

ARTICLE II.

THE CREATION.

[by the Rev. W.H. Darnall (1841-1921)]

God never acts without reason. In the material world and the spiritual; every exertion of his majestic power is guided by infinite and unerring wisdom, which comprehends and permeates every action. The acorn germinates, the mountain oak falls; the infant is born, the old man dies; new governments arise, old political establishments decay; peace reigns, war rages; joy gladdens the heart of the Christian, and remorse scourges the soul of the sinner—because wisdom dictates it, because it is reasonable and right. “Known unto God are all his works,” “and from the throne of his holiness” “his kingdom ruleth over all.” Assured of this, the study of the dispensations of his providence and the mighty acts of his power, is always inviting, instructive, and beneficial. If successful in the search after the reasons by which the Almighty was pleased to govern his acts, we have additional evidence of his goodness and his love, and a fresh impulse to devotion. If we fail to fathom the depths of his mysteries, humility will bid us bow to, and faith will lead us to adore, that God who is the author of that which we understand not. And if indeed, because of the earthiness which envelopes us, we should be averse to this study, it is still our duty, because the Father himself has commanded it, that we may behold and love the beauty and perfection of his character, and seek after that spiritual exaltation which will assimilate us to him. Nor are we in these investigations to rely solely upon the suggestions of unaided reason; but we must move forward under the guidance of those truths which God in his goodness has revealed to us in Nature and in Revelation. Then, many of those mysterious acts of his providence and power which cause us to doubt and rebel, will lead us to believe and adore, his ways will be vindicated, and fresh delights will spring up in his service. With these views, we propose to consider the work of Creation;

not vainly presuming that we have mastered the subject, but with the humble hope that we may point others to a path of useful and edifying investigation. And we shall consider—

I. The necessity of Creation.

II. The character of Creation.

III. Why Creation should sustain such a character.

To prove the necessity of creation, let us consider—

1. That God is essentially a Creator. For if he were wanting in this element of completeness, his character would be imperfect, and he would therefore cease to be God. Besides this, nature, which is itself a creation, points us to him, who was its great First Cause; and revelation teaches us that he bespangled the firmament with its stars, and moulded the earth into its form, by the “breath of his power.”

2. God is always active. Action is necessarily implied in the idea of a Creator; for how could God create without the utterance of the word of his power, or without the “stately stepplings” of his majesty? The material universe, having been created, cannot be preserved but by the exercise of omnipotent power; and the holy decrees of his will must be brought to pass by the exercise of his sovereign volition.

3. God is omnipresent. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up unto heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me; and thy right hand shall hold me.” To govern all things, God must be present with all things; for a creation, free from his presence, would be without the pale of his power. The obstinate sceptic, wrapped up in and proud of his earthly idealities, may attempt to laugh, to mock; but from the bosom of the universe comes the voice, “Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” and the bold unbeliever falls prostrate in the dust.

4. God is omnipotent. A power that could successfully resist him would divide his kingdom, and his sovereignty would cease. He would be “as one of us.” Without a power that is absolute and irresistible, that mysterious, sublime order which governs in all things would be left to the fickleness of chance; the laws, which he has established, would be annulled; and a “wreck of matter and a crush of worlds” would resolve us into original

chaos. Should he purpose to create, his arm might be stayed. The throne of his supremacy would totter to its fall, and the sovereign Ruler become the downcast subject. This cannot be; for "the Lord God, omnipotent reigneth."

These attributes, while they are separate and distinct in the divine character, do yet mysteriously and harmoniously blend in every movement of the Deity. And this, too, from necessity; for otherwise the purposes of God might be thwarted, because of the conflict of his own powers. Should wisdom dictate the creation of matter, his spirituality might oppose, and the stretched out arm would be motionless. This cannot be, for God is consistent. Whenever he moves, whether to create, to preserve, or to save, there we behold a beautiful commingling of justice, mercy, eternity, unchangeableness, omnipotence, omnipresence, and every attribute of the Godhead.

These things being true, we can easily perceive the *necessity* of creation. God is a Creator, and as such is active; and as such he is active in every place, and with irresistible power. Therefore, there must be a creation. God spoke, and from the depths of nonentity the universe emerged into being; his Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters," and myriads of worlds, "arrayed in beauty, in order, in light, took their stations in space and began their grand diapason of praise to him who made them.

Having established the necessity of Creation, we come next to the consideration of—

I. The character of Creation.

1. It is material. And this matter is good, is combined in various forms and in different degrees, possesses unity, individuality, order; and completeness characterises each individual part and crowns the whole. That creation is material, we need only bend our eyes to the earth for proof. That this matter is good, we learn from the character of him who made it, and its wonderful adaptation to the uses, for which it was designed. The earth was made for tillage, and the toil of the husbandman is rewarded with a bountiful harvest. Ten thousand lights glow and sparkle above us, because for this were they designed. The combinations of this matter in various forms we see in the soft clay, the granite rock, the opening flower, the sturdy oak, and every formation of nature; its different degrees we behold in the grain of sand, the hill, the mountain, the earth, the universe of

stars, and in the gradual progression from the lowest order of animal existence to the crowning work of earth, mankind; yea, and beyond, even to the throne of God himself. Nature tells us that this matter is one; that the countless worlds which people space form one grand unity, under the control of the same immutable laws. And, at the same time; she whispers to us that each of these worlds is a distinct, separate existence, “a wheel within a wheel,” which, while it forms a part of the magnificent whole, is still entire and sufficient within itself. And from nature, too, we learn that order pervades this matter. The lesser moves with the greater wheel; the power which attracts or repels a system, attracts or repels each orb of that system, and thus harmony reigns. And completeness characterises each individual part and crowns the whole. We believe this, because otherwise the work must be imperfect, and it is inconsistent with the character of God that he should be the author of a work that is not perfect and complete.

2. Creation is material and spiritual combined. And this work is man. When made, he was good, the “image of God;” to him was given dominion over all the earth and every living thing thereon; and with all this, he was mutable. His body was formed of the dust of the ground, and into the nostrils of this body the Lord God breathed the “breath of life, and man became a living soul. Spirit tabernacled with matter, and senseless dust became connected with an immortal intelligence. And God beheld this matchless work and saw that it was very good. Not only so. This “living soul” was stamped with the impress of the divine character, and was made an image reflecting in miniature the majesty and perfections of the inapproachable Trinity. What wonderful exaltation—a godlike creature! Thus fashioned, God said unto them, “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 earth.” Here we behold, with gratitude and praise, the divine right of our kingship; our warrant for wielding the sceptre of dominion. But with all this, man was mutable—liable to change; for his will was free, and no will is immutable unless sovereign and irresistible; for the lesser must bend when met by the greater. Hence, God alone is unchangeable. This mutability is also recognised by the Father in his commands to man “to

have dominion,” and to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. These commands recognise the power to obey or disobey, to exercise authority or to refuse its exercise, to eat of the fruit or to abstain therefrom. If he could do these things, he must have been capable of change. Thus moulded, man became at once the representative of humanity and of the Godhead, invested with immortal dignity and exercising godlike power, and burdened with the eternal interests of his race. Strange, exalted, responsible, mutable creature! With fear and trembling, let us adore the God that made us. “His thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways.”

3. Creation is spiritual. In this we have the angels. And these are pure; serve God as ministering spirits to his saints, and as ministers, of vengeance to his enemies; and, in the service of the upper sanctuary, worship him with ascriptions of praise, of honor, and of glory. With the voice of his power, God called them into being to fulfil the sovereign decrees of his will. Born for the skies, they are robed in the spotless white of heaven. Stainless in purity, the immaculate Father has placed them within a habitation where naught that defileth can enter; and the rich fruits upon which they feast, the life-giving waters of which they drink, and the effulgent radiance of the throne in which they bask, preserves them bright, beautiful, and holy forever. These heavenly messengers are sent out by the Father to “minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation.” To the Christian whose heart is swelling with a joy “unspeakable and full of glory,” they come with songs of gladness and of praise; and to the weary pilgrim whose path is beset with difficulties and dangers, tribulation and anguish, they come with whisperings of comfort and of hope, “bear him up in their arms lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone,” and with hallowed influences woo him to the skies, where a blissful eternal communion with the redeemed shall be the reward of his faithfulness. But to those who disregard the calls of heaven, trample upon its holy laws, and insult the majesty of the Father, they come as ministers of vengeance to make known the “terrible name of the Lord,” and to execute upon them the consuming judgments of his wrath. Rebellious Jerusalem bowed under the outstretched hand of the avenging angel, and returned to the God of Israel. In heaven, which is their home, with harps

attuned to celestial melody, and hearts ravished with bliss, they sound forth the praises of God, which swell with their increasing joys until the chambers of eternity send back the echo of the ecstatic harmony—"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb."

These three—the material, the material and spiritual combined, and the spiritual—comprehend every possible form of creation; matter and spirit being the antipodes, and their combination the medium between them. How simple, how complex, how wonderful!

Having thus given the character of Creation, we shall consider next—

III. Why Creation should sustain such character.

1. Why should creation be material? We answer—it is necessary to establish God's omnipotence. Power, to be omnipotent, must be infinite, sovereign, and irresistible. Unless infinite, there would be objects to which it did not extend; unless sovereign, there might be a power above it; unless irresistible, that which opposed might stay its exercise. It must stand alone in its inapproachable majesty. If spiritual, it must extend to and operate upon that which is not spiritual; else it might be concluded that it could not do so, and that would destroy its existence. God is a Spirit. To prove his omnipotence, then, his power must be exercised upon and over not only that which is spiritual, but that which is not spiritual. But that which is not spiritual is material. Therefore, matter must be created. And this matter must, first, be good. God is infinite in goodness, without any mixture of evil. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good." Being without evil, then, it is impossible that he should impart evil to his material creation; for he cannot impart that which he has not. Hence, being free from evil, matter must necessarily be good. Secondly, it must be combined in various forms and different degrees. We learn this from God's omnipotence and omnipresence as a sovereign. He is "Lord of all," and governs all things absolutely. And thus he governs his material creation. To prove this, it must be shown that no part of this creation can escape his presence or his over. Hence, from the atom we advance through infinite variety of combinations and through numberless degrees, until we reach the boundless universe. These combinations and dif-

ferent degrees teach us that God is present with every part of his material creation, and in the laws which govern in each we see the exercise of his sovereign power. Without them, we might question his presence and his power to form, establish, and govern either; but with them we feel that he is in every place, and controls absolutely and irresistibly. The earth spreads before us its rich variety—its green woods, its rolling prairies, its carolling birds, “the beast of the field,” the “fish of the sea,” blooming flowers, blushing fruits, lustreless clay and brilliant diamonds, because omnipresence and omnipotence command it. And from the same cause, we have the grain of sand, the towering mountain, the great earth, the shining sun, the solar system, the universe itself, with its peopling systems and worlds, and their grand revolutions through space. Thirdly, it must possess unity, individuality, order, and completeness. And these are required by omnipotence. This almighty power admits of no exception to its absolute sway, lest its existence be doubted. Were there an exception, the exception might prove stronger than the power, and it would end. Only in its triumphant exercise upon all things can its supremacy be established. Unity was given to this matter to establish the power of God over it as such. The earth and the numberless lights that glitter above us form one grand unity—and, resting in the hollow of his hand,” testify that God is omnipotent. But does his power stop here? Can he control matter only in one agglomerated mass? To prove that such is not the case, this grand unity is made up of separate, distinct, individual parts—worlds revolving around worlds, system moving within system, in obedience to the word of his power. Order reigns in every part to prove the ability of God to establish it, and completeness belongs to the whole, lest it be said that God cannot perfect that which he has begun. Thus we perceive the necessity of a material creation, the reason of its beauty and its grandeur, and learn how “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

2. Why should creation be material and spiritual combined? or, why should *man* be made? It was necessary to establish God’s omnipotence and wisdom. We have already seen that his material creation pays the tribute of obedience to the word of his

power. The opposite of this material is the spiritual. Without the union of these, the power and the wisdom to combine them and then rule the combination, might be questioned. To silence this objection of scepticism, infinite wisdom has wonderfully adapted the material for the reception of the spiritual, omnipotence has compelled their union, and governs them therein; and man stands before us a living witness, evincing the wisdom and almighty power of the Father. Having been made, it was necessary that man should, in the first place, be good; for God his Creator is good. Secondly, he must be the image of God. God is a Spirit, and not only so as distinguished from matter, but he is a spiritual intelligence. That he is such must appear in his creation, else the truth may be doubted. It cannot appear in simple matter, for that is the opposite of God's nature, and, as we have seen, was created to establish his omnipotence. It must therefore appear in his spiritual creation. If, then, there were no spiritual intelligences, we would have no evidence that God is such; and to prove that he is, they were made. And the possession of those attributes which belong to God as a spiritual intelligence can only be established by their being possessed in some degree by his intelligent creatures; for if one were wanting, it might be urged that it was wanting with God; and that would be such an invasion of the completeness and perfection of his character as would rob him of his divinity. And further: without this mysterious combination of the material and spiritual, and the stamping it with the impress of the divine perfections, we might question the sovereignty of God over such beings. Hence, man was "made in the image of God," possessing intellect, will, and passions, harmoniously blended; pure in heart, surrounded with joys, divine in beauty, and of holy completeness. Thirdly, to him must be given dominion over all the earth and every living thing thereon. This results from his being made "in the image of God." God being the ruler of that which is inferior to him, man must be made the ruler of that which is inferior to him. Being the only spiritual intelligence upon the earth, he is superior to it and its creatures; and, therefore, to him was given the dominion over them. Besides this, how forcibly does this investiture of man with power and dominion remind us of the Father's omnipotence! How inconceivably august and irresistible that Being who can dele-

gate kingly authority to immortal intelligences in the most distant parts of his creation, and then govern them and their principalities by the absolute volitions of his will! Fourthly, he must be mutable. God's will being absolute and uncontrolled, freedom of will must be delegated to man, else he will not be an image of this attribute. Having freedom of will, man is liable to change; for his will must yield to that which is stronger than man himself. Again, if man were immutable, he would be able to withstand God, and the sovereignty of the I AM would cease. But this cannot be. Behold then, O man, in thine own mysterious being, the infinite wisdom, limitless power, immeasurable goodness, absolute perfection, and inconceivable glory of that Being who made thee; and covering thyself with humility, bow down with fear, and reverently adore his matchless name.

Why should creation be spiritual? why should angels be made? Without these purely spiritual beings, God could not be said to be *infinite*; for his august being would stop short on the confines of spirituality; nor omnipotent, for the measuring of his strength with the "invisible" would be untried; nor yet a spirit, for the evidence thereof would be wanting. But ever jealous to maintain the integrity of his character, and willing to make known his glorious perfections through the testimony of his works, he breathed the breath of his power, and from the regions of darkness sprang legions of spirits, clad in light, to testify of his infinity, his power, and his spirituality. And first, these are pure, for God is pure. Secondly, they serve him as "ministering spirits" to his saints, and ministers of vengeance to his enemies. This is necessary, to show that he commands them, and to prove that he not only governs the material and spiritual creations, each being separate and distinct from the other, but that a connexion has been established between the two, that they form one grand empire which acknowledges the supremacy of his power. Thirdly, in the service of the upper sanctuary, they worship him with ascriptions of praise, of honor, and of glory. His sovereignty requires this. Matter must acknowledge the authority of his will, man must bow to the majesty of his divinity, and winged spirits, basking in the sunlight of heaven, must proclaim him "God over all, blessed for ever more."

Thus we have glanced at the work of creation: God's magnificent temple of the universe. We have beheld its lofty proportions, its wonderful symmetry, the exactness and precision in every part, and the grand beauty of the whole. We have seen the flower blooming upon its pavement, man walking in holiness within its courts, worlds gleaming from its vaulted arch, and high above all, angels rejoicing in light. We have seen the wisdom that contrived it, the goodness that guided in its construction, the omnipotence that fashioned it, the purity that pervades it, and that absolute sovereignty which takes the finished work in the "hollow of its hand" to sustain and preserve it. With reverent awe let us approach the altar, and lift up our voices in ascriptions of praise, of majesty, of power, and of glory to that God "who doeth all things well."