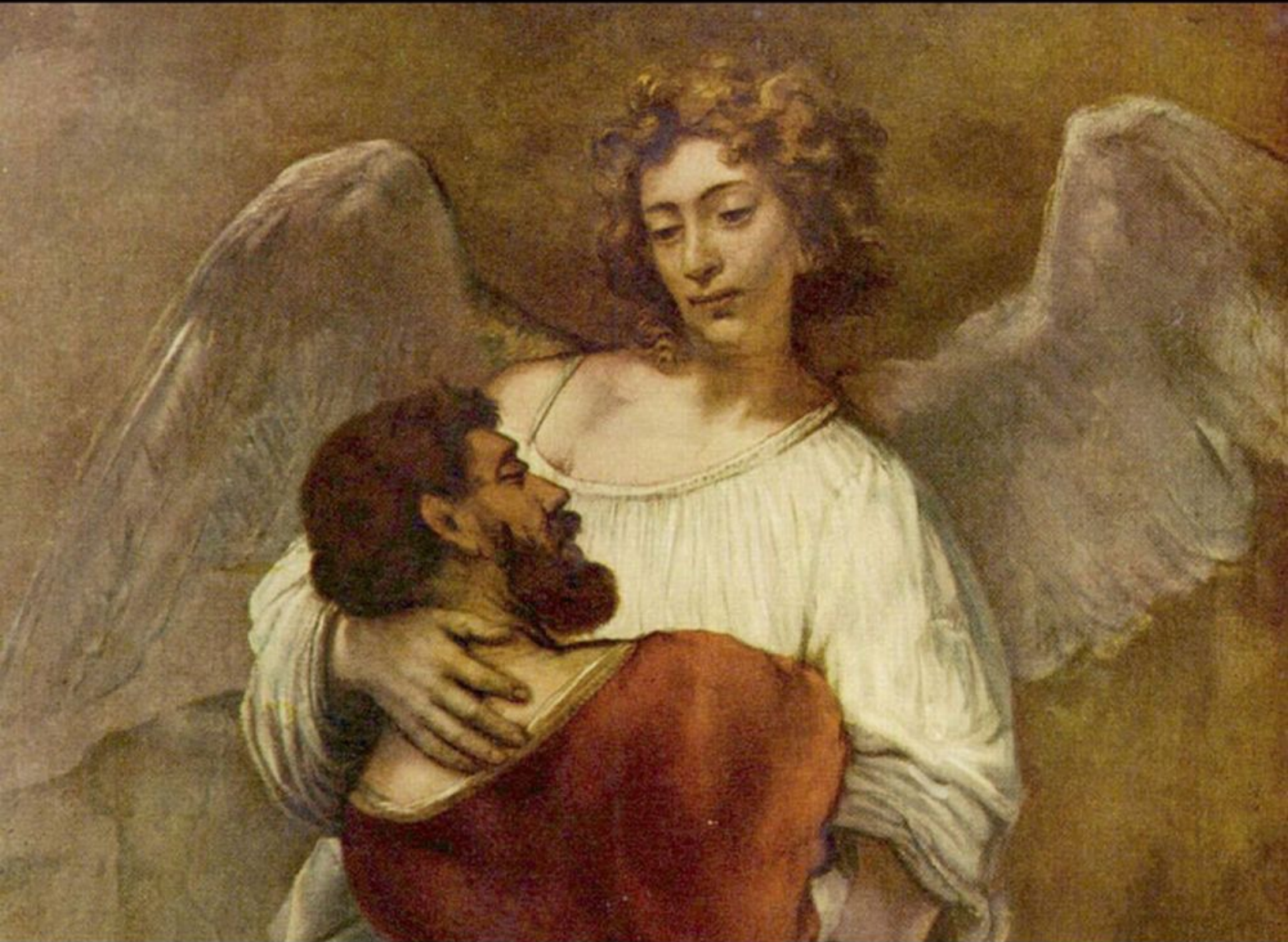


CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

VOLUME I



THE BOOK OF
GENESIS

CHILDREN'S GREAT BIBLE TEXTS

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

JAMES HASTINGS

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IN THE BEGINNING.

In the beginning. — Gen. i, 1.

These words are the beginning of the greatest Book in the world. They are the first words of the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible.

The Jews call the book of Genesis " the Book of the Beginnings" because the first word in the Hebrew Bible is the word which our translators have rendered, " In the beginning." It is a splendid name. Genesis is a book of beginnings. It tells of the beginning of the world, of the beginning of man, of the beginning of the Jewish nation, of the beginning of God's promises.

Now I think that our text is specially a text for boys and girls. You are all " beginnings " — beginnings of men and women. But what kind of men and women you are going to be depends largely on how you begin.

1. So I want to say to you first — begin well. A good start means a tremendous lot in a race, and a good start means a tremendous lot in the race of life. Sometimes we are inclined to look upon the years of girlhood or boyhood as a time of waiting. The long, long years stretch out in front of us and it seems as if we never would grow up. But they are years of preparation too — the most important of our life. They are the years when we lay up stores of knowledge, stores of goodwill, stores of character. If you lose the opportunity of getting ready then, you will never make it up.

A famous writer tells us that once, when he was a youth, he had a strange dream. He thought that he was an old, old man standing at a window on the last night of the year and looking out into the darkness. He saw a star falling from the sky and he exclaimed in unutterable sorrow, "That is myself!" For he had wasted and misspent his life, and he felt that he was no better than a wandering star that would

presently be extinguished in the blackness of night. Then he cried out with a great longing, " Give, oh, give me back my youth! "

At that moment the bells rang out to welcome the New Year and the youth awoke to find it was a dream. He had begun to follow wrong paths, but he was still young. Life with its glorious opportunities still lay before him. He could still make it something noble, something worth living.

And, boys and girls, you have all got that magnificent opportunity — the opportunity to make something splendid of your lives. Don't wait longer to begin. Begin now.

2. And the other thing I want to say to you is — begin with God. It follows from the first, for you can never begin well unless you begin with God.

Will you look again at the text and notice the word that follows — " In the beginning — God." Yes, God is at the beginning of every beginning.

There was a famous professor once who was giving a lantern lecture to children about plants and flowers. He explained how the seeds became plants, how the plants became leaves and flowers, how the flowers developed seeds again. Then he went on to tell how all the different parts of a plant were built up of tiny cells, and how all these cells were filled with a wonderful substance called protoplasm, a substance which is contained in all living bodies and which makes them live and grow. Finally he said that no one knew what gave to protoplasm its power of living and growing. That was a closed door, and behind the door was unfathomable mystery. Then one of the children asked a question — "Please, sir, does God live behind the door?"

And that was the very best answer that could have been given. Behind every closed door, behind every beginning is — God. Behind the tiniest insect, behind the smallest blade of grass is God, and God is love.

God is in the beginning of every beginning, and He wants to be in your beginning too. He made you, He made you for Himself, and you will never reach the full glory of your manhood or womanhood unless you take Him into your life.

Do you want to make your life noble and grand, do you want to make the very best of it? Then take this as your motto — " In the beginning God."

THE PERFECT PATTERN.

God created man in his own image.— Gen. I, 27.

Some grown-up people have, as you boys and girls know, a way — a rather trying way — of turning you round about and looking you up and down, and then saying, "Let me see, who are you like? Why, of course, you are just your father over again!" or " You are your mother's living image!" You don't care for the looking up and down, but secretly you are not a little proud of being told you are like father; for where could you find another man so splendid? And you are really very pleased to know you resemble mother; for her face is the dearest on earth.

But there is Someone else whom you all resemble more or less closely, and that is God. To-day's text tells us that God made man "in his own image." What does that mean? It means that when He made man He made a copy of Himself.

It means that God made us — you and me — after the very best pattern that He knew.

God formed the flowers and the fruits, the fishes and the birds, the insects and the beasts, each after its own wonderful pattern, and God saw that they were all very good. But there was something still lacking.

What was it? God wanted something finer and nobler than any of these, something nearer Himself, something that could think and understand, something that could share His friendship and return His love. Where could He get a pattern for that? The only worthy pattern for such a being was God Himself. And so, because nothing but the best was good enough, God made man in His own image. Doesn't that make you feel proud and humble at the same time?

Now, if God made us after His own likeness, it means that He intended us to be as like that likeness as possible. He did not want us to be a poor copy. When you are making a copy of anything you try to make the copy as near the original as you can. You keep the model beside you, and you measure it and study it every other moment to make sure that your copy is right. In the same way God meant every man to be a good copy of Himself.

But alas! man was not content to be like God. He preferred to spoil the image which God had created. He began to mar it and deface it, and so to destroy it that sometimes it is" only God Himself who can tell where the likeness is to be found; for man has made himself nearer a beast than a man.

But God's image is still there, and it can be restored. Have any of you seen an old house which has been restored? Once upon a time the building had ceilings with wonderful

paintings. Or it had walls with beautiful wooden panelling. But somebody who knew no better splashed these exquisite ceilings with colour-wash, and daubed that lovely panelling with green or red paint. All the loveliness was hidden. Then an artist, or a man who knew about such things, came along, and he guessed what was under the colourwash and the paint. He had them removed, oh! so carefully. He restored to the house its original beauty, and now it is the glory of the neighborhood.

So God can restore His image in man. How does He do it?

Well, God found that there was one way, only one way, that man could be remade in His image. It was by coming Himself to earth, by showing men the Original. He came to earth two thousand years ago in the person of Jesus Christ. He showed us the Original Pattern, the Perfect Example, and He asks us to copy it.

Can we remake ourselves then? No. We may do a little; but if we want ourselves properly remade we must put ourselves in God's hands. God has shown us the Perfect Pattern to awaken our desire and longing to be like Him, but He knows that we cannot manage the remaking all by ourselves. And so He is ready to help us. We have only to come to Him and say, " Father, I want to be like Jesus. Make me anew in His image."

And if we really mean it God will do it. Day by day, with His help, we shall grow more like Jesus, more like Himself, more worthy to be called "a child of God."

MIST.

There went up a mist from the earth.— Gen. ii, 6.

If you searched the world to find people who really and truly like mist I expect you would discover very few. You would not find many even in Scotland, where, according to English ideas, they specialize in mist. Yes, few of us like mist. It hides the world from us; it makes us feel choky and damp and depressed. We seldom see a boy or a girl dancing and skipping down the road on a misty day as they do on a sunny one. Even the birds and beasts seem less lively.

Did you ever wonder what mist is and how it is formed? Well, mist is just water — tiny drops of water. The sun draws up the moisture from the earth and the sea and the rivers. It draws it up in the form of water-vapor, which is really a transparent gas and so invisible to us. But when the air gets cooler, as at sunset, the water-vapor turns into mist much in the same way as the water-vapor that comes out of a boiling kettle turns into steam when it strikes the cooler air of a room. Sometimes this mist stays above us in the form of clouds, sometimes it comes down to earth.

Now we haven't lived very many years in the world before we find that there are mists in life as well as in nature. There are sunny days when everything seems to go right, and there are misty days when everything seems to go wrong. There are things that are hard to bear or difficult to accomplish, and we don't see the use of them. There are troubles that seem to surround us on every side like a mist. We cannot see through them, and we begin to wonder if there is any way out. I want to speak to you about some of these mists to-day.

1. First there are the little mists we can rise above. These are the small frets and worries and annoyances of everyday life. A great deal of time and energy is wasted in turning these slight mists into impenetrable fogs. If you have to

learn a difficult lesson, any amount of wishing you hadn't to won't help you. If you have to go to the dentist, well, you just have to, and worrying about it beforehand won't make it any nicer. If you have broken a favorite toy or lost a favorite knife, fretting and regretting won't mend matters. If someone has spoken a cross word to you, that is no reason why you should break your heart. They are most likely suffering from indigestion. Just be nice to them and see what happens.

In the midst of a great political crisis Mr. Gladstone was once asked by a friend, "Don't you find you lie awake at night, thinking how you ought to act, and how you ought to have acted? " And Mr. Gladstone replied, "No, I don't. What would be the use of that?"

If we could just make ourselves think like that, then we could rise above these annoying little mists of everyday life.

A lady once went travelling in Switzerland. She lived mostly in the towns and villages, but one night she slept in a chalet half-way up a mountain. When she wakened in the morning she found herself in a wonderful world. Above was the beautiful blue sky, all round was the morning sunlight, but beneath was a thick carpet of mist. It filled all the valley and shut away entirely the villages below. She felt as if she were in a world of her own, up there with the blue sky and the sunlight and the snow-capped mountains.

And, boys and girls, that is the best way to deal with our small frets and worries. If we can get up into the sunshine, if we can learn to look on the bright side of things, then we shall find that all these little disagreeable mists are in their right place — beneath our feet!

2. And then there are the mists that make things "beautiful, the bigger mists of real trouble and hardship and difficulty. They don't seem beautiful at the time, these mists, but they leave a rare beauty behind them.

Have you ever looked round you, when the sun came out after a thick mist? The world was turned into a wonderful fairy palace. Each blade of grass carried a diamond, and the spiders' webs sparkled with jewels of many colors. And " Old Man Mist " had done it all with his magic wand.

When the roses droop and the daisies swoon
For song of the summer rain, His presence comes as a
gracious boon
O'er valley and field and plain; "Whenever the folds of his
tent swing wide,
At eve or the grey of morn, The hills are glad and the
mountainside,
The meadows and fields of corn.
Full softly he comes with stores untold

And scatters his treasure rare — Life for the blooms of
crimson and gold,
And jewels beyond compare; But hidden away from blaze
of light
His wonderful deeds are done, Under the cloud and out of
the sight
Of the fervid glow of the sun!

(B. F. Leggett, " Old Man Mist.")

And it is the same with the mists of life — they make things beautiful. They grow beautiful characters. It is generally the men and women who have had to fight against the greatest difficulty who have made the biggest and noblest name for themselves in the world; and a good old man once