



INTRODUCTION

This volume carries the name *In the Beginning*—the words with which the book of Genesis starts. The name seems appropriate because it describes the cosmic events which are narrated in the first book of the Hebrew Bible; but also because in it I speak of events that preceded those described by me in *Worlds in Collision*—thus the name of the book conveys to the reader the notion that here is an earlier history of the world compared with the story of *Worlds in Collision*; although it is the second volume in that series, in some sense it is the first volume, being the earlier story.

When the manuscript of *Worlds in Collision* was first offered to the publisher (Macmillan Company, New York) it contained a brief story of the Deluge and of the cataclysm that terminated the Old Kingdom in Egypt. But after one of the publisher's readers suggested that the book should concentrate on one event, we compromised in presenting in the published volume two series of cataclysms—those that took place in the fifteenth century before the present era and were caused by the near-approaches of Venus, and those that occurred in the eighth century before this era and were caused by the near-approaches of Mars. The unused material was left for elaboration in a separate work on "Saturn and the Flood" and "Jupiter of the Thunderbolt." The reception of *Worlds in Collision*, however, made me understand that I had already offered more than was palatable. And so I did not hurry with what I consider to be the heritage of our common ancestors, an inheritance of which my contemporaries in the scientific circles preferred not to partake.

Researching and writing this book, I would sit at the feet of the sages of many ancient civilizations—one day of the Egyptian learned scribes, another of the Hebrew ancient rabbis, the next of the Hindus, Chinese, or the Pythagoreans. But then, rising to my feet, I would confer with present-day scientific knowledge. At times I came to understand what perplexed the ancients, and at other times I found answers to what perplexes the moderns. This shuttle back and forth was a daily occupation for a decade or more, and it became a way to understand the phenomena: to listen to those who lived close to the events of the past, even to witnesses, and to try to understand them in the light of the theoretical and experimental knowledge of the last few centuries, in this manner confronting witnesses and experts.

I realized very soon that the ancient sages lived in a frightened state of mind, justified by the events they or their close ancestors had witnessed. The ancients' message was an anguished effort to communicate their awe engendered at seeing nature with its elements unchained. The moderns, however, denied their ancestors' wisdom, even their integrity, because of an all-embracing fear of facing the past, even the historically documented experiences of our progenitors, as recent as four score generations ago.

I have deliberately described the catastrophes of the second and first millennia before this era before I describe the catastrophes of the previous ages. The reason is obvious: the history of catastrophes is extremely unsettling to the historians, evolutionists, geologists, astronomers, and physicists. Therefore it is preferable to start from the better known and then proceed to the less known. For the last catastrophe caused by the contact of Mars and the Earth I could establish the year, the month, and even the day; not so for the catastrophes in which Venus and the Earth participated, when only the approximate time in the space of a definite century could be

established. Still, I found it advisable to narrate the story of the second millennium first: it was possible to write the story of the contacts with Venus with a fair amount of detail. But each cataclysm is not only more remote in time from us, it is also obscured by the catastrophes that followed. As we seek to penetrate ever deeper into the past, we can see the foregoing periods through the veil of the catastrophes; dimmer and dimmer is the light behind every veil, till our eye can distinguish no more behind the veil that hangs over the period when the Earth was Moonless, though already inhabited by human life. We do not know the beginning; we can only enter the theater at what may have been the third or fourth act.

