

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR APR. 4.

"The Story of Creation."—
Genesis 1:1-2:25.

By a curious coincidence, I find myself on the shore of the Red Sea, at a point almost central to the oldest scenes of human history, when the time comes around for writing this first of a new series of nine months of Sunday school lessons in Old Testament history, I am in the geography of Genesis.

These sandy mountains of North Africa, and the brown wastes of the Sinai, with the mountains in the haze beyond, have looked upon more history than the hand of man has ever penned. It seems easy and natural, on this spot, to muse upon the primal things. Nobody hereabouts ever heard of "fundamentalism" or "modernism"; and it never occurs to anybody in these lonely regions not to reverence and worship God.

As I reread, in this appropriate setting, the majestic opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, so much more sublime than anything that has come down to us from a contemporaneous period in Egypt or Babylonia, that only the hand of inspiration can explain it, I find myself impressed anew with the restraint of the Scriptural narrative. It tells simply the essential facts. All other creation stories are diffuse and disorderly and puerile. Within the ordered lines of the first two chapters of Genesis there is ample room for all that the mind of man has since discovered about the ways of God.

This restraint of Genesis contrasts strikingly with the noisy and needless clash of churchmen and scientists in America. Genesis has had to take nothing back, while theories of origins, theories of matter, theories of space and theories of time have turned out to be wrong guesses. Only the past week I heard from one of the biggest of the archaeologists now in Egypt that recent finds have made necessary the entire revision of accepted Egyptian chronology. It is small wonder that the president of the American Society of Chemists, himself, a Nobel Prize winner, should caution his fellow scientists against the present habit of scientific dogmatism which exceeds that of the theologians.

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Frankly, the public needs to be warned seriously against its present aptitude for accepting the latest utterances of archaeologists, geologists and anthropologists as of higher authoritativeness than the Bible. A quick cure for this habit would be a more intimate acquaintance, at first hand, with the work and ways of archaeologists, such as I am experiencing this winter. The reckless guesses and claims made concerning the importance of their own finds; their childish jealousy and disparagement of one another; their tendency to form general conclusions upon wholly inadequate data; these cause hard-headed men to display a vigorous and cynical skepticism.

The over-press-agented Tut-Ankh-Amen is a case in point. The discovery of his tomb was exploited throughout the world as the greatest find in the history of archeology; yet the young man in his lifetime was really nothing but the ornamental boy husband of a queen; and the lavish embellishments of his burial (which really are worth seeing) express merely the vanity of his widow—who was busy at the time these sumptuous memorials were in preparation corresponding with the king of the Hittites concerning a second husband from among his sons! Yet unsophisticated people swallow Tut-Ankh-Amen publicity as of more importance than the Genesis narrative! One other important point should be borne in mind as we approach the Bible story of first things. Early Genesis gives no dates. Bishop Usher's chronology, printed on margin of most editions of the Authorized Version, has wrought confusion and harm. There is ample space within the Bible's record of creation for all the millenniums that archaeology may surmise. But what shall we say of that Toronto scientist who contends that flint instruments were fabricated by man thirty-million years ago? One of the daring characterizations of the Deity by Scripture is that with Him "a thousand years are as a day." With a certain type of modern scientist, whose words are as much of grief to his sober associates as they are to the preachers, a million years are as an hour.

Grave Generalizations
As I look out on these blue waters of this old, old Bible sea it comes to me that, despite our intellectual pride, as much as mankind throughout the past three thousand years has been able to grasp. And it is in no respect inconsistent with what men have since clearly read in God's Book of Nature. If for these later times the Creator has reserved supplemental editions of His Autobiography, it is for man to accept them with reverence and gratitude; and without disparaging the first, and still true, edition.

Four words, which began the whole Bible, contain the substance of all that has since been written anywhere: "In the beginning, God." The bookmen's indispensable "First Cause" is the Christian's conscious Creator and ever-living God. Because God was, all things else are. There is no time so far back in eternity that the Spirit of God was not brooding over chaos. Before the awesome sublimity of the contemplation of the ever-existent and infinite Creator the human spirit simply falls prone in adoration.

He who created the world still continues to govern it. And if our consciousness of the vastness of the universe has immeasurably expanded, so also has our reverence toward Him who made and rules all things. His primal "Let there be light!" is still the fiat holding most of hope for human progress.

How Old Is Man?
The antiquity and origin of man is a perplexing problem. Recently I examined the fragment of petrified skull unearthed last year near the northern shore of the Lake of Galilee and called the "Galilee Man," and I also carefully examined the cave in which it was found. The surmise is that this skull is from twenty to fifty thousand years old; a French scientist whom I chanced to meet on the spot told me he thought the age was nearer fifty thousand than twenty thousand years; but, with Gallic skepticism, he admits that it is all surmise.

Our interest in the "Galilee Man" and the relation of this skull to our present Genesis lesson, lies in the point that, up to the present hour, science has no trace of man when he was other than man. Whenever a prehistoric skull has been found it has been that of a reasoning mortal. Get firm hold of that. It is central to the whole current discussion.

Listen to the words of Sir Arthur Keith, the foremost living British anthropologist, to whom this Galilee fragment was officially submitted; and remember he was an "smart" paragrapher, poking fun at his fellow countrymen; the humorous aspect of his carefully written dictum has probably not yet penetrated his own skull. Says Sir Arthur Keith, concerning this prehistoric man, whose age he puts down as at least twenty thousand years: "His brain capacity was that of the average Englishman of today." The distinguished British scientist was not indicating his countrymen as having only the brains of cave men; he was testifying that twenty thousand years ago, as he surmised, the men who dwelt in the caves of the Wadi Amud, in Galilee, had as much brains as we boasted moderns!

"Whither?" Versus "Whence?"
Staggering, isn't it? And for the practical purposes of the everyday person, I am not now dealing with the vast and measureless reaches of time involved in scientific hypothesis—this all means, as I have tried to show in the Bible Lands book that I am over here to write, that there is no hope for humanity in the theory of evolution. As far back as can be measured, the human brain has not "evolved" in its potentiality one iota in twenty thousand years. Most of us have scarcely the patience to wait that long for the amelioration of the race.

Religion is more scientific than evolution; for its power has been proved, whereas the process of evolution is conjectured. There is not space here to go into the statements of scientific men, such as I have had at first hand, to the effect that religion has more than once completely transformed the characteristics of a people and developed new powers in them. Actually, regeneration is more demonstrably scientific than evolution. Professor William James' great book leaves no doubt upon that point.

Since inner character is more important in life than outward form, the question of "whither" is of greater moment than "whence." The Bible is only incidentally a book of origins; primarily it deals with destiny. What a man is; and which way he is going, are the real facts of importance about him.

SEVEN SENTENCE SERMONS
The strength of a republican government depends on the morality of the individual citizens. Matt. 23:23

One on God's side is a majority—Wendell Phillips.

God is the perfect poet. Who in his person acts his own creations. Robert Browning.

Every man feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action. James Russell Lowell.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Psalms 46:1.

A charge to keep I have
A God to glorify,
A never dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky. Charles Wesley

The greatest fault, I should say, is to be conscious of none but other people's. Thomas Carlyle.

Combine Two Materials
One of the latest style combinations is the printed silk blouse with a stain skirt. It is an overblouse, of course, and just now is made with long sleeves that tie at the wrists. Later it may have very short sleeves, just capping the shoulders and very close fitting. One such costume consisted of a black satin skirt and the gayest of printed silk blouses, made from two dresses that had seen much wear in another form.

"Soils are like individuals," they have temperament. Every farmer must give his best thought if he is to keep his soil working at top efficiency. Milton Whitney.

Object of The Cotton Contest

The papers of the state and the Extension Service are trying to do everything that they can to have the cotton produced as economically as possible, and to plant a staple that can find a ready market. The statewide cotton contest will determine to a great extent the best means of producing cotton. The prize money totaling \$2000 has been provided by generous action of "The State," through Mr. Ambrose E. Gonzales. 1st prize \$1000 2nd prize \$500; 3rd prize \$200; 4th, 5th, and 6th prizes \$100 each.

To those entering the five-acre contest one reliable seed concern has offered any seed that they have at half price so that the farmers may secure good seed at a very reasonable price.

Application blanks may be had from the county agent, also any additional information that you may desire concerning this contest.

Even if you don't win one of the cash prizes, the experience, that you may get from keeping a record will not have caused you to have lost anything; but go into the contest with the determination of winning.

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RULES FOR COTTON CONTEST

1. The acreage shall consist of one body of five acres of land. Calculations are to be made from outside measurements.
2. No applications will be considered that are received by the Extension Service of Clemson College later than May 1. Enrollment blanks will be furnished upon application to the Extension Service, Clemson College, or to a county agent.
3. Each contestant shall keep a record on forms furnished of operations and expenses in connection with the five-acre field. This record is to be kept throughout the year, and at the end of the season it is to be turned over to the Extension Service regardless of yield obtained. These records will constitute a valuable fund of information based on actual experience. All records must be received by the Extension Service at Clemson not later than December 15.
4. One of the objects of this contest is to distinguish her from the needs of the mills of South Carolina. Each contestant is therefore required to state in his application the variety, strain and source of the seed to be used in the contest. Seed of varieties and strain that are known not to produce staple of one inch length or better will not be approved. Each contestant will be notified of this approval or disapproval shortly after receipt of the application.

Magdala, now el-Mejdel, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. It may be that, as a lady of means, the title showed her local importance. When encountered by our Lord, Mary was one of those afflicted with that awful and horrible complaint known as "possessed by the devil." Exactly what that was we do not know, for the disease is no longer in existence, but it was probably something resembling epilepsy, caused by a devilish assumption of power over humanity by Satan, at that time when the great conflict for the mastery of the word was at its extreme height.

Mary Magdala was a sufferer from such possession to an unusual degree. "Seven devils," were cast out of her by Jesus Christ, either successively or at once, and her relief must have been excessive when Satan's power over her suffering body was broken, and she was a normally healthy woman again.

That she became from henceforth a disciple or follower of her Savior, along with some other women, was not to be wondered at, nor was it strange that in thankfulness, "she ministered to him of her substance."

Whether she proclaimed the good news of the Savior's presence to the mothers of Salem we are not informed, but so devoted a disciple, and thankful a believer, could hardly be expected to keep silence about Him in general conversation.

At any rate she followed after Jesus with faithfulness, and if on that dark betrayal night she was unaware of the treachery against Him, she followed among the way of sorrows to Calvary with His mother, and stood in anguish with her beside the cross of suffering.

When Joseph of Arimathea had rescued the sacred body from ignominy, and with Nicodemus laid it decently in his new, rock-hewn tomb, the evangelists especially tell us Mary of Magdala was there, and witnessed the hasty entombment.

For a time she and another Mary sat and wept beside the tomb as loving, mourning women; until the duties of that last of the old Sabbaths called them away.

They had made their plans, however, and as soon as the Sabbath had passed, "at sunrise" hastened to buy, mix and prepare a great amount of spices, and no doubt more fine linen, to preserve, attire and do all honor

after receipt of the application. 5. In order to put these rules into effect equitably among contestants there shall be appointed for each contestant a committee of three, two of whom shall be nearby neighbors who are not contestants and the other shall be the county demonstration agent. This committee shall have charge of surveying the five-acre field, estimating probable yield at proper times, collecting samples, checking the work of the contestant in any way deemed necessary or advisable, and shall finally place its approval upon the report of the contestant. The committee may render other services in connection with the contest not herein mentioned but which seem advisable as the contest proceeds.

6. A statewide committee on awards shall be charged with the responsibility of passing judgement

on the work of each contestant and making the awards to the winners under these rules. The personnel of this statewide committee shall be announced prior to the harvesting season.

7. These rules will apply for the year 1926 and, while it is expected that the contest will be continued along the same general lines from year to year and its scope probably broadened to include other crops, the rules may be amended, so as to better meet the needs for succeeding years. Such amendments applying to future years will be announced early enough to permit all interested to take amendments into account in planning the year's work.

8. The contestant shall be declared the winner who after complying with the foregoing produces the largest number of pounds of lint cotton on the five acre field.

There is a quite common opinion that Mary Magdalene was "the woman who was a sinner" mentioned in St. Luke 7:36-50. That woman was evidently notorious for her sinful life, and on account of that opinion the Magdalene has come to be considered a kind of patron saint of depraved womanhood. Even the clergy sometimes use her as an example of the possibility of repentance bringing the vilest of the vile into the company of the blessed.

For this opinion there is not a vestige of proof in the scriptures, nor does the most ancient tradition support it. We have not the faintest reason for thinking that Mary Magdalene was ever an abandoned woman! To every careful reader of the New Testament it must be a matter to regret that the honorable name of the thankful, good woman, who was the first witness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, should have been besmirched carelessly.

No doubt the mention of Mary Magdalene in the chapter next to the one that tells us of the sinful woman at the house of Simon the Leper (Luke 8), has had something to do with the forming of this, wrong opinion. Certain authorities were in some cases inclined to identify that woman with Mary the sister of Lazarus, but that is not a popular opinion now with the commentators.

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AN EASTER STORY

Morning found them, still at their task, and very early, before it was yet light, they stole out with their burdens to Joseph's garden in which was the sepulcher.

That the Roman governor's seal had been impressed upon wax over the sides and lintel of the doorway, a seal not to be broken with impunity, they would not know. Nor could they be aware of the guard of soldiers, Pilate, at the solicitations of the sanhedrin, had placed about the sepulcher!

To their horror and surprise they found the stone rolled away, the sepulcher wide open, and timidly peeping in they saw no sign of the sacred body of their Lord!

Fearful that still further indignity had been offered Him, they hurried back, fast as their feet would carry them, to the house where Peter and John were lodging, breathlessly announcing "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher!"

With headlong haste the two ran through the streets in the early dawn, dashed through the garden, and, Peter now in the lead, entered the tomb to find grave clothes and head wrap all neatly folded, as though there had been no untimely haste about that departure from the grave. To the disciples came remembrances of His talk of "rising from the dead," and wonder that the others must be told at once, and they hasten back to them with their news and surprise.

The women had followed the two out of the sepulcher. If thou hast pained them back to the city. But not Mary Magdalene! Wondering, fearing, weeping, she stood in Joseph's garden, not knowing which way to turn in her grief.

A voice inquiring "Why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?" only aroused a trifling interest. Without raising her head she made answer, "They have taken away my Master out of the sepulcher. If thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, that I may take away that sacred body!"

"Mary!" came the reply. The old familiar accent of tender care, of gentle sympathy, of command, which she had such good reason to remember, was in the word! In a very agony of joy and amazement the woman was prostrate at His feet in adoration, while all she could make her lips utter was the one word "Rabboni!" My Master; My Master!

Jesus in actual verity, hark from the dead! The marks of death still in side, hands and feet, but the same! The glory of the risen life, of the resurrection, of the world of heaven to which the way was wide open, now shone in His face. He was clad in the resurrection body, able to breathe the air of heaven or the atmosphere of earth, to eat earthly food or exist without it, to move all independently of mundane laws so as to pass where He would. But the same Jesus of Nazareth still!

And Mary of Magdala was the first to see it—she the physical shipwreck, miraculously salvaged by His divine power from the sevenfold bonds of Satan's ruin!

Seldom has mortal experienced deeper, purer joy than that which found Mary in devotion at her Savior's feet in Joseph's garden, on the first Easter morning!

Wonderful are the ways of our God! The first apostles of the Savior's name and birth were a few poor shepherds of Bethlehem; the first apostle of the Gospel of the Resurrection was a woman, one who had been on the threshold of hell, fast bound by Satan's power!

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