

APRIL '68

"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE

Each Sabbath for about six months, I have been teaching a class composed of Juniors and Earliteens. (Their lesson topics coincide.) The Sabbath school lessons for the first quarter of this year (1968) covered the over-all topic - Creation and Redemption. Each lesson in the Junior Quarterly is divided into daily assignments. The very first lesson was disturbing. The headings on the daily assignments for the first lesson were as follows:¹

Lesson for Sunday - *The Earth Is Created*

Lesson for Monday - *Creator of Heaven and Heavenly Beings*

Lesson for Tuesday - *God's Plan Criticized [Rebellion of Lucifer]*

Lesson for Wednesday - *Satan Introduces Sin into the Earth*

Lesson for Thursday - *Creation Continues*

It is not difficult to note the suggestion that this outline of study contains. God created the elementary mass, and then, the rebellion of Lucifer erupted in heaven. Defeated, Satan was assigned to this earth, and then God continued His creative plans. If this were true, this would leave a great deal of time between the creation of the basic elements of the earth, and the creation of man on the sixth day. We are told concerning the rebellion in heaven led by Lucifer, that God "bore long"² with this angelic leader. The amount of time is not specified, but "long" from God's viewpoint is far greater than from the viewpoint of man.

The lesson for the second Sabbath was even more specific on this point. The first question read: "What was the earth like *before* Creation?"³ Genesis 1:2, first half, was given as the answer - "And the earth was without form, and

void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Two questions in the Friday review section emphasized the same thought. The condition of the earth "before Creation" was stated to be without "form" and wrapped with darkness like a "swaddling band."⁴

Now it is true that the concept was specifically taught in these lessons that God created this mass - the basic elements of the earth. And it was God Who came back and formed the surface features of the earth. The amount of time separating the creation of the mass, and the creation of light on the first day was not given. It was intimated by suggestion through the arrangement of the lesson material.

Why become disturbed over this seemingly little point? It is the thin edge of the wedge. If the idea be true that much time elapsed between the elementary creation and the formation of the earth's surface features, unless God created the "primordial substance" absolutely resistant to all forces, then these elements were acted upon by time and space. Would any changes occur in such a period of time? Is it possible that certain things that man can now observe geologically, which cannot be explained by human reason, could be adjusted into such a period of time? Is this then becoming our "out" to accommodate ourselves to evolutionary processes?

The sad part of this picture is that while the parents were studying in the adult lessons the power of God in the spread of the Gospel in Apostolic times, their children were being exposed to a teaching which opens the door to "evolutionary" processes, and modifies the power of God.

Parents who are consistent readers of the Review and Herald will not be unduly surprised, for a series of editorials were written in 1967 advocating this basic theory.⁵ The very first paragraph of the editorials states clearly the problem to be discussed. Note this paragraph:

One area of current concern, study, and discussion in the church is the seeming conflict between certain observed phenomena in the natural world that appear to indicate a very great age for the surface features of the earth and the living things upon it, and statements in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which limit these phenomena to a relatively few thousand years. One aspect of the problem has to do with whether the basic substance of the earth as a planet was created on day one of Creation week or immediately prior thereto, or whether our planet existed in a chaotic state before - possibly long before - that momentous first day. Do the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have an inspired answer to this problem? ⁶

The associate editor's conclusions could be summarized briefly as follows: The definition for "earth", "heaven(s)" and "create" as used in Genesis 1:1 would indicate that the surface features of this globe were all that was indicated as far as the Bible is concerned. As to the time of the creation of the elementary substance of our planet, his conclusion was, "The Bible. . . does not answer this question."⁷ When considering the Spirit of Prophecy statements, the editor drew the same conclusion in these words:

In their Biblical context these statements are not concerned with the origination of the primordial substance of this planet, but with the creative acts specified by the inspired writer of Genesis 1 - the rearrangement of its surface elements into a suitable abode for man and the origination of living things by infusing the element of life into selected aggregations of matter. ⁸

Now what does the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy state on this question?

First let us consider the Bible. The fourth commandment from the lips of the Creator Himself reads:

For in six day the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea [the primary elements], and all that in them is [the surface features and living forms], and rested the seventh day. ⁹

If this were all that we have from Inspiration, I would not need to take a great leap of faith to understand that all - primordial substance and living forms in a suitable abode - was the work of God in six literal days.

In considering the light which the Spirit of Prophecy sheds on this topic let us first note the question asked in the editorial concerning what Sister

White has written. After discussing the possible meaning of the words, "earth" and "world" as found in several references quoted, the editor asks: "Can we know which meaning of 'earth' and 'world' was intended?" The writer then concluded: "She uses the words, 'earth' and 'creation' in the same sense in which the Bible writer uses them - of shaping of land, sea, and sky and their myriad forms of life during the six days of Creation week."¹⁰

Is there a clear-cut statement in the Spirit of Prophecy as to the meaning of "world" as differentiated from "earth"? And in the same connection is there a time specified as to how long ago this "world" was created? Also is the Spirit of Prophecy use of the term, "world", compared with the geological time-concept of how old the "world" is? Note the following in full context:

Infidel geologists claim that the *world* is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the *earth* itself, that the *world* has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the *earth*, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the *world* is now only about six thousand years old.¹¹

From this quotation it is important to note that the same "world" which infidel geologists claim is much older than the Bible record indicates, is the very same "world" which the Spirit of Prophecy declares to be "only about six thousand years old."

In 1864 when this statement was written, the professed Christian world was explaining these unexplainable wonders found in the earth as occurring through successive ages, making each day of creation a vast, indefinite period of time. Such a belief was declared by the Spirit of God to be "the worse kind of infidelity."¹² Are we then, merely tempering the kind of infidelity we espouse? While we admit the six days to be literal, we have supposedly devised a way to involve long periods of time intervening between the creation of the elements, and the first day

of Creation week. Is this not also, "disguised infidelity"?

How appropriate are the words of Inspiration:

The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy. These are not to be twisted and turned to mean what man may want them to mean. ¹³

¹Junior Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, First Quarter, 1968

²Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39

³Junior Quarterly, op. cit., p. 6

⁴Ibid., p. 8

⁵Raymond F. Cottrell, "'In the Beginning. . .'" Review and Herald, June 29, July 6, 13, 1967.

⁶Ibid., June 29, p. 12

⁷Ibid., July 13, p. 13

⁸Ibid.

⁹Exodus 20:11

¹⁰Cottrell, op. cit.

¹¹Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 3, pp. 91-92

¹²Ibid., p. 92

¹³Ellen G. White, Letter 92, 1900

+++++

WE NEED TO GUARD CONTINUALLY AGAINST THE SOPHISTRY IN REGARD TO GEOLOGY AND OTHER BRANCHES OF SCIENCE FALSELY SO-CALLED, WHICH HAVE NOT ONE SEMBLANCE OF TRUTH. THE THEORIES OF GREAT MEN NEED TO BE CAREFULLY SIFTED OF THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF INFIDEL SUGGESTIONS. ONE TINY SEED SOWN BY TEACHERS IN OUR SCHOOLS, IF RECEIVED BY THE STUDENTS, WILL RAISE A HARVEST OF UNBELIEF. THE LORD HAS GIVEN ALL THE BRILLIANCY OF INTELLECT THAT MAN POSSESSES, AND IT SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO HIS SERVICE.

Review and Herald, March 1, 1898

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer
P. O. Box 237
Florence, Ms., 39073

April 68 (1-4)