

0200-0300 – Victorinus Petavionensis Episcopus – De Fabrica Mundi [Fragmentum]

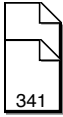
On the Creation of the World

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VICTORINUS

[TRANSLATED BY THE REV. ROBERT ERNEST WALLIS, PH.D.]



ON THE CREATION OF THE WORLD²¹⁹⁶

To me, as I meditate and consider in my mind concerning the creation of this world in which we are kept enclosed, even such is the rapidity of that creation; as is contained in the book of Moses, which he wrote about its creation, and which is called Genesis. God produced that entire mass for the adornment of His majesty in six days; on the seventh to which He consecrated it . . . with a blessing. For this reason, therefore, because in the septenary number of days both heavenly and earthly things are ordered, in place of the beginning I will consider of this seventh day after the principle of all matters pertaining to the number of seven; and as far as I shall be able, I will endeavour to portray the day of *the divine* power to that consummation.

In the beginning God made the light, and divided it in the exact measure of twelve hours by day and by night, for this reason, doubtless, that day might bring over the night as an occasion of rest for men's labours; that, again, day might overcome, and thus that labour might be refreshed with this alternate change of rest, and that repose again might be tempered by the exercise of day. "On the fourth day He made two lights in the heaven, the greater and the lesser, that the one might rule over the day, the other over the night,"²¹⁹⁷ — *the lights of the sun and moon* and He placed the rest of the stars in heaven, that they might shine upon the earth, and by their positions distinguish the seasons, and years, and months, and days, and hours.

Now is manifested the reason of the truth why the fourth day is called the Tetras, why we fast even to the ninth hour, or even to the evening, or why there should be a passing over even to the next day. Therefore this world of ours is composed of four elements — fire, water, heaven, earth. These four elements, therefore, form the quaternion of times or seasons. The sun, also, and the moon constitute throughout the space of the year four seasons — of spring, summer, autumn, winter; and these seasons make a quaternion. And to proceed further still from that principle, lo, there are four living creatures before God's throne,²¹⁹⁸ four Gospels, four rivers flowing in paradise;²¹⁹⁹ four generations of people from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ the Lord, the Son of God; and four living creatures, *viz.*, a man, a calf, a lion, an eagle; and four rivers, the Pison, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. The man Christ Jesus,

²¹⁹⁶ A fragment by the martyr Victorinus, bishop of Petau, who flourished towards the end of the third century. [He died in the persecution A.D. 304. For the text and full annotations, see Routh, iii. 451–483. His See must not be confounded with the Gallic Poitiers. He was of Petau in Austria (*Pannonia Superior*), as Launoy demonstrated A.D. 1653.]

²¹⁹⁷ Gen. i. 16, 17.

²¹⁹⁸ Rev. iv. 6. [See vol. v. note 3, p. 618, this series.]

²¹⁹⁹ Gen. ii. 10.

the originator of these things whereof we have above spoken, was taken prisoner by wicked hands, by a quaternion *of soldiers*. Therefore on account of His captivity by a quaternion, on account of the majesty of His works,—that the seasons also, wholesome to humanity, joyful for the harvests, tranquil for the tempests, may roll on,—therefore we make *the fourth day* a station or a supernumerary fast.

On the fifth day the land and water brought forth their progenies. On the sixth day the things that were wanting were created; and thus God raised up man from the soil, as lord of all the things which He created upon the earth and the water. Yet He created angels and archangels before He created man, placing spiritual beings before earthly ones. For light was made before sky and the earth. This sixth day is called *parasceve*,²²⁰⁰ that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. For He perfected Adam, whom *He made* after His image and likeness. But for this reason He completed His works before He created angels and fashioned man, lest perchance they should falsely assert that they had been His helpers. On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God, or a fast. On the seventh day He rested from all His works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord's day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the *parasceve* become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews, which Christ Himself, the Lord of the Sabbath, says by His prophets that "His soul hateth;"²²⁰¹ which Sabbath He in His body abolished, although, nevertheless, He had formerly Himself commanded Moses that circumcision should not pass over the eighth day, which day very frequently happens on the Sabbath, as we read written in the Gospel.²²⁰² Moses, foreseeing the hardness of that people, on the Sabbath raised up his hands, therefore, and thus *figuratively* fastened himself to a cross.²²⁰³ And in the battle they were sought for by the foreigners on the Sabbath-day, that they might be taken captive, and, as if by the very strictness of the law, might be fashioned to the avoidance of its teaching.²²⁰⁴

And thus in the sixth Psalm for the eighth day,²²⁰⁵ David asks the Lord that He would not rebuke him in His anger, nor judge him in His fury; for this is indeed the eighth day of that future judgment, which will pass beyond the order of the sevenfold arrangement. Jesus also, the son of Nave, the successor of Moses, himself broke the Sabbath-day; for on the Sabbath-day he commanded the children of Israel²²⁰⁶ to go round the walls of the city of Jericho with trumpets, and declare war against the aliens. Mattathias²²⁰⁷ also, prince of Judah, broke the Sabbath; for he slew the prefect of Antiochus the king of Syria on the Sabbath, and subdued the foreigners by pursuing them. And in Matthew we read, that it is written Isaiah also and the rest of his colleagues broke the

²²⁰⁰ παρασκευή.

²²⁰¹ Isa. i. 13, 14.

²²⁰² John vii. 22.

²²⁰³ Exod. xxii. 9, 12.

²²⁰⁴ 1 Macc. ii. 31–41.

²²⁰⁵ Ps. vi. 1; [also Ps. xii. On *Sheminith*, 1 Chron. xv. 21].

²²⁰⁶ Josh. vi. 4.

²²⁰⁷ Mattathias, interp. Vulg.

Sabbath²²⁰⁸—that that true and just Sabbath should be observed in the seventh millenary of years. Wherefore to those seven days the Lord attributed to each a thousand years; for thus went the warning: “In Thine eyes, O Lord, a thousand years are as one day.”²²⁰⁹ Therefore in the eyes of the Lord each thousand of years is ordained, for I find that the Lord’s eyes are seven.²²¹⁰ Wherefore, as I have narrated, that true Sabbath will be in the seventh millenary of years, when Christ with His elect shall reign. Moreover, the seven heavens agree with those days; for thus we are warned: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the powers of them by the spirit of His mouth.”²²¹¹ There are seven spirits. Their names are the spirits which abode on the Christ of God, as was intimated in Isaiah the prophet: “And there rests upon Him the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of wisdom²²¹² and of piety, and the spirit of God’s fear hath filled Him.”²²¹³ Therefore the highest heaven is the heaven of wisdom; the second, of understanding; the third, of counsel; the fourth, of might; the fifth, of knowledge; the sixth, of piety; the seventh, of God’s fear. From this, therefore, the thunders bellow, the lightnings are kindled,²²¹⁴ the fires are heaped together; fiery darts²²¹⁵ appear, stars gleam, the anxiety caused by the dreadful comet is aroused.²²¹⁶ Sometimes it happens that the sun and moon approach one another, and cause those more than frightful appearances, radiating with light in the field of their aspect. But the author of the whole creation is Jesus. His name is the Word; for thus His Father says: “My heart hath emitted a good word.”²²¹⁷ John the evangelist thus says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made.”²²¹⁸ Therefore, first, was made the creation; secondly, man, the lord of the human race, as says the apostle.²²¹⁹ Therefore this Word, when it made light, is called Wisdom; when it made the sky, Understanding; when it made land and sea, Counsel; when it made sun and moon and other bright things, Power; when it calls forth land and sea, Knowledge; when it formed man, Piety; when it blesses and sanctifies man, it has the name of God’s fear.

²²⁰⁸ Matt. xii. 5.

²²⁰⁹ Ps. xc. 4.

²²¹⁰ Zech. iv. 10.

²²¹¹ Ps. xxxiii. 6. [*Seven*, say the Rabbis. Vol. ii. note 7, p. 438, this series.]

²²¹² Probably “knowledge.”

²²¹³ Isa. xi. 2, 3.

²²¹⁴ Or, “the rivers are spread abroad.”

²²¹⁵ Trabes. [There is no proof of seven heavens in Scripture.]

²²¹⁶ Coma horribilis curabitur.

²²¹⁷ Ps. xlv. 1 [Vol. i. p. 213, this series.]

²²¹⁸ John i. 1, 2, 3.

²²¹⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 45–47.

Behold the seven horns of the Lamb,²²²⁰ the seven eyes of God²²²¹ — the seven eyes are the seven spirits of the Lamb;²²²² seven torches burning before the throne of God²²²³ seven golden candlesticks,²²²⁴ seven young sheep,²²²⁵ the seven women in Isaiah,²²²⁶ the seven churches in Paul,²²²⁷ seven deacons,²²²⁸ seven angels,²²²⁹ seven trumpets,²²³⁰ seven seals to the book, seven periods of seven days with which Pentecost is completed, the seven weeks in Daniel,²²³¹ also the forty-three weeks in Daniel;²²³² with Noah, seven of all clean things in the ark;²²³³ seven revenges of Cain,²²³⁴ seven years for a debt to be acquitted,²²³⁵ the lamp with seven orifices,²²³⁶ seven pillars of wisdom in the house of Solomon.²²³⁷

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Now, therefore, you may see that it is being told you of the unerring glory of God in providence; yet, as far as my small capacity shall be able, I will endeavour to set it forth. That He might re-create that Adam by means of the week, and bring aid to His entire creation, was accomplished by the nativity of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Who, then, that is taught in the law of God, who that is filled with the Holy Spirit, does not see in his heart, that on the same day on which the dragon seduced Eve, the angel Gabriel brought the glad tidings to the Virgin Mary; that on the same day the Holy Spirit overflowed the Virgin Mary, on which He made light; that on that day He was incarnate in flesh, in which He made the land and water; that on the same day He was put to the breast, on which He made the stars; that on the same day He was circumcised,²²³⁸ on which the land and water brought forth their offspring; that on the same day He was incarnated, on which He formed man out of the ground; that on the same day Christ was born, on which He formed man; that on that day He suffered, on which Adam fell; that on the same day He rose again from the

²²²⁰ Rev. v. 6.

²²²¹ Zech. iv. 10.

²²²² Rev. iv. 5.

²²²³ Rev. iv. 5.

²²²⁴ Rev. i. 13.

²²²⁵ Lev. xxiii. 18.

²²²⁶ Isa. iv. 1.

²²²⁷ Acts vi. 3?. [This is how the footnote in the print edition is worded. The only verse in the Bible that lists the seven churches is Rev. i. 11.]

²²²⁸ Acts vi. 3.

²²²⁹ Rev. *passim*.

²²³⁰ Josh. vi.; Rev. viii.

²²³¹ Dan. ix. 25

²²³² Dan. ix.

²²³³ Gen. vii. 2

²²³⁴ Gen. iv. 15.

²²³⁵ Deut. xv. 1.

²²³⁶ Zech. iv. 2.

²²³⁷ Prov. xi. 1.

²²³⁸ Ea die in sanguine.

dead, on which He created light? He, moreover, consummates His humanity in the number seven: of His nativity, His infancy, His boyhood, His youth, His young-manhood, His mature age, His death. I have also set forth His humanity to the Jews in these manners: since He is hungry, is thirsty; since He gave food and drink; since He walks, and retired; since He slept upon a pillow;²²³⁹ since, moreover, He walks upon the stormy seas with His feet, He commands the winds, He cures the sick and restores the lame, He raises the blind by His speech,²²⁴⁰—see ye that He declares Himself to them to be the Lord.

The day, as I have above related, is divided into two parts by the number twelve—by the twelve hours of day and night; and by these hours too, months, and years, and seasons, and ages are computed. Therefore, doubtless, there are appointed also twelve angels of the day and twelve angels of the night, in accordance, to wit, with the number of hours. For these are the twenty-four witnesses of the days and nights²²⁴¹ which sit before the throne of God, having golden crowns on their heads, whom the Apocalypse of John the apostle and evangelist calls elders, for the reason that they are older both than the other angels and than men.



COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE OF THE BLESSED JOHN

FROM THE FIRST CHAPTER.

1. “THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, and showed unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass, and signified it. Blessed are they who read and hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things which are written.”] The beginning of the book promises blessing to him that reads and hears and keeps, that he who takes pains about the reading may thence learn *to do* works, and may keep the precepts.

4. “Grace unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.”] *He is*, because He endures continually; *He was*, because with the Father He made all things, and has at this time taken a beginning from the Virgin; *He is to come*, because assuredly *He will come* to judgment.

“And from the seven spirits which are before His throne.”] We read of a sevenfold spirit in Isaiah,²²⁴²—namely, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, of knowledge and of piety, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord.

5. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead.”] In taking upon Him manhood, He gave a testimony in the world, wherein also having suffered, He freed us by His blood from sin; and having vanquished hell, He was the first who rose from the dead, and

²²³⁹ Mark iv. 38.

²²⁴⁰ “He makes the deaf to hear, and recalls the dead:” this is inserted conjecturally by Routh.

²²⁴¹ Rev. iv. 4.

²²⁴² Isa. xi. 2. [P. 342, *supra*.]