

The First Eon

(Essay no 17)

A first assessment of our subject will need to take note of those general distinctions that lie around this period, and to distinguish it from all the eons that follow. The first eon commenced in the primeval condition, with no sin abroad. This is not the case for any other eon, not even the final or fifth eon, though then missing (sin) its effects will have come to be definitely contained.

The question of the orders of beings that belong to this eon will also press into view. We must then enquire into the sequence of features by which the universe was built up in the first eon, as well as extending out of it, for we will find that this eon fashions the character of all later eons.

Perhaps it may be thought that we should first consider the features which bring the material side into existence, but a little thought may soon show why this must be made to be the second stage of enquiry. We must certainly alert ourselves to the distinctions that exist between the earth and the heavens, and so be ready to regard the beings which the Scriptures indicate for the celestial regions. This will be the most effective method of procedure, for it will lead us more easily into the then conditions, circumstances and relationships on the earth.

Humans certainly did not characterize the first eon. Nor were there anywhere in the universe in this period rational creatures possessing the capacity of self-multiplying. Thus the first eon cannot be marked by generations: in fact, the order of time existence, as we are aware of it, may well be largely out of consideration. Nor of the factors or features created should we think that they came into being forthwith at an approximate initial moment.

In some regards we have to make a judgment around the odd matter, even in using a statement given in reference to the week's work in Genesis one. For such a case we may refer to the words – "and the stars" (Gen. 1:16). Undoubtedly these belong to the first eon, yet, in relation to the week's work, they were given a new function, that of becoming one of the items within the ruling of the night, even though still being related to the celestial regions.

In this way do we come to discern that darkness is an intruder, arising in the first eon, in the economy of the earth, and from its appearance it actually kept back some measure of the original glory. In part, the darkness remains related to the earth, and has been made to be a major feature of the readjustment in respect of the second eon. *The stars, whilst being a feature of the first eon, are used to supply to us a figure whereby some of the celestials can be referred to our understanding.*

This item of darkness, coming through into the second eon from the first, is in a sense, removed from continuing to be the void or mere accompaniment of the chaos of the earth, for not only does its appearance come to be lessened, but it is coming to be interspersed by those bodies, the stars, which really belong to the first eon. The stars did not appear through the darkness until the night of the fourth day (Gen. 1:19). But the darkness has remained, not alone to the second eon, but forward into the third and fourth eons. It will not be dispelled until the fifth eon, when there is no night. *Understood within the revelation of the Scriptures, the darkness of night serves as an indication of the effect of a contrary will in the universe, and the record by darkness continues until the Adversary is restrained from any further function within the eons.*

The separateness which has arisen around the first eon, making it distinct from other eons, was a very real division. Yet some prior effects therefrom, both physical and spiritual, are retained throughout the following eons, two, three, and four. However, the heavens do again function along with the readjusted earth, to make one whole, that is, the UNIVERSE. That which has come to be termed the 'disruption' by the Concordant Version, carried forward its relation to the darkness. It is used, too, as a waymark of some important features of God's ways. This is especially notable in regard to those ways which flow from His counsels formulated with Himself, preceding the creation. From them (His counsels) come the secrets of Paul's ministry, and they are especially in point in regard to the ecclesia, amidst its lot with Him Who is the Head of the universe.

In other contexts, this same matter, the disruption, is instanced to deny and correct that all is continuing

thus from the beginning of creation. This is 2 Peter 3, and there are other passages which make reference to the first eon. These are of singular moment, for they furnish details which are guides in respect of the sequence of the making of the celestials, and as to when their entry into the order of the universe occurred. We have also references in Job 38 and Proverbs 8, and to these we will return later, to make due comments on their relation to our subject, the first eon.

At Hebrews 1:10, quoting from Psalm 102:25, we learn that God, speaking to His messengers, said to them concerning His Son, that His Son founded the earth according to original counsels. In these original matters we have moved back prior to the earth: in fact, to before creation, other than that God's Son was the Creative Original. The SON preceded all else: His priority over all else is established. He was more excellent than every other celestial minister. The glory which the Father made to inhere in Him, in His precedence, is fully confirmed, and all others of creation are informed of it.

This precedence of the Son must be kept well in mind, for it will serve to remind that other details have their sequence or order of appearance. This is especially the case in respect of the celestials, for the matter as to when they appeared is, indeed, quite important. Were the celestials in being prior to the earth? We will take up this point when dealing with Job 38, for there we will find the answer.

The bringing forth into creation of that one who was to fill the office of Adversary must be taken up as one of the leading matters in the first eon. Equally the point as to when he first appeared amidst created beings and the physical elements of creation must be considered. It will not do to have this one entering creation prior to the earth, for he would not join in the shout of jubilation which was raised by the sons of Alueim at the shooting into position of the cornerstone of the earth. (Job 38:7).

Whilst study and consideration around the Adversary have led us to the understanding that creation gave to him the character which constituted and fitted him to fill the office, we have not wholly faced the question as to the direct and immediate effect of his entry into affairs. Certainly, on the lowest estimate, creation could not proceed as before, for that element of opposition commensurate with the idea of an adversary, was thus introduced. Enmity is now existent within the domain of creation.

What form the effect from the Adversary's entrance would assume, this may readily be judged when we think that the Firstborn of creation had been constituted as the ONE through Whom creation was being carried forward. To this ONE creation was immediately subject. Yet it was the character of the counterworker to be the reverse of subject, and so forthwith this must be the case, with the corresponding effect to creation. In fact, from the point of the Adversary entering into his office, from then did the character of the eons change. Along with this fact, we must regard the remainder of the eons.

There is every reason to give attention to the wide inclusion which the first verse of Genesis states. The term "beginning" does not take its value as part of an absolute statement, but rather is it relative to all that comes into being by reason of creation, and also as inaugurating all the outworkings of future eons.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures we find references which give brief details of some leading matters of the first eon. Those which speak directly of the conclusion of that eon are known to us. Speaking around creation, and the heavens and earth thereof, it is said (2 Peter 3:5) that "the then world" perished. That earth cohered out of and through water, for its strata were laid down by means of water, as suggested by mention of the top soils (Prov. 8:26). There was no sea in that eon, the water having settled down below the earth's surface, and it was by means of the internal water that the first earth was deluged.

From this came the submerged chaos of the second verse of Genesis one. Ieue covered over the ruin of that with murkiness and cloud. (Job 38:9). (Prov. 8:27-29). It was, so to speak, by these means excluded from immediate view, to be brought back to partial view at the point of the week's work when luminaries were made to appear in the heavens. At a later point in the eons, the darkness will be entirely gone, and this will correspond with the consummation.

Ere Alueim made any adjustment to this dark scene, He first called for light (Gen. 1:13). The wreck of the first eon could not be moved away from, apart from His first fiat, and corresponding thereto, there must needs be the spiritual counterpart, and this resided in the LAMBKIN. Thus do we have the statement that the Lambkin

was slain from the disruption of the world (Unv. 13:8). Truly, in the Lambkin was the spiritual light from which to call the impulse to move forward into another eon, and to an earth which shall afford the situation that will make possible the slaying of HIM WHO is the LAMBKIN.

Assuredly the foregoing event, which ruined the earth, was the point around which the Adversary entered office, and so prevented there being any humans on the first earth, for it never came to be indwelt (Isa. 45:18). This was a signal counter action arising out of the jurisdiction of darkness, one which seemingly destroyed the unity which creation had thus far displayed. This was the immediate effect of the Adversary's office, for, all unwittingly, he remained ready and available for GOD'S sequel, which was to ensue as a start of the second eon. (Genesis 3).

From the details, it becomes apparent that celestials were dominant creatures in the first eon. Those celestial offices termed thrones, lordships, sovereignties and authorities (Col. 1:16) require us to understand that there were correlative subjects, though to us they would be invisible. To the first eon belong the sovereignties, authorities and worldmights, which, even in the current eon, and especially the present administration, aim to systematize all against GOD. They are enlisted by the Adversary to forward his stratagems. From these come the spirit now operating in the sons of stubbornness (Eph. 2:2). These are the opponents of the ecclesia in the present administration: they have strayed the ecclesia down the centuries and the straying seems now to be moving to its height. Yet the conclusion of the third eon will reach a marked restriction upon the Adversary's activities and his influence. This will forward the ministry of the ecclesia among the celestials.

Coming to one of the passages mentioned earlier, that of Job 38, we find that Elihu has just concluded speaking. He had supposed that his speaking to Job would solve Job's problems and correct Job's outlook. But, as from Job's prior friends, his case remained. This speaking of Elihu was followed by a theophany in which leue addresses Job (ch. 38). At once was leue able to subject Job, for Job's declarations were failing in knowledge. It is very notable that IEUE answers Job by the use of details which, in the main, come over from a major situation of the first eon: "Whereat were you when I founded the earth ?" This introduction begins to show that the root of Job's dilemma belongs to circumstances which have a parallel in those of the prior eon. Job was unable to explain the things which had overtaken him. He had tried by words, but he simply was not aware of the whole situation. IEUE had founded the earth, yet it had come to have the sea rushing over it, as out of the womb (Job 38:8). This was quite a distinct affair to the jubilation of the stars of the morning (Job 38:7). The occurrence was in the nature of a disaster, for IEUE had to overshadow the sea with lids, for it rushed forth as from a womb. IEUE also constituted clouds to be clothing for the sea, as well as murkiness to be its swaddling band.

A specific statute had been necessary by IEUE in order to restrain this happening (38:10). And whence came this occurrence of the first eon ? Was it not, as in the case of Job, due to the activity of the Adversary ? The rushing forth of the sea, as from a womb, really brings about the submerged chaos (Gen.1:2). Job is learning that his endurance had arisen at the instance of the Adversary. Job's case was parallel to what earlier had overtaken the earth, ere humans ever lived upon it.

IEUE by dwelling upon the preliminaries of His founding of the earth, that is, as to measurements, and sinking its sockets, and stretching over the earth as a tape, makes all these details to compare with the carefulness of Job as regards his family and his estate. Both had come to calamity, and due to the same cause. But one occurred in the first eon and Job's case is in the third eon.

The discourse upon wisdom in Proverbs 8 widens out the consideration of its theme so as to cover every angle which may be around it. The survey is not limited to the matters of wisdom in relation to humans, but from verse 22, it builds up to examine wisdom in the ways of IEUE. We have a scrutiny which covers the ways of IEUE from their beginning, right on to the point which wisdom saw enabling it to rejoice in the habitation of the earth (31): therein would eventually come to be that factor which would adjust all those matters which lay around the submerged chaoses (verse 23 cf. Gen. 1:2). Wisdom could view such things with the fullest joy.

To be more precise, we may point to the details of verses 23 to 31 of Proverbs 8, for they begin to make mention of matters equal to Genesis 1:1, affirming that IEUE had acquired wisdom as an initial matter. To speak

thus of wisdom, in respect of IEUE, is to assure us that He made the fullest use of all His knowledge when framing every detail and feature of creation. There was the fullest counsel and deliberation ere creation was embarked on.

We are then informed that the feature of Genesis 1:2, that is, the submerged chaos were antedated by wisdom, and so too, ere mountains were sunk or hills were there. Nor had the earth and its outside, or the top soil of the habitation been made. In fact, wisdom is being personified as though it were God's Son, and His delectation looked forward to the sons of humanity. We see, too, by the reference to "top soils," that the earth was first laid down by orderly strata.

Thus, beginning with the inception of the first eon, this passage (Proverbs 8) passes in review right on to humanity, when He Who is our wisdom, will have fulfilled the delight which He foresaw amidst the sons of humanity. His anticipation will have carried forward His obedience to His Father. Such is the glory of God's Son that, ere the eons began to ensue, He looked forward with delectation to the will and purpose of His Father. Later, in Gethsemane when the day of His delectation had actually been achieved, then, under the direct duress, such that the flesh would create the will that the cup might be carried aside from Him, then, in the glory of the day of His cross, He said: "Not My will but Thine be done."

Our enquiry regarding the first eon leads us to see of this first eon, that one of its leading matters is the introduction of the jurisdiction of darkness. This is the fuller statement regarding the Adversary. It is not a cursory matter, nor did it just occur, for the one who fills this office is characterized with a genius which is in line with the operation laid upon him..

The Adversary must be one whose disposition is so positive in its persistence that he will accept failure as success, and so never be deterred by failure: in fact, we may say that he does not have the understanding of it, despite his remarkable capacity. He was equal to the testing of God's Son, seeking to turn Him from the way of the cross, yet, when he failed to do so, then he turned to a course which ensured that God's Son would be crucified. The Adversary did not measure that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus was able to rouse His Son out from among the dead, for did *he* not have the might of death ?

Nor was the counterworker concerned for himself. Yet God's Son, as also His Father, knew the joy that lay ahead for them in the conciliation of the Adversary, for even to such an one as he will God yet come to be ALL. The requirements of the first eon will not frustrate the glory of God's Son, nor yet of His Father's purpose.

We have viewed the complexity and the capacity which resided in this one who came to be the sway of the first eon. That eon came to be the period in which the Adversary began his career amidst God's ways. That career affirmed the purpose of God: it did not do the opposite, though that was the design of the counterworker.

Let us also see that the Firstborn of creation was not of the first eon, for He antedated it. This must be so, for the eons were made through Him (Heb. 1:2). Thus, with creation first formed in God, in order to be out of Him, and then into the Son, in order that it may be through Him, the Son duly brought forth the Adversary at the necessary point of the first eon.

Then did the Adversary find the whole of creation to be subject to the Firstborn of creation. The divine service of the celestials undoubtedly ascribed glory to Him and through Him to Al. This was quite contrary to the disposition of the counterworker. The whole of the divine service became deranged and to such a degree that it could not be composed. In fact, when the divine service of the celestials became a model of service in Israel, even then that service lacked effectiveness for Israel. The blood of bulls and goats gave no righteousness. Righteousness awaited God's Son and His faith. Yet Israel, in the third eon, were to a great extent preserved from the jurisdiction of darkness. The folly of Israel's ways and their idolatry brought their kingdom under the Adversary's control, so that, in the days of the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, the Adversary was able to offer to give Him the kingdom for the consideration of His worship. Still did the Adversary persist in his outlook of the first eon.

With the understanding of the first eon, God's ways lose any nebulous aspect. Mist is dispelled from around His ways, and we discern the glory of the God and Father of our Lord, Christ Jesus.

We see God's ways as they prepare for His evangel which shall not only reveal His love and His righteousness, but also will bestow it upon us and upon all creation.

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