produced by the Divine power, and command. But God is represented, as making man himself, immediately, to denote his dignity, and superior prerogative above the rest of the creatures.

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Still at v. 26. *And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* By which twofold expression, it is likely, one and the same thing is intended. For when the result or execution of this deliberation and purpose is described and related, it is in this manner: *v. 27. So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him.*

What is the *image*, or likeness of God, intended by Moses, is not clear, because he has not distinctly expressed it and we may now conjecture things, which were not in the mind of the writer. Nevertheless I think, the coherence leads us to understand hereby, as somewhat suitable to the mind of Moses, *dominion over the rest of the creatures of this earth*, together with that reason and understanding, which is a main part of the superiority of the human

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nature above brute creatures, and qualifies man to rule over them, and subdue them, and make them subservient to his own use and benefit. So are the words of this [26 v.](#) *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 on the earth.* And the eminence of man is thus described [Job xxxv. 11.](#) *He teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.*

[V. 27.](#) *So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.* What we are first led to observe here, as connected with what was just said, is that the woman was made after the *image* of God, as well as the man.

And from inserting, in this summary account of man's creation, on the sixth day, this particular, that *God created man male and female*, it may be concluded, that the woman too was made on that day: which, I reckon, is the general opinion of interpreters: though there are some things in the next chapter, containing a more particular account of the formation of man, that might occasion some doubt about it. Patrick, in particular, says: "God made woman the same day he made man: as he did both sexes of other creatures, and as he made herbs and plants with seed in them, to propagate their species."

It is always supposed, that God made man in maturity of body and understanding. And some have been so curious as to inquire, at what age: or what was the age, he appeared to have. And in conformity to the great length of the lives of the antediluvians, they have supposed, he might have the appearance of a man of fifty or sixty years of age, according to that time.

[V. 28.](#) *And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.* The Jewish writers are generally disposed to understand that expression, *be fruitful and multiply*, as implying a precept, universally binding. But the coherence rather leads us to understand it of a blessing, or power: the like to which was bestowed upon the brute creatures, at [v. 22](#), which are not the subjects of a precept.

And here the privilege of dominion over the creatures is again expressed, denoting it to be common to both sexes, and designed to appertain to their posterity. *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.*

It follows in [v. 29, and 30.](#) *And God said: Behold, I have given you every herb, bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed. To you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth on the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so.* Hence it is argued by many, that meat, or food of animal flesh, was not used before the flood. But that does not seem certain. It may be allowed, that for a good while, flesh was forbore. As animals were made by pairs only, it was not convenient,



that any should be slain, till they were increased. It may be allowed also, that vegetables were very much the diet of those who lived before the flood: when, probably, all things were in greater vigour and perfection, than afterwards. But here is no prohibition of animal food. And it is observable, that Abel, and Seth, and all who were of the family of God, were keepers of cattle. And, if they were not allowed to make use of them for food, it would be difficult to shew, how keeping cattle, not fit for draught, or burden, especially in any large number, could turn to a good account. If it be said, they might use their milk: I answer, that is more than is clearly expressed in the grant. Moreover, sacrifices of living creatures were in use very early. It is not reasonable to think they were all whole burnt offerings. It may be reckoned probable, that they who brought to God sacrifices and offerings of living creatures, did partake of their offerings: which, certainly, was the custom in after times.

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The first chapter of Genesis concludes thus: *And God saw every thing that he had made: And behold, it was very good, And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.* Every thing was now formed, according to the will, and purpose, and command of God. And every part of each day's creation, man in particular, was good, and such as God approved and designed.

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Thus we have surveyed the summary account of man's creation, which is in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. At the beginning of the second chapter is introduced an account of the sabbath, and a description of paradise, which I forbear to insist on: but I would observe what is farther said of the formation of the first pair.

Ch. ii. 7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, And man became a living soul. Man is made of the *dust of the ground*. But thereby is supposed to be meant moist earth. And whereas it is said, *God breathed into him the breath of life*, which is not said of any other animals: it is hence argued, that the soul of man is different from the body, and that it is a more excellent spirit, than that of brute creatures.

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V. 18. And the Lord God said: It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him. Here, I apprehend, we are led to the same observation that was mentioned before, upon occasion of those words, which represented God as consulting about the creation of man. The design of those expressions was to intimate the great dignity, and superior excellence of man above brute creatures, whose creation was before related. In like manner, when God proceeds to the making of the woman, he is represented as consulting, and resolving, what to do: that the man might be the more sensible of the goodness of the creator in providing for him so suitable a help.

V. 19. And out of the ground God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them to Adam, to see what he would call them. And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof: 20. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found an help

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meet for him. This bringing the living creatures to Adam, and his giving them names, is a proof of his dominion over them.

This representation of things would lead us to suppose, that Eve was not formed on the sixth day, but some time after, because her formation is here related after the living creatures had been shewn to Adam. Nevertheless, as before hinted, that argument is not conclusive. Here we have only a more distinct account of what was before related in general. This may be strongly argued from the [seventh verse of this chapter](#), before taken notice of, concerning the formation of Adam, who, certainly, was created on the sixth day.

It follows at [v. 21](#). *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.* By this sleep, as is supposed, all pain was prevented. It is needless to multiply words here, or nicely to weigh objections. It seems most probable, that in the first formation there was somewhat superfluous in Adam. It has been supposed, that he had a superfluous rib on each side: and that God took away one pair, with the muscular parts adhering to them, and out of them made Eve.

[V. 22.](#) *And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.* [23.](#) *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.*

It has been thought not improbable, that Adam had an extasy, during the time of his deep sleep, shewing him, what was done upon him: which enabled him to speak so properly, when Eve was brought to him.

[V. 24.](#) *Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they be one flesh.*

This is sometimes called Adam's prophecy. For certain, if these are the words of Adam, he must have been inspired. For he could not at this time, in an ordinary way, have distinct ideas of the relations of father and mother. But many good interpreters think, that these should rather be understood as words of Moses, who by divine direction here inserted this law.

[V. 25.](#) *And they were both naked, the Man and his wife. And they were not ashamed.* This, certainly, must have been the case in a state of innocence. And therefore was proper to be mentioned.

And thus concludes the account of the formation of the first pair.

2. The next point in order is the trial, upon which Adam was put in paradise.

[Ch. ii. 9.](#) *And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree, that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

Of what kind, or for what use, *the tree of life* was, we cannot certainly say: though the name of it might lead us to think, it would have been of use upon occasion of eating any thing noxious, or for restoring decays, and preserving the vigour of life.

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And the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is doubted, why this tree was so called: whether it received its denomination from the event: or whether it was at first so called from the design, for which it was made and instituted, that it might be a trial of man's virtue.

In the 8. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. verses is the description of paradise, which I pass over.

V. 15. *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.* Not that he was made out of paradise, and then brought into it. But, when made, he was placed therein, to keep it in good order.

V. 16. *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat. 17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die.*

Adam, as a rational creature, was subject to the law and will of God. He was necessarily bound by all moral laws and rules, and thereby obliged to love, honour, worship his creator, and to love every creature of the same species or kind with himself, and to be merciful and tender of inferior beings, in subjection to him. But God was pleased to try him also by a positive law. And this would be likewise a trial of his virtue. For there can be no doubt, but he was obliged to respect this law and restraint of his bountiful maker. And if he should disobey this law, it must be owing to some defect or failure of virtue. There cannot be conceived any reason, why he should transgress this command, unless some wrong temper, or evil thought, or irregularity and exorbitance of desire, (which, certainly, is immoral and sinful) first arose in him.

In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Literally, in the original, *dying thou shalt die.* Which our translators have well expressed, *thou shalt surely die.*

Hereby some expositors have understood death *spiritual*, *natural*, and *eternal*. But I do not see any good reason, they have for it. We seem rather to be justified in taking it in the sense of *natural* death only, or the dissolution of this frame, the separation of soul and body. We are led to this by the words of the sentence pronounced after the transgression: *Dust thou art. And unto dust shalt thou return.*

In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. By which may be meant, that very day thou shalt become mortal, and be liable to pains and diseases, which will issue in death. Or, that very day thou shalt actually die. Which last sense may be as probable, as the other.

That is the trial, upon which man was put in paradise, and in his state of innocence.

3. The next point, the third in order, is the temptation, which he met with: the account of which is at the beginning of the third chapter of the book of Genesis. How long it was after the creation of Adam and Eve, before this happened, is not said. But it is likely, that some days had passed. The serpent found Eve alone, and tempted her in the absence of the man. Nor would his insinuations have been received, we may suppose, if he had suggested disobedience to a command, that was but just then given.

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Ch. iii. 1. *Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which God had made.* It is generally allowed, that here was the contrivance and agency of Satan. But Moses speaks only of the outward appearance: and therein, as I apprehend, refers to, or intends the winding, insinuating motion of serpents. *And he said unto the woman: Yea has God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* This is somewhat abrupt, and, possibly, some other discourse had preceded. However, it is very artful: not denying what was most true and certain: but insinuating, that it was very strange, if such a prohibition had been delivered to them. And, possibly, Eve concluded, that she was now addressed to by some angel, who wished them well.

V. 2. *And the woman said unto the serpent: We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden.* 3. *But of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it: Neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.* By which we perceive, that the woman was well apprized of the command, and the strictness of it. And, probably, she was by, when it was delivered: though Adam only be particularly mentioned.

V. 4. *And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die.* 5. *For God does know, that in the day you eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* Which last words may be thought to imply, that Eve was not without an apprehension of other intelligent beings, distinct from God the creator and man, and of an intermediate order between both.

In this discourse the serpent insinuates a wrong and disadvantageous opinion of the Deity, as envious of the high happiness and dignity, which they might attain to. And Eve was much to blame, for admitting suspicions of the benevolence of him that made them.

4. I proceed immediately to our first parents' transgression, the accounts of that and the temptation being closely connected.

V. 6. *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.* This is indeed strange. But from the serpent's insinuations she had admitted a dishonourable and disrespectful thought of the Deity, and then soon lost a just regard to the command he had given. She views this dangerous and deadly fruit with complacency. She looked upon this prohibited fruit, till she had an appetite to it, conceived of it as good food, and was taken with its beautiful colour, and possessed with a persuasion, that her curiosity would be gratified with an increase of knowledge. And according to the Mosaic account, which is concise, when Adam came up, and Eve presented him with some of the same forbidden fruit, he took it at her hand, and did eat of it. The account, I say, is concise. But it was needless to be more particular, after the clear account before given of the strict prohibition. Which sets Adam's fault in a conspicuous view. Possibly, the woman gave Adam an account of what the serpent had said to her, and represented it to him, with tokens of her approbation. He could have no temptation



beyond what had been presented to the woman, beside the addition of her offer of it. Which, as it seems, was no small inducement to compliance, and to do as she had done, and whatever should be the event, to share as she did.

V. 7. *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed [or twisted] fig-leaves together, and made them selves aprons.* Upon reflection, their eyes were opened in a different sense from what the serpent had said, and they were filled with shame, not knowing what to think of themselves, or how to act. But they soon contrived a slight garment as for a covering.

V. 8. *And they heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden, in the cool of the day.* They perceived a brisk motion of the air, coming towards them, with an increasing sound, that was awful to them. Or, in the words of Bp. Patrick: "They heard the sound of the majestic presence, or the glory of the Lord, approaching nearer and nearer to the place, where they were." *And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.* They who before had had converse with God, which was delightful, now retire into the closest, and most shady coverts, to avoid the divine appearance.

V. 9. *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him: Where art thou?* God summoned Adam, to appear before him, and to attend to what he should say. 10. *And he said: I heard thy voice in the midst of the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked. And I hid myself.* 11. *And he said: Who told thee, that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?* Intimating, that doubtless that was the occasion of all this confusion, and disorder of mind, and of his shiness of the Divine pretence,

V. 12. *And the man said: The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* He cannot deny his guilt. But he puts it off; as much as he can, upon the woman. And the more to excuse himself to God, he says: *The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me. . .*

V. 13. *And the Lord God said unto the woman: What is this thou hast done? And the woman said: The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* She too endeavours to cast the blame upon another. And though it was not a full vindication, (far from it) yet it was an alleviation of the fault. It would have been much worse, if she had eaten of her own accord, without a tempter.

V. 14. *And the Lord God said unto the serpent: because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* 15. *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

It is an observation of an ancient Christian writer, in Patrick upon v. 14. "That though God inflicted punishments upon Adam and Eve, yet he did not curse them, as he did the



serpent, they standing fair for a restitution to his favour.” Undoubtedly, it must have been comfortable to Adam and Eve, to see the displeasure of God against the servant that had seduced them. Nor were they presently cut off, as the threatening, annexed to disobedience, seemed to import. Yea God speaks of the *woman’s seed*. Therefore they were not to die immediately, but were to have a posterity: Meaning by her *seed* men in general, or the Messiah, and good men, who should prevail against the tempter and adversary, though they would suffer some injuries through his means: and calling it the *woman’s seed*, as some expositors think, to mollify Adam, and prevent his displeasure against her, who had led him into wrong conduct.

V. 16. *Unto the woman he said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children: that is, I will add to the pain and sorrow of child-bearing. And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.* Thy will shall be subject to thy husband’s. So it was before. But now his authority might be more rigorous, and severe, than otherwise it would have been. The punishment inflicted on Eve is suitable to the condition of her sex.

V. 17. *Unto Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, (Where we see, what was his chief temptation, and what was the nearer and most immediate inducement to him to transgress:) and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. 18. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field. 19. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

This part of the sentence, *returning to the dust*, or dying, must be supposed common to both, the man and the woman. And so far the first sentence takes place. They did not die immediately. But an irreversible sentence of death passes upon them, which would take place in a term of years, when God saw fit.

The rest of the sentence or punishment inflicted on Adam, is suitable to the condition of his sex, as the woman’s was to hers, whose province, as the Apostle excellently describes it, *1 Tim. v. 14.* is to *bear children, and guide the house*: whilst the man has the charge of providing for himself and the family by his care, labour and industry. The punishment therefore laid upon Adam is, that his care, and toil, and labour, should now for the future, be increased, beyond what it would have been otherwise.

But here arise objections, relating to the execution of the several sentences pronounced upon the *serpent*, the tempter, and the *two transgressors*. The sentence upon the serpent was: *Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.*

This is thought a difficulty. And it is asked: Did not serpents go upon the belly before? Was not that their ordinary motion always? How else should they be serpents, if they wanted

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that which is their proper nature? With regard then to this, and the two other sentences of punishment pronounced upon Eve, and upon Adam, I would observe. It seems to me probable, that God foresaw the event: and that though Adam was made innocent and upright, yet he would fall. This being foreseen, there were dispositions made in the original formation of things, which would be suitable to what happened. Therefore the alterations to be made upon the transgression of the first pair, were not very great and extraordinary. That is, there needed not any great alteration in the form of serpents, nor in the woman's make and constitution, nor in the temper of the ground, to accomplish what is mentioned as a punishment upon each.

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Serpents there were before the fall, as is manifest. And their winding, insinuating motion is referred to. Nor did God now, after the fall, create any new species of plants, as *thorns and thistles*, to exercise Adam's patience. There were already formed plants and herbs, that were not immediately useful for food, and would occasion an increase of labour and toil. And doubtless there were also lions, and tigers, and other like creatures: all originally made within the compass of the six days creation, and all good, and wisely designed, as a restraint upon man, according as his temper and circumstances should prove: to humble him, and to render him sensible of his weakness in himself, and his dependance upon God: and to make him thankful for all his distinctions, that he might be induced to give the praise of all his prerogatives and pre-eminences to him, from whom they came: who had made him to differ, with advantage, from the rest of the living creatures of this earth: but had also shewn, in a proper measure, his wisdom and power in them, as well as in him, and indeed is wise and holy, great and admirable in all his works.

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Nor does it appear, that the whole earth, though fitted for great fertility, was made paradisaical. For, according to Moses, Paradise was a *garden*, a spot of ground, *which God planted*, a certain district or territory, designed for the accommodation of man and the living creatures with him, in a state of innocence. When Adam therefore was turned out of paradise, he would find a difference.

It follows at [v. 20](#). *And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*

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When this was done, is not absolutely certain. Moses does not say, when. And as he seems not always to keep the order of time, it may be questioned, whether this was done very soon after the sentence had been pronounced upon them: or not till after the woman had brought forth, and was the mother of a living child.

[V. 21](#). *Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God makes coats of skin, and clothed them.*

It is very likely, that this is not mentioned in the order of time. For it precedes the account of expelling Adam and Eve out of paradise: whereas it cannot be easily supposed, that it was

done so soon. It must be reckoned probable, that immediately after the transgression of our first parents, and pronouncing sentence upon them, they were driven out of paradise. But *coats of skins* could not be had, till some time after the fall. For as all the brute creatures were made by pairs, some time must have been allowed for their increase, before any could be slain in the way of sacrifice, or other wise.

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Some of the Jewish writers indeed have understood this literally: *that unto Adam and his wife God did make coats of skins, and clothed them*: that is, he *created* for them such garments. Then, there would be no occasion to take from any of the beasts. But the more likely meaning is, that by Divine instruction and direction they made to themselves coats of skins. And it may be supposed, that they were but rough and unpolished.

Understand these words, as we generally do, that by Divine instruction, and with the Divine approbation, Adam and Eve clothed themselves with the skins of slain beasts, of sheep, or goats, or other living creatures: I should be much inclined to think, that Moses inserted this particular, as evidence, that God himself approved of clothing the body with proper and sufficient covering, as a ground and foundation of that decency, which is necessary to be observed by so sociable a creature as man, and in his present circumstances. And if the rough skins of beasts were used then, a more agreeable, and more ornamental clothing would not be unlawful or sinful hereafter: when farther improvements in arts and sciences should be made by the wit and industry of man: provided it were but suitable to the ability and condition of persons. And, for certain, a great variety of circumstances was very likely to arise in a numerous race of beings.

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I say, if this be the meaning of the words, as they are generally understood, I should be much disposed to think, that Moses inserted this particular, to prevent all scruples upon this head. For though a thing be in itself reasonable, and highly expedient: yet there is nothing, that so effectually puts objections to silence, as a Divine precept or precedent.

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However, there is a very learned and diligent Expositor¹ of Scripture, who explains this text in a different manner. He does not deny, that the original word is used for *coat* or *clothing*: But yet he thinks the word rendered *coats* signifies *tents* or *tabernacles*: which would be more needful than clothing in that warm climate, near paradise. Nor would the first pair, he thinks, need there so thick and heavy a clothing as that of the skins of beasts. Nevertheless, I do but just mention this sense. For that of our translation is generally approved of both by Jewish and Christian interpreters.

1 Vid. J. Cleric. Comm. in Gen. iii. 7. et 21.

V. 22. *And the Lord God said: Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.* Calvin's remark upon this verse is exactly to this purpose: "Whereas,² says he, many Christians from this place draw the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Deity, I fear, the argument is not solid." So that great man. And indeed, though Moses gives no particular account of the creation of angels, yet their existence is supposed in several parts of this history. And what reason could there be for saying, upon this occasion, that man was become like one of the Divine Persons? It may therefore be reckoned very likely, that here is a reference to the angelical order of beings, supposed to be more perfect, and more knowing, than man.

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Still v. 22. *And now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and live forever.*

The expression is elliptical. Somewhat is to be supplied, and to this effect, "Now care must be had, that he take not of the tree of life, and live for ever." This seems to imply, what was formerly hinted, that the tree of life was salutary, and healing, and might be useful, in case of hurts, and injuries, and decays. But man having transgressed in eating of the fruit forbidden him, and having incurred the threatened sentence; (which too had been pronounced upon him:) it was by no means fit, he should eat of the tree of life: the fruit of which might have rendered him immortal, or however prolonged his days to a period, that was not suited to the circumstances, into which he had brought himself by wilful transgression. There is an allusion to this design, or this virtue of the tree of life in [Rev. xxii. 2.](#) *And in the midst of the street of it, and on either side the river was there the tree of life. . . . And the leaves of the tree were for healing the nations.*

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V. 23, 24. *Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground, from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man. And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

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The design of all which seems to be to intimate, that the sentence of death, pronounced upon man, was peremptory and irreversible. He was by no means to attain to immortality in this world, but suffer the change of death, or the dissolution of soul and body, and return to the dust, out of which he was taken.

The text speaks expressly of *man* only. But all allow, that the *woman* is included, and must be understood. And are we not also to conclude, that the living creatures were all to follow Adam, and leave paradise? There was no need to mention them. They accompanied him, who, had dominion over them.

Man is sent forth *to till the ground*, in doing which he would have more labour, than he would have had in paradise. His employment is described by *tilling the ground*. For that

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2 Quod autem eliciunt ex hoc loco Christiani doctrinam de tribus in Deo personis, vereor ne satis firmum sit argumentum. Comm. in *Gen.* iii. 22.

would be his main work, as his diet, for some while at least, would be chiefly vegetable. At the entrance into Eden, by which Adam was driven out, were placed cherubim, or angels, with a bright appearance, more than ordinary, which rendered it awful.

It would be too curious, I apprehend, to inquire what became of that delightful garden, or spot of ground, in which Adam and Eve were first placed by their bountiful maker. If it subsisted for a while, it may be supposed to have been destroyed by the flood, and possibly before.

I have now surveyed the account of the creation and fall of man. And though I have not made use of the notion of its being allegorical, which usually leaves too much room for fancy, and for a variety of imaginations, many of which, if not all, would be conjectural yet, possibly, all is not exact history, nor every thing put in the order of time.

One instance of this, I think, we have plainly seen in the latter part of this chapter: where God's *making coats* for Adam and Eve is mentioned before their expulsion from paradise: whereas it is very probable, it was after it.

Another thing seems to be transposed in the Mosaic account. The living creatures are represented to be brought to Adam, to see how he would call them, before Eve was made. But it is not easy to conceive, how that should be done on the very sixth day of the creation, when Eve was made. It might be rather done some time after it. But Moses places that transaction, as he has done, the more to shew the importance of the woman's creation, though it might in time succeed it.

And there might be some other things instanced in, which need not to be literally taken, as here related, in the utmost strictness of interpretation.

In this account of Moses we have the origin of things. It is what speculative minds, in all ages, and in almost all parts of the world, have been employed about. God is good. But how to account, then, for evil, is a difficulty, which has greatly engaged, and perplexed mankind.

In this relation of Moses is set before us the origin of moral and penal evil, of sin, and diseases, and death, of the uncommon pains of child-bearing women, and of the great pains and labour, which man takes for the providing the necessaries of life.

And though, as has been owned, the Mosaic account is not free from difficulties, there never was a better given by any. And confider Moses only as a Philosopher, or Lawgiver, separate from the character of an inspired writer, his account of the creation, and of the primitive state of man, and his fall, is worthy of respect. And we have reason to be thankful for it.

I shall now mention some observations in the way of corollary.

I. All things were originally, as they came out of the hand of God, *good*, and were made by him in great wisdom.

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After the history of the six days creation, and of man in particular, it is added by Moses, at the end of the first chapter of this book: *And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.* And Solomon having with great diligence employed his active and capacious mind in surveying the affairs of this world, and having observed many instances of vanity and vexation therein, and particularly the great degeneracy of mankind, says: *This have I found, of this I see reason to be fully satisfied, that God made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.* [Ecc. vii. 29.](#)

II. We are here led to observe the dignity of the human nature, which is so set before us, that it might not be overlooked, but might be regarded, and taken notice of by every one.

[Gen. i. 26.](#) *And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* Every word shews the dignity of the human nature. God is represented as proceeding to the formation of man with deliberation and consultation. He makes him himself. He does not say: *Let the earth now bring forth man.* But, *Let us make man.* And still farther: *in our image, after our likeness.* His dignity is also signified in what follows. *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.* This thought, of man's having dominion over all things in this earth, and being lord of all the creatures therein, seldom occurs, as I apprehend, in Heathen writings: but it is a great and just notion, and is a privilege, which man still enjoys in great measure.

This notion of the dignity of the human nature leads us to two reflections: First, man, who has been made so excellent, and has dominion over other creatures, should act according to his dignity, as reasonable, and superior to other creatures on this earth, and should scorn every thing that is mean, base, impure, and cruel.

Another thought, which the dignity of the human nature leads us to, is this: That we can thence argue with great probability, if not with absolute certainty, that God will not lose this creature man, or suffer him to be for ever, and totally lost. If man perish and be lost, to what purpose was this earth formed? And of what use are all things therein, if man, to whom dominion over them was given, be taken away? and if he live not to take pleasure in, admire, use, and improve, the rich and costly furniture, with which this earth is adorned? It is moreover highly probable, that his time on this earth is not the whole period of his existence. So we may argue from the consideration of the superior dignity of the human nature. And we may see hereafter, that the argument is not inconclusive, but rightly framed.

III. All mankind have proceeded from one pair.

Of this we could not be now absolutely sure, without some good authority, or well attested tradition. But it is the account of Moses, the greatest Lawgiver that ever was, and an inspired Prophet of God. The great resemblance of mankind in the several parts of the world might be some ground of this supposition. But it would not be full proof. For many pairs,



resembling each other, might have been formed by God, the Creator, at once, in several, and remote countries, that the earth might be soon peopled thereby. But the account of Moses, I suppose, may be relied upon. Nor ought difference of complexion, and some other lesser things, to be reckoned a valid objection. For difference of climates, with the varieties of air, earth, water, and the lesser or greater degrees of the sun's heat, will make sensible alterations and differences in one and the same species. St. Paul observes to the Athenians, that *God had made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.* Acts xvii. 26. And though, as before said, the great resemblance of the human frame and powers in the several parts of the world may not be a demonstrative argument to us, that all came from one pair: yet this account of Moses is much confirmed by the great agreement between the several nations of the earth in bodily frame, and intellectual powers, like desires, and passions, and diseases, and in universal liableness to death.

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This leads us to two reflections. One is, the remarkable effect of the Divine blessing, bestowing such fruitfulness, that by one pair the vast circumference of this earth should be gradually peopled, manured, and improved.

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The second is, that all men ought to love one another as brethren. For they are all descended from the same parents, and cannot but have like powers, and weaknesses, and wants. Solomon says Prov. xxvii. 19. *As in water, or any other mirrour, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.* By considering ourselves we may know others: what they want, how we may relieve and comfort them. And this thought should abate exorbitant pride. For, notwithstanding some differences of outward condition, we have all the same nature, and are brethren.

IV. The Mosaic account teaches the only right order of marriage, that is, of one man and one woman.

When the Pharisees came to our Lord with a question about divorce, they being then accustomed to polygamy, and to frequent and easy divorces, he immediately answers them, and puts them to silence, by referring them to the Mosaic account of the creation of the first pair, and the Divine institution of marriage. Careful observations upon the increase of mankind have shewn us, that the number of males and females born into the world is near equal. Consequently, great inconveniences would ensue from a perversion of the right order of marriage. Nevertheless nothing can be so effectual, to put, and keep things in a right course, as Divine authority, like that in the Mosaic account of the creation.

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V. Another thing taught in this account of the origin of things is the lawfulness, purity, and innocence of the marriage state.

For God made man male and female, and marriage was instituted in the primitive state of innocence. Ch. i. 27. 28. *And 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.* Not now to recite again the

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farther account of the formation of the woman in the second chapter. Doubtless this account of Moses has been of great service in all ages, to remove, or prevent scruples, and to restrain those, who from mistaken notions, or wrong views, have been disposed to prohibit, or to discourage marriage.

But though all are at liberty to marry, if they please, yet our Saviour,³ as well as St. Paul,⁴ seems to intimate the commendableness of the single life in some: if they are masters of their own purpose, and if they prefer it, that they may serve God with less distraction, and greater freedom from the cares of this life: if they chuse to deny themselves, and to give themselves wholly up to the service of others in spreading the principles of religion, or promoting the interest of civil society, in any cafes of emergence: provided also, that they herein ad without ostentation, and do not over-value themselves upon this account, nor at all despise others; then there may be some commendableness in the single life. Nevertheless, after all, it may be reckoned probable, that there are not, and cannot be, many instances of the single life with all the above-mentioned qualifications.

VI. The Mosaic account of the origin of things teaches the duty of the sexes to each other in the marriage state.

This account teaches this, and is designed so to do. The design is so apparent, that it may, possibly, lead some to question, whether there is not some studied contrivance in the narration. And if all is history, and things were so performed, in the order here related, it may be esteemed unquestionable, that things were so done, particularly, that God created the man and the woman in this manner, and in this order, on purpose to convey these instructions. So therefore argues St. Paul, *1 Cor. xi. 7. 8. 9. For the man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.* And in another place. *1 Tim. ii. 12. 13. 14. But I suffer not a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed, then Eve. Here he adds also: And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

Indeed all nations by their own reason and observation have discerned the same, and have allotted to men the cabinet of princes, the senate, and courts of judicature, as well as the command of navies and armies. But there are two ways of teaching one and the same thing. One is by reason, the other is by facts related in a certain order, and clothed with certain circumstances. And this latter method may be least offensive, and as effectual, as the other. For comparisons between equals, or nearly so, are odious and disagreeable. Few or none can bear to insist upon majesty of countenance, bulk and strength of body, compass of knowledge, and solidity of judgment, as grounds of superiority and pre-eminence; when

3 Matth. xix.

4 1 Cor. vii.

too there may be on the other side advantages of a different kind, that will bring the balance very nigh, if not quite, to an equilibre. The Mosaic narration affords a better, as it is a softer argument. *Ch. ii. 7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a living soul. Afterwards, v. 18. And the Lord God said: It is not good, that man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him. V. 21, 22. And he took one of his ribs . . . And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.* All which affords excellent instruction. And if this account teaches yielding of will and desire on the one hand, it does as strongly enforce protection, love and tenderness on the other: the performance of which, suitably, on each side, it is likely, will secure mutual comfort and happiness.



VII. Man was put upon a fair and equitable trial, and fell from his primitive state of happiness by his own fault.

Ch. ii. 16, 17. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Divines of all denominations, I think, are agreed, that Adam had freedom of will, power to chuse and to refuse. Good and evil were set before him. Nor was it a difficult thing, to avoid the prohibited fruit. And yet he was induced to eat of it.



VIII. If Adam, who was made upright, was overcome by temptation, we ought to be upon our guard.

This is a duty, inculcated upon all of us by our excellent Lord and Master. Especially ought we to guard against disadvantageous and dishonourable thoughts of the Deity. By this means, as much as any, the subtle serpent prevailed upon and deceived Eve. *Ch. iii. 1. Yea has God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . V. 5. For God does know, that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* All dishonourable sentiments of God, as unmerciful, illiberal, rigid, and inexorable, except upon terms of strict justice, are as false, as those here suggested by the serpent, or rather by satan: and if hearkened to, will have a bad influence upon us, and lead us astray from him, who is the source of our happiness.



IX. The fall of our first parents is not only an argument to watch ourselves, but also to watch over others. Says St. Paul *2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. . . For I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

X. The sentence pronounced by God upon our first parents for their transgression was mild and equitable: or, it was a just sentence tempered with mercy.

The whole process of the judgment shews this, as related by Moses. First, Adam is summoned. He could not deny, that he had eaten the forbidden fruit. But he has an excuse: not a very good one, yet an excuse it is. *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she*



gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman too had tasted of the forbidden fruit, and had first tasted. She likewise has an excuse and apology: and though not sufficient, yet of some moment. *And the woman said: The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* Still farther, God begins with pronouncing sentence upon the serpent, which must have been exceeding comfortable to our first parents. And an intimation is given, that the *seed of the woman* should prevail against the serpent: or, that the cause of truth and innocence, religion and virtue, and the true interest and happiness of man, should prevail, and take place in the end.

And though afterwards there are distinct and several sentences pronounced upon each, even upon Adam, and Eve: and the sentence of death, as common to both: yet they are not immediately destroyed, but have time afforded for repentance.

We cannot forbear therefore to observe the justice and the equity of the Divine Being. Man must die, but not immediately. And he would meet with arguments to establish his resolutions for obedience to the will of God, and for performing the duties of his present condition. The angels that fell, appear not to have had any mercy shewn them. They, it is likely, had no tempter. Herein, then, there is a difference between man and them. God in his great goodness and equity considers this, and treats man accordingly. This, as well as other things, should induce us to acknowledge the goodness of God, and to guard against all those sentiments that impeach it. God is the fountain of goodness. God therefore is the most merciful; and most equitable being in the universe.

XI. The Mosaic account may lead us to think, that some magnify the consequences of the fall of our first parents.

The sin of Adam was the introduction of death, and of the miseries of this life. And so far his sin is imputed to his descendents, that they all become liable to the sentence of natural death. As St. Paul says [Rom. v. 12](#). *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death, a sentence of death, passed upon all men.* This is not to be denied. Nor is it any impeachment of the Divine justice or goodness. For God might have made man at first mortal, only supposing a future state: and that all things here, comforts and sorrows, be designed and ordered, as preparatory and disciplinary for another and better state.

But beside this, some assert, that the descendents of Adam derive from him a vitiated and corrupted nature, unable and averse to good, and inclined to evil. But where is this taught, either in this origin of things, now before us, or in any other part of Scripture? And would not this be, in reality, to make God the author of sin? Is not this imitating guilty Adam, who said: *The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me, and I did eat?* But if men could allege a vitiated nature, it would be a better apology, than that of Adam. The bad conduct and the solicitations of the woman could be no more at the utmost than a temptation from without. But nature is inborn, and the man himself. If a bad nature be derived to him without his own fault, the evil is past remedy, and quite out of his power. And

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if bad actions flow from a bad nature, he is scarce accountable for them. They must be put to the account of nature, and the author of it.

Besides, what reason is there to apprehend so great an alteration made in the nature and powers of man by Adam's transgression? Is there an immense difference between Adam and his posterity? Adam was made innocent. But his virtue was not confirmed. How easily were Adam and Eve misled, and drawn into transgression! Is it not very strange, that, in their circumstances, they should not be satisfied, without tasting of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: when the prohibition was so express and strict, and they enjoyed great plenty of other things? The positive law, delivered to Adam, forbidding him to touch the fruit of that one tree, was a proper trial of his virtue. For it cannot be doubted, that he was obliged to respect this law of his Creator. And if he should disobey it, that must be owing to some defect or failure of moral virtue, as before observed.

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Let us, then, not be unwilling to consider, whether the consequences of the fall of our first parents be not aggravated by some: and let us be careful, not to admit any schemes, which are derogatory to God's honour, and which countenance or justify men in their allowed weaknesses, or wilful transgressions.

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XII. Finally, from the Mosaic account of the origin of things, and the explication, which has been now given of it, we may be enabled to perceive, that the permission of the fall of our first parents, with the consequences of it, is no reflection upon the wisdom of the Divine Government.

For rational creatures must be put upon trial. They cannot be without freedom of will, which may be abused. And as our first parents did not sin without a tempter, or of their own motion, as many of the angels seem to have done, God in his treatment of them has joined mercy with justice. Hence will arise glory to God, and good to men. God by his long-suffering and patience, and the instructions afforded to them, and other methods of his Providence, the result of his unsearchable wisdom and goodness, will bring many of the sons of Adam to repentance, true holiness, eminent virtue, and heavenly glory and happiness, exceeding what could have been enjoyed on this earth, even in paradise itself.

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The virtue of true penitents is sometimes very great. They gain an establishment in the love and fear of God, and a full resolution for all goodness. The steady virtue of men amidst the temptations of this world will exceed the virtue of Adam in paradise. It is true, they are not innocent, as he was. But they are upright, and fully resolved, and they overcome strong temptations. And the moment of their virtue, according to equitable construction, (and such is that of the Divine judgment:) may equal, and even surpass the virtue of an angel, who has not so great temptations, I am the more led to this, considering the great recompences, which God in the gospel has proposed to the faithful, the Ready and victorious in this state of trial. And if we may attain to such excellence here, and such glory hereafter, we

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are greatly to blame, and much wanting to ourselves, if we do not *strive against sin*.⁵ [Hebr. xii. 4.](#) to the utmost, and resolutely, though humbly, and without ostentation, maintain our integrity amidst all the solicitations of this world.

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