

what is best for them, and will make all things work together for their good. O what a sweet and pleasant life would ye have under the heaviest pressures of affliction, and what heavenly serenity and tranquillity of mind would you enjoy, would you cheerfully acquiesce in the good will and pleasure of God, and embrace every dispensation, how sharp soever it may be, because it is determined and appointed for you by the eternal counsel of his will!

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OF THE WORK OF CREATION.

HEB. xi. 3.—*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

HAVING discoursed to you of the decrees of God, whereby he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, I come now to treat of the execution of these decrees. That question, ‘How doth God execute his decrees?’ being only an introduction to what follows, it is needless to insist on it. Only you must know, that for God to execute his decrees, is to bring to pass what he has decreed. Now, what God from all eternity decreed is brought to pass in the works of creation and providence. Nothing falls out in either of these but what was decreed; nor does it fall out in any other way than as it was decreed. The decrees of God are as it were the scheme, draught and pattern of the house; and the works of creation and providence are the house, built in every point conformable to the draught.

In the text we have an answer to that question, ‘What is the work of creation?’ Wherein, we may consider,

1. What we understand about it. (1.) The making of the world; it was *framed*, and had a beginning, not being from eternity. (2.) The author and efficient cause of it, God. (3.) What God made, *the worlds*; all things, heaven, earth, sea, air, &c. and all the inhabitants thereof, angels, men, cattle, fowls, fishes, &c. (4.) How they were made, *by the word of God*, that word of power which spake all things, into being. Or it may denote Jesus Christ, who is called *the word of God*, and by whom God *made the worlds*. (5.) Whereof they were made. This is declared negatively, *Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear*, that is, not of pre-existent matter, but of nothing. By *things that are seen* may be understood visible corporeal things; and if these were made of nothing, much more things that are not seen. But I rather under-

stand it of all things which are seen to have a being; for that word relates to the eyes of the understanding, as well as of the body.

2. How we understand this creation of the world, *through faith*. Not that we can understand nothing of the creation by the light of nature; for the eternity of the world is contrary to reason as well as faith; but we have the full and certain knowledge of this work of creation in the particular circumstances of it, through faith assenting to divine revelation, and no other way.

In speaking to this work of creation I shall shew,

I. What we are to understand by creation.

II. That the world was made, or had a beginning.

III. Who made it.

IV. What God made.

V. Whereof all things were made.

VI. How they were made.

VII. In what space of time they were made.

VIII. For what end God made all things.

IX. In what case or condition he made them.

X. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I am to show what we are to understand by creation, or what it is to create.

1. It is not to be taken here in a large sense, as sometimes it is used in scripture, for any production of things wherein second causes have their instrumentality; as when it is said, Psal. civ. 30. 'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.' Where the meaning is, thou sendest forth thy quickening power, which produceth life in the creatures from time to time: for the Psalmist speaks not here of the first creation, but of the continued and repeated production of living creatures, in which the divine power is the principal agent. But,

2. We are to take it strictly, for the production of things out of nothing, or the giving a being to things which had none before. And here you must know, that there is a twofold creation, one immediate, and the other mediate.

(1.) There is an immediate creation; as when things are brought forth out of pure nothing, where there was no pre-existent matter to work upon. Thus the heavens, the earth, the waters, and all the materials of inferior bodies, were made of nothing; and the souls of men are still produced from the womb of nothing by God's creative power, and infused into their bodies immediately by him, when they are fully organised to receive them.

(2.) There is a secondary and mediate creation, which is the making things of pre-existing matter, but of such as is naturally unfit

and altogether indisposed for such productions, and which could never by any power of second causes be brought into such a form. Thus all beasts, cattle, and creeping things, and the body of man, were at first made of the earth, and the dust of the ground; and the body of the first woman was made of a rib taken out of the man. Now, this was a creation as well as the former; because, though there was matter here to work upon, yet it could never have been reduced into such a form without the efficacy of Almighty power. We have an account of both these in the history of the creation. It is said, Gen. i. 1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;' *i. e.* he made that mighty mass of matter out of nothing, which was at first a rude and indigested lump; for the earth was without form, and the heavens without light. And then by that same omnipotent power he reduced it into that beautiful order and disposition wherein it now appears to our view.

II. I go on to shew that the world was made, that it had a beginning and was not eternal. This the scripture plainly testifies, Gen. i. 1. above quoted. And this reason itself teacheth: for whatsoever is eternal, the being of it is necessary, and it is subject to no alteration. But we see this is not the case with the world; for it is daily undergoing alterations.

III. I am next to shew who made the world, and gave it a beginning. That was God and he only, Gen. i. 1. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' This will evidently appear from the following particulars.

1. The world could not make itself; for this would imply a horrid contradiction, namely, that the world was before it was; for the cause must always be before its effect. That which is not in being, can have no production; for nothing can act before it exists. As nothing hath no existence, so it hath no operation. There must therefore be something of real existence, to give a being to those things that are; and every second cause must be an effect of some other before it be a cause. To be and not to be at the same time, is a manifest contradiction, which would infallibly take place if any thing made itself. That which makes is always before that which is made, as is obvious to the most illiterate peasant. If the world were a creator, it must be before itself as a creature.

2. The production of the world could not be by chance. It was indeed the extravagant fancy of some ancient philosophers, that the original of the world was from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which were in perpetual motion in an immense space, till at last a sufficient number of them met in such a happy conjunction as formed the universe in the beautiful order in which we now behold

it. But it is amazingly strange how such a wild opinion, which can never be reconciled with reason, could ever find any entertainment in a human mind. Can any man rationally conceive, that a confused rout of atoms, of diverse natures and forms, and some so far distant from others, should ever meet in such a fortunate manner, as to form an entire world, so vast in the bigness, so distinct in the order, so united in the diversities of natures, so regular in the variety of changes, and so beautiful in the whole composure? Such an extravagant fancy as this can only possess the thoughts of a disordered brain.

3. God created all things, the world, and all the creatures that belong to it. He attributes this work to himself, as one of the peculiar glories of his Deity, exclusive of all the creatures. So we read, Isa. xlv. 24. 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' Chap. xlv. 12. 'I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.' Chap. xl. 12, 13. 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Job ix. 8. 'Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.' These are magnificent descriptions of the creating power of God, and exceed every thing of the kind that hath been attempted by the pens of the greatest sages of antiquity.—By this operation God is distinguished from all the false gods and fictitious deities which the blinded nations adored, and shews himself to be the true God. Jer. x. 11. 12. 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' Psal. xevi. 5. 'All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.' Isa. xxxvii. 19. 'Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.' None could make the world but God, because creation is a work of infinite power, and could not be produced by any finite cause: For the distance between being and not being is truly infinite, which could not be removed by any finite agent, or the activity of all finite agents united.

This work of creation is common to all the three persons in the adorable Trinity. The Father is described in scripture as the

Creator, 1 Cor. viii. 6.—‘The Father, of whom are all things.’ The same prerogative belongs to the Son, John i. 3. ‘All things were made by him (the Word, the Son); and without him was not any thing made that was made.’ The same honour belongs to the Holy Ghost, as Job xxvi. 13. ‘By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.’ Chap. xxxiii. 4. ‘The Spirit of God hath made me (says Elihu), and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.’ All the three persons are one God; God is the Creator; and therefore all the external works and acts of the one God must be common to the three persons. Hence, when the work of creation is ascribed to the Father, neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit are excluded; but because, as the Father is the fountain of the Deity, so he is the fountain of divine works. The Father created from himself by the Son and the Spirit; the Son from the Father by the Spirit; and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the manner or order of their working being according to the order of their subsisting. The matter may be conceived thus: All the three persons being one God, possessed of the same infinite perfections; the Father, the first in subsistence, willed the work of creation to be done by his authority: ‘He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.’—In respect of immediate operation, it peculiarly belonged to the Son. For ‘the Father created all things by Jesus Christ,’ Eph. iii. 9. And we are told, that ‘all things were made by him,’ John iii. 3. This work in regard of disposition and ornament, doth peculiarly belong to the Holy Ghost. So it is said, Gen. i. 2. ‘The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,’ to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed. Thus it is also said, Job xxvi. 13. above cited, ‘By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.’

IV. Our next province is to shew what God made. All things whatsoever, besides God, were created, Rev. iv. 11. ‘Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.’ Col. i. 16. ‘By him were all things created.’ The evil of sin is no positive being, it being but a defect or want, and therefore is not reckoned among the things which God made, but owes its existence to the will of fallen angels and men. Devils being angels, are God’s creatures; but God did not make them evil, or devils, but they made themselves so.

Those things that were made in the beginning were most properly created of God; but whatsoever is or will be produced in the world, is still made by God, not only in respect that the matter whereof they are made was created by him, but because he is the first cause of all things, without whom second causes could produce nothing;

and whatever power one creature has of producing another, is from God. Hence Elihu says, as above cited, 'The Spirit of God hath made me;' though he was produced by the operation of second causes. And it is worth while to consider what David says on this head, Psal. cxxxix. 13,—16. This clearly appears from the impotency of the creature to produce any thing according to nature, when God denies his concurrence. Hence we have a chain of causes described, Hos. ii. 21, 22. where God is the first cause, and acts the same part in all other operations wherein creatures are concerned: 'I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.' If it be asked, then, what did God make? I answer, he made every thing that has a being, this stately structure of the universe, and that vast variety of creatures that are in it, sin only excepted, which he permitted should take place, but had no hand in the effecting of it as such.

V. I proceed to shew of what all things were made. Of nothing; which does not denote any matter of which they were formed, but the term from which God brought them; when they had no being he gave them one. There was no pre-existent matter to make them of, nothing at all to work upon: for he 'made all things both visible and invisible,' Col. i. 16. Rom. xi. 36. If then he made all things, he must needs have made them of nothing, unless he would say there was, besides God, something before there was any thing, which is a palpable contradiction. To create is properly to make a thing of nothing, to make a thing have an existence that had none before. Thus were the heavens and the earth made of nothing simply; that is, they began to exist, which they never did before. This is what is called immediate creation, as I shewed on the first head. But there is a mediate creation, as I also noticed, which is a producing of things from matter altogether unfit for the work, and which could never be disposed, but by an almighty power to be such a thing. Thus man's body was created of the dust, and this itself was created of nothing, and was utterly unfit for producing such a work without a superior agency.

VI. The sixth head is to shew, how all things were made of nothing. By the word of God's power. It was the infinite power of God that gave them a being; which power was exerted in his word, not a word properly spoken, but an act of his will commanding them to be, Gen. i. 3. God said, 'Let there be light and there was light,' Psal. xxxiii. 6, 9, 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' By his powerful word he called them from nothing to being, Rom. iv.

17. 'God calleth those things which be not as though they were.' This is a notable evidence of infinite power, which with so great easiness as the speaking of a word, could raise up this glorious fabric of the world. An heathen philosopher considered this as a striking instance of the sublime, peculiar to the books of the Jewish legislator.

VII. Our next business is to shew in what space of time the world was created. It was not done in a moment, but in the space of six days, as is clear from the narrative of Moses. It was as easy for God to have done it in one moment as in six days. But this method he took, that we might have that wisdom, goodness, and power that appeared in the work, distinctly before our eyes, and be stirred up to a particular and distinct consideration of these works, for commemoration of which a seventh day is appointed a sabbath of rest.

But although God did not make all things in one moment, yet we are to believe, that every particular work was done in a moment, seeing it was done by a word, or an act of the divine will, Psal. xxxiii. 9. forecited. No sooner was the divine will intimated, than the thing willed instantly took place.

In the space of these six days the angels were created; and it is not to be thought that they were brought into being before that period; for the scripture expressly asserts, that all things were created in that space, Exod. xx. 11. And though Moses, Gen. i. makes no express mention of the angels, yet, Gen. ii. 1. he shews that they were created in one of these six days, as he mentions the host of the heavens and the earth; and it is certain, that in the host of heaven the angels are included, 1 Kings xxii. 19. where Micaiah the prophet says, 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven (which can be no other than the angels) standing by him.'

The works of the first day were, (1.) The highest heaven, the seat of the blessed, and that with the angels its inhabitants, who in Job xxxviii. 4,—7. under the designation of 'morning stars and sons of God,' are said to have 'sang together, and shouted for joy,' when the foundations of the earth were laid, as being then made. (2.) The earth, that is, the mass of earth and water, which Moses says was without form and void; that is, without that beauty and order which it afterwards received, and destitute of inhabitants, and without furniture and use. (3.) The light, which was afterwards gathered together, and distributed into the body of the sun and stars.

The works of the second day were the firmament; that is, that expansion or vast space which extends itself from the surface of the earth to the utmost extremity of the visible heavens, which ver. 8.

is called *heaven*, that is, the aerial heavens, the habitation of birds and fowls, through which they wing their way. This vast extension is called the *firmament*, because it is fixed in its proper place, without which it cannot be removed without force and violence. Another work of this day was the dividing of the waters above the firmament, that is, the clouds, from the waters as yet mixed with the earth, which were afterwards gathered together into seas, rivers, lakes, fountains, &c.

On the third day, the lower waters were gathered into certain hollow places, which formed the sea; and the dry land appeared, adorned with plants, trees, and herbs, which continue to be produced to this day.

On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were made, to enlighten the world, and render it a beautiful place, which otherwise would have been an uncomfortable dungeon, and to distinguish the four seasons of the year.

On the fifth day, the fishes and fowls were made.

On the sixth day, all sorts of beasts, tame and wild, and creeping things were produced out of the earth; and last of all, man, male and female.

It is probable that the world was created in autumn, that season of the year in which generally things are brought to perfection for the use of man and beast. But this not being an article of faith, we need not insist upon it.

VIII. I come now to shew for what end God made all things. It was for his own glory, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. xi. 36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' And there are these three attributes of God that especially shine forth in this work of creation, namely, his wisdom, power, and goodness.

1. His wisdom eminently appears, (1.) In that after the heavens and their inhabitants were created, those things that have only being and not life, then those that have being and life, but not sense, then those that have being, life, and sense, but not reason, and last of all, man, having being, life, sense, and reason, were successively formed. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' (2.) In his appointing of every thing to its proper use, by the law of creation, Gen. i. Hence the wisdom of God is celebrated in that work, Jer. x. 12. 'He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.'

2. The power of God appeared, (1.) In creating all things by a word, which instantly produced the effect intended. (2.) In that he

created plants, herbs, and trees, before the sun, moon, and stars, which now naturally are the causes of the earth's producing its fruits; as also light before them, for discovering their beauty and verdure.

3. His goodness appears, in that he first prepared the place before he brought in the inhabitants, first provided the food before the living creatures were made, and adorned and fitted all for the use of man, before he formed him.

IX. If it is asked, 'In what state were all things made? I answer, They were all 'very good,' Gen. i. 31. The goodness of the creature consists in its fitness for the use for which it was made. In this respect every thing answered exactly the end of its creation. Again, the goodness of things is their perfection; and so every thing was made agreeable to the idea thereof that was formed in the divine mind. There was not the least blemish or defect in the work; but every thing was beautiful, as it was the effect of infinite wisdom as well as almighty power. And God being the end of all, even natural things tend to him. (1.) Declaring his glory in an objective way, Psal. xix. 1. (2.) Stirring us up to seek him, and behold him as our chief good and portion, Acts xvii. 26, 27. Rom. i. 20. (3.) Sustaining our life, and serving man, that he might serve God, for which he was made very fit, in regard of the rich endowments of his mind, all pure, holy, and upright, 1 Cor. x. 31. All the sin and misery that is now in the world, by which its beauty is greatly marred, its goodness defaced, and disorder and irregularity so universally prevail, proceeded from Satan, and man's yielding to his temptations.

I shall shut up this subject with a few inferences.

1. God is a most glorious being, infinitely lovely and desirable, possessed of every perfection and excellency. He made all things, and bestowed upon them all the perfections and amiable qualities with which they are invested. So that there is no perfection in any of the creatures which is not in him in an eminent way, Psal. xciv. 9. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?' Whatever excellency and beauty is in the creatures, is all from him; and sure it must be most excellent in the fountain.

2. God's glory should be our chief end. And seeing whatever we have is from him, it should be used and employed for him: For 'all things were created by him and for him,' Col. i. 16. Have we a tongue? It should be employed for him, to shew forth his praise; hands? they should do and work for him; life? it should be employed in his service; talents and abilities? they should be laid out

for promoting his interest and honour; and, upon a proper call, we should be ready to suffer for him.

3. God is our Sovereign Lord Proprietor, and may do in us, on us, and by us, what he will: Rom. ix. 20, 21. 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' There is no reason to murmur and fret under the cross, or any afflicting dispensations, that he exercises us with. Should he destroy that being that he gave us, to whom would he do wrong? As he gave it us freely, he may take it away, without any impeachment of his goodness and justice. May not God do with his own what he will?

4. We should use all the creatures we make use of with an eye to God, and due thankfulness to him, the giver; employing them for our use, and in our service, soberly and wisely, with hearts full of gratitude to our Divine Benefactor; considering they stand related to God as their Creator, and are the workmanship of his own hands. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. iv. 4. They are not to be used to his dishonour, or the feeding of our base lusts and irregular appetites, but to fit us for and strengthen us in the performance of our duty to him.

There is no case so desperate, but faith may get sure footing with respect to it in the power and word of God. Let the people of God be ever so low, they can never be lower than when they were not at all. Hence the Lord says, Isa. lxxv. 18. 'Be glad and rejoice,' &c. He spoke a word and so the creature was made at first; and it will cost him but a word to make it over again. Hence Christ is called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. iii. 14. O seek to be new-made by him; that old things may pass away, and all things become new.

6. Give away yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, making an hearty, a cheerful, and an entire dedication and surrender of your souls and bodies, and all that ye are and have, to him as your God and Father, resolving to serve and obey him all the days of your life: that as he made you for his glory, you may in some measure answer the end of your creation, which is to shew forth his praise. Serve not sin or Satan any longer. God made you upright and holy; but Satan unmade you, stripping you of your highest glory and ornament. Relinquish his service, which is the basest drudgery and slavery, and will land all that are employed in it in hell at last: and engage in the service of God in Christ, which is truly honourable and glorious, and will be crowned with an everlasting

reward in the other world : for where he is, there shall his servants also be.

7. *Lastly*, This doctrine affords a ground of love, peace, justice and mercy betwixt men, which should be carefully cultivated by all that would desire to be with God for ever. For says the prophet, Mal. ii. 10. ‘Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?’ The consideration of being created by God, should be a powerful inducement to us to practise all the duties we owe to one another as men and Christians.

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OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

GEN. i. 27.—*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.*

HAVING discoursed of the creation of all things out of nothing, and exhibited some of the displays of the admirable wisdom, power, and goodness of God apparent therein, I come now to speak of the creation of man, the masterpiece of the lower creation. In the text we have an answer to that question, ‘How did God create man?’ God only spake the word and then the other creatures were produced: but being to create man, he called a council of the Trinity for that end: whereby the excellency of man above the other creatures, who is a compend of the world, is clearly demonstrated. Here we have the execution of that council, *So God created man, &c.* For, as says Seneca, a heathen moralist, man is not a work huddled over in a haste, and done without great forethought and consideration; for man is the greatest and most stupendous work of God, even of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As the sacred historian had said before of the Creator, ‘Let us make man in our image,’ &c. so it is not for nought that he repeats the act of creating three times in this verse; in which also the *us* in the former verse is restrained to God; so that the plurality there spoken of is not God and angels, but the three persons, one God; for it was not angels, but God that created man. Man here signifies man and woman, male and female, Adam and Eve. Wherefore they are called *him* and *them*; for as they were originally one, God having made two of one by creation; so they two were made one again by marriage. And they were both made in one day, Gen. i. 26.—31.; and that in the image of God, which is twice repeated; the import whereof